



Combined evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

*Final report – main
evaluation report (volume 1)*

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Directorate B: Youth, Education and Erasmus+

E-mail: EAC-DIRECTION-B@ec.europa.eu

Unit B4 (coordination of Erasmus+)

Contact: Mr Sebastien Combeaud

E-mail: Sebastien.Combeaud@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

Combined evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

Final report

Prepared by ICF

***Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union.***

Freephone number (*):

00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://europa.eu>).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2017

ISBN 978-92-79-74442-6

doi: 10.2766/945765

NC-04-17-945-EN-N

© European Union, 2017

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Printed in Belgium

The core evaluation team:

Daniela Ulicna (ICF)
Stéphanie Oberheidt (ICF)
Juliette Mathis (ICF)
Simona Milio (ICF)
Kristyna Basna (ICF)
Gabor Endrodi (ICF)
Marcel Schnabel (ICF)
Andy White (ICF)
Adam Krcal (Technopolis)
Jelena Angelis (Technopolis)
David Campbell (Science Metrix)
Christian Lefebvre (Science Metrix)
GfK Team

Acknowledgements:

The core team is grateful to the other ICF and partner organisations' (Technopolis, GfK and Science Metrix) team members and external experts who also contributed to the evaluation. We also warmly thank the vast number of respondents (interviewees, surveys and OPC respondents) who, through their insights, valuably helped inform the present evaluation report and/or its complementary volumes.

Table of Contents

Executive summary	9
Headline findings	9
Methodology.....	10
Relevance	12
Coherence.....	13
Effectiveness	13
Efficiency	17
EU added value.....	18
Conclusion and recommendations	19
1 Introduction	22
2 Brief description of Erasmus + and predecessor programmes	23
2.2 Main changes in the programmes over the period under evaluation ...	32
2.3 Intervention logic of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes.....	38
3 Approach to the evaluation and methodology	44
3.1 Scope of the evaluation and terminology	44
3.2 Summary overview.....	49
3.3 Evaluation framework and measurement of results	51
3.4 Sources of data.....	53
3.5 Specific analytical techniques.....	78
3.6 Analysis of other qualitative data.....	85
3.7 Discussion of validity and reliability of the findings	86
3.8 Acronyms and country codes	89
4 Relevance of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes.....	92
4.1 Summary of main findings.....	92
4.2 The programme's alignment with EU and national policy priorities ...	100
4.3 The programme's responsiveness to stakeholders' and sectors' needs	124
4.4 The programme's suitability for attracting different target audiences	137
4.5 The programme's visibility.....	143
4.6 The programme's suitability for addressing hard-to-reach groups....	147
5 Coherence of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes	155
5.1 Summary of main findings.....	155
5.2 Internal coherence	161
5.3 External coherence	182
6 Effectiveness	207
6.1 Summary of main findings.....	207
6.2 Outputs delivered	217
6.3 Participation patterns.....	239
6.4 Results.....	253
6.5 Impacts (organisational level and system level)	310
6.6 Effectiveness per field and type of action.....	349
6.7 Factors influencing effectiveness	363
6.8 Results for disadvantaged groups	379
6.9 Dissemination and efforts for mainstreaming	386
6.10 Integrated programme.....	401

6.11	Sustainability	407
7	Efficiency	411
7.1	Summary	411
7.2	Distribution of the budget.....	414
7.3	Cost effectiveness	424
7.4	Implementation and management structures	454
7.5	Efficiency gains through changes in the new programme	468
7.6	Monitoring mechanisms.....	479
7.7	Anti-fraud measures	492
8	EU added value.....	495
8.1	Summary	495
8.2	Added value compared to national and international actions	497
8.3	Added value compared to predecessor programmes	512
8.4	Consequences of 'no Erasmus+'	513
9	Conclusions and recommendations	524
9.1	Main transversal conclusions.....	524
9.2	Areas for improvement and related recommendations.....	530

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, eTwinningPlus.

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 eTwinningPlus;
- 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.

¹ *Standard Eurobarometer 87*, spring 2017.

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 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 %; 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
Primary collection surveys	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	1,122 valid responses

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
		selection and those supporting evaluation of final reports	
	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 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)

	Source	Type of respondent/source	Nbr of respondents/cases/records
	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 interviews	Teachers in programme and partner countries, EU-level actors and key stakeholders	31 interviews (for further details, see standalone eTwinning+ section)
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

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.

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 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.

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

A blind spot of the programme 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 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.

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.

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).

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

- 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+. Individual actions exist in all the sectors covered by Erasmus+ but these are separate programmes. 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 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.

Conclusion	Recommendation
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
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.

1 Introduction

This report presents the main findings of the combined mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and ex-post evaluation of predecessor programmes (Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), Youth in Action (YiA), Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and the Preparatory Actions in Sport).

The evaluation has been carried out by ICF Consulting Services Limited (ICF) and its partners GfK, Technopolis and Science Metrix, on behalf of the Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission (DG EAC) between May 2016 and October 2017.

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 offers background information of Erasmus + and predecessor programmes
- Section 3 presents the methodological approaches to the evaluation
- Section 4 includes evaluation findings on the relevance evaluation criterion
- Section 5 includes evaluation findings on the coherence evaluation criterion
- Section 6 includes evaluation findings on the effectiveness evaluation criterion
- Section 7 includes evaluation findings on the efficiency evaluation criterion
- Section 8 includes evaluation findings on the EU added value evaluation criterion
- Section 9 sets out conclusions and recommendations

It is accompanied by the following annexes (supplied separately):

- Annex 1: Overview tables of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes
- Annex 2: Additional data outputs: participation and results
- Annex 3: Results of beneficiaries surveys
- Annex 4: Results of programme agencies survey
- Annex 5: Results of experts survey
- Annex 6: Results of socioeconomic actors
- Annex 7: Results of Jean Monnet survey
- Annex 8: Results of SLGF survey
- Annex 9: Case studies write-ups
- Annex 10: Expert panel assessment analysis report
- Annex 11: Literature review
- Annex 12: Benchmarking of comparator programmes analysis

The report is also complemented by additional targeted analysis focusing on:

- Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF) – volume 2
- Jean Monnet programme – volume 3
- Etwinning Plus – volume 4
- Synopsis report on the Open Public Consultation (OPC) – volume 5
- Synthesis of the National Authorities (NAUs) reports – volume 6

2 Brief description of Erasmus + and predecessor programmes

This evaluation is the combined mid-term and ex-post review of seven EU-level programmes in the fields of education and training and youth, plus the former Preparatory Actions in Sport. These comprise:

- Mid-term evaluation:
 - Erasmus+ (2014–2020). The period under the scope of the evaluation is 2014–2016.
- Ex-post evaluation:
 - Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP hereafter, 2007–2013)
 - Youth in Action (2007–2013)
 - Erasmus Mundus II (2009–2013)
 - Alfa III (2007–2013)
 - Tempus IV (2007–2013)
 - Edulink (2008–2013)
 - Preparatory Actions in Sport (2009–2013)

Their respective field coverage is outlined in the table below.

Table 2.1 Overview of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

	Type of evaluation		Field coverage						
	Mid-term	Ex-post	School	VET	AL	HE	JM	Youth	Sport
Erasmus+	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LLP		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
YiA		✓						✓	
Erasmus Mundus		✓				✓			
Tempus		✓				✓			
Alfa		✓				✓			
Edulink		✓				✓			
Preparatory Actions in Sport		✓							✓

Source: ICF

From a structural point of view, a key novelty brought by **Erasmus+** is that it does not only draw on the legacy of its predecessors but also, and more importantly, bring them together in a single integrated programme. Such an approach is, among other things, expected to ensure greater efficiency and to take advantage of the synergies between the various fields addressed (for further details, see Section 2.3).

Similarly to its predecessors, the priority actions of the programme align with the EU policy priorities defined in the different areas it covers. Built on the subsidiarity principle,

Erasmus+ aims at supporting and supplementing the actions taken by the Member States and other participating countries, while fully respecting their responsibility for the content of education and training systems, actions in favour of the youth and sport sectors and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

This section offers a brief overview of the current and predecessor programmes in regard to their main objectives, types of actions and implementation structures, in the respective sectors they cover(ed).

As mentioned above, Erasmus+ draws on the legacy of:

- five predecessor programmes in the field of education and training;
- one predecessor programme in the field of youth;
- one predecessor Preparatory Action in the field of sport.

Each of those is briefly presented below per main field. The presentation is followed by overview tables outlining their main objectives, types of actions and implementation structures against those of Erasmus+.

These tables are illustrative overviews of the different programmes. The following categories are to be understood as follows:

- **Main objectives:** The tables do not offer a comprehensive list of all priority objectives but rather include a few illustrative key operational objectives per sector.
- **Main types of actions:** The tables only outline the generic types of actions (i.e. learner/youth mobility; practitioner/youth worker mobility; cooperation and system-level actions).
- **Implementation structures:** This refers to the structures (and related level of implementation) responsible for the management of the main types of actions offered by the respective programmes. In short, the latter can/could be run at either centralised (by the EACEA) or decentralised (by the national agencies (NAs)) level. This is reflected as follows in the tables: 'C' and 'D', which stand for 'centralised' and 'decentralised' level of management respectively.

Further details on the above can be found in Annex 1.

2.1.1 Erasmus+ and its predecessors in the field of education and training

The education and training component of Erasmus+ is the largest in scope and budget (i.e. 77.5 %⁶ of the overall programme budget). The programme incorporates and draws on the legacy of the LLP, Erasmus Mundus II, Tempus IV, Alfa III, Edulink and to a lesser extent the bilateral cooperation agreements and the programmes for cooperation with industrialised countries⁷. LLP was, proportionally, the programme receiving the greatest funding (84 %) followed by Erasmus Mundus II and Tempus IV. Alfa III and Edulink were much smaller (but also more targeted in scope) in comparison.

The LLP set goals in terms of creativity, competitiveness, employability, personal fulfilment, social inclusion and European citizenship, and priorities in the area of language learning and equal access for citizens of all ages and all conditions. It drew on six complementary subprogrammes:

- sectoral programmes:
 - **Comenius:** targeting general compulsory education;
 - **Leonardo da Vinci:** targeting vocational education and training⁸;

⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1288>

⁷ Not under the scope of the evaluation as most were discontinued before 2013.

⁸ I.e. addressing the teaching and learning needs of all those in vocational education and training, other than at tertiary level.

- **Erasmus:** targeting higher education⁹;
- **Grundtvig:** targeting general adult education.
- the transversal programme that embedded four cross-cutting areas or key activities (KAs):
 - policy cooperation and innovation (KA1);
 - promotion of language learning (KA2);
 - development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice (KA3); and
 - dissemination and exploitation of results of actions supported under the programme and previous related programmes and exchange of good practice (KA4).
- the Jean Monnet programme that embedded three KAs:
 - the Jean Monnet action (KA1);
 - Operating grants to support specified institutions dealing with issues relating to European integration (KA2); and
 - operating grants to European associations active at European level in the field of European integration and education and training (KA3).

The operational objectives involved key targets to be reached by each of the four sectoral programmes. These targets were seen as a basic prerequisite for improved European economic competitiveness and represented a considerable stepping up of the LLP compared with the previous programmes.

Complementary with the objectives set out above, the LLP programme (and the mirroring ET 2020 at policy level) was also expected to enable greater consistency and complementarity with other Community policies carried out by DG EAC. Clear links in terms of lifelong learning fields and intended target groups were supported with youth, culture, media programmes and research-related actions (e.g. Marie Curie actions).

Next to the LLP, the other EU programmes that operated in education and training comprised notably Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Alfa and Edulink. As opposed to the LLP which was primarily addressed to EU, EEA/EFTA and candidate countries, the latter mostly targeted the external dimension of education and training systems in Europe¹⁰:

- Tempus¹¹: trans-European mobility programme for university studies which enabled universities from EU Member States to cooperate with Western Balkans, neighbouring countries and Central Asian ones¹² in higher education modernisation projects;

⁹ I.e. addressing the teaching and learning needs of all those in formal higher education and vocational education and training at tertiary level whatever the length of their course or qualifications, including doctoral studies.

¹⁰ This was particularly the case with Erasmus Mundus. Besides third countries-centred actions, a key component of Erasmus Mundus (Action 1) was the promotion of the European Union as a centre of excellence in learning around the world, via cooperation (mainly) among the EU's HEIs and (EU and third country) student mobility (mainly) within the EU.

¹¹ The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) has been responsible for the management of Tempus IV (2007–2013), under the supervision of EuropeAid (DEVCO) and the Directorate-General for Enlargement (DG ELARG of the European Commission). Tempus IV was composed of three different actions, all managed by the EACEA.

¹² List of countries covered available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/international-cooperation/neighbouring-countries_en.htm

- Erasmus Mundus¹³: cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education. It aimed to enhance quality in European higher education and to promote intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries;
- Alfa¹⁴: programme aimed to contribute to the development of higher education in Latin America through cooperation between the EU and Latin American countries (as a means of contributing to the economic and social development of the region in general);
- Edulink¹⁵: programme designed to foster cooperation in higher education between the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP states) and the EU. Its general objectives were to promote regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions, to foster capacity building, and to support a higher education system of quality.

¹³ The EACEA has been responsible for the management of all three actions of Erasmus Mundus, under the supervision of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC of the European Commission) and EuropeAid Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO).

¹⁴ Alfa was managed by DG DEVCO and concerns only Latin America,

¹⁵ Edulink was managed by the ACP Secretariat and the Intra-ACP Mobility programme (not covered by this evaluation); it was managed by EACEA (now replaced by the Intra-Africa Mobility Programme).

Table 2.2 Overview of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes in education and training

School education				VET				Adult learning				Higher education				
Erasmus +	Key objectives	Main actions	C	D	Key objectives	Main actions	C	D	Key objectives	Main actions	C	D	Key objectives	Main actions	C	D
	- Improving attainment in basic skills	Practitioner mobility (KA1)		✓	- Increasing learners' employability and life skills	Learner mobility (KA1)		✓	- Modernising adult education through cooperation with other sectors	Practitioner mobility (KA1)		✓	- Increasing students' skills and contributing to EU competitiveness	Learner mobility (KA1)	✓ ¹⁶	✓
	- Reducing early school leaving	Cooperation actions (KA2)		✓	- Supporting enhanced European cooperation in VET	Practitioner mobility (KA1)		✓	- Validating non-formal/informal education	Cooperation actions (KA2)		✓	- Improving quality in teaching and learning	Practitioner mobility (KA1)	✓	✓
	- Reinforcing quality in early childhood education and care	System-level actions (KA3)	✓		- Fostering quality assurance	Cooperation actions (KA2)	✓	✓	- Supporting guidance systems and quality assurance	System-level actions (KA3)	✓		- Modernising HE/ internationalising	Cooperation actions (KA2)	✓	✓
						System-level actions (KA3)		✓						System-level actions (KA3)	✓	
LLP	- Supporting key competences development	Learner mobility		✓	- Facilitating the adaptation to labour market	Learner mobility			- Responding to the E&T challenge of an ageing population in Europe	Learner mobility			- Supporting the realisation of a EHEA	Learner mobility		
	- Fostering pupils'/staff's intercultural awareness	Practitioner mobility		✓		Practitioner mobility			- Helping to	Practitioner mobility			- Supporting partnerships and innovation	Practitioner mobility		

¹⁶ In higher education, the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees (EMJMD) draw on the legacy of the former Erasmus Mundus programme. Falling under KA1, the action supports learner and practitioner mobility. Run at central level (by the EACEA), it complements other decentralised mobility actions (run by Erasmus+ national agencies).

School education				VET				Adult learning				Higher education					
		Cooperation actions	✓	✓		Cooperation actions			provide adults with alternative pathways	Cooperation actions				Cooperation actions			
		System-level/transversal actions	✓			System-level/transversal actions	✓			System-level/transversal actions	✓			System-level/transversal actions	✓		
														Key objectives	Main actions	C	D
Erasmus Mundus	Not applicable				Not applicable				Not applicable					- Enhancing the quality in European higher education	Learner mobility	✓	
														Enhancing cooperation and mobility within the EU and third countries in HE	Practitioner mobility	✓	
														- Promoting the EU as a centre of excellence in learning	Cooperation actions	✓	
															System-level actions	✓	
Tempus	Not applicable				Not applicable				Not applicable					- Supporting modernisation and capacity building of higher education in partner countries	Practitioner mobility	✓	
															Cooperation actions	✓	

School education		VET	Adult learning	Higher education		
					System-level actions	✓
Alfa	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	- Supporting modernisation and capacity building of HE in Latin America	Cooperation actions	✓
					System-level actions	✓
EduLink	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	- Supporting modernisation and capacity building of higher education in ACP countries	Cooperation actions	✓
					System-level actions	✓

Source: ICF (based on desk research). C= centralised action (run by EACEA)/D= decentralisation action (run by NA)

Table 2.3 Overview of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes in education and training

Programme	Key objectives	Main actions	C	D
Erasmus+	- Promote teaching and research on European integration worldwide - Promote policy debate and exchanges between the academic world and policy-makers on Union policy priorities - Support activities of academic institutions or associations active in the field of European integration studies	- JM Chair, JM Centre of Excellence, JM Module, projects and networks - Policy debate and exchanges	✓	
	- Support the specified institutions pursuing an aim of European interest	- Same as in LLP KA2		
LLP	- Jean Monnet action (KA1)	- JM Chair, JM Centre of Excellence, European Module,	✓	
	- Operating grants to support specified institutions dealing with issues relating to European integration (KA2)	- Association of professors and researchers, - Information and research activities, JM multilateral research groups		
	- Operating grants to European associations active at European level in the field of European integration and education and training (KA3)			

Source: ICF (based on desk research)

2.1.2 Erasmus+ and its predecessor in the field of youth

Similarly to the above, Erasmus+ largely draws on the legacy of its predecessor, the Youth in Action programme (YiA). As is still the case now, the latter funded projects supporting individual mobilities, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue among European young people, with a view to enhancing their skills and competences as well as their active citizenship and participation. The programme also funded projects that offered youth organisations and youth workers training and cooperation opportunities, to strengthen the professionalism and the European dimension of youth work in Europe.

The Youth in Action programme targeted young people, youth organisations and youth workers through five operational actions corresponding to five general objectives:

- Action 1 – Youth for Europe: promoting young people’s active citizenship through youth exchanges, youth initiatives and youth democracy projects;
- Action 2 – European Voluntary Service: developing solidarity and tolerance through voluntary activities abroad to the benefit of local communities;
- Action 3 – Youth in the World: fostering mutual understanding while encouraging cooperation with partner countries of the world;
- Action 4 – Youth Support Systems: developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and youth organisations through training and networking activities;

- Action 5 – European cooperation in the field of youth through policy dialogue between young people and policymakers.

All actions were open to the participation of the programme countries while Actions 2 and 3 were also open to the participation of ‘partner countries’ with an emphasis on the EU neighbouring countries, such as Eastern Europe and the Caucasus for which an Eastern Partnership Youth Window was set up in 2012 as an integral part of YiA.

Table 2.4 Overview of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes in youth

Programme	Key objectives	Main actions	C	D
Erasmus+	- Promoting the level of key competences and skills of young people	- Mobility of young people (KA1)	✓	✓
	- Promoting participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, etc.	- Mobility of youth workers (KA1)		✓
	- Fostering quality improvements in youth work	- Cooperation actions (KA2)	✓	✓
	- Complementing policy reforms at local, regional and national level	- System-level actions (KA3)	✓	
Youth Action programme	- Promoting young people’s active citizenship	- Mobility of young people	✓	✓
	- Developing solidarity and promoting tolerance	- Mobility of youth workers	✓	✓
	- Fostering mutual understanding between young people in different countries	- Cooperation actions	✓	✓
	- Developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and youth organisations	- System-level actions	✓	✓
	- Promoting European cooperation in the youth field			

Source: ICF (based on desk research). C= centralised action (run by EACEA)/D= decentralisation action (run by NA)

2.1.3 Erasmus+ and its predecessor in the field of sport

Even if competences on sport primarily lie with Member States, the Treaty of Lisbon provided the EU with supporting competences: the EU can only intervene to support, coordinate or complement the action of Member States, but has no legislative power (Art. 6, TFEU).

Before being integrated in Erasmus+, the EU contribution to sport was implemented during five years of Preparatory Actions. The main objective of these was to ‘prepare future EU actions in the field of sport, on the basis of priorities set in the 2007 White Paper on Sport and the 2011 Communication on Developing the European Dimension in Sport’¹⁷.

¹⁷ DG EAC website: http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/preparatory-actions/preparatory-actions_en.htm

Table 2.5 Overview of Erasmus+ and former Preparatory Actions in Sport

Programme	Key objectives	Main actions	C	D
Erasmus+	- Tackling cross-border threats to the integrity of sport	- Cooperation actions	✓	
	- Promoting and supporting good governance in sport and dual career of athletes	- System-level actions	✓	
Preparatory Actions in Sport	- Promoting voluntary activities, social inclusion and equal opportunities, together with the awareness of the importance of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA), and equal access to sport for all	- Cooperation actions	✓	
	- Promoting health and physical activity, ET in sport; sport for persons with disabilities, gender equality in sport, volunteering, etc.	- System-level actions	✓	
	- Fighting against doping and match-fixing			
	- Promoting physical activity for active ageing			
	- Organising trans-frontier joint grassroots sport competitions			
	- Supporting good governance and dual careers in sport			
	- Traditional European sports and games			

Source: ICF (based on desk research)

2.2 Main changes in the programmes over the period under evaluation

As mentioned above, the integrated structure of Erasmus+ is among the most noticeable changes brought by the programme. Besides, other important changes have taken place between the two programming periods. Those have primarily taken the form of an increased budget allocation; a renewed internal structure of the programme; and the introduction of new implementation and monitoring approaches.

2.2.1 Erasmus+: A more generous budget than its predecessors

The programme has substantial resources, with a budget of €14.8 billion¹⁸ spread over seven years (i.e. as opposed to the total budget (slightly over €9 billion) allocated to its predecessors within the period 2007–2013).

¹⁸ The programme has an overall indicative financial envelope of €14.774 billion under Heading 1 and of €1.680 billion under Heading 4 of the EU budget for the seven years (2014–2020): https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/programme-guide/part-a/what-is-the-budget_en

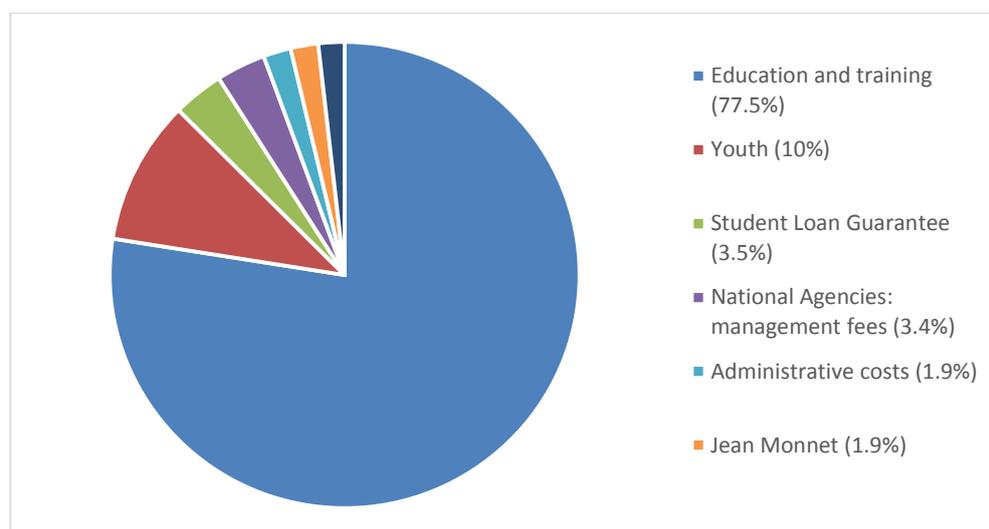
Table 2.6 Overview of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes' budgets

Programme	Erasmus + (2014–2020)	LLP (2007–2013)	YiA (2007–2013)	Erasmus Mundus (2009–2013)	Tempus (2007–2013)	Alfa (2007–2013)	Edulink (2007–2013)	Preparatory Actions Sport (2009–2013)
Budget (€)	14.8 billion	6.9 billion ¹⁹	885 million ²⁰	953.7 million ²¹	258.7 million ²²	75 million ²³	58.3 million ²⁴	16.8 million ²⁵
Total	14.8 billion	9,146.8 billion						

Source: ICF

The most substantial part of Erasmus+ budget is allocated to education and training (77.5 %) and, within this particular strand, to higher education (33.3 % of the total) and vocational education and training (17 %), followed by school education (11.6 %) and adult learning (5 %).

Figure 2.1 Budget allocation 2014-2020 for Erasmus+



Source: ICF, based on Erasmus+ legal basis

¹⁹ http://www.welcomeurope.com/european-funds/llp-lifelong-learning-programme-585+485.html#tab=onglet_details

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/youth-in-action-2013_en.pdf

²¹

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/documents/2011/em_programmeguide_1612_en.pdf

²² https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/lifelong-learning-programme-factsheet_en.pdf

²³ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/latin-america/regional-cooperation/alfa/index_en.htm_en

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/lifelong-learning-programme-factsheet_en.pdf. This amount represents €20.3 million allocated to Edulink II for the period 2010–2013.

²⁵ No total budget was found for the 2009–2013 period. The amount presented in the table has been calculated based on the yearly budgets allocated to the Preparatory Actions.

2.2.2 Erasmus+: An integrated programme underpinned by a simplified architecture

The programme builds on an integrated structure which embeds three cross-cutting sectors: education and training, youth, and sport. Internally it draws on a simplified architecture which articulates around three main pillars (i.e. the Key Actions (KAs)) in the education and training and youth fields and two standalone chapters applicable to Jean Monnet actions and the sport field. This shift has been mostly driven by the conclusions of the Impact Assessment for the current programme. These notably recommended to:

- reduce radically the complexity of the architecture of the programme, in order to diminish the administrative costs at EU, national agency and beneficiary level, and to increase programme user-friendliness, and to;
- concentrate on activities with the highest added value, where a critical mass can be mobilised, and on strong incentives to achieve those EU policy objectives targeting systemic change.
- This simplification has resulted in the following (this list is neither exhaustive nor in a specific order):
- reducing the overall number of activities supported in the predecessor programmes, i.e. in the sole case of the LLP, reducing it from 75 to 1126 activities (4 mobility activities, 4 cooperation activities, policy support activities) spread over 3 main KAs²⁷;
- giving an international dimension to the programme in the HE and youth fields: as a result of the integration of the four former HE programmes (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa and Edulink primarily) and former international-oriented YiA actions;
- offering simplified distribution of roles between the NAs and the EACEA²⁸;
- KA1 mostly implemented by NAs (the main exception being the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees run by the EACEA).
- KA2 shared between NAs (Strategic Partnerships actions) and the EACEA (capacity building in the field of youth and HE, Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliance);
- KA3 mostly implemented by EACEA/DG EAC and to a lesser extent by NAs (small-scale activities under programme action structured dialogues in the field of youth);
- Jean Monnet and sport activities implemented through direct management by EACEA.

With regard to the KAs mentioned above, Erasmus+ still funds similar types of actions (i.e. mobility actions aimed at individuals; cooperation actions aimed at organisations and/or systems) as its predecessors. Meanwhile, one of the main differences between them (and the LLP more particularly) is that it no longer contains subprogrammes per sector of education (schools, VET, higher education, etc.). The three KAs mentioned above apply to the education and training sector as well as to the youth chapter²⁹ of the Erasmus+ programme. Overall, Erasmus+ draws on the following KAs, which are meant to be complementary and mutually reinforcing:

- Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals;

²⁶ I.e. Excluding the Jean Monnet initiative and sport.

²⁷ The three KAs have similar management structures (e.g. calls for proposals for transnational cooperation) and delivery methods (direct management by the Commission, or indirect through executive and national agencies).

²⁸ I.e. KA1 implemented by NAs; KA2 shared between NAs (strategic partnerships actions) and the EACEA (capacity building in the field of youth, Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliance); KA3 mostly implemented by EACEA/DG EAC and to a lesser extent by NAs (small-scale activities under programme action structured dialogues in the field of youth).

²⁹ I.e. as officially referred to in Erasmus+ programme legal basis.

- Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices;
- Key Action 3: Support for policy reform;

The table below offers an overview of the main types of activities supported under each KA.

Table 2.7 Main type of activities per Erasmus+ KAs

Learning mobility of individuals (KA 1)	Strategic and collaborative partnerships ³⁰ (KA2)	Support for policy reform (KA3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility of learners/youth and practitioners - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees (EMJMD) - Erasmus+ Master's Degree Loans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Partnerships - Knowledge Alliances - Sector Skills Alliances - Capacity building - IT support platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open Method of Coordination (OMC) - Prospective initiatives - EU recognition tools - Dissemination and exploitation - Policy dialogue with stakeholders, third countries and international organisations

In addition to the above, specific activities relate to European integration through **Jean Monnet** and in the field of **sport**, resulting from the Lisbon Treaty.

In this remit, the novelties brought into Erasmus+ most notably include the following:

- In VET: in addition to the Strategic Partnerships³¹, the Sector Skills Alliances³² constitute new types of project opportunities under KA2. These are more focused on the identification of VET sector needs (in terms of skills and training).
- In higher education: the introduction of the Student Loan Guarantee, the incorporation of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees and the Knowledge Alliances³³ (drawing on the legacy of the former Erasmus Mundus and LLP respectively), the opening up of the traditional Erasmus+ HE mobility to the whole world, and the bringing together of all developing regions of the world under one programme for capacity building in HE are among the most important changes brought about in the sector under Erasmus+.
- In youth: the large-scale EVS events have been incorporated in Erasmus+ while the support actions for National Working Groups are new as this was not offered under the Youth in Action programme. In addition, the recent establishment and launch of

³⁰ Also formally referred to as 'Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices'.

³¹ Strategic Partnerships aim to support the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices as well as the implementation of joint initiatives promoting cooperation, peer learning and exchanges of experience at European level.

³² Sector Skills Alliances aim at tackling skills gaps by identifying sector-specific labour market needs and demand for new skills with regard to one or more occupational profiles, and/or enhancing the responsiveness of initial and continuing VET systems to sector-specific labour market needs.

³³ Knowledge Alliances aim at strengthening Europe's innovation capacity and at fostering innovation in higher education, business and the broader socioeconomic environment.

the European Solidarity Corps that receives funding from Erasmus+³⁴ offers opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe.

- Transversal (system level): new ways to trigger policy reform in the form of prospective initiatives) are also being put in place.

In addition to the actions above, the programme has introduced several new online tools among which:

- Online Linguistic Support (OLS): Introduced in October 2014, the tool aims to promote language learning and linguistic diversity while allowing higher education students, VET learners and EVS volunteers to test and improve their language skills and knowledge before and during their mobility activities. As a latest development, the OLS was put in the service of supporting the integration of refugees and migrants who arrived since the migration crisis in 2015.
- The project results dissemination platform Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (EPRP) – also commonly referred to as VALOR: Building on the legacy of the ADAM and EVE platforms, the main purpose of EPRP is to act as a repository for all EU-funded projects under the programme. The development of the EPRP platform was aimed to address dissemination-related weaknesses – as reflected in the LLP interim evaluation. Under Erasmus+, the new tool is supported by an overarching dissemination and exploitation strategy that was adopted by DG EAC in 2015.
- The School Education Gateway (SEG)³⁵, which works alongside eTwinning, is an online platform addressed to teachers, school leaders, policymakers, experts and other professionals in the field of school education. It was launched in February 2015 and added its Teacher Academy online courses in May 2016. Displayed in 23 European languages, the portal is aimed to support schools in planning Erasmus+ projects and more specifically to help them: find staff professional development and partnership opportunities for school staff mobility (Key Action 1) and Strategic Partnerships (Key Action 2) activities. It also offers information in the form of news and events, policy updates and information on good practice. This acts as a complementary tool to eTwinning whose value and attractiveness as a key enabler to foster mutual learning, partnerships and networking among school education teaching staff across Europe and beyond has been evidenced since the LLP. Under Erasmus+, the successful achievements of eTwinning have led the Commission to launch a pilot action (eTwinning Plus) aiming at expanding the programme's scope to a few targeted partner countries³⁶. The pilot action has made the object of a distinct focused evaluation in parallel to the present evaluation assignment. In addition to eTwinning, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe³⁷ (EPALE) platform is also worth mentioning. Launched under the LLP as a means to address Grundtvig stakeholders' need to have a space for exchanging ideas and practices to develop their professional practice, EPALÉ is a 'multilingual open membership community for teachers, trainers, researchers, academics, policy makers and anyone else with a

³⁴ Other programmes also contributing to the Corps are: the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), the LIFE programme, the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Health programme, the Europe for Citizens programme, the European Regional Development Fund, and the Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

³⁵ <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm>

³⁶ In 2013 eTwinning was extended on a pilot basis to six neighbouring countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Tunisia and Ukraine.

³⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/>

professional role in adult learning across Europe³⁸. Similarly to eTwinning supporting collaborative work between schools, teachers and pupils, EPALE offers an online community for the adult learning sector and adult learning professionals. A noticeable difference between the platforms is that EPALE does not offer the possibility to twin classes, as classes do not exist for adults in the same way as they do in primary and secondary education. EPALE is managed by a Central Support Team with the help of 36 National Support Teams, the National Support Services³⁹ (NSSs) appointed by the National Authorities participating in Erasmus+ across Europe. The objective of the NSSs is to contribute to the content creation for EPALE, and to the animation of the platform.

The simplified architecture and integrated nature of the programme has also affected the approaches or tools used for grant applications, monitoring, auditing or dissemination purposes (e.g. new e-application forms, single audit system, expansion of the use of lump sums, performance-based monitoring system, etc.).

As a result of the integrated framework, the increased budget it offers and the attention to continuously align the programme's objectives and actions with EU-level policy priorities, new or increased attention has been paid to the following (non-exhaustive list):

- more opportunities for VET and higher education (HE) students to increase their employability through learning mobility and traineeships;
- cross-sector strategic partnerships and ICT projects and support for effective interaction among different interested parties (teachers, trainers, students, apprentices, young people, youth workers, employers, NGOs active in the fields of youth and sport, other relevant social partners, policymakers, etc.);
- new innovative actions to enhance employability and entrepreneurship (Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances);
- enhanced synergies across the different levels of intervention (i.e. individual, organisations and system level) including new ways to trigger policy reform (prospective initiatives), etc.

In addition to the streamlined structure, a few other changes were introduced such as a simplified project application (i.e. via e-forms for applicants) or funding systems. The latter regards more particularly the extended use of lump sums. In compliance with the Financial Regulation for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014–2020⁴⁰, the Commission reviewed the above for Erasmus+. Under Erasmus+ simplified forms of grants now cover all educational and training sectors, including higher education, school education, VET, adult education and youth under different activities.

2.2.3 Erasmus+: A programme underpinned by result-oriented approaches

In the designing process of Erasmus+, specific attention has also been paid to make it more result oriented than its predecessors (notably in the light of the changing policy and socioeconomic landscape discussed earlier, new governance rules at EU level, or growing funding cuts in many Member States).

This new approach applies to the entirety of the programme. Some of its key features are outlined in the box below.

³⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/faq>

³⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/who-are-national-support-services-and-what-do-they-do>

⁴⁰ I.e. Article 124 requiring to make extensive use of simplified form of grants in Erasmus+.

A streamlined and performance-based financial approach

- KA 1: draws on the performance-based allocation applied under Erasmus (except for the international credit mobility action, being a completely new action for the NAs progressively introduced since 2015). In practice, around 25 % of the funds allocated to national agencies are distributed on the basis of quantifiable principles such as budget implementation, number of individuals on the move and the implementation of the national agencies' work programmes. The remaining budget is allocated to national agencies essentially on the basis of the size of the population.
- KA 2 and 3: qualitative criteria to increase EU added value apply (e.g. level of institutional and resource commitment of the stakeholders entering a partnership, or link between OMC and the challenges, as identified in Europe 2020 governance).

In terms of auditing, the NAs or EACEA and/or the European Commission may carry out technical and financial checks and audits in relation to the use of the grant. They may also check the statutory records of the beneficiary (or co-beneficiary) for the purpose of periodic assessments of lump sum, unit cost or flat-rate financing. The use made of the grant may be checked at any time for up to five years, or for up to three years for grants not exceeding €60,000.

For projects managed at centralised level by the EACEA, different types of audit procedures may be applied according to the KA concerned and the size of the grant awarded.

2.3 Intervention logic of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

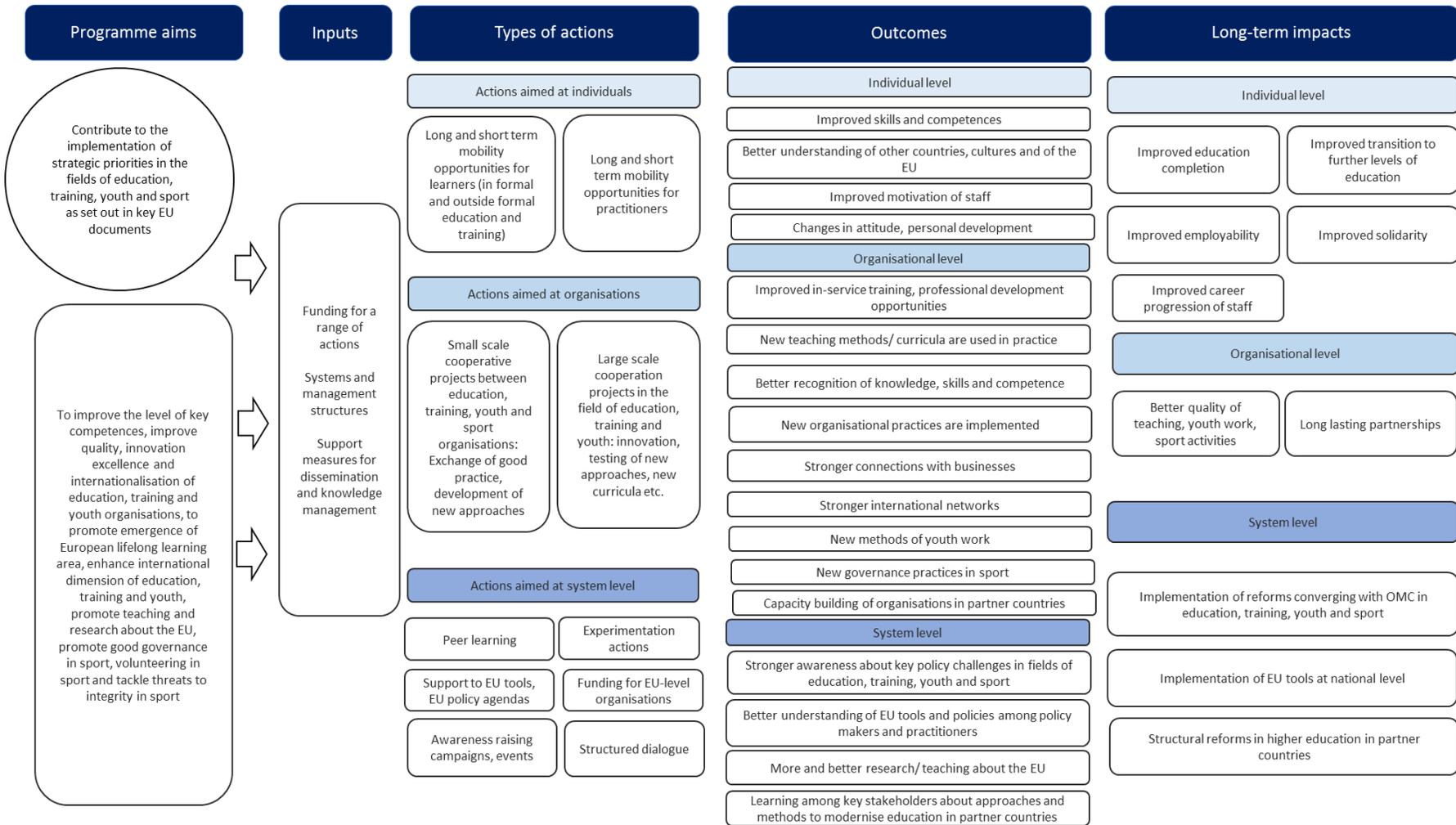
As explained above, the current programme as well as the predecessors combine a great variety of sectors and types of actions. Each of the sectors and types of actions have a number of specificities and it would have been possible to develop separate detailed intervention logics for each of the sectors and/or types of actions. However, given that the focus of this evaluation is to remain at the overall programme level and to provide a global picture of the performance of the programme, this approach of detailed over-specification was not followed.

The intervention logic developed, which was used to develop the more detailed framework of results and impact indicators, remained at a fairly general level. The team also did not develop a separate intervention logic for each programme covered. As explained below, the choice was made to compare the predecessor programmes, wherever possible, to the structure of the current programme. Broadly speaking the predecessor programmes can be described through this common intervention logic, even though that means that some very specific types of actions are not fully captured.

The intervention logic is illustrated in the Figure 2.2 and further presented thereafter against:

- Programmes' aims;
- Inputs;
- Types of actions;
- Outcomes, and;
- Long-term impacts.

Figure 2.2 Intervention logic of Erasmus + and predecessor actions (overall)



Programmes' aims

Drawing on the legacy of its predecessors (LLP, YiA, 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 and EU Work Plan for Sport and various European Commission Communications such as: 'Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an Agenda for Change'⁴¹, etc.) or confirmed since then 'New Skills Agenda for Europe'⁴²; 'Renewed EU agenda for higher education'⁴³, 'Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an Agenda for Change'⁴⁴, etc.). These objectives jointly with the programme's rationale are specified in the legal basis⁴⁵ and the programme guide⁴⁶.

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.

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) as discussed earlier;
- The emphasis on employability is also clearer in the current programme which was designed in a period when young people were facing important 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

⁴¹ Available at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/com3a20113a06373afin3aen3atxt.pdf>

⁴² Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20160610-education-skills-factsheet_en

⁴³ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/he-com-2017-247_en.pdf

⁴⁴ Available at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/com3a20113a06373afin3aen3atxt.pdf>

⁴⁵ Available at : <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1288&from=EN>

⁴⁶ 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 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 during the lifetime of the predecessor programmes but which progressively had less attention. 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. Over time this issue became less prevalent (even though the problems remained) and such specific actions were not continued. Regarding Erasmus+, some priorities have changed within its first years of implementation. The issue of social inclusion became for instance prominent during the refugee crisis since 2015 and the issue of radicalisation became an urgency after the terrorist attacks that started in 2015. Specific actions in both fields were implemented through the programme.

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.

For further details, see section 2.2.

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 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 Figure 2.2 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.

In line with the above, 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.

3 Approach to the evaluation and methodology

3.1 Scope of the evaluation and terminology

3.1.1 Evaluation criteria and related questions

The evaluation has assessed the performance of Erasmus+ and above-mentioned predecessors against five main evaluation criteria:

- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Relevance
- Coherence
- European added value

Based on the specifications set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and as further refined during the inception phase, the main evaluation report has been informed by the following evaluation questions spread across the five evaluation criteria mentioned above.

Table 3.1 Main evaluation questions per evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation question (EQ)
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQ 1: 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? • EQ 2: To what extent are needs of different stakeholders and sectors addressed by programme objectives? • EQ 3: 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? • EQ 4a: How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme’s scope? • EQ 4b: How well is the Erasmus+ programme known to the education and training, youth and sport community? • EQ 5: 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? • EQ 6: In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?
Coherence	<p>Internal coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQ 1: To what extent are the objectives of the different fields within the Erasmus+ programme consistent and mutually supportive? • EQ 2: What evidence exists of synergies between the different programme fields and actions? How well do different actions work together? • EQ 3: To what extent do there exist duplications, overlaps, or other disadvantageous issues between the programme fields and how are they dealt with? • EQ 4: To what extent are the centralised and decentralised actions coherent? How do they interact/complement each other? • EQ 5: To what extent was the internal coherence improved through introduction

	<p>of an integrated programme?</p> <p>External coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EQ 6: To what extent is the Erasmus+ programme coherent with relevant EU policies and programmes with similar objectives? To what extent has the Erasmus+ programme proved complementary to other EU interventions/initiatives in the field of education and training, youth and sport? EQ 7: To what extent does the Erasmus+ programme design provide appropriate links and support to the EU policy agendas? EQ 8: To what extent is the Erasmus+ programme coherent with various interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives? EQ 9: To what extent has the Erasmus+ programme proved complementary to other Member States interventions/initiatives in the field of education, training, youth and sport?
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EQ 1: To what extent have the various programme fields (both within Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes) delivered the expected outputs? EQ 2: To what extent have the various programme fields (both within Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes) delivered the expected outcomes? EQ 3: What are the long-term (and short term) impacts of the predecessor programmes? EQ 4: What are the unintended effects? EQ 5: To what extent did programme participation lead to spill over effects at the level of the organisations? EQ 6: To what extent did the programme participation lead to spill over effects at the level of systems? EQ 7: Which fields and actions of the Programme are the most effective considering the needs? EQ 8: Are there positive /negative effects that existed in the previous programmes, but that no longer exist with the new programme? EQ 9: What negative and positive factors seem to be influencing outputs and outcomes? EQ 10: What are the differences in outcomes for disadvantaged groups? EQ 11: To what extent are the Programme results adequately disseminated and exploited? EQ 12: Have appropriate efforts been invested at EU and national level to enable practices to be transferred and mainstreamed? EQ 13: How and to what extent is the existence of one integrated Programme a help or a hindrance in promoting greater effectiveness for the EU's activities in the field of education and training, youth and sport? EQ 14: How and to what extent is the existence of one integrated Programme a help or a hindrance in promoting greater visibility for the EU's activities? EQ 15: How and to what extent is the existence of one integrated Programme a help or a hindrance in promoting greater effectiveness for the EU's activities in the field of education and training, youth and sport? EQ 16: To what extent are the effects likely to last after the intervention ends? EQ 17: What conclusions can be drawn on the likely impact of Erasmus+ programme given the fact that significant parts of their actions are a continuation of predecessor's programmes?
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EQ 1: To what extent is/was the size of the 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?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQ 2: What is the cost effectiveness of various actions (clusters of actions) of the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessor programmes? How do the relative costs and outcomes (effects) of various programme actions compare within and across the programme fields? • EQ 3: What is the prospect of other policy instruments or mechanisms providing a better cost-effectiveness ratio? • EQ 4: 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 periods? What are the areas for improvements? • EQ 5: 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. • EQ 6: To what extent are the management support tools (e.g. EPlusLink, Mobility Tool) adequate and sufficient to support sound management of the programme? • EQ 7: 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. • EQ 8: 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 the Erasmus+ programme? • EQ 9: To what extent has the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for national agencies, the 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? • EQ 10: 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? • EQ 11: 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? • EQ 12: To what extent have the anti-fraud measures allowed for the prevention and timely detection of fraud?
EU added value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQ 1: What is the additional value and benefit resulting from EU activities, compared to what could be achieved by Member States at national and/or regional levels? • EQ 2: What does the Erasmus+ programme offer in addition to other education and training support schemes available at both international and national levels? • EQ 3: What is the benefit and added value of the Erasmus+ programme compared to the benefit of the predecessor programmes?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQ 4: What is the added value of repetitive actions/activities of the Erasmus+ programme and the predecessor programmes? • EQ 5: What would be the most likely consequences of stopping the Erasmus+ programme?
--	--

3.1.2 Geographical coverage

The evaluation has covered the Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes' actions in all Programme countries, namely the 28 EU Member States, EFTA/EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), candidate (Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia and Turkey) and Partner countries⁴⁷.

The period considered for the assignment was 2007-2016. This corresponds to the first two years of implementation of Erasmus+ (2014-2016⁴⁸) and to the whole period of implementation of predecessor programmes (i.e. 2007-2013) for the LLP, Tempus IV, ALFA III and Youth in Action programmes and 2009-2013 for the Erasmus Mundus II one). The Edulink started in 2006 for an initial round of four years (2006-2010 under Edulink I) and second one of three years (2010-2013 for Edulink II).

3.1.3 Terminology

To ensure terminological consistency over the whole assignment, the evaluation reports (main report and subsequent volumes) refer to the following when discussing:

- Types of beneficiaries of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes:
 - **Individual learners:** this term refers to all types of learners considered by the programmes in the different sector areas (education and training, youth and sport). Individuals involved in formal, non-formal and informal education within any of these sectors (i.e. pupils, students, apprentices, volunteers, young people, etc.) thus fall under this overarching term.
 - **Individual practitioners:** this term brings together all types of practitioners considered by the programmes in the different sector areas (education and training, youth and sport). Practitioners involved in formal, non-formal and informal education within any of these sectors (i.e. teachers (including prospective teachers), trainers, youth workers, educators, coaches, etc.) have been considered.
 - **Organisations:** this term refers to all organisations (active in the education and training, youth and sport fields) eligible to Erasmus+ and individual predecessor programmes funding. As per the different programme guides, these include(d): schools (from pre-primary to upper secondary education delivering general and VET (where applicable) education), VET training centres, adult learning centres, higher education institutions, youth organisations, sport organisations, enterprises, NGOs, etc.
 - **Systems:** this term refers to the countries that benefit or benefited from Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes' system level-oriented actions. Those actions most commonly address(ed) above-mentioned Programme countries

⁴⁷ i.e. which may participate in certain actions, in accordance with the Erasmus+ legal basis and the concluded participation agreements. These comprise: Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia); Eastern Partnership Countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Territory of Ukraine as recognised by international law), Russian Federation (Territory of Russia as recognised by international law); South-Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia) and other Partner countries of the world.

⁴⁸ The whole duration of the programme is 2014-2020.

but also target Partner countries in a few cases (e.g. through capacity building in the higher education and youth fields). Note: as agreed with the European Commission (DG EAC), qualitative information on the latter has been primarily informed by existing sources among which another EU level recent evaluation, namely: the evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)⁴⁹ .

- **Types of actions:** considering the large scope of the evaluation in terms of the number of programmes or preparatory actions (seven in total) to review, the present report (and subsequent volumes) systematically refers to 'types of actions'. Offering a common terminology was key more specifically in regard to the large number of actions to consider and the varying ways to refer to those (e.g. types of actions, categories of actions, unclear distinction between actions and activities, etc.) from one programme to another.
 - **Mobility actions:** these are actions that fund mobility of learners or staff. These are actions funded under KA1 of Erasmus + and predecessor programmes. However this also covers mobility actions that are part of KA2 and equivalent. When reporting programme data analysis mobility actions refer to KA1 (unless otherwise specified) as there is little programme data collected on mobility under KA2. When analysing the effects on learners and staff through beneficiary surveys carried out by ICF, mobility under KA2 was also included.
 - **Short and long term mobility.** Note that the extent to which a mobility action is considered in ICF beneficiary surveys as short term or long term was defined based on respondents' statement on the duration of the mobility. The respondents were given a range of possible durations and they chose which applied to their case.

As a reminder also respondents in exchanges/ mobility actions funded through KA2 (blended mobility, etc.) were invited to respond to the survey of beneficiaries. This explains why there is a discussion of short term mobility under higher education. On one hand the respondents could have taken part in traineeships which lasted a couple days less than three months (three months being the minimum duration) on the other hand those responding about short term mobility could have been participants in KA2 types of mobilities.
 - **Organisational cooperation actions:** these are actions that fund projects for sharing and learning, capacity building, development of new products, etc. These are KA2 projects in the current programme and equivalent types of projects in predecessor programmes.
 - **System level actions:** these are actions that fund projects that aim to have system level effects. These are projects under KA3 and equivalent.
- **Fields/sectors:** the terms are used interchangeably across this report and subsequent ones (i.e. volumes 2 to 5) to refer to the fields or sectors that fall under the scope of Erasmus+ and its predecessors, namely: education and training, youth and sport. When presenting findings on education and training, 'subfields' or 'subsectors' are also used to refer to: school education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), Adult Education (AE) and higher education (HE).

⁴⁹ European Commission (DG DEVCO), evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014), 2017.

- **Hard-to-reach groups or specific disadvantaged groups:** these terms are comply with the definition set out in Erasmus+ programme guide (2016) which refers to: individuals with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities such as disability (i.e. participants with special needs); educational difficulties (e.g. low achievers, early school leavers, etc.); economic obstacles (people with a low standard of living, low income, unemployed, etc.); cultural differences (e.g. immigrants or refugees); health problems; social obstacles (people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, etc.); people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky behaviours; people in a precarious situation; geographical obstacles (people from remote or rural areas, etc.).
- **Respondents:** generic term referring to all types of respondents to the main qualitative sources of data collated for the evaluation, namely: key informant interviews (KIIs), case studies and surveys. When using this term, the qualitative method of approach it links to has been systematically specified in the text. With regards to the KIIs and case studies, the terms 'interviewees' has also been used.
- **Proportion of respondents:** the following terminology has been applied across the report to quantify the share of respondents or respondents' views on given questions :
 - A majority = 50-60%
 - A vast majority = 60-75%
 - Most of = 75%-100%

For shares below 50%, 'less than half' or more precise terms (e.g. one third, one quarter, around 10%, etc.) have been used depending on the level of detailed information required in corresponding statements. For cases where findings have been expressed by a very small number of respondents (less than 10%), terms used commonly include: '(very) few', 'a small number' or 'only some'.

3.2 Summary overview

Table 3.2 Summary of data sources

Source	Type of respondent/source	Nbr of respondents/cases/records
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 staff
Online Linguistic Support	Learners in KA1 (mostly higher education students)	Total sample size: 523,238 participants
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 Staff: 20,155 beneficiaries and 928 from control group
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 evaluation report (volume 2))

Source	Type of respondent/source	Nbr of respondents/cases/records
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 evaluation report (volume 2))
Jean Monnet students survey	Students studying about the EU – beneficiary students and non-beneficiary students	332 beneficiaries and 1,015 non-beneficiaries
Jean Monnet section in the main beneficiary student survey	Higher education students studying about the EU – beneficiary students and non-beneficiary students	120 beneficiaries and 5,822 non-beneficiaries
Jean Monnet staff survey	Staff teaching about the EU – beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries	560 beneficiaries and 443 non-beneficiaries
Jean Monnet section in the beneficiary staff survey	Staff teaching about the EU – beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries	210 beneficiaries and 4,681 non-beneficiaries
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 evaluation report (volume 3))
eTwinning pilot survey	Staff 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+ evaluation report (volume 4))
eTwinning interviews	Teachers in programme and partner countries, EU-level actors and key stakeholders	31 interviews (for further details, see standalone eTwinning+ evaluation report (volume 4))
Socioeconomic actors survey	Organisations other than the primary target group, i.e. companies, public authorities, civil society (other than youth organisations)	947 valid responses
Experts survey	Assessors supporting project selection and those supporting evaluation of final reports	1,122 valid responses
Programme agencies survey	Agencies in charge of programme implementation One respondent per sector	130 valid responses
Key informant interviews	Key stakeholders in all sectors	59 at EU level 131 in 15 countries
Case studies	Staff, learners, leadership and	233 respondents

Source	Type of respondent/source	Nbr of respondents/cases/records
	other stakeholders if relevant	38 case studies
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 ⁵⁰ sources reviewed (evaluations, studies, academic papers at EU, national, international level)

3.3 Evaluation framework and measurement of results

To undertake the combined mid-term evaluation of the current programme (Erasmus+) and the *ex post* one of the predecessor programmes, the evaluation has drawn upon a set of evaluation questions relating to five main criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value (as per the Terms of Reference (ToR)). Those have been further broken into sets of indicators that were ultimately used to answer each of the evaluation questions spread across the five main evaluation criteria listed above.

To ensure consistent and comparable approaches over the whole assignment and to design and improve the development of adequate methodological tools, approaches and indicators, an evaluation framework has been developed by the team. This has underpinned the whole work and methods of approach carried out over the lifecycle of the evaluation.

A first key consideration taken into account by the team to design the evaluation framework has regarded the structural differences between Erasmus and its predecessors. Indeed, the differences in the architecture of the respective programmes made it difficult to compare those straightforwardly.

As noted in Section 2, the Erasmus+ programme has changed radically on many points compared to the previous programming period. Several programmes have been merged and rather than organising the programme by fields (and subfields) and making a distinction between intra-EU (and EEA+ candidate countries) and extra-EU countries, the programme has been restructured around main types of actions (KA1, KA2, KA3 in education and training plus ad hoc actions for the Jean Monnet and sport chapters).

The specific objectives of the predecessor programmes were formulated in quite different ways, each aiming to achieve different types of changes. The programmes had also very different architectures and the names and types of actions between the programmes did not fully match.

In order to effectively evaluate Erasmus+ and its predecessors, the evaluation team has first developed a mapping comparing the predecessor programmes to the Erasmus+ programme. The matrix compares the types of actions in the predecessor programmes

⁵⁰ For the sole purpose of the literature review assembled during the inception phase and complemented during the interim phase, 131 sources were identified and reviewed. 110 were more specifically retained and helped inform the narrative (see Annex 12) assembled by the evaluation team. Additional sources were reviewed over the lifetime of the evaluation and served to inform other parts of the report.

and the corresponding actions in the Erasmus+ programme. Said differently, the evaluation does not look at programmes through their own types of actions.

In the matrix all those actions have been distributed across the main levels of intervention of the current programme, namely:

- individual level: spread into actions at learner/youth and practitioner level (teacher/trainer/youth worker/sport coach);
- organisation level;
- system level.

This is further illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 3.1 Structure of the analytical framework

Fields and sub-fields	Individual learners	Individual practitioners	Organisations – partnerships and networks	Systems and policies
E&T - Schools	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs
E&T – Vocational education and training	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	
E&T – Higher education	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	
E&T – Adult learning	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	
Youth	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs
Sport	N/A	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs	Outputs/ outcomes/ costs

To ensure terminological consistency over the whole assignment, the evaluation has furthermore applied a common terminology when referring to the following types of beneficiaries of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes:

- **Individual learners:** refers to all types of learners considered by the programmes in the different sector areas (education and training, youth and sport). Individuals involved in formal, non-formal and informal education within any of these sectors (i.e. pupils, students, apprentices, volunteers, young people, etc.) will thus fall under this overarching term.
- **Individual practitioners:** refers to all types of practitioners considered by the programmes in the different sector areas (education and training, youth and sport). Practitioners involved in formal, non-formal and informal education within any of these sectors (i.e. teachers (including prospective teachers), trainers, youth workers, educators, coaches, etc.) were considered.

This matrix combined with other insights (mostly in the form of contextual information obtained through literature review) helped inform the development of the analytical framework. The literature review notably offered insights on the main types of effects (or

outcomes) but also barriers encountered through predecessor programmes (and Erasmus+ based on available evidence-based research) at each of the levels of programme intervention mentioned above.

This approach has then been applied across the analytical process to design/further develop the methods of approach for the different data collection and analysis tasks that have been carried out for the purpose of the assignment.

The resulting analytical framework was presented to DG EAC by the evaluation team during the inception stage, and then further refined and approved.

3.4 Sources of data

This evaluation combined a number of data sources and data collection methods which are presented here. More detail about the samples of respondents is provided in annexes.

Table 3.3 Overview of annexes corresponding to each data collection method

Data collection method	Corresponding Annex
Initial desk research	Annex 1: Overview tables of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes
Programme data analysis	Annex 2: Additional data outputs: participation and results
Survey: beneficiaries surveys	Annex 3: Results of beneficiaries surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a: Technical report ▪ b: Results of staff survey ▪ c: Results of learners survey ▪ d: Results of pre- and post- surveys
Survey: programme agencies survey	Annex 4: Results of programme agencies survey
Survey: experts survey	Annex 5: Results of experts survey
Survey: socioeconomic actors survey	Annex 6: Results of socioeconomic actors
Survey: Jean Monnet survey	Annex 7: Results of Jean Monnet survey
Survey: SLGF survey	Annex 8: Results of SLGF survey
Case studies	Annex 9: Case studies write-ups
Expert panel assessment	Annex 10: Expert panel assessment analysis report
Literature review	Annex 11: Literature review
Benchmarking	Annex 12: Benchmarking of comparator programmes analysis

3.4.1 Programme data

The evaluation used the programme data available for the programmes covered. This concerns primarily data about inputs (funding) and outputs (numbers of projects, numbers of beneficiaries, etc.). While the programme data analysed generally concerned the period from 2007 to 2016, some indicators were unavailable for 2007. The exclusion

of the figures for 2007 has been highlighted where applicable. It is also important to note that the 2016 figures for centralised actions were not fully available and confirmed 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. For the Erasmus+ programme some data on results is available through the monitoring tools in place as discussed below.

The sources of programme data can be divided into two categories:

- programme databases used for programme management; and
- specific tools for programme monitoring (beneficiary surveys under Erasmus+ and data from the online linguistic support – OLS).

The quality and completeness of the **programme databases** for programmes covered by this evaluation varied greatly. The quality and completeness of the data is best for the Erasmus+ programme, followed by the LLP and YiA (although this was lacking data on participants in youth exchanges). There were also gaps in the mobility data for centralised actions, including Erasmus Mundus and Tempus, and even less data were available for the remaining higher education international programmes and sport preparatory actions. Table 3.3 gives a summary overview of the datasets coverage. Note that the below is a summary overview and the availability of data for Erasmus+, LLP and YiA varies also according to a) centralised/decentralised management, as different systems are used for centralised actions, and b) types of actions and sectors. For the remaining higher education international programmes, data was taken directly from another evaluation⁵¹. For sport Preparatory Actions only the funding and number of selected projects were available.

Overall the quality of data for the predecessor programmes was good (the programmes for which data was less good were very small) and for Erasmus + very good. . The main issues with the data were as follows.

- There was incomplete coverage of data on the types of organisation as it was not provided in many cases. Some 40 % of organisations participating in Erasmus + were classified as 'other', but the type of these organisations is effectively 'unknown'. This strongly affects the possibility of analysing the participation per type of organisation.
- The extent to which data is collected on participants' special needs, few opportunities and disadvantaged background varies between actions. Data for participants with few opportunities and disadvantaged backgrounds is not available for all actions. This affects the reliability of the indicator on participation of disadvantaged groups based on programme data.
- A unique ID for each organisation was only introduced under Erasmus+. Under predecessor programmes the name of organisations is available; however, it could not be analysed through the network analysis as the same organisation is frequently present under several names (spelling, use of abbreviations, etc.).

⁵¹ 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.

Table 3.4 Summary overview of datasets' coverage

	E+ decentr.	E+ centr.	LLP – decentr.	LLP centr.	– YiA decentr.	YiA centr.	EM	Tempus
At the level of types of actions								
Number of applications received	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of projects contracted/ completed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total value of funding requests submitted	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total value of funding requests contracted	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of planned mobilities submitted	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✗	✗	✗	✗
Number of planned mobilities approved	✓	✗	PARTIAL	N/A	✓	✗	PARTIAL	✓
Scores of unsuccessful applicants	✓	✗	✗	✓	PARTIAL	✓	✓	✓
Scores of successful applicants	✓	✗	✗	✓	PARTIAL	✓	✓	✓
At the level of each project								
Thematic focus of selected grants (priorities)	✓	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	✓	✓	✗	✗
Type of organisation (lead and partner)	✓ - quality issues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country of lead and partner organisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	E+ decentr.	E+ centr.	LLP – decentr.	LLP centr.	– YiA decentr.	YiA centr.	EM	Tempus
Type and number of planned and realised outputs	✓	✗	✗ - unreliable	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Number of planned mobilities submitted/ approved	✓	✗	✗ - unreliable	N/A	✓	✗	PARTIAL	✓
Project score at time of final report	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	N/A	✗
Start and end date	✓	✓	✓ – quality issues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contact details for the lead and partner organisation	✓	✓	✓ – coverage is not comprehensive	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ **
Funding allocated per organisation	PARTIAL	✓	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	✗	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	PARTIAL
Number of staff the organisation employs	PARTIAL	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Number of learners in the organisation	PARTIAL	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
At the level of mobile persons								
Contact details	✓	✗	✗	N/A	PARTIAL (only EVS)	✗	✓	✗
Type of action through which the person was mobile	✓ ***	✗	✗	N/A	Idem	✗	✓	✗
Country of residence/ destination	✓ ***	✗	✗	N/A	Idem	✗	✓	✗
Gender	✓ ***	✗	✗ aggregated	N/A	idem	✗	✓	✗
Age	✓ for	✗	✗ average age	N/A	idem	✗	✓	✗

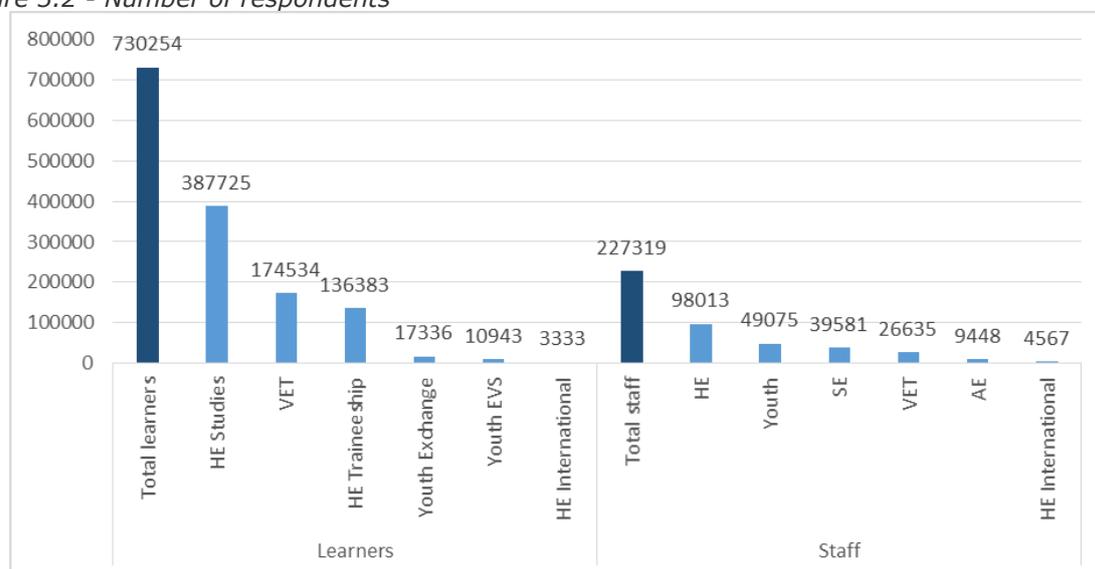
	E+ decentr.	E+ centr.	LLP – decentr.	LLP centr.	– YiA decentr.	YiA centr.	EM	Tempus
	learners only staff not		aggregated					
Indication of socio-economic disadvantage	✓ ***	✗	✗	N/A	PARTIAL (aggregates & unreliable)	✗	✗	✗
Duration of mobility	✓ ***	✗	✗	N/A	PARTIAL (EVS only)	✗	✓	✗
Type of mobility action	✓ ***	✗	✗	N/A	idem	✗	✓	✗
Start and end date	✓ ***	✗	✗	N/A	idem	✗	✓	✗

* no final reports were available for Erasmus + at the moment of extractions; ** does not differentiate between lead and partner; *** for completed mobility actions;
 N/A not applicable

Another source of data for this evaluation was the **monitoring surveys of beneficiaries** carried out by DG EAC. All beneficiaries (individual learners or staff) who took part in mobility activities under KA1 between 2014 and 2016 were requested to complete an online survey on completion of their mobility. As filling out the survey is mandatory, there should be 100% response rate. As a result monitoring survey data are available for learners in VET, higher education, international higher education and youth. Data are also available for mobile staff in schools, VET, higher education, international higher education, adult learning and youth. The data were made available to the evaluation team in autumn 2016. The analysis is based on data available at that point in time meaning that 2016 data are not covered. However, given the sample sizes, the data is considered to be strongly reliable even though it covers only the first two years of the programme.

As Figure 3.2 shows, at the time of the analysis, there were more than 730,000 learners and more than 220,000 staff who completed the questionnaire.

Figure 3.2 - Number of respondents



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

Note: HE International draws on Erasmus+ data falling under International credit mobility (KA107). It comprises outgoing and incoming staff and learners participating in mobilities involving partner countries.

The reliability of the data from beneficiary monitoring surveys is strong. There are, however, the following issues that affect the quality of insights that can be gathered from this data.

- Few factual questions are asked and most questions concern the perceived contribution of the mobility.
- The questionnaires differ across types of target groups, and even for very similar questions the responses offered vary. This affects the comparability of the data across target groups.

Another sources of programme data used for this evaluation were data from the Online Linguistic Support (OLS). This was introduced with the Erasmus+ programme to help mobility participants improve their knowledge of the language in which they will work, study or volunteer abroad, so that they can make the most out of this experience. It comprises a set of language assessments as well as online language courses, including

interactive MOOCs and tutoring sessions. Before and at the end of the Erasmus+ mobility, Erasmus+ participants take the language assessment to measure their level and progress in the language. Higher education students whose initial language level is below B2 automatically receive access to the online language course. The data analysed in this evaluation concerns the years 2014, 2015 and 2016.

The total sample size amounts to 523,238 participants, comprising 500,410 higher education participants, 19,441 from the VET sector and 3,387 from the youth sector. The majority of the above are students, with 395,930 individuals, followed by trainees (104,474 respondents), both concerning higher education. Fewer participants are identified as youth EVS volunteers (3,387) or VET learners (19,447). Those numbers are illustrated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 OLS coverage

	Higher education	VET	Youth	Total
Youth – EVS volunteers	0	0	3,387	3,387
HE – Studies	395,930	0	0	395,930
HE Traineeships	104,474	0	0	104,474
Vocational education and training	6	19,441	0	19,447
Total	500,410	19,441	3,387	523,238

Source: ICF calculations based on OLS data as of 31/08/2016

3.4.2 Beneficiary and control groups surveys

To collect quantitative data on programme results, the evaluation team implemented a series of surveys of beneficiary learners and staff and related control groups⁵². These surveys covered all programme target groups. As shown in Table 3.6 over 26,000 learners responded to the survey and over 21,000 staff responded. The numbers of respondents were highest in the higher education sector, which is also the sector with the highest numbers of beneficiaries.

The respondents were learners and staff but the questionnaires did not concern only KA1 (mobility) but also KA2 (organisational cooperation) type of activities.

The questionnaires had the following characteristics.

- The questions were built around a number of result areas identified based on an initial literature review. Some result areas were specific to a given sector/target group while others were common to all.
- As often as possible the questions used in the survey were taken from existing trialled and tested survey instruments such as PISA, TALIS or Eurobarometer. For example, to measure learners' attitude towards their education and training institution, PISA measures were used. This ensures the validity of the

⁵² For details on the selection of control groups, see Annex 3.

survey as the questions used are typically developed by expert teams and were in the past tested in large-scale surveys.

- Where the above was not possible, the evaluation team developed questions that were as often as possible factual, so as to enable a comparison with the control group. Questions about the perceived contribution of mobility were still used but they were minimised.
- Results at the level of organisations were measured through responses of staff.

The surveys were promoted in the following manner.

- For those beneficiaries of KA1 (and equivalent under predecessor programmes) where contact details for beneficiaries are available (e.g. higher education mobility), the beneficiaries were sent an individualised link to the survey. For other types of beneficiaries (e.g. beneficiaries of KA2 and equivalent), the surveys were disseminated via participating organisations.
- The surveys were disseminated to beneficiaries of Erasmus+ as well as predecessor programmes;
- Control groups were recruited in the following manner:
 - snowball recruitment technique: participating organisations were asked to disseminate the survey also to non-participants;
 - the use of a contact databases: unsuccessful applicants (organisations) were asked to disseminate the survey to their staff;
 - open social media recruitment strategy to promote the registration page.

Despite several rounds of reminders, the control groups for sport and the adult education sector were too low. As a consequence, the evaluation team used the following: (i) a control group of VET staff was also used for adult education; (ii) a control group of youth staff was also used for sport. A comparison was made against a range of background characteristics and the groups were found to be sufficiently comparable.

Table 3.6 Sample sizes for beneficiary surveys (completed and cleaned numbers of responses)⁵³

		Control group	Target group	Total
Learners	Pupils	639	2,063	2,702
	VET learners	225	4,726	4,951
	Higher education students	1,321	15,042	16,363
	Youth exchanges/EVS	510	2,206	2,716
	Total	2,695	24,037	26,732
Staff	School staff	146	2,924	3,070
	VET staff	182	2,493	2,675
	HE staff	385	10,880	11,265
	Youth staff	137	2,340	2,477

⁵³ ICF and their partner GfK did significance tests on background variables comparing the control group and target group. The results are presented in the technical report (Annex 3).

	Control group	Target group	Total
Adult education	55	1,321	1,376
Sport staff	23	197	220
Total	928	20,155	21,083

Source: ICF/GfK beneficiary surveys

The comparability of the control group with the target group was assessed on a number of key variables for learners and staff as summarised in the tables below (please also refer to the technical annex (3a) for more information). Although there are statistically significant differences on quite a number of indicators, we believe this does not undermine the reliability of the analysis for the following reasons:

- the order of magnitude of the differences remain minor (i.e. limited practical significance)
- the direction of the difference changes across variables and across sectors, meaning that the difference is not expected to affect the outcome systematically in the same way (e.g. depending on the sector, target group will have higher or lower parental educational attainment; or in the same sector, target group will have higher parental educational attainment but also higher migration background)
- the observed differences have been controlled for in the regressions and via the Propensity Score Matching - see also the survey result annex (3b and 3c).

Table 3.7 Comparability of the control group with the target group – Learners’ survey

	Pupils	VET	HE	Youth
Age	No significant diff.	Significant diff.: beneficiaries having higher percentages of those between 20 and 29 years old.	Significant diff.: beneficiaries having higher percentages of those between 20 and 29 years old.	Significant diff.: beneficiaries having higher percentages of those between 25 and 29 years
Gender	Significant diff.: more females among beneficiaries	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.
Country	Significant diff.	Significant diff.	Significant diff.	Significant diff.
Migration Background	No significant diff.	Significant diff.: beneficiaries having less often migration background.	Significant diff.: beneficiaries having more often migration background	No significant diff.
Repeated a class	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.
Rural/urban area	No	Significant	Significant	No

	Pupils	VET	HE	Youth
	significant diff.	diff.: higher percentages of those living in a rural zone in the target group	diff.: lower percentages of those in the target group living in a metropolitan area	significant diff.
Socio-economic background	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	Significant diff.: beneficiaries more likely not to answer	Significant diff.: beneficiaries ' families less likely to save money
Feeling of disadvantage	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	Significant diff.: beneficiaries more likely to feel disadvantaged	No significant diff.
Parents' educational attainment	Significant diff.: higher parental educational attainment among beneficiaries	Significant diff.: lower parental educational attainment among beneficiaries	Significant diff.: higher parental educational attainment among beneficiaries	Significant diff.: lower parental educational attainment among beneficiaries

Source: ICF/GfK beneficiary surveys

Table 3.8 Comparability of the control group with the target group – Staff survey

	Higher education staff	School staff	VET staff	Adult learning staff	Staff in youth organisations	Staff in sports organisations
Age	Significant diff.: the target group has a higher percentage of those between 45 and 49 years old	Significant diff.: the target group has a higher percentage of those 35+	Significant diff.: the target group has a higher percentage of those between 45 and 49 years old	No significant diff.	Significant diff.: the target group has a lower percentage in the category 'Older than 50'	No significant diff.
Gender	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	Significant diff.: more males among beneficiaries	No significant diff.	No significant diff.

	Higher education staff	School staff	VET staff	Adult learning staff	Staff in youth organisations	Staff in sports organisations
Country	Significant diff.	Significant diff.	Significant diff.	Significant diff.	Significant diff.	Significant diff.
Rural/urban area	Significant diff.: lower percentage of beneficiaries living in a rural zone among beneficiaries	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.
Position	Significant diff.: more teachers among beneficiaries	Significant diff.: less administrative staff among beneficiaries	Significant diff.: more respondents in the other category among beneficiaries	Significant diff.: less administrative staff among beneficiaries	No significant diff.	No significant diff.
Length in service (short / medium / long)	Significant diff.: higher percentage among beneficiaries for the 'eleven to fifteen years' and the sixteen to twenty years' category.	Significant diff.: higher percentage among beneficiaries for the 'eleven to fifteen years' and the sixteen to twenty years' category.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	Significant diff.: higher percentage among beneficiaries of those with two to five years, six to ten years and sixteen to twenty years of experience	No significant diff.
Speaks foreign language	Significant diff.: higher percentage among beneficiaries speaking three or more languages	Significant diff.: lower percentage among beneficiaries speaking no other languages	Significant diff.: higher percentage among beneficiaries speaking two or more languages	Significant diff.: lower percentage among beneficiaries speaking no other languages	Significant diff.: lower percentage among beneficiaries speaking no other languages	Significant diff.: lower percentage among beneficiaries speaking only one foreign

	Higher education staff	School staff	VET staff	Adult learning staff	Staff in youth organisations	Staff in sports organisations
	.		.			language
Size of the institution	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.
Disadvantaged institution						
(1) share of those whose first language is different from the language of instruction	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.
(2) share of those with special needs	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.	No significant diff.
(3) share of those from socio-economically disadvantaged homes	Significant diff.: less socio-economically disadvantaged homes among beneficiaries	Significant diff.: more socio-economically disadvantaged homes among beneficiaries	Significant diff.: more socio-economically disadvantaged homes among beneficiaries	No significant diff.	Significant diff.: more socio-economically disadvantaged homes among beneficiaries	No significant diff.

Source: ICF/GfK beneficiary surveys

In two sectors, in addition to the above 'post' surveys (i.e. beneficiaries were surveyed after they took part in the programme), the evaluation team also carried out pre-surveys. This was the case for the following types of actions:

- short-term mobility exchanges (part of KA2) for school pupils; and
- youth exchanges.

Schools and youth organisations that were organising short-term actions in the relevant time frame (January–May 2017) were identified by National Agencies and then contacted directly by the evaluation team.

The questions in the pre-survey were the same as in the post survey.

The samples sizes for the pre- and post-surveys are presented below (post numbers include only the answers of those who indicated they participated in a pre-survey as well).

Despite the intensive follow-up work, the sample sizes suffered from a high attrition from the pre- to the post survey, especially for the control group and the youth sector. This allowed for two types of analyses to be made, on the school sector only⁵⁴.

- Comparison of future E+ participants and a control group (peers from the same schools) prior to the E+ action – to draw conclusions on selection into the programme.
- Comparison of answers from all the participants taking part in the pre-survey versus the answers of post respondents, participating in short-term actions, who said they have taken part in the pre-survey (unmatched data) – to observe changes during the time of the E+ experience. Post respondents were taken from the pool of pre-respondents only to maintain a minimum degree of comparability across the pre- and the post sample while the use of unmatched data guaranteed a minimum sample size.

Table 3.9 Number of responses in pre-post surveys by participation in the programme

Sector	E+ participants		Control group	
	Pre-	Post	Pre-	Post
School	401	119	332	47
Youth	96	41	21	17

Source: ICF/GfK pre-post beneficiary surveys

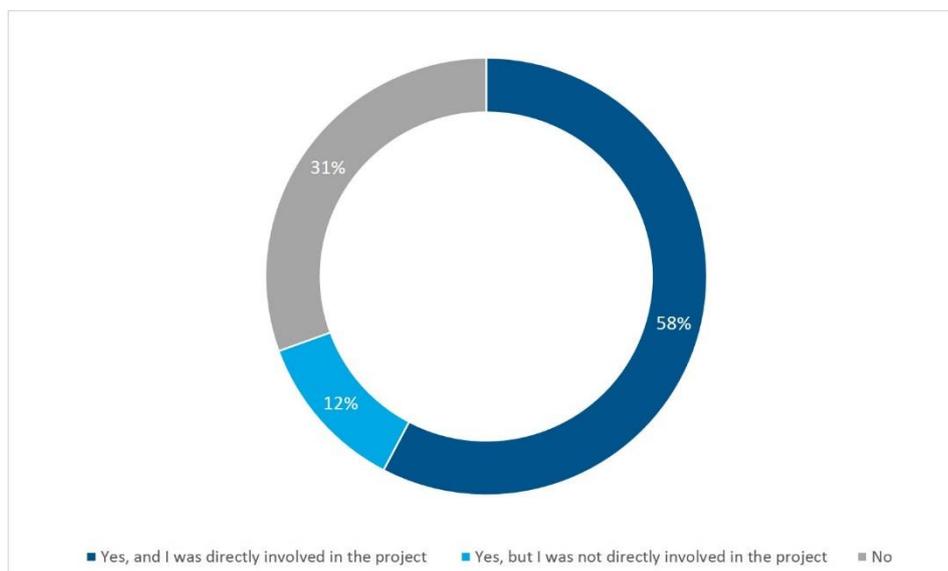
3.4.3 Specific surveys for Jean Monnet actions and other data collection efforts

Specific surveys were implemented to assess Jean Monnet grants. These are:

- a survey of students studying about the EU, targeting students that have taken part in the Jean Monnet actions:
 - 1,548 valid responses were received combining students receiving training through Jean Monnet actions and students studying about the EU under non-beneficiary professors. Of this number, 332 students stated that they were aware that a course they studied received Jean Monnet funding.
 - From the Erasmus+ learners beneficiary surveys, we have also received 5,942 valid responses from HE learners who stated that they have taken at least one course (i.e. in the form of a course or a seminar – for details, see separate Jean Monnet standalone evaluation report (volume 2) on the EU. Of them, 120 students were aware that their course was funded by the Jean Monnet programme.
- a survey of staff teaching on EU topics:
 - 1,003 valid responses were received from beneficiaries (professors directly granted Jean Monnet grant) and non-beneficiary professors teaching about the EU;
 - From the Erasmus+ staff beneficiary surveys, we have also received 4,891 valid responses from HE staff who stated that their department offers at least one course about the EU (out of them JM 210 beneficiaries (professors directly granted a Jean Monnet grant)).

⁵⁴ Comparison of profiles prior to E+ action has not been done for the youth sector (too low sample size for the control group). Pre-post results for the youth sector are presented for transparency purposes but are not further interpreted (high likelihood of sample bias).

Figure 3.3 Overview of Jean Monnet staff survey sample size by participation in the programme



Source: Jean Monnet staff survey (n= 1003)

The surveys were disseminated in the following manner:

- Staff survey
 - The survey was sent to the beneficiaries of Jean Monnet grants; contact details were received from the EACEA.
 - The survey was also sent to unsuccessful applicants for the Jean Monnet grants; contact details were received from the EACEA.
 - Finally, we have identified based on desk research an additional 326 professors and researchers who teach about the EU but have never applied for the Jean Monnet grant.
 - There was also a section on the Jean Monnet programme added to the Erasmus+ beneficiary and non-beneficiary surveys
- Learner survey
 - As there is no database of learners who received training under the Jean Monnet programme, staff that received the Jean Monnet survey was asked to disseminate the survey among their students.
 - In addition, a section on Jean Monnet was added to the Erasmus+ beneficiary and non-beneficiary surveys.

In addition to these surveys, specifically for Jean Monnet grants, the evaluation team interviewed five professors from universities in Europe and beyond who have never applied for the Jean Monnet but are teaching and doing research about the EU as Table 3.8 shows.

Table 3.10 Interviews with professors who have never applied for a Jean Monnet grant

Country	University	Field
AU	The University of Sydney	European Studies
CZ	Masaryk University	European Studies

Country	University	Field
EL	University of Athens	Political science – EU
UK	University of Cambridge	European and EU law
US	University of Washington	European Studies

3.4.4 Specific data collection methods for the Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF)

To put the SLGF data into perspective, secondary data was analysed on the SLGF itself and on alternative/complementary schemes, including: EIF data and reporting from financial intermediaries to the EIF, 2015 and 2016 annual surveys of students receiving Erasmus+ backed loans, applicable market rates in selected countries, and conditions of national student lending schemes

Analysis of secondary data was complemented with the analysis of primary data collected through surveys at student fairs and interviews with stakeholders.

Five student fairs were attended by the evaluation team over December 2016–March 2017 with the aim to test the awareness and attitudes towards the SLGF – of not only future students but also of the exhibitors (higher education institutions, student support organisations’ booths dedicated to mobility for incoming or outgoing students) – as their awareness is a prerequisite if they are to pass on the information to students. In total, all five fairs taken together, 119 students and 100 exhibitors were surveyed.

In addition, a total of 33 interviews were carried out with various stakeholders (see Table 3.11) to gather views on the market gap, assess the value of EU intervention in this field, explore motivation (not) to participate, study implementation-related aspects, test awareness levels, establish how communication channels are working, etc.

Table 3.11 Stakeholder interviews

Stakeholder group	Coverage
Representatives of financial institutions and guarantee institutions	4 of the main EU-level organisations, including European Savings and Retail Banking Group European Association of Guarantee Institutions European Banking Federation European Microfinance Network
Participating financial intermediaries	Whole population – 6
Non-participating FIs	4
National student loan schemes	1
HEIs and their representatives	7 HEIs (mostly International Offices at HEIs) and European University Association, EFMD
National Authorities and agencies	5 <i>[National agencies were also covered via a survey which included some questions on the SLGF]</i>
Representatives of students and young people	2 of the main EU-level organisations: European Students’ Union European Youth Forum
Other	National Association of Student Money Advisers

Stakeholder group	Coverage
	Researcher
Total	33 interviews

3.4.5 Specific surveys for eTwinning Plus pilot action

To collect data on the eTwinning Plus pilot action focusing on cooperation with selected third countries, the evaluation team developed a survey questionnaire with two versions addressed to:

- teachers (and other school staff) in partner countries taking part in eTwinning Plus;
- teachers (and other school staff) in programme countries participating in eTwinning Plus projects, i.e. cooperating in projects with partner countries.

In total 1,091 completed responses were received. From these, 405 responses were received from partner countries and 635 from programme countries.

For the purpose of estimating a participation rate of partner countries' respondents, the evaluation team has taken 2016 data on European projects as a proxy for the survey target population. Table 3.12 shows the estimated response rates per country based on the number of users involved in European projects in 2016.

It is not possible to credibly estimate the response rate for participants from programme countries.

Table 3.12 Estimation of survey response rates based on the number of users involved in at least one European project in partner countries in year 2016

Partner country	In European projects (2016)	Nbr complete responses to survey	Response rate
Armenia	84	16	19 %
Azerbaijan	27	9	33 %
Georgia	253	73	28.8 %
Moldova	88	59	67 %
Tunisia	108	29	26.8 %
Ukraine	487	219	45 %
TOTAL	1047	405	38.7 %

Sources: Data on participation in European projects sent to ICF by the CSS; survey for school staff participating in eTwinning projects involving partner countries

In addition to this survey, the evaluation team carried out:

- 10 interviews with teachers from programme countries, participating in eTwinning projects with partner countries;
- 10 interviews with teachers from partner countries, participating in eTwinning Plus projects;
- 6 interviews with representatives of each of the Partner Support Agencies (PSAs) (partner countries);
- 5 interviews with DG EAC, EACEA, the CSS and the EU delegation in Tunisia (one of the beneficiary countries).

3.4.6 Survey of socioeconomic actors – Beneficiaries

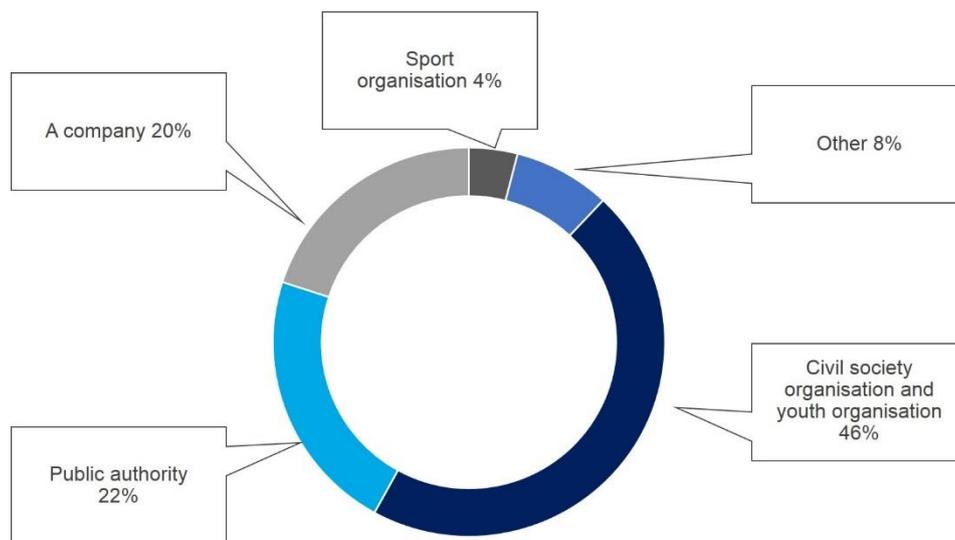
The surveys of learners and staff were complemented with a survey of socioeconomic organisations taking part in the programme to assess the results (but also the relevance and efficiency) for these types of beneficiaries.

This survey was disseminated to beneficiary organisations according to the ‘organisation type’ selected in the programme database. The survey was disseminated to all those who selected one of the categories that does not correspond to education and training providers, meaning companies, public authorities, civic organisations, sectoral bodies, etc.

Note that the survey was not initially disseminated to sport organisations and youth organisations as these are primary programme target groups. Nevertheless, respondents from these categories answered the survey. As already mentioned in the section on programme data, the data on types of organisations is not of high quality and this response pattern confirms it. Nevertheless, the responses from these target groups were maintained in the sample of responses analysed.

In total, 947 usable responses were received. The respondents were spread across Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes as well as across the different programme sectors.

Figure 3.4 Overview of respondents to the survey of socioeconomic actors



Source: ICF (survey of socioeconomic actors)

Note: All respondents (n = 947).

3.4.7 Survey of experts assessing project applications and reports

To complement the data collection on cooperation projects and system-level projects, in particular about the quality of applications and final reports but also about the efficiency of the selection process, a survey of project assessors was carried out.

All agencies were asked to disseminate the survey link to the mailing lists of assessors they use for evaluating applications and reports for approval.

In total, 1,122 valid responses were received and analysed. The sample of respondents covered all sectors of the programme, predecessor as well as current programmes, national agencies as well as the EACEA.

3.4.8 Survey of programme agencies

National agencies and the EACEA are key organisations in the implementation of the programme. As such they have a good overview of the efficiency of the programme management but also of the relevance and partly of the effectiveness of different types of actions. Programme agencies' views were collected in the form of a specific survey. The survey asked agencies to delegate one person for each of the sectors to complete the survey.

130 valid responses were received. This represents 76 %. The responses covered all sectors of the programme and all countries.

3.4.9 Key informant interviews

190 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted at both national and European level by the research team between mid-November 2016 and mid-February 2017. They comprised:

- 45 KIIs at EU level targeting EC/agency officials organised in two rounds:
 - scoping interviews during the inception stage: 31 interviews;
 - KIIs during the interim stage: 14 interviews.
- 14 KIIs targeting EU key stakeholder organisation representatives;
- 131 KIIs at national level (15 countries covered) targeting policymakers and key stakeholders. Fifteen national-level interviews specifically focused on national-level comparator programmes (individual mobility and/or cooperation programmes) fed into both the main evaluation analysis and the specific benchmarking of comparator programmes task (see Section 3.5.4).

Further details can be found in the following tables.

Table 3.13 Overview table – Key informant interviews (EU level)

EC/EC agencies	SE	HE	AE	VET	Sport	Youth	Other	TOTAL
Scoping interviews	3	5	4	3	2	4	8 ⁵⁵	31
KIIs	1	3	1	2 (incl. ETF)	1	2	4 ⁵⁶	14
<i>Total</i>								45
	SE	HE	AE	VET	Sport	Youth	Other	TOTAL
KIIs	1	4	3	1	1	1	3 ⁵⁷	14

⁵⁵ I.e. EC staff members responsible for the Erasmus+ programme's design, coordination, monitoring and dissemination.

⁵⁶ I.e. staff members from other DGs (DG EMPL, DG REGIO, DG GROWTH) and ETF.

⁵⁷ I.e. trade union (teachers, students, employers) representatives.

<i>Total</i>								14
Grand total								59

Table 3.14 Overview table – Key informant interviews (national level)

Country	SE	HE	AE	VET	Sport	Youth	TOTAL
Bulgaria	2	-	1	1	2	1	7
Cyprus	2	1	1	1	1	1	7
Czech Republic	1	4	1	1	1	1	9
Denmark	-	4	-	1	1	2	8
France	-	-	2	-	2	3	7
Germany	5	2	1	2	1	3	14
Hungary	1	1	-	-	1	2	5
Ireland	-	1	4	-	1	3	9
Italy	3	1	-	2	1	1	8
Latvia	1	1	1	3	-	1	7
Lithuania	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Norway	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Poland	2	2	2	2	1	2	11
Spain	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
Sweden	3	4	-	-	1	1	9
Turkey	2	2	1	3	1	1	10
UK	2	-	3	3	-	-	8
Total	26	26	19	21	16	23	131

These interviews, inter alia, contributed to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the systemic impact of the programme at EU and national level. The key findings emerged have fed into all evaluation criteria, further complementing and substantiating the quantitative data with qualitative insights.

3.4.10 Case studies

The evaluation team has conducted 38 case studies comprising:

- 32 case studies at organisational level (spread across all education and training, youth and sport fields);
- 3 Jean Monnet case studies;
- 4⁵⁸ system-level case studies.

⁵⁸ The fourth case study (focusing on 'Developing an innovative European Sport Tutorship model for the dual career of athletes' project) was taken into account jointly with other sources to inform this report. However, insights collated have proven to be limited. Related write-up has not been included in Annex 9 which thus brings together 38 individual write-ups in total.

The case studies served to complement insights gained from key informant interviews and surveys. The task drew upon desk research and semi-structured interviews (face-to-face or on the phone) with 233 key stakeholders including:

- leadership of organisations visited;
- individual beneficiaries: learners/young people, teachers and trainers, youth workers, volunteers;
- project leaders and others.

Interviews were based on a standardised approach to allow comparable data collection across the different types of case studies. They notably built on:

- common topic guides (designed by the evaluation team and approved by DG EAC) per main types of case studies;
- common write-up templates for each main type of case studies.

To collate meaningful information on interviewees' perceptions of the impact of their own participation or that of their organisation in given actions of the Erasmus+ programme, the most significant change approach was followed, in particular for the organisation-level case studies. The approach is based on open-ended unstructured questions which ask beneficiaries to give their own account, in their own words, of the difference the programme makes to them. It proceeds through two or more phases:

- beneficiaries are asked to describe the outcomes in their own words first;
- second they are asked, in a group, to decide which of the testimonies are most significant to them as a group.

More specifically, this approach has been carried out through the case studies to identify the outcomes that the beneficiaries themselves perceived as the most significant. This gave them the opportunity to express any outcomes that they observed, independent of whether they were expected or not. This approach did complement the measurement of outcomes against a predefined framework of indicators that was used in the surveys.

Related findings were used to feed into the evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme and are reflected, where appropriate, in the present report.

For further details, see Annex 9 that sets out the case studies write-ups.

Fieldwork was carried out between late April and late June. Key findings were analysed and used to feed into different parts of the evaluation reports. Part of the interviews built on the most significant change approach; this is further presented below (see Section 3.4.11).

The case studies examined in particular the following issues:

- the channels through which the programme generates organisational and system-level changes (i.e. applying in particular to the organisation and system-level case studies);
- spill-over effects from individuals who are direct beneficiaries to other individuals and to organisations;
- which outcomes are particularly valued by the respondents and why.

The first two types of case studies (see above) enabled the evaluation team to collate the perceptions of the following key stakeholders at organisation level: practitioners and leadership. The case study approach has resulted in separate but interlinked outputs (write-ups) on the following perspectives (notably based on the abovementioned most significant changes approach):

- changes at the level of the organisation;
- changes and views of practitioners;

- changes and views of learners (where applicable); and
- description of system-level effects (if/where applicable).

The case studies at system level focused on the project leader and at least one beneficiary of the project. They resulted in write-ups focusing on the following perspectives:

- description of key features of the project;
- description of system-level effects;
- changes and views of project leader;
- changes and views of beneficiary(ies).

Details on the number of interviews per sectors and types of case studies are outlined in the following table.

Table 3.15 Overview of number of interviews per type of case studies

	School education	VET	Adult learning	Higher education	Youth	Sport	Total
System level		6		2		3	11
Organisation level	36	37	24	58	30	27	212
Other – Jean Monnet				10			10
Total	36	43	24	70	30	30	233

3.4.11 Review of selected project reports

Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes fund a high number of cooperation projects which result in outputs that are aimed to be used within the organisations that took part in the project but also beyond. To get a better understanding of the type of outputs of these projects and the topics covered, the evaluation team mapped 386 project reports.

The outputs were mapped into 11 mapping templates (one per sector/subsector and for the four transversal actions). Each template has combined, in addition to a narrative, predefined categories for the following items:

- topics covered;
- target group;
- type of activities implemented;
- type of organisations involved and their roles;
- type of intellectual outputs delivered;
- profile of participants;
- participation of disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups;
- type of results reported;
- type of impacts reported;
- dissemination activities put in place and outreach.

Initially the evaluation team identified 400 projects and a reserve list. A high number of these project outputs were collected from national agencies. The final sample of projects reviewed was 386. Given that only relatively a few Erasmus+ funded projects were completed at the time of this evaluation, the sample is somewhat biased towards predecessor programmes.

Table 3.16 Number of projects coded across sectors

	Total number projects analysed	LLP projects	E+ projects	Centralised		Decentralised	
				Target	Analysed	Target	Analysed
Schools	65	58	7	13	13	67	52
VET	49	40	9	10	11	40	38
Higher education	25	20	5	20	20	10	5
Adult learning	33	27	6	10	10	30	23
Jean Monnet	50	47	3	50	50		
Youth	42	24 (YiA)	18	38	24	22	18
Sports	22	0	22	40	22		
LLP Transversal actions KA1	27	27		19	27		
LLP Transversal actions KA2	26	26		12	26		
LLP Transversal actions KA3	33	33		12	33		
LLP Transversal actions KA4	14	14		14	14		
Total	386	292	70	231	250	169	136

3.4.12 Expert panel assessment of selected project outputs

The expert panel reviewed the actual outputs (i.e. the tools, toolkits, methodologies, etc.) of cooperation projects. The outputs assessed were delivered by 100 projects. The projects were selected from the group of 386 that were screened by ICF as part of initial mapping (see above).

The list of 100 projects included a variety of types of actions as well as all the fields of actions, as presented below:

Table 3.17 Sample of selected projects

Field of action	LLP	Erasmus+	YiA
School education	15	1	-
Higher education	10	1	-
Adult learning	9	3	-
VET	9	1	-
Jean Monnet	6	1	-
Youth	-	7	5

Sport	-	6	-
Various sectors as part of key actions 1–4 under LLP	26	-	-
Total	75	20	5

Based on the 100 projects above, 144 outputs were identified and categorised by the research team as presented below.

Table 3.18 Number of outputs selected

Type of output	Number of outputs
Policy recommendations	2
Research/evidence/indicators	35
Practitioners guidelines/toolkit	31
Good practices examples	18
Didactic material (teaching/assessment methods)	36
Qualifications standards/references for qualifications	6
Online learning platform	16

3.4.13 Literature review

An extensive literature review (131 sources at national, EU and international level) was carried out during the inception stage and further complemented at a later stage during the analysis stage. Sources reviewed were of a varied nature comprising: EU policy documents, studies and evaluations; other studies at national, EU or international level; and academic papers.

Two main types of sources were considered for the literature review:

- research and evaluation reports referred to in the Terms of Reference for this assignment;
- additional academic articles and research identified during the inception stage.
- These 131 sources reviewed covered the different (sub) fields under the scope of this assignment (i.e. school education, VET, higher education, adult learning, youth and sport).

During the inception stage, the task consisted of:

- reviewing and mapping relevant insights for the purposes of the evaluation from all predecessor programmes' interim evaluations and related documentation and other key documents listed in the Terms of References (ToR);
- identifying, reviewing and mapping relevant insights from other complementary sources.

Besides reviewing the sources listed in the ToR, the general approach consisted of:

- identifying additional evidence based on online searches, including databases of online journals (via EBSCO Host59);
- systematically mapping evidence of outcomes of transnational mobility and transnational partnerships for each (sub) field at the three levels of intervention considered in a mapping table;
- producing a written synthesis of key findings.

The main purpose of the literature review was to review research notably on:

- key outcomes of predecessor mobility programmes in education, training and youth at individual level (i.e. students, apprentices, volunteers, young people in general and practitioners (teachers, trainers, youth workers, etc.));
- key outcomes of transnational cooperation predecessor programmes in the fields of education, training, youth and sport;
- factors influencing or deterring the above;
- factors influencing or deterring participation in the above;
- judgement on validity of the existing evidence; and
- success factors for and obstacles to the above (per field and at all three levels).

During the inception stage, insights gained from the task helped the team gain first insights on whether and where the predecessor programmes have had impacts at the individual, organisational and system levels (i.e. central to the analytical framework underpinning this assignment) across Erasmus+ predecessor programmes. This served to inform the development of the analytical framework of outcome indicators that has underpinned the evaluation assignment.

At later stages, information gathered was used to complement insights gained from other sources and reflected where appropriate in subsequent evaluations reports. Key findings from the literature in the form of overview tables aiming to complement other key evaluation results have been assembled and included in the present report (see Section 6).

For further details on the literature review narrative produced during the inception phase and updated towards the end of the assignment as well as on the comprehensive list of sources reviewed, see Annex 11.

3.4.14 Delphi survey of experts

A Delphi survey of experts was carried out to collect experts' views about the added value of the programme and thus to provide inputs into the analysis of cost effectiveness. The experts were asked to assess alternative responses to three main questions:

- What would have happened in the 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 to those of Erasmus+?

The responses to these three questions were also used to assess cost-effectiveness (not only EU added value). To assess cost-effectiveness it is necessary to understand what is the effect that is due to the existence of the programme (participation). To assess this, the evaluation used, next to the analysis of effectiveness data, also the qualitative judgement on alternative means through which comparable results could have been observed. Had the Delphi survey identified interventions which could have led to

⁵⁹ The leading provider of online information resources to researchers in academia, research organisations and government. This provides access to the full text of over 10,000 peer-reviewed journals in dozens of languages.

comparable effects a comparison in the costs of these interventions could have been made. However, the survey showed that there is agreement among the experts that the types of effects observed for Erasmus + concern a unique package of results which can only be achieved through transnational mobility or cooperation. Hence the comparison was only made with the programmes analysed as part of benchmarking.

Alternative responses for each of the questions were prepared and tailored to each of the sectors.

The Delphi survey was disseminated among experts who act as project assessors. A subset of those persons who responded to the survey of experts and indicated that they were willing to be contacted were invited to respond to the Delphi survey. They were considered a relevant group of experts because they are highly likely to be knowledgeable about other opportunities for funding international cooperation as well as the possible effects of the absence of Erasmus+.

Overall, 213 responses from experts were received, meaning between 25 and 40 per sector.

3.5 Specific analytical techniques

3.5.1 Statistical analysis and counterfactual estimation

This section describes the statistical analysis techniques and estimation methods applied (or considered), in turn for the post surveys and the pre-post surveys.

3.5.1.1 Overall approach to the analysis of the post surveys

Construction of the indexes

Main survey findings on learners and staff are organised by area and aim to establish whether there are any significant differences in respondents' attitudes, views, competences and skills which would be correlated with their participation in the Erasmus+ or predecessor programmes. On some occasions, the questions were asked only to the target group because they were not applicable to the control group (e.g. questions on perceived contribution of mobility).

For each area, we report either on proportions (e.g. share of respondents saying 'yes' or 'agreeing') or on indexes (as a way of compiling one score from a variety of questions/statements which are supposed to measure the same, not necessarily unidimensional, underlying concept).

Where indexes have been constructed, the following approach has been taken.

- We calculated Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of a set of questions/statements.
- Where the resulting coefficient was above 0.7 (the coefficient ranges from 0 to 1 and the higher the coefficient, the higher the covariance between questions/statements), we reported on the index. Where it was below 0.7, we excluded the less correlated questions/statements from the index or simply presented proportions on selected single questions/statements.

The indexes initially take a value from 0 to 1 but to ease the reading we have rescaled them from 0 to 100.

Stage 1 analysis: t-tests and regressions

We mainly report findings on statistically significant differences (***) $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$). These were assessed through t-tests on means for responses from two different groups, participants and non-participants (then further divided by sectors and actions).

T-test results are complemented by regression analyses. The regression analyses modelled a logit (or ordered logit) regression with proportions (or indexes) as a dependent categorical variable – depending on the areas.

The results of this Stage 1 analysis in the learners and staff annex should be interpreted with caution as the data is observational data, not experimental data. We are reporting on associations not on causation. Causal effects of the Erasmus+ programme are difficult to determine. One main reason is due to the self-selection bias. People select themselves to participate in a programme (participation is not random). Some practitioners decide to apply for Erasmus+ and others do not. Those who do participate may differ from those who do not in important ways. They may be more determined to benefit from mobility or have better support resources. These characteristics may actually be causing the observed outcome, instead of the Erasmus+ programme itself. To better attribute the observed changes to the E+ programme, we applied a quasi-experimental method (propensity score matching) – see Stage 2 analysis.

Stage 2 analysis: Counterfactual estimation of the programme impact via quasi-experimental methods

We estimated the impact of participating in an Erasmus+ initiative by matching the control group to the surveyed treatment group a posteriori, based on characteristics that have been measured through the survey. We looked at the 'average treatment effect on the treated' i.e. our counterfactual estimation consists in answering the question: *'What would have been the outcome for the participants had they not participated?'*

This approach, called the propensity score matching approach (PSM)^[1], has the advantage of using a large number of covariates such as gender, age, socio-economic background, feeling of disadvantage, parents' educational attainment, etc (for the full list for learners and staff see tables on Comparability of the control group with the target group under section 3.4.2.), to make both groups comparable (while only a few observed covariates can be included in a weighting strategy) and to *attribute* the difference in outcomes between both groups to the programme, controlling for any other underlying factor.

Here are some further clarifications.

- We applied PSM (more precisely inverse probability weighting) on all outcome areas, further tested the balancing of our covariates (to check whether propensity scores are truly similar in the control group and treatment group), and reported on all treatment effects on the treated – indicating the size of the treatment effect and the level of significance.
- Given the sample sizes at the sector level and the fact that PSM requires sufficient number of matched individuals who have the same propensity to participate in the programme⁶⁰
- The HE sector responses which make up most of our sample influence considerably the overall average. Besides, for some areas, depending on the estimated indicator or the covariates, the sample sizes were smaller and might have ended up affecting

[1] The validity of the approach is based on a series of assumptions which have been tested and are satisfied. For more information on the assumptions behind this method, please refer to: Caliendo, M. and Kopeinig, S. (2008), 'Some practical guidance for the implementation of propensity score matching', *Journal of Economic Surveys*, Vol. 22, No 1, pp. 31–72, or Cattaneo, M. D., Drukker, D. M. and Holland, A. D. (2013), 'Estimation of multivalued treatment effects under conditional independence', *Stata Journal*, Vol. 13, No 3, pp. 407–450.

⁶⁰ The more background variables we take into account, the larger the sample sizes required. With t-tests under stage 1, we only take into account one explanatory variable, which allowed us to produce the analysis by sector and action.

statistical significance (this is indicated in the results where this might have been the case).

3.5.1.2 Overall approach to the analysis of the pre-post surveys

Construction of the indexes

For the pre-post survey analysis, we report on the same results as for the post survey (same proportions or indexes) – with some exceptions where there are differences in composition of the index due to the formulation of some items which changed (i.e. were clarified in light of the cognitive testing results) between the pre- and the post survey (these particular items had to be excluded from the composition of the indexes to be consistent over time.) Areas concerned are identified as such in the parts presenting the results.

Stage 1 analysis: t-tests and regressions

Similar to the post survey, our first stage analysis was based on t-tests comparing Erasmus+ participants and non-participants prior to the intervention on the one hand (to study selection aspects) and comparing responses from participants at different points in time, before and after the intervention, on the other hand (to observe changes during the time of the E+ experience). For pre-post comparisons, t-tests were complemented by regressions to take into account the differences in profiles of pre- v post respondents.

One major caveat inherent to this simple pre-post setting, however, is that it does not allow us to attribute the changes which are observed to the Erasmus programme. The survey follows changes during the Erasmus time frame but the observed changes might be due to factors other than Erasmus – i.e. they may reflect new skills picked up elsewhere (although for some areas immediately linked to the E+ experience, e.g. spoken interaction, this is less likely). Also, the samples are of a limited size and the differences might as well reflect sample bias. The feasibility of applying a more advanced econometric estimation method to isolate the effects of the E+ programme intervention was assessed as part of Stage 2, but the method could not be applied for the reasons stated below.

Stage 2 feasibility assessment: Difference-in-difference estimation

The difference-in-difference estimation (DiD) compares outcomes of people targeted by an intervention (target group) to outcomes of people not affected by the intervention (control group) before and after the intervention takes place. The feasibility of applying this method was tested during the Erasmus+ evaluation, but it does not appear to be an appropriate method for estimation of impacts of this programme. There are several reasons for this.

1. *Large differences between target (Erasmus+ participants) and control (non-participants) group prior to the intervention.* Erasmus+ participants were significantly different from non-participants prior to the intervention, suggesting that their outcomes may have developed in very different ways over time even in the absence of Erasmus+. Thus all results from DiD estimations may be biased, since similarity of control and target group is a core assumption behind this method.
2. *Low number of students who participated in both pre- and post-Erasmus+ surveys.* For DiD, we would ideally like to have the same students observed before and after the Erasmus+ intervention, to make sure that pre- and post-intervention populations are comparable across time. However, less than half of the students who participated in the pre-Erasmus+ survey also responded to the post-Erasmus+ survey. This reduces the number of available observations to under

200, which is far below the expected number necessary to identify statistically significant effects of short-term interventions whose content (and therefore impact) varied a lot from person to person. This type of intervention make their effects particularly difficult to identify in statistical analysis (see e.g. Card et al, 2009 & 2011; Carling et al., 2002).

3. *Lack of comparability in overall pre- and post-Erasmus+ student samples.* DiD can also be used if a random sample of students is interviewed prior to an intervention while another random sample is interviewed after its end (and these are not necessarily the same people). This is a promising approach, because many students took part in the post-Erasmus+ survey, but only few of them participated in the pre-Erasmus+ survey as well. However, using this approach would be inappropriate due to systematic differences between pre- and post-Erasmus+ student samples. In the pre-Erasmus+ survey only students from schools involved in Erasmus+ took part, whereas in the post-Erasmus+ survey students from any school (participating or not) were allowed to participate.

3.5.2 Network analysis

The aim of the social network analysis was to collect insights into the following aspects of programme participation:

- Participation of different types of organisations and its evolution across the programming periods
- The degree of cross-sectoral cooperation and its evolution
- The degree of interconnectedness of country networks; and
- Degree of repeated participation in the programme: this was envisaged but could not be carried out due to the names of organisations appearing under too many forms hindering the reliable identification of recurring participants – see below.

The cross-sectoral co-participation rate was calculated based on the number of projects involving organisations from at least two organisational types that are considered cross-sectoral divided by the total number of projects. In other words, number of projects including heterophilic pairs divided by the total number of projects.

The network analysis was carried out based on programme data from Erasmus +, LLP, Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus and Tempus. This means that not all the Higher Education international programmes were covered. The lack of data about participation patterns in decentralised projects under predecessor higher education international programmes means that no data was available to perform the network analysis for this category; for centralised projects, the necessary data was available. It should thus be noted that in the overall analysis of higher education international projects (i.e. centralised plus decentralised), the results only reflect the centralised component.

Furthermore, the network analysis was only done on KA2 and KA3 actions and equivalent. The reasons for this are that:

- The question of cross-sectoral cooperation is only relevant for KA2 and KA3 projects as KA1 projects are not expected to be cross-sectoral; and
- The data on types of organisations under Erasmus+, in particular for the first year of the programme, is not of sufficiently complete. In the overall dataset (KA1, KA2 and KA3) some 40% of organisations are classified as 'unknown'. This quality of data would not have been sufficient for the analysis. By removing KA1, the share of organisations classified as 'unknown' drops to 20%. This is still a large number which means the results of the network analysis have to be treated carefully.

To carry out the network analysis, the evaluation team rationalised the types of organisations used in the various datasets; in other words, the types appearing under

different programmes were matched and grouped under a restrained set of common organisational types. It needs to be noted that the types of organisations used for decentralised actions under LLP and Erasmus + were different from the types used under centralised actions for E+, LLP, Erasmus Mundus and Tempus. The data on Youth in Action used yet another typology of organisations. Furthermore, the number of types of organisations used was very large.

To calculate the indicators pertaining to cross-sectoral cooperation, it was also necessary to distinguish which pairs of organisational types were to be considered as cross-sectoral (i.e. heterophilic pairs) from those pairs which should not be considered as cross-sectoral (i.e. homophylic pairs). In a first step, the evaluation team mapped the rationalised organisational types to programme sectors to obtain organisational sectors. In a second step, a matrix of all possible pairs of organisational types was constructed to label each pair as cross-sectoral or not. Any pair of organisations consisting of organisational types mapped to different sectors were counted as cross-sectoral pairs, whereas if they belonged to the same sector they were not counted as cross-sectoral pairs. For example, the two following organisational types have been assigned to the school sector: general education – school and association school sector. Any pair of organisations consisting of one or both of these organisational types were not considered as cross-sectoral. On the other hand, a pair consisting of organisations from the following organisational types was considered cross-sectoral: general education – school (mapped to the school sector) and higher education institution (mapped to the higher education sector). Some organisational types (such as public authorities or enterprises) were not assigned to any programme sector. The combinations involving such organisational types were always considered cross-sectoral except for pairs consisting of two organisations from the same organisational types (e.g. public authority – public authority or enterprise – enterprise).

The feasibility of assessing repeated participation of organisations in the programmes was assessed but was not deemed feasible as it would have required substantial cleaning of the data. It is common that the same organisation appears in the database with multiple names (different forms, different spelling etc.). A random check found that some organisations appear with as many as six or seven different forms of the name. A unique ID was only implemented since 2014. As such, the analysis of repeated participation would only cover the current programme (Erasmus+) for the 2014-2016 period for which data is currently available. Taking only projects contracted in such a short period would underestimate the degree of multiple participation from the predecessor to the current programme. It is also worth noting that some organisations were attributed more than one unique ID which would also underestimate the degree of multiple participation.

The key network statistics reported in this evaluation are briefly introduced below:

- Cross-sectoral co-participation rate: Number of projects including heterophilic pairs (i.e. cross-sectoral pairs formed by two organisations from different organisational sectors) divided by the total number of projects.
- Share of heterophilic links: This is equal to the sum of all links formed by heterophilic pairs in the network to the total number of links in the network.
- Betweenness centrality: It measures how often a given country in a network lies along the shortest paths between two other countries that are not directly connected to one another. It highlights countries who play an important “brokering” role, acting as a connecting link between relatively isolated islands of countries within the overall topography who do not directly co-participate with one another. The weighted version of this indicator was used accounting for the number of co-participations between any two countries (i.e. number of joint projects). The indicator is also normalised to enable the comparison of networks of varying size; there are more projects under the predecessor than the current programme.

3.5.3 Social media analysis

The evaluation team used the Crimson Hexagon platform for the social media analysis. Social media analysis was used primarily to collect evidence about the awareness on the programme and its public image. The total number of posts discussing Erasmus+ is 725,678 during the analysed year. Analysis was conducted on posts in English, French, Spanish and German. The sources used to identify content on social media were Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Twitter is the source for 96 % of posts analysed; only 3 % were from Facebook, and less than 1 % from Instagram. Out of almost three quarters of a million posts in total, about 412,999 were original and about 312,679 were retweets. The period analysed was between 5 November 2015 and 4 November 2016 for all the analyses.

The Crimson Hexagon platform⁶¹ identifies the topics of conversations on social media according to the keywords and key phrases that appear frequently in posts. The tool also analyses trends in the social media content by using different options for graphical representation (e.g. topic wheels, maps etc.). The search terms used for gathering relevant data were 'Erasmus+', 'Erasmus+', 'Erasmus plus' and 'Erasmusplus'. More information about the tool and the process around data analysis is presented in Section 3 of this report.

All relevant posts were then analysed for trends in the volume and content of discussions. The analysis focused, on the one hand, on the Erasmus+ programme globally as well as on the different sectors of the programme on the other hand (youth, schools, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning, sport and Jean Monnet). These categories were first manually coded with 10-20 posts after refining results for Erasmus+ using secondary keywords, such as youth, school or schools, higher education or higher education, VET or vocational, adult learning, sport, etc. The manually coded posts were used by the software to auto-code the remaining posts.

The following analysis of social media data was performed:

- volume of social media conversation about Erasmus+ – both globally and by sector;
- a snapshot of topics and subtopics in conversations about Erasmus+ overall;
- an overview of topics and subtopics related to each of the seven sectors of the Erasmus+ programme;
- analysis of audience, including demographics such as age and gender, location of posts, and an analysis of most influential and most prolific authors.

Additional analysis carried out comprised:

- comparison of total volume of social media conversation about Erasmus+ with volume of information shared about other EU programmes (e.g. Marie Curie, MEDIA, Citizens programme);
- comparison of volume by original content versus retweets;
- sentiment analysis and comparison by topics;
- comparison of topics and sentiment for specific countries of interest;
- topic and sentiment analysis of results by the type of author – individuals, organisations (managing programme authorities or other organisations) and news/media.

Following the extraction of insights from the social media analysis, the presentation of these initial findings was the next step performed. Innovative graphical representation of data was employed to present insights from the social media analysis of Erasmus+.

⁶¹ Crimson Hexagon is a social media analytics platform that generates insights derived from social media data. Source: <https://www.crimsonhexagon.com/>

including various charts, topic wheels, maps and tables with examples of quotes from social media posts.

3.5.4 Benchmarking

The evaluation team has carried out a benchmarking analysis consisting of benchmarking Erasmus+ against 18 selected comparator national and transnational mobility and cooperation programmes. Its main purpose has been to provide evidence to support the main evaluation findings (excluding for Jean Monnet) across the different evaluation criteria.

- **Relevance:** e.g. to what extent are needs of different stakeholders and education levels addressed by the programme's objectives? How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope?
 - **Coherence:** e.g. to what extent is the Erasmus+ programme coherent with various interventions pursued at national and international level that 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?
 - **Effectiveness:** e.g. what are the differences in impact of programme actions on specific disadvantaged groups⁶² of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational activities as compared to other groups that benefit from the programme?
 - **Efficiency:** e.g. what is the prospect of other policy instruments or mechanisms in providing better cost-effectiveness ratios? To what extent is the implementation and management structure of centralised and decentralised actions appropriate, efficient and well-functioning?
- EU added value: e.g. what is the additional value and benefit resulting from EU activities, compared to what could be achieved by Member States at national and/or regional levels? What does the Erasmus+ programme offer in addition to other education and training support schemes available at both national and international levels?

The benchmarking has covered all the fields and subfields of Erasmus+ (schools, VET, HE, adult learning, youth and sport) and provided information on a wide range of indicators, both qualitative and quantitative.

Initial data collection and desk review has resulted in identifying a list of 58 comparator programmes among which 18 were retained based on selection criteria agreed with DG EAC. The data for all the indicators and for all the 18 schemes was then brought together and compared in a series of benchmark analyses. Three different types of benchmarking were undertaken.

- **Strategic benchmarking** – the relevance, coherence and added value of the programmes have been analysed and compared.
- **Process benchmarking** – the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities in the administration and management of the programmes have been analysed and compared.
- **Financial benchmarking** – the financial efficiency and effectiveness of the programmes have been analysed and compared.

⁶² Disadvantaged groups can be defined as groups of individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged/low-educated families, migrants, Roma, marginalised or rural communities and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

3.6 Analysis of other qualitative data

The analysis of programme data (see Section 3.4.2) has been enriched by using other secondary data.

Important contextual features indeed need to be taken into account when analysing programme data. For example, the country participation patterns need to reflect the features of education, training, youth and sport systems/policies in order to find out to what extent programme participation also benefits those countries where challenges in the different fields are greatest. When making the analysis at the level of subfields (schools, VET, etc.), it may be relevant to compare the findings with systemic features such as autonomy of education providers, focus on school-based or apprenticeship-based VET, participation of young people in youth activities, etc.

For this purpose the evaluation team has extracted and analysed relevant contextual indicators from the education and training monitor, the youth indicators, relevant Eurobarometer studies or the sport indicators available on Eurostat.

A specific focus of this task has also been to link programme data with data on education and training institutions with a high share of disadvantaged students. For this purpose, the analysis has identified disadvantaged schools across a sample of countries, using external data sources, and has compared these with the programme data to identify the schools that have (or have not) engaged with the Erasmus+ programme. It also described the profile of these schools and the nature of their engagement with the programme. Related results were used to feed into the main evaluation report.

3.6.1 Open Public Consultation (OPC)

In addition to the tasks above, the evaluation team designed jointly with the European Commission (DG EAC), supported the launching of and ultimately synthesised the key findings of the Open Public Consultation (OPC) on the Erasmus+ programme. The OPC was formally conducted by the European Commission from 28 February to 31 May 2017.

The objective of the consultation was to gather the opinions and perspectives of various stakeholders, and the general public, to help assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and added value of the current programme⁶³. It also included effectiveness-, efficiency-, and added value- related questions applying to Erasmus+ predecessor programmes. Those could also be addressed by respondents (where considered relevant).

The OPC was launched through the dedicated European Commission website and was available in all official EU languages.

Between early May and late September 2017, the evaluation team undertook the following.

- Early May–end May 2017: extracted and reviewed the responses supplied to open-ended questions. Responses to closed questions were also tracked and compiled in an initial tracking report submitted to DG EAC.
- Early June–end June 2017: assembled the draft synopsis report which was submitted to DG EAC by late June. This was to be complemented by a synthesis of 24 position papers that had been supplied separately to the main questionnaire.
- End July–end September 2017: expanded the synopsis report and finalised it based on DG EAC comments.

⁶³ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/consultations/erasmus-plus-mid-term-evaluation-2017_en

The resulting OPC synthesis report can be found in a separate document (see volume 5 of the present evaluation report). Building upon 1,800 complete responses and 24 position papers, the latter offers information on the following:

- profile of respondents, covering their sector and individual and organisational backgrounds;
- key findings on the Erasmus+ programme, assessed against the evaluation criteria;
- breakdown of the above per sector, namely education and training, youth, sports, and Jean Monnet;
- key findings on previous programmes, preceding Erasmus+ (2007–2013)
- key findings on the future of Erasmus+, and the extent to which education and training, youth and sport should remain funding priorities during the next EU planning period.

3.6.2 Synthesis of National Authorities (NAUs) reports

The evaluation team also reviewed and synthesised key findings emerging from the national implementation reports (focusing on Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes) submitted by National Authorities (NAUs) against the five main evaluation criteria (i.e. Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and European added value) considered for the present evaluation. Those reports were to be sent by individual NAUs (i.e. all EU Member States, EFTA countries, Former Republic of Macedonia and Turkey) to the European Commission (DG EAC) by 30 June 2017. ICF received final individual reports from DG EAC between late March and late July. Note: by the time the present final report was being assembled, two last reports were pending (i.e. MT and UK) and could not hence be taken on board.

Once a critical mass (i.e. two thirds of reports received) was reached, ICF undertook the following:

- systematically coded individual reports into NVivo;
- reviewed content, and;
- extracted and synthesised key findings of relevance to the present evaluation into a synthesis report (see volume 6 of the present evaluation report).

The above was carried out between mid-June and late July 2017.

Besides offering an overview of the key findings emerging from all the reports reviewed (including key commonalities and differences among the NAU reports), another of the main purposes of this task was to obtain additional insights from this complementary source and enable the evaluation team to assess the extent to which the latter aligned with the key findings of the present report (i.e. resulting from all the different sources listed above).

3.7 Discussion of validity and reliability of the findings

The below elements of the methodological approach enhance the reliability and validity of the overall findings of this evaluation. Based on these elements we believe that the reliability and validity of the evaluation is strong.

Elements of the methodology	Discussion	Judgement
Validity of overall judgements	The evaluation was based on an agreed evaluation framework which broke down all evaluation criteria into questions and sub-questions and defined judgement criteria for all	Strong

Elements of the methodology	Discussion	Judgement
	The evaluation framework was agreed with the steering group prior to the design of data collection tools	
Definition of results and impacts	<p>A key criterion for this evaluation was effectiveness. The analysis of effectiveness was based on a framework of potential results and impacts</p> <p>The framework was defined based on a combination of review of programme documentation, literature review on analysed results and impacts of similar types of interventions and scoping interviews with key policy officers in charge of the programme</p>	Strong
Validity of measurement tools to collect data on results and impacts	The surveys implemented by the evaluation team aimed, as often as possible, to measure attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and competences related to the concepts in the framework of results and impacts. This means that statements about the self-perceived contribution of the programme were as often as possible avoided. To strengthen the validity of the survey items used, the evaluation team used existing large-scale surveys as a basis. Questions extracted from surveys such as PISA, TALIS or Eurobarometer were used. These are trialled and tested questionnaires developed by experts specifically for the purpose of measuring a given concept	Strong
Generalisation of findings to the whole programme	<p>We believe that the overall findings can be generalised to the whole programme with sufficient confidence because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The survey samples are large - It is not possible to judge whether the surveyed respondents correspond to the beneficiaries compared to background characteristics as only a few background characteristics are available on the programme beneficiaries⁶⁴. However the distribution of various background variables within the survey samples (target group versus control group and the background acceptable. - The differences in background variables between the control group and the treatment group were also assessed. For most variables there are no significant differences and where they are these concern variables that are not likely to strongly influence the findings - For qualitative fieldwork the respondents to key informant interviews were selected using category-based 	Medium to strong

⁶⁴ As outlined in the methodology (Technical Report part of Annex 3), the databases of contacts used to recruit respondents do not in all cases contain information on individuals, and so contacts rather were primarily made through organisations. For that reason, it is not possible to compare the survey data with population data (which does not exist) in relation to school pupils, young people on youth exchanges, or sports staff. In the case of the databases for which we have the individual contact details, the comparison with the population is also problematic. Firstly, we have the database of individuals for only a very limited number of actions; moreover, the background variables differ by actions and also by the programme period.

Elements of the methodology	Discussion	Judgement
	<p>purposeful using category based purposeful sampling (i.e. spread across each (sub)field⁶⁵ covered by the programme, bringing together interviewees at both EU and national level, including policymakers and key stakeholders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case studies were selected using a combination of criterion-based selection and random selection - Findings are systematically triangulated using a variety of sources 	
Reliability of overall evaluation design	<p>The evaluation collected data from a large variety of sources: documentation produced by the programme, programme data of the managing bodies, direct beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries, policymakers, other stakeholders and bodies in charge of implementation.</p> <p>It also combined a breadth of data collection and data analysis techniques</p>	Strong
Counterfactual assessment	<p>A partial quasi-experimental design was used to assess the contribution of the programme to the results measured.</p> <p>The design (as explained above) cannot fully exclude that the differences in result variables measured between the beneficiaries and the control group might be related to selection into the programme rather than participation in the programme.</p> <p>Nevertheless, it does control for various characteristics of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries when judging the differences in results</p>	Medium
Surveys	<p>The sample sizes for all surveys are large (in all cases sufficiently large to make judgements) as discussed above. Given the limited background variables about the beneficiaries it is not possible to assess how comparable are the samples compared to the programme population</p>	Medium
Collection of qualitative data	<p>All qualitative fieldwork was based on a standard protocol which defined the data to be collected and the types of respondents to interview</p> <p>All researchers received oral and written briefing</p> <p>The outputs of qualitative fieldwork were captured in standardised write-up forms or in grids and templates</p> <p>The outputs were reviewed to assess quality on an ongoing basis and feedback was provided to interviewers if additional insights were needed</p>	Strong
Systematic exploitation and interpretation of	<p>All qualitative data was coded in NVIVO using standardised sets of codes prior to analysis</p>	Strong

⁶⁵ I.e. school education, VET, HE, adult learning, youth, sport and Jean Monnet.

Elements of the methodology	Discussion	Judgement
qualitative data		
Programme data	<p>The data on outputs and partially on results was also based on data collected and managed by DG EAC and EACEA. The availability of the programme data varied greatly across the programmes covered. The reliability of the data on most outputs is strong except certain specific indicators (participation of disadvantaged groups and numbers of participants). These are discussed in related sections as well</p> <p>The reliability of results data collected through DG EAC monitoring of programme beneficiaries is strong (large sample sizes, required response). However, the validity of certain indicators is more problematic. Most result indicators are based on self-perception and in several cases the link between the survey items and the concept measured is rather weak. That is why this data was complemented through other sources via primary data collection</p>	Medium
Granularity of the analysis	<p>This evaluation covered a high number of programmes which when combined together had a very high number of types of actions. Therefore the decision has been made to assess programme effectiveness according to a matrix differentiating between the sectors and fields of action on one hand and key actions on the other hand. However, there are some limitations to this approach as it meant that a high number of types of actions were put together in the same category under the pillar corresponding to KA2. In future evaluations (which will not cover the predecessor programmes anymore) a more granular approach for this pillar would be desirable.</p>	Medium

3.8 Acronyms and country codes

3.8.1 Acronyms used in the report

Table 3.19 List of acronyms used in the report

Acronym	Meaning
AE	Adult Education
CEA	Cost-effectiveness analysis
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
E+	Erasmus+ Programme
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EMJMD	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree

EPRP	Erasmus+ Project Results Platform
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ET 2010	Education and Training 2010 Strategic Framework
EU	European Union
EVS	European Voluntary Service
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher education institution
JM	Jean Monnet
KA	Key Action
KII	Key Informant Interview
LLP	Lifelong Learning Programme
MS	Member State
NA	National Agency
NAU	National Authority
OLS	Online Linguistic Support
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
OPC	Open Public Consultation
SEG	School Education Gateway
SLGF	Student Loan Guarantee Facility
SP	Strategic Partnership
VET	Vocational education and training
WP	Work Programme
YiA	Youth in Action Programme

3.8.2 Country codes

Table 3.20 List of country codes used in the report

Country code	Country
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus

CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IS	Iceland
IT	Italy
LI	Lichtenstein
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
FY	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
TR	Turkey
UK	United Kingdom

4 Relevance of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

4.1 Summary of main findings

This section offers an overview of the main findings emerging from the analysis supplied below on the relevance of the Erasmus+ programme. This summary also reflects key findings of additional sources (focused evaluation on Jean Monnet, the Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF), synthesis of the Open Public Consultation (OPC) results and synthesis of the National Authorities' (NAUs) reports⁶⁶), whose detailed analysis makes part of standalone documents.

The relevance of the programme (compared where appropriate with that of its predecessors) has been assessed against seven evaluation questions that overall looked into:

- the programme's alignment with EU and national policy priorities;
- the programme's responsiveness to the needs of stakeholders and sectors;
- the programme's suitability for attracting different target audiences;
- the programme's visibility;
- the programme's suitability for addressing hard-to-reach groups.

The assessment results are generally positive, as revealed by the key findings of the different evaluation questions. However, the analysis also reveals slight to more important misalignments or issues in a small number of areas, as detailed below.

Erasmus+ can be firstly considered relevant in regard to both its **alignment with EU policy priorities** in the areas of education and training, youth and sport and its **adaptability to emerging EU-level socioeconomic needs and challenges** (Section 4.2). There is consensus among key informants, at EU and national level, that this is the case. The vast majority of interviewees consider that the programme exhibits a high degree of alignment with key EU priorities as primarily expressed in the EU2020, ET2020, Youth Strategy and EU Work Plan for Sport. These findings concur with those of the OPC and the synthesis of the NAU reports. With regard to the sport field which is embedded for the first time ever in an EU-level programme, over half of interviewees were generally positive about the above. Meanwhile, findings also reveal that in this field a gap or misalignment between broad EU priorities and the need for more targeted ones at national level is often felt by respondents at this level.

The alignment of the programme to EU-level policies and priority objectives is similarly confirmed by the findings of the experts' and programme agencies' surveys. On the one hand, the review of topic coverage of funded projects undertaken for this evaluation suggests that these align to a high extent with EU-level priorities such as promoting equity or social cohesion. On the other hand, the extent to which the projects reviewed align with more specific priorities (e.g. early school leaving, HE attainment, adults' participation in adult learning, etc.) is less clear. For instance, across the sampled projects in higher education, none focused on the attainment headline target⁶⁷. In school education, only a very small number dealt with early school leaving.

⁶⁶ Key findings of the focused evaluation on the Jean Monnet programme are not reflected in the present summary.

⁶⁷ The Europe 2020 strategy sets out a target 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.

Most interviewees also consider that Erasmus+ has proven to be flexible in adjusting to new emerging issues. Its recent adjustments (involving ad hoc measures and funding) to help address the refugee crisis or its alignment with the Paris Declaration's objectives⁶⁸ were among the most commonly reported examples by interviewees. Overall judgements on the capacity of the programme to adjust to new issues are particularly positive among EU-level stakeholders in the school and higher education (HE) sectors, while perceptions are more mixed among EU-level stakeholders in the sport sector and national stakeholders. At EU level, the annual work programme is furthermore seen as a good lever to adapt to new priorities. Some stakeholders, however, called for greater emphasis being placed within the programme on the promotion of social inclusion. As the contextual information set out in the box below, there has however been a shift recently towards more social inclusion-related priorities within the programme.

The social inclusion dimension of Erasmus+

Designed in the aftermath of the 2008-2009 economic crisis (and hence primarily concentrating on economic-related priorities), the programme has paid increased attention to social inclusion-related priorities, particularly since 2016.

This shift has been driven by various challenges among which: persistent consequences of economic crisis on youth but also adult unemployment; outbursts of violence, extremism, intolerance and radicalisation across Europe; recent refugees crisis and related social inclusion needs to address by EU Member States, etc.

In this context, the role of education, youth and sport in the prevention of social exclusion has been widely acknowledged. Erasmus+ priority objectives have been reviewed against key policy priorities among which, though not exclusively, the 2015 Paris Declaration. In response to this, the Commission and the Council decided in November 2015 to adapt their policy cooperation in the fields of education and training (ET 2020) and youth to give priority attention to the implementation of Paris Declaration-related priority objectives. Since then, explicit reference has been made to those across various EU reference documents (e.g. Erasmus+ annual work programmes, ET2020 joint (2015) report⁶⁹ that also sets other types of priorities Erasmus+ aligns with, etc.).

At programme level, the definitions set in the Programme guide⁷⁰ refer to social inclusion in the light of measures and activities aimed to address the following at the individual, organisation and system levels:

- disability (i.e. participants with special needs) or health problems:
- educational difficulties: young people with learning difficulties; early school-leavers; low qualified adults; young people with poor school performance;
- economic obstacles: people with a low standard of living, in long-term unemployment or poverty etc.;

⁶⁸ Declaration on 'Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education', http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20160316-paris-declaration-education_en

⁶⁹ 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) - New priorities for European cooperation in education and training. Available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215(02)&from=EN)

⁷⁰ i.e. the 2016 Erasmus+ Programme has been considered here. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide/2016-version_en

- cultural differences: immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families; people belonging to a national or ethnic minority; people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties;
- social obstacles: people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.;
- geographical obstacles: people from remote or rural areas; problem zones; areas with poor facilities).
- Social inclusion-related measures are present over the three fields (education and training, youth and sport) and levels of intervention (individual, organisation and system) of the programme.

That being said, the social dimension of the programme is currently not clearly apparent in the legal basis nor in its general objectives.

In 2016, the programme has for instance:

- expanded the scope of the OLS (KA1 supporting tool) to refugees⁷¹: the aim is to address circa 100,000 refugees over three years via the tool, on a voluntary basis and free of charge for them. The initiative is open to individual refugees, organisations supporting refugees and Erasmus+ beneficiary institutions/organisations;
- devoted over € 200 million to the development of new social inclusion education and youth policy approaches and practices through Erasmus+ KA2 transnational partnerships;
- launched targeted KA3 calls:
 - KA3 Support for policy reform – Social inclusion through education, training and youth call⁷²: €13 million allocated for the specific purpose of disseminating, replicating and upscaling existing good social inclusion practices at grass-root level
 - KA3 multi-sector call for European policy experimentations): of which € 14 million were devoted to support policy experimentations focusing on Paris Declaration/social inclusion issues.

In addition to the above, additional ad hoc measures were already in place under KA1 in the HE and Youth fields. These notably include:

- Top-up grants for HE students from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. other than those with special needs) including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants: this takes the form of a single monthly amount which is jointly determined by individual national authorities and NAs. This varies between €100 and €200 per month depending on the programme countries. Top-up grants are also offered to students from outermost Programme Countries and regions.
- Extra funding for special needs support: student and staff with special needs (i.e. physical, mental or health-related situation that requires ad hoc support to make their mobility experience possible) can receiving an increased grant

⁷¹ The objective of this initiative is to support the efforts of EU Member States to integrate refugees into Europe's education and training systems, and ensure their skills development.

⁷² Eligible projects should meet at least of the following objectives: Preventing radicalisation and promoting democratic values, fundamental rights, intercultural understanding and active citizenship and/or fostering inclusion of disadvantaged learners including those with migrant backgrounds while preventing and combating discriminatory practices.

- Other more practical measures exist such as the EC recommendations on the inclusion of HE students and staff with physical, mental or related conditions which set out recommendations for NAs to facilitate the participation of these target groups in the programme
- Ad hoc support and funding are also made available in the youth field: Erasmus+ can for instance fund 100% of costs (e.g. personal assistant, additional medical care, etc.) to enable people with a disability to take part in mobility. It also funds exceptional costs incurred when running a mobility project with young people with fewer opportunities, in addition to the regular organisational support⁷³.

In line with the above, the evaluation identified the following points as aspects that could be further enhanced in the future.

- The links between Erasmus+ actions and EU-level challenges is not always presented in a sufficiently clear and explicit way:
 - The description of the programme's actions (programme guide⁷⁴), though detailed on a number of points⁷⁵, does not explicitly state the type of challenges⁷⁶ the actions can help address. It is felt this is a gap that would be worth considering.
- The programme's objectives are ambitious but the extent to which all are achievable over time is questioned:
 - The shift towards more social inclusion priorities is generally perceived as a commendable step forward by most interviewees. Meanwhile, the appropriateness of the budget allocated as yet to social inclusion actions was questioned at some occasions across interviews. It is however to be noted that reference was most commonly made to the above-mentioned KA3 call launched on social inclusion and to the ad hoc KA1 measures in higher education to a lesser extent. For around one quarter of those interviewees, the latter (KA3 call in particular) was often perceived as too modest to effectively achieve tangible impact. Overall, it is also to be noted that a vast majority of interviewees at national level had either no opinion or no sufficient knowledge on those actions. This suggests that this is an aspect that would merit further attention at programme level in the future.

The following is to be added on the latter point. In addition to a possible lack of or insufficient communication at EC and national level (via NAs or NAUs) on the existing opportunities to address this group of people findings of the evaluation of the effectiveness criterion (for details, see 6.3 and 6.8) show that addressing the most disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups and measuring the impact of programme's actions at their level is an area that is lagging behind at the moment. According to the data available, findings indeed reveal that the level of participation of disadvantaged learners differs between sectors (see 6.3) whilst several definitions co-exist within the programme. This causes difficulties in measuring participation of this target group

⁷³ Extracted from Erasmus+ Programme guide 2016, available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/awp/docs/c-2015-6151.pdf

⁷⁴ The programme guide is understood as a key source of information and first entry point for (potential) applicants or beneficiaries. It is to be noted that in some cases (e.g. KA3 calls for Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects and support for policy reforms) priorities are drafted ad hoc.

⁷⁵ Detailed information is for instance supplied on the aims of individual actions, their key features (including target beneficiaries, type of activities they can support, conditions for eligibility, etc.) and expected results, etc.

⁷⁶ To take a recent example, the 2017 programme guide refers to the European Solidarity Corps in the youth sector (part describing EVS). This is briefly presented as a means to help 'resolve challenging situations across the European Union and beyond' without specifying the latter.

actions. Data also suggests that where the programme manages to reach out to disadvantaged, it often struggles to reach those most disadvantaged. Overall, this suggests that more efforts are to be put on this dimension both communication- and monitoring-wise.

This concurs with key findings of the DG DECVO evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014)⁷⁷. These notably highlight that '*DG EAC and EACEA should monitor the performance of Erasmus+ and other EU support to partner countries against clear performance targets for inclusiveness [in HE]*'. The need for getting a commonly agreed definition in the area is also emphasised, also in the light of contributing to the achievement of UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development social inclusion-related goals.

With regard to findings collated at **national level**, similarities were found with those outlined above at the EU level. The alignment of Erasmus+ objectives with national policies and related objectives is for instance confirmed by a vast majority of respondents (i.e. key informants and respondents to the programme agencies and experts surveys).

Findings of the experts survey reveal for instance that most respondents consider that the projects funded generally align well (from high to average alignment) with both EU and national policy priorities. Experts also felt that there has been an improvement on this matter between Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes (i.e. in the fields of education and training and youth). Views from interviewees (national level) are however more mixed and varied between types of respondents and sectors. Stakeholders interviewed were in general more complimentary on the alignment of the programme with national challenges than policymakers in VET, adult learning, HE and youth. In the school education sector, the share of policymakers with a strong positive feeling of the alignment was conversely slightly higher. The most noticeable difference was found in the sports field where no stakeholders and a small share of policymakers see Erasmus+ as strongly relevant to addressing the national challenges.

These findings corroborate those of NAU reports. Most National Authorities consider that Erasmus+ is relevant to country needs. The reports indicate that Erasmus+ objectives are well aligned with national and/or institutional priorities in the fields of education and/or youth⁷⁸. Several reports (e.g. EE, IE, NL, NO, SI) value the flexibility of Erasmus+ objectives: those are considered broad enough to make it possible to address different ongoing or emerging challenges at EU and/or national level. However, some countries (e.g. DE, HU, LV, LT, SI and SK) ask for more flexibility to allow the programme to adapt better to local or national needs. Hungary and Lithuania mention for instance that this is particularly relevant in the youth sector. The German report considers that tender priorities should be formulated in a more targeted manner and be regularly aligned with societal realities. It adds that it should be possible to set national priorities to allow for a better response to the needs of national target groups.

A small number of reports⁷⁹ also refer to needs that could be further addressed, including the objectives connected to the Paris Declaration and prevention of radicalisation, traineeships and opportunities to enhance employability skills, transversal skills, and

⁷⁷ Particip (2017) Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014).

⁷⁸ The NAU reports were meant to cover Erasmus+ decentralised actions and could, on an optional basis, also discuss centralised ones where considered appropriate. In practice the review showed Jean Monnet has been discussed to a very limited extent while the sport field has not been covered in any reports. .

⁷⁹ BEnl, FR, LU, SE, SK.

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

Besides the programme's alignment to policy priorities and adaptability to ongoing or emerging socioeconomic challenges at both EU and national levels, the question of the **responsiveness of Erasmus+ to the needs of stakeholders and sectors** was examined (Section 4.3).

Key findings from various sources (key informant interviews, programme agencies survey, programme data analysis and case studies) suggest that the programme is well suited to attract a **wide range of target audiences** and groups across the fields it covers. It is particularly suitable for reaching out to learners with different profiles, with one noticeable exception: disadvantaged groups. Despite the specific attention paid to the need to widen participation of disadvantaged target groups, evidence suggests that this is clearly an area where there is room for improvement. A number of barriers to participation of these groups is evidenced. At organisational level for instance, there is a prevailing view (most interviewees approached through key informant interviews and case studies) that Erasmus+ has limited potential to reach those organisations that address problems specific to this group of people (Section 4.4).

Similar findings emerge from both the review of NAUs reports and the analysis of the OPC. Some NAUs reports (e.g. SI, NO) also discuss whether Erasmus+ focuses too much on the needs in the education and training sector to the detriment of those in the youth sector, and more specifically on employability (see details in standalone reports synthesis).

Besides the suitability of the programme to target various audiences, findings (as discussed in the present report) reveal that the programme is both well-known and perceived as increasingly attractive to an array of organisations, active in the different sectors within the programme's scope. On a less positive note it is found that the extent to which Erasmus+ is capable of reaching out to potential organisations often varies (most remarkably regarding the field of youth) across the different fields. This is especially visible when looking at the quality and innovative capacities of applications⁸⁰ or the competition to receive grants.

In the youth field, evidence suggests that the programme is often perceived as more suitable to larger organisations while the smaller ones often don't have the knowledge, experience, and furthermore financial and human resource capacity a successful application would require. This tendency expressed by a large number of national key informant interviews is also noted across the NAU reports (e.g. CY, FI). This is especially visible when looking at the quality and innovative capacities of applications⁸¹ or the competition to receive grants.

When looking deeper into the suitability of Erasmus+ to **address the needs of various stakeholders**, the analysis shows that the needs of different stakeholders and sectors are generally well addressed. However, the extent to which the programme is responsive to the needs of the stakeholders displays some variation from sector to sector,

⁸⁰ Supporting innovative projects and approaches is among the key priority objectives and actions of Erasmus+. The capacities of the programme to identify and fund innovative projects and to be ultimately perceived as a programme that funds such projects is an additional layer to the analysis of the relevance of the programme, notably in regard to its capacity to be attractive.

⁸¹ Supporting innovative projects and approaches is among the key priority objectives and actions of Erasmus+. The capacities of the programme to identify and fund innovative projects and to be ultimately perceived as a programme that funds such projects is an additional layer to the analysis of the relevance of the programme, notably in regard to its capacity to be attractive.

geographical location and sector, level of intervention (individual, organisational or system-level) and organisational size (Section 4.4).

A number of constraints that present some limitations in the extent to which the programme addresses the needs of stakeholders were identified mostly through key informant interviews (national level).

- At the individual level: while the programme is appealing to a number of individuals (learners/youth and staff) in regard to the opportunities for competences and self-development it can offer, financial barriers, administrative burdens, and geographical disparities are often reported. The latter was in particular experienced in the higher education sector where a majority of interviewees noticed that funding appears to be more crucial for HEIs based in 'poorer' Member States.
- At the organisation level: the programme in its current configuration (where it offers less room for small-scale projects than in the past – as illustrated above) fails to effectively address and reach grassroots-level organisations and does not sufficiently take into account their diversity.
- Many stakeholders believe that funding under the programme has become highly competitive, making it accessible only to the best and most experienced/largest organisations⁸².
- With regard to the Jean Monnet programme, findings (see evaluation report volume 3 for details) furthermore suggest that the underpinning need for an EU programme that funds teaching and related research predominantly in higher education about the EU in the current form is not clear cut. Higher education is the sector that already offers most opportunities for teaching about the EU and it is also the sector in which there are most knowledgeable students about the EU. There are other target groups such schools which have lower opportunities to access teaching about the EU or who have much lower levels of understanding of the EU that should be addressed in the future call for proposals.

The extent to which stakeholders' needs would not be (or inadequately) addressed in the light of discontinued actions⁸³ was also discussed (Section 4.4). In general, findings of the different sources considered (including the NAU reports) suggest positive sentiments about the integrated nature of the programme. Regarding the small number of (LLP and YiA) actions that were discontinued, concerns were most commonly expressed by both key informants at national level and across NAU reports (e.g. CY, ES, SI, SK), about the following.

- Discontinued learner mobility actions in school education and adult learning (to a small extent): in the current configuration of Erasmus+, this is rather indirectly under KA2. Many key informants argue for concrete coverage under KA1.
- Discontinued YiA local youth initiatives: those were considered to be very helpful (notably by all interviewed EU-level key stakeholder representatives active in the field) as opposed to current transnational youth initiatives, which are seen as too complex for informal groups of young people to apply.

⁸² I.e. this prevents access to the programme to potential newcomers, hence reducing the number of people and organisations who may benefit from a European experience.

⁸³ The merger of the predecessor programmes into a single integrated programme has led the EC to reduce and streamline the overall number of actions and activities supported in the predecessor programmes.

Findings of the DG DEVCO evaluation⁸⁴ furthermore refer to the following which was not taken on board or differently under Erasmus+ (for details, see DG DEVCO evaluation final report (volume 1)):

- Erasmus+ programme does not currently enable all HEIs to both send and receive students under the mobility components as it was previously the case under former Erasmus Mundus Action 2 for 2013 and 2014 projects
- Erasmus+ represents a step back on the regional component, as the participation in the capacity-building action of partner countries and their HEIs is more limited: the evaluation explains that ALFA III included minimum requirements for the participation of Latin American HEIs in projects – at least four LA countries (Lot 1) or 16 LA countries (Lot 2). This promoted the creation of networks, and also promoted synergies contributing to HE regional integration. Currently under Erasmus+, the number of HEIs in programme and partners countries has to be equal.

Moving to the **visibility of the programme**⁸⁵, results from the sources reviewed (social media analysis, national agencies survey, NAU reports, Eurobarometer survey and outputs of the Erasmus+ 30 years anniversary campaign) show that Erasmus+ is well known to the audience in general and very visible especially among the young population. Its large visibility is also confirmed by the benchmark analysis with other EU programmes such as Horizon 2020, Europe for Citizens or EU Aid Volunteer, which shows Erasmus+ posts largely exceed the latter (Section 4.5).

According to both OPC and NAU reports findings, the unification of the different programmes under Erasmus+ (the programme's visibility is also discussed in Section 6.9) is considered to have contributed to a greater visibility of the programme overall. However, for a small portion (estimated less than 10 %) of key informants (national level) Erasmus+ still remains viewed as associated with the mobility experience of HE students. A few NAU reports (e.g. DE, FI, and RO) observe that participation in Erasmus+ is lower in primary education and in early childhood education and care and link this to a lower awareness of the programme in these sectors.

Lastly, the suitability of the programme for **addressing hard-to-reach groups or specific disadvantaged groups**⁸⁶ was also assessed (Section 4.6). Despite some progress made in the programme design it can be concluded that there is a dissonance between often ambitious programme and project objectives and actual development of suitable project outputs, specifically to the disadvantaged. Similarly findings emerge from the OPC and the NAU reports. Most NAU reports welcome the additional funding available for disadvantaged participants but do not consider it sufficient on its own. Some

⁸⁴ Particip (2017) Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014).

⁸⁵ The integrated nature of the programme jointly with its branding was, among other things, expected to offer it a clear visibility across the programme countries and beyond. Jointly with the other evaluation questions covered, assessing the visibility of the programme is a good indicator to inform the programme's relevance and capacity to be attractive.

⁸⁶ These terms are understood as interchangeable. As per the 2016 Erasmus+ Programme Guide (p. 9), they comprise individuals with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities such as: disability (i.e. participants with special needs); educational difficulties (e.g. low achievers, early school leavers, etc.); economic obstacles (people with a low standard of living, low income, unemployed, etc.); cultural differences (e.g. immigrants or refugees); health problems; social obstacles (people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, etc.); people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky behaviours; people in a precarious situation; geographical obstacles (people from remote or rural areas, etc.).

countries (e.g. FR, NL) call for more clarity and consistency on the definitions used and the rules applying to disadvantaged participants in Erasmus+.

In this area, findings of the Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLFG) evaluation furthermore reveal that the initiative has very limited suitability to address the needs of the disadvantaged who are risk averse not only to go abroad for a full master's programme but also to take up loans (even where repayments are not income contingent).

4.2 The programme's alignment with EU and national policy priorities

This subsection addresses the following evaluation question:

To what extent are current and emerging key socioeconomic needs and challenges that Europe is facing reflected in the policy priorities, objectives and actions/activities of the programme?

The assessment of this evaluation question required to consider two main dimensions (and levels of intervention), namely: the relevance of the programme in terms of its alignment with key EU but also national policy priorities in the fields it covers (education and training, youth and sport). In both cases this also comprised assessing the programme's suitability to adapt to current and emerging socioeconomic needs and challenges.

The information set out in this section has been structured accordingly: presenting first key findings applying to the alignment of Erasmus+ with EU policy priorities and then focusing on national-level ones.

4.2.1 The programme's alignment with EU policy priorities

Overall, the analysis of data collected reveals that Erasmus+ policy priorities, objectives and actions/activities align to a high extent with EU-level policy priorities set to address current and emerging socioeconomic needs and challenges in education, training, youth and sport.

Both the general and specific objectives of the programme mirror those policy priorities, as both the review of the Erasmus+ programme guide and subsequent work programme (for details see Annex 1) and complementary sources (see listed in table below) confirmed. These findings also revealed a few areas where the relevance of the programme could be possibly maximised.

The assessment of this evaluation question has drawn upon five main indicators and has been informed by different sources, as the following table outlines. Key findings are presented thereafter.

Table 4.1 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Alignment between programme objectives and EU priorities	Desk research – review of programme documentation and EU strategic documents	 Both general and specific objectives of the programme mirror to a high extent policy priorities defined for the education and training, youth and sport fields in most key EU-level strategic documents
Share of activities funded which are aligned with EU priorities	Programme data analysis – review of projects funded per priority	 Most projects reviewed align with EU priorities. The top 10 topics covered (>50,000 projects) show clear alignment. However, topics rather refer to broad EU objectives rather than more specific ones
	Mapping of selected project outputs – share of reviewed projects focusing on key EU priorities	 All Erasmus+ projects covered by the sample have a topic coverage that aligns with EU-level priorities/challenges. However, as above, topics rather refer to broad EU objectives rather than more specific ones
Share of interviewees who agree that the programme is relevant to the EU priorities	Scoping interviews and key informant interviews – EU level	 Most interviewees see strong alignment with key EU priorities – EU 2020, ET 2020, and Youth Strategy primarily. They also positively rate E+ subsequent adjustments since 2014
Share of programme agencies' key staff who consider that there is a strong alignment between key EU priorities and (centralised or decentralised) projects funded	Programme agencies survey	 Most respondents see strong to medium alignment with most of the EU priorities
Share of experts assessing projects who consider that a high share of projects funded focus on issues high on the EU policy agenda	Experts survey	 Most respondents estimate that a high share of projects funded align to high or average extent with EU-level priorities

The **programme guide and subsequent work programmes** are closely linked since the programme guide has been drafted in accordance with abovementioned EU-level policies. Such an approach allows to continuously adapt the programme to emerging priorities.

Similarly to its predecessors but in a streamlined manner, Erasmus+ is aimed at supporting the development of actions, cooperation and tools linked to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and its flagship initiatives, in particular the implementation of country-specific recommendations and of the policy priorities agreed at European level in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in education and training and in youth⁸⁷ and more generally in the light of revised ET 2020 priorities for 2016-2018 as set out in the ET2020 joint report.⁸⁸ It also supports work linked to the priorities of European external actions and to those of the EU Work Plan for Sport, in particular grassroots sport.

⁸⁷ i.e. as specified in the 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) - New priorities for European cooperation in education and training. Available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215(02)&from=EN)

⁸⁸ i.e. as specified in the 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) - New priorities for European cooperation in education and training. Available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215(02)&from=EN)

Erasmus+ and the revised ET2020 priorities

- The new set of ET 2020 priority actions for 2016-2018 and the reviewed organisation of the working groups (WG) set up in the context of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) call for increased synergies with Erasmus+. The programme is being used for anchoring the preparation for policy experimentations in the WG and using evidence gathered through excellent projects. Six WG focusing on thematic areas where synergistic approaches⁸⁹ are expected with Erasmus+ have been set up for the period⁹⁰. Note: the impact of revised ET 2020 priorities on Erasmus+ has not been specifically assessed as part of this evaluation.
- The revised ET 2020 priorities also put particular emphasis on enhanced support to transnational cooperation in order to gain mutual learning about practices including innovative approaches.

The increased intention to 'put the programme at the service of EU policy priorities⁹¹' is made explicit through several articles forming the legal basis (i.e. Articles 9, 10, 15 and to a lesser extent 16⁹²). Tangible examples include for instance:

- the continuous adjustment of the programme to ongoing or emerging challenges and related political priorities:
 - opening-up of the OLS to refugees;
 - call for enhanced cross-sectoral cooperation and ad hoc funding allocation⁹³ to tackle radicalisation and support the integration of migrants in line with the Paris Declaration⁹⁴;
 - stronger emphasis on skills and competences of relevance to the labour market (clear linkages between Erasmus+⁹⁵ and the New Skills Agenda; launching of ErasmusPro⁹⁶), etc.

⁸⁹ E.g. 'Strengthening teacher training and education by using the opportunities of new technologies'; 'VET teachers and trainers in work-based learning/apprenticeship (VET)'; 'Follow-up of policy experimentations related to the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of adult learning policies and provision'; 'Employment and Skills: validation of informal and non-formal learning in Education and Training', etc.

⁹⁰ i.e. WG on schools, VET, Modernisation of higher education, adult learning, digital skills and competences and Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

⁹¹ As noted in the Erasmus+ work programme 2015.

⁹² Respectively dealing with support for policy reforms in education and training; Jean Monnet; youth and sport.

⁹³ As part of the €400 million envelope for the 2016 Erasmus+ cooperation projects, priority has been given to those projects tackling the objectives of the Paris Declaration. For 2017, a €300 million increase (in comparison to the 2016 allocation) was adopted. The available funds for 2017 will be partly used for implementing the European Solidarity Corps, in which European young people could volunteer to help in crisis situations.

⁹⁴ Declaration on 'Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education', http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20160316-paris-declaration-education_en

⁹⁵ E.g. the Sector Skills Alliances in the VET sector⁹⁵ do align well with several priorities set out in the New Skills Agenda.

In many regards, the above was reflected in the information collated, in particular via a number of respondents comprising: key informants interviewed (at EU⁹⁷ and national⁹⁸ level) and respondents to two surveys, namely NA/EACEA staff members and experts in charge of assessing applications and projects' final reports.

A first set of general and comparable insights on the perceived degree of alignment of the programme's actions and/or projects was obtained through the **programme agencies⁹⁹ and experts surveys**. As the following figures illustrate, findings from both surveys are along the same lines: Erasmus+ is perceived as well (or very well aligned) with EU priorities by a high share of respondents.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below present the perceptions of programme agencies' respondents on the above in the **education and training and youth** sectors. These show that a clear alignment (from strong to medium extent) is perceived between the programme and the different EU priorities in the fields.

In education and training, the top three areas where strongest alignment is perceived are:

- improving the quality of education and training: 74 % of respondents perceiving this as strong alignment;
- increasing the number of learners and staff who spend some time abroad: 70 % of respondents in the same category as above;
- opening up education and training to the wider world: 68 % of respondents in the same category as above.

Conversely, least alignment (though to a relative extent) is found in the following areas:

- increasing cognitive skills in reading, maths and science: 28 % only consider strong alignment in this area while 24 % claimed they 'don't know';
- increasing HE attainment: though rated as strongly aligning for 44 % of respondents, 33 % claimed they 'don't know'.

Besides, the following results are worth being noted:

- capacity building in HE in partner countries: though rated as strongly aligning for 39 % of respondents, 39 % claimed they 'don't know'. The latter share is the highest among all proposed areas of possible alignment.

One should nevertheless interpret this with caution. Indeed, considering that the international dimension of higher education is a rather specific part of the programme, this may not be necessarily well known by all respondents – also suggesting potential need to better promote this strand of the programme. The high share of 'don't know' responses may be attributable to this factor.

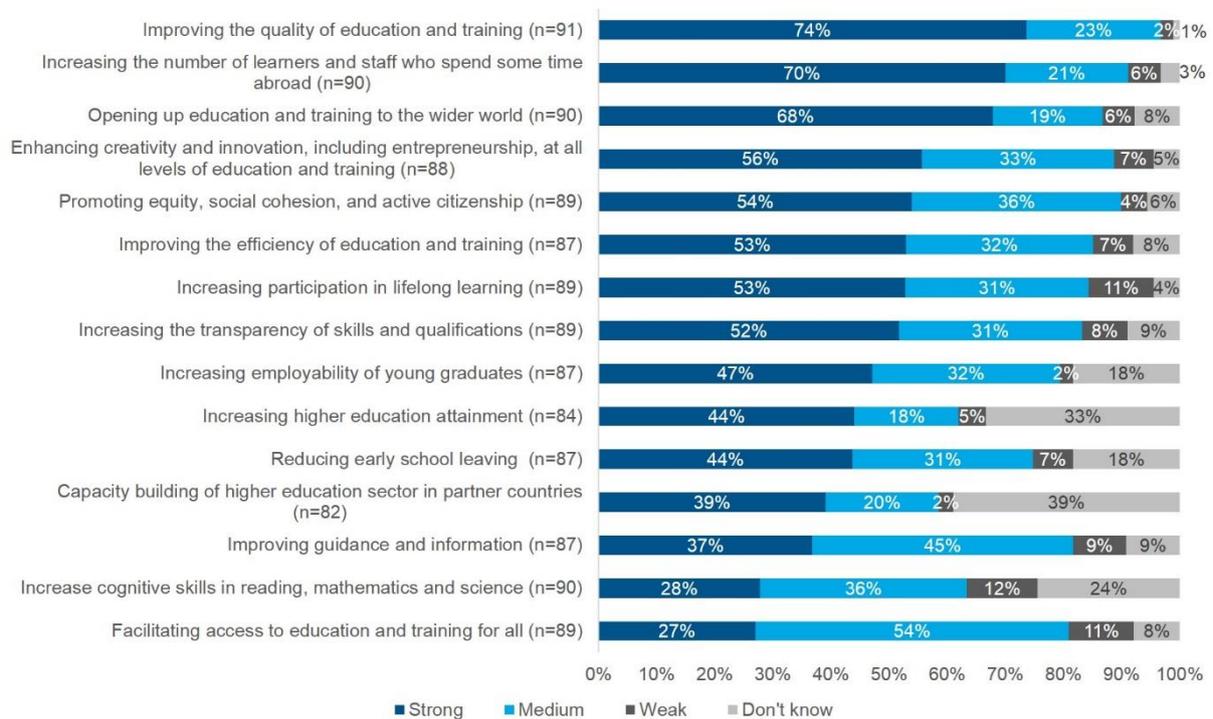
⁹⁶ A new dedicated activity within the programme to support long-duration placements for apprentices abroad.

⁹⁷ Ten EC-level officials and 12-EU level organisations.

⁹⁸ 125 key informant interviews (comprising 115 policymakers and stakeholders and 10 managers of national mobility or cooperation schemes of a similar nature as those offered under Erasmus+).

⁹⁹ The programme agencies survey launched for the purpose of the evaluation was addressed to national agencies (NAs) and the EACEA's staff members. For further details on the different surveys that helped inform the evaluation, see Section 3.

Figure 4.1 Perceived degree of alignment of E+ actions and projects in E&T with key EU policy priorities



Source: ICF (programme agencies survey)

Respondents were also asked to compare the degree of alignment of both Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes with EU policies of current and predecessor programmes (for further details, see Annex 4). Findings reveal that Erasmus+ is felt to have stronger alignment than its predecessors in particular in the following areas:

- Opening up education and training to the wider world: 64 % of respondents perceive stronger alignment;
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education: 61 % of respondents in the same category as above;
- Increasing the number of learners and staff who spend some time abroad: 56% of respondents in the same category as above. 28% feel the alignment is the same and 16% that it is weaker.

Though also showing stronger alignment of Erasmus+, results are more balanced in the following areas.

- Improving the quality of education and training: 52 % of respondents perceive stronger alignment as opposed to 44 % who feel that alignment is the same. The remainder (4 %) answered 'I don't know'.
- Capacity building of higher education in partner countries: 51 % of respondents perceive stronger alignment as opposed to 43 % who feel that alignment is the same. The remainder (5 %) answered 'I don't know'. Note: this finding draws on a smaller sample of respondents (56) than that for the question above (see Fig. 4.1), strictly applying to Erasmus+ (81). It can be fairly assumed that the question about comparing alignment among the two programming periods was primarily addressed by most knowledgeable respondents.

- Increasing employability of young graduates: 51 % of respondents perceive stronger alignment as opposed to 40 % who feel that alignment is the same. The remainder (8 %) answered 'I don't know'.

In one area ('Increasing the transparency of qualifications and skills'), 48 % of respondents estimate that there is stronger alignment of Erasmus+ while 48 % rather think that the alignment is the same as in the past.

Conversely, areas where alignment is felt to be the same as in the past by most respondents include:

- improving guidance and information: 63 % of respondents see similar alignment as opposed to 32 % who rather see stronger alignment of Erasmus+;
- increasing cognitive skills in reading, mathematics and science: 60 % versus 34 % (same categories as above);
- facilitating access to education and training for all: 57 % versus 32 % (same categories as above);
- increasing higher education attainment: 58 % versus 37 % (same categories as above);
- reducing early school leaving: 53 % versus 43 % (same categories as above).

Lastly, findings are more contrasted in one area (increasing participation in lifelong learning): while 55 % of respondents estimate that alignment is the same as in the past, 22 % and 21 % replied that alignment is stronger and weaker respectively.

For further details on data, see Annex 4.

Those findings overall suggest that:

- the alignment of Erasmus+ with EU-level priorities is positively rated in a number of areas;
- a continuity between the two programming periods is observed in several areas: while there are a few clear areas where alignment is seen as stronger under Erasmus+, data is more balanced in several other areas (i.e. with rather similar shares of respondents estimating that alignment is stronger or the same);
- there is room for improvement in a few other areas (e.g. increasing participation in lifelong learning; increasing cognitive skills in reading, mathematics and science; increasing HE attainment or facilitating access to education and training for all). The data shows that those areas are both perceived among those least aligned with EU priorities under Erasmus+ and those where most respondents estimate that the alignment is similar to in the past. As noted above, figures are even more contrasted in the case of 'Increasing participation in lifelong learning'.

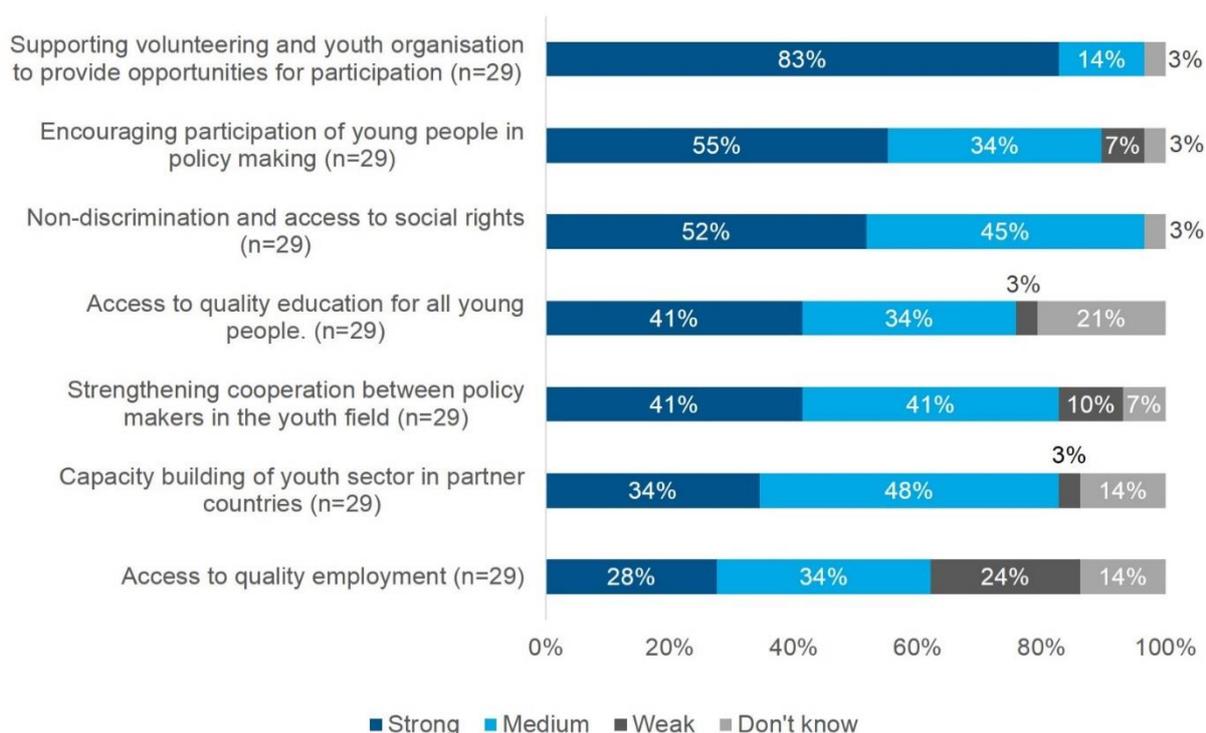
Similar insights are also available for the **youth field**. Those are outlined in Figure 4.2. They overall show that, as for the education and training field, a clear alignment is perceived with EU priorities. The top three areas showing the strongest alignment are:

- support to volunteering and youth organisations: 83 % of respondents rated it as 'strong' while 14 % saw 'medium' alignment (the remainder (3%) replied 'don't know');
- engaging participation of young people in policymaking: 55 % perceive strong alignment as opposed to 34 % and 7 % considering the alignment as 'medium' and 'weak' respectively (4 % replied 'don't know');
- non-discrimination and access to social rights: 52 % perceive strong alignment. However 45 % rather saw it as 'medium' (3 % replied 'don't know').

Conversely, areas where respondents' views were more mixed and, in particular, where the smallest share of responses suggesting 'strong' alignment is found concern:

- access to quality employment: only 28 % of respondents strongly agreed while 14 % claimed they 'don't know';
- capacity building of youth sector in partner countries: only 34 % of respondents strongly agreed while 14 % claimed they 'don't know' and 48 % perceived medium alignment.

Figure 4.2 Perceived degree of alignment of E+ actions and projects in youth with key EU policy priorities



Source: ICF (programme agencies survey)

Comparing Erasmus+ alignment with that of its predecessor programme (YiA), it was felt that Erasmus+ is doing better in particular in one main area: 'Strengthening cooperation between policymakers and the youth field' (strongly perceived by 58 % of respondents).

In the vast majority of other areas, the alignment of Erasmus+ with EU priorities was considered to be rather similar to that perceived under the Youth in Action (YiA) programme. This is particularly marked in:

- non-discrimination and access to social rights: 81 % of respondents considered that alignment is the same as opposed to 12 % and 8 % believing that it is stronger or weaker respectively;
- access to quality employment: 68 % of respondents considered that alignment is the same as opposed to 24 % and 8 % believing that it is stronger or weaker respectively;
- access to quality education for all young people: 68 % of respondents considered that alignment is the same as opposed to 27 % and 5 % believing that it is stronger or weaker respectively.

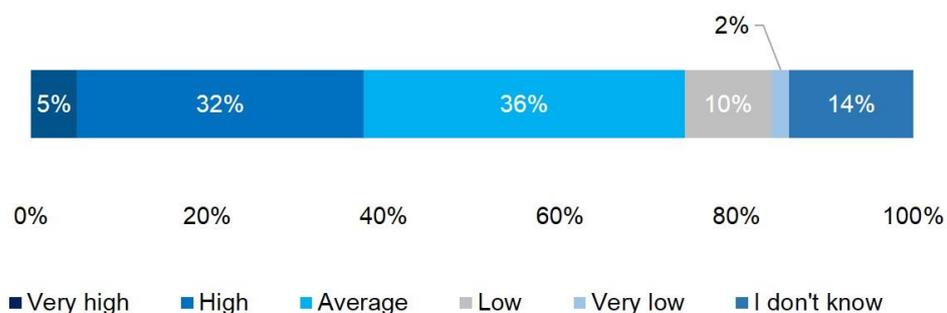
For further details on data, see Annex 4.

Despite the variations observed, respondents' perception is that Erasmus+ is overall considered better aligned with EU policies than its predecessors in both education and training and youth areas, as the results of the **experts survey** outline in Figures 4.3 and 4.4.

As Figure 4.3 shows, the vast majority of respondents (73 % as opposed to 52 % in the case of predecessor programmes) estimate that a high share of the projects funded that they assessed align with EU-level priorities. Nevertheless, variations are found among those respondents in terms of the degree of alignment perceived. Indeed, the group distributes as follows: 37 % believe that the projects assessed aligned with EU-level priorities to a high (32 %) or very high extent (5 %). The remainder (36 %), though positive, rather consider this alignment as average. Notwithstanding this, improvements are found in each of the categories above in comparison with predecessor programmes, as Figure 4.4 further illustrates.

Another interesting finding regards the share of experts who have no opinion (ticked 'do not know'). This regards 14 % of respondents in the case of Erasmus+. The initial assumption was that this result might signify the need for more guidance for the experts on this point. However, the survey results tend to contradict this as over 80 % replied that the guidance received was 'very useful', and 58.8 %¹⁰⁰ that the definition of the award criteria and accompanying guidance for assessors had improved in comparison to predecessor programmes. Though the exact reasons for this gap would require further assessment (beyond the current evaluation), improvements are noted in this area if one compares this survey result with that for the predecessor programmes (38 % v 14 %). In both cases, the microanalysis furthermore shows that NA external experts are the least knowledgeable; those working for both the EACEA and NAs are the most knowledgeable.

Figure 4.3 Share of projects assessed under Erasmus+ addressing issues of relevance to the EU policy agenda (education and training, youth and sport) in 2014–2016

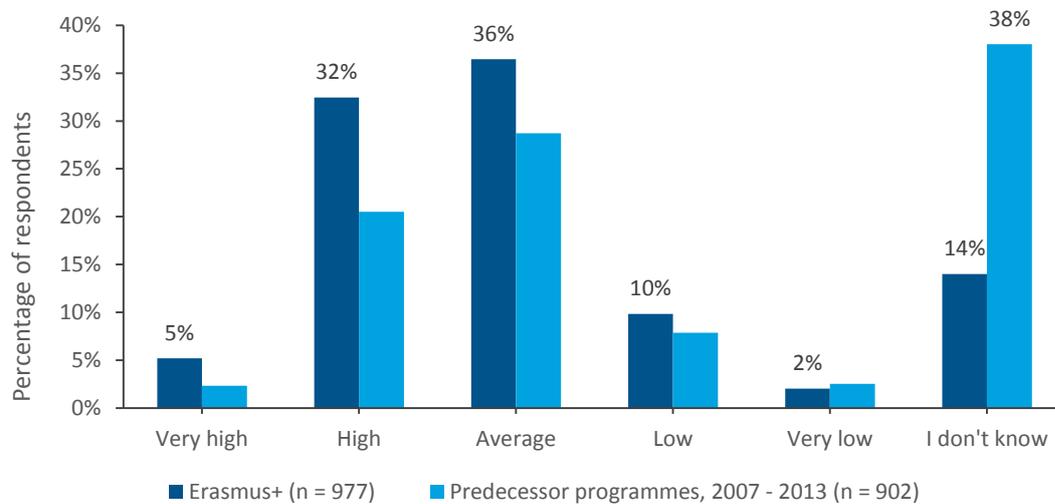


Source: ICF (based on experts survey)

As for the programme agencies survey, results suggest an improvement in the share of projects showing a very high to average alignment with issues high on the EU policy agenda between Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes. As Figure 4.4 below illustrates, most significant differences regard projects that are found to align to a high or average extent.

¹⁰⁰ The following question 'Has the new guidance under the Erasmus+ programme improved the way you now assess the applications/projects?' could be addressed by 63 % of the respondents. The remainder (37 %) did not know as they had only taken part in either Erasmus+ or predecessor programme(s).

Figure 4.4 Comparison between Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes: The share of projects that focus on issues that are high on the European policy agenda¹⁰¹



Source: ICF experts survey

In many regards, the positive sentiments above were echoed through **key informant interviews** (KIIs). A key finding from this source is that the vast majority of interviewees consider that the programme aligns well with key EU priorities (EU 2020, ET 2020, and the Youth Strategy primarily). With regard to the international dimension of the programme (in the higher education and youth fields¹⁰²), the alignment with key EU priorities (e.g. as set out in 2013 European Commission Communication 'European higher education in the world'), though more scarcely discussed¹⁰³, is positively viewed too. The review of the evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)¹⁰⁴ also shows explicit linkages between Erasmus+ priority objectives and key EU policy priorities in the area.

Most interviewees also feel that it has proven to be flexible in adjusting to new emerging issues. In this area, the annual work programme is perceived as a good lever to adapt to new priorities.

EU-level stakeholders in the school and HE sectors were particularly positive on the above. Views were more mixed among respondents active in the sport sector. In the fields of HE and VET the good alignment of the programme with the Modernisation of Higher Education Agenda and the New Skills Agenda was often valued. The increased attention paid to the latest developments (i.e. enhanced focus on apprenticeships/work-based learning, proposal of ErasmusPro to support apprentices' long-term mobility, etc.) aimed to help tackle youth unemployment and, in the field of adult education, low-skilled adults' insertion on the labour market was welcome too. In the same vein, examples

¹⁰¹ Note: the structure and types of actions being different under Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes the following is to be interpreted cautiously. This shows an improvement since the predecessor programmes.

¹⁰² i.e. supported through KA1 (e.g. *International credit mobility of individuals and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees in HE*), KA2 (*Capacity-building projects*) and KA3 (*Support to policy dialogue*).

¹⁰³ The vast majority of interviewees were either not knowledgeable or not directly involved on related actions.

¹⁰⁴ European Commission (DG DEVCO), evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014), 2017.

were often given for illustrating the flexibility of the programme to adapt to new socioeconomic challenges. Reference was often made to the Paris Declaration (calling for action at EU level to prevent and address radicalisation and violence and to support social inclusion through education, youth and sport), the adjustment of the programme to help address the refugee crisis or the related Erasmus+ KA3 call on policy experimentations on social inclusion through the three sectors.

Next to the findings above on individual perceptions, the alignment of the programme was also assessed against the topical coverage of EU-funded projects. For this purpose, the **programme database** as well as a selected number of **funded projects** were reviewed.

The programme database review enabled the evaluation team to cluster, based on the review of a large number of selected Erasmus+¹⁰⁵ and LLP¹⁰⁶-funded projects, the top 10 topics covered. Results show similarities in the topical coverage of both Erasmus+ and LLP mobility actions. Only the ordering differs among both programmes, as Table 4.2 shows.

Table 4.2 Key topics of mobility actions under the Erasmus+ and LLP programmes (top 10)

LLP mobility actions (based on actions COM02, GRU03, GRU13 and GRU14)		Erasmus+ mobility actions (based on actions KA101, KA102, KA104 and KA105)			
Topic	No. of related projects	% of total	Topic	No. of related projects	% of total
1 Teaching and learning of foreign languages	45,408	53 %	Social inclusion/equal opportunities	7,518	30 %
2 Curricula/teaching methods	15,658	18 %	Curricula/teaching methods	6,190	25 %
3 Intercultural/intergenerational education and (lifelong)learning	6,596	8 %	Teaching and learning of foreign languages	5,747	23 %
4 ICT – new technologies – digital competences	6,173	7 %	Skills and labour market issues	5,493	22 %
5 Creativity and culture	5,850	7 %	Youth (participation, youth work, youth policy)	5,268	21 %
6 EU citizenship	5,444	6 %	Intercultural/intergenerational education and (lifelong)learning	4,855	20 %
7 Social inclusion/equal opportunities	4,141	5 %	EU citizenship	4,806	19 %
8 Skills and labour market issues	3,364	4 %	Creativity and culture	4,743	19 %
9 Comparing educational	3,257	4 %	International cooperation,	3,495	14 %

¹⁰⁵ Erasmus+ topics are focused on schools, VET, adult learning and youth sectors (actions KA101, KA102, KA104 and KA105).

¹⁰⁶ LLP topics are focused on schools and the adult learning sector (actions COM02, GRU03, GRU13 and GRU14).

	systems			international relations, development cooperation		
10	European project management	1,688	2 %	ICT – new technologies – digital competences	3,245	13 %

Source: ICF calculations based on the EPlusLink and LLPLink

Note: Data included for all actions for which 'topic' information was available. LLP mobility actions include COM02, GRU03, GRU13 and GRU14, while Erasmus+ mobility actions include KA101, KA102, KA104 and KA105.

Similar findings are found on the topical coverage of cooperation actions. One of the most common topics for each programme relates to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The main differences between Erasmus+ and LLP cooperation projects considered is that the former were more likely to focus on skills and labour market issues, entrepreneurship and international cooperation while the latter more likely to focus on environmental topics, educational systems, and the linkages between education and working life.

Table 4.3 Key topics of cooperation actions under the Erasmus+ and LLP programmes (top 10)

LLP cooperation actions (based on COM06, COM07, COM13, GRU06, LEO04)				Erasmus+ cooperation actions (based on KA200, KA201, KA202, KA203, KA204, KA205, KA219)		
	Topic	No. of related projects	% of total	Topic	No. of related projects	% of total
1	EU citizenship	11,781	22 %	ICT – new technologies – digital competences	2,667	20 %
2	Teaching and learning of foreign languages	9,782	18 %	Curricula/teaching methods	2,418	18 %
3	Creativity and culture	9,511	18 %	Creativity and culture	1,466	11 %
4	Environment/sustainable development	8,990	17 %	Teaching and learning of foreign languages	1,417	11 %
5	ICT – new technologies – digital competences	7,914	15 %	Skills and labour market issues	1,372	10 %
6	Health and wellbeing	3,666	7 %	EU citizenship	1,232	9 %
7	Reinforcing links between education and working life	3,528	7 %	International cooperation, international relations, development cooperation	1,180	9 %
8	Comparing educational systems	2,889	5 %	Entrepreneurial learning – entrepreneurship education	1,171	9 %
9	Natural sciences	2,247	4 %	Intercultural/intergenerational education and (lifelong)learning	897	7 %
10	Sport	2,120	4 %	Health and wellbeing	676	5 %

Source: ICF calculations based on the EPlusLink and LLPLink

Note: Data included for all actions for which 'topic' information was available. LLP mobility actions include COM06, COM07, COM13, GRU06, LEO04, while Erasmus+ mobility actions include KA200, KA201, KA202, KA203, KA204, KA205, KA219.

This overall set of information is valuable to get a first general appreciation of the degree of alignment of funded projects both under Erasmus+ and (in this case) LLP. In many regards, it suggests an alignment of the latter with a number of overarching EU priorities (e.g. relating to fostering social inclusion/equal opportunities, EU citizenship, learners'/young people's employability, etc.). Meanwhile, the fact that the topical coverage of many of the projects above is at a rather broad level is somehow artificial and did not allow to get a finer overview of the more specific issues (e.g. early school leaving, widening participation of adult learners, etc.), for which the projects are funded.

Further insights were obtained through the **mapping of selected projects**. Related findings offered finer information to some extent. The most frequently encountered topic coverage per project and sectors was as follows.

- School education: ECEC participation, early school leaving and promotion of social inclusion.
- VET: promoting quality of VET and promoting entrepreneurship.
- HE: developing innovative pedagogies and promoting entrepreneurship. (Note: under Erasmus+, no Knowledge Alliances projects were reviewed as none was finalised when the review of selected projects was carried out by the evaluation team).
- Adult education: promoting social inclusion and increasing literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Youth: social inclusion, fostering volunteering and active citizenship.
- Sport: fostering volunteering.

Against these overall positive findings, a few reservations can however be pointed out.

- The links between Erasmus+ actions and EU-level challenges are not always presented in a sufficiently clear and explicit way: while the alignment of the programme with EU priorities is positively perceived, details on the alignment of funded projects with specific challenges or priorities were actually difficult to capture. In general, the topical coverage of the funded projects reviewed suggested an alignment with broad rather than specific objectives. Besides, the description of the programme's actions (programme guide), though detailed on a number of points¹⁰⁷, does not explicitly state the type of challenges¹⁰⁸ the actions can help address. This is somehow misleading as:
 - this fails to offer a solid enough basis to help effectively assess the relevance of the actions;
 - potential applicants (who may not be necessarily familiar with all EU-level priorities and challenges in their sector) may misinterpret the actual scope of given actions or miss potential funding opportunities due to lack of information.
- The programme's objectives are ambitious but the extent to which all are achievable over time is questioned. Overall the shift to more social inclusion-related priority actions is welcome. Meanwhile, Erasmus+ was (in particular in its first two years of implementation) often perceived¹⁰⁹ as more economic-oriented than its predecessors:

¹⁰⁷ Detailed information is for instance supplied on the aims of individual actions, their key features (including target beneficiaries, type of activities they can support, conditions for eligibility, etc.) and expected results, etc.

¹⁰⁸ To take a recent example, the 2017 Programme Guide refers to the European Solidarity Corps in the youth sector (part describing EVS). This is briefly presented as a means to help 'resolve challenging situations across the European Union and beyond' without specifying the latter.

¹⁰⁹ Key informant interviews and desk research.

- the programme had not foreseen any 'shadow' budget for the unexpected¹¹⁰. This has made it hard for the EC to find money when new pressing needs such as the migrant crisis or the Paris Declaration priority objectives arose;
 - the budget allocated to 'new' social inclusion priorities (e.g. in line with the Paris Declaration's priority objectives) may be too small to achieve any tangible impact;
 - the extent to which the programme can realistically address the number of (growing) overarching EU-level challenges over time is questioned.
- Lack of comprehensive view on the priorities, i.e. gap in knowledge/clear relationship between the priorities and what gets funded/selected, in particular at decentralised level.

In addition to the above, the following consideration is worth being outlined in the field of youth. Across different sources (key informant interviews and desk research¹¹¹) reviewed, there was a fairly common sentiment that though the Erasmus+ breadth allows for the incorporation of new priorities, the programme is now more difficult to steer (compared to the previous Youth in Action (YiA) programme). In short, the sector seems to have gained visibility but lost in terms of ability to shape the activities of the programme.

4.2.2 The programme's alignment with national priorities

Similarly to the findings presented above, the analysis of data collected confirms a high level of alignment of the programme with national policy priorities in general.

The assessment of this evaluation question has drawn upon four main indicators and been informed by different sources, as the following table outlines. Key findings are presented thereafter.

¹¹⁰ The EC called for it during the designing process but this was ultimately rejected by the European Parliament.

¹¹¹ E.g. review of position papers supplied alongside the OPC, NAU reports.

Table 4.4 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Share of national stakeholders who consider the programme is aligned with national priorities	Key informant interviews – national level	 Most interviewees see high to medium level of alignment of Erasmus+ with key national policies. Results vary per sectors and type of respondents
Share of experts who consider the programme focuses on issues that are high on the policy agenda	Survey of experts in charge of assessing applications and projects' final reports	 Most respondents estimate that a high share of projects funded align to high or average extent with national-level priorities
Share of programme agencies' staff who consider that Erasmus+ is better aligned with national priorities than predecessor programmes	Programme agencies survey	 60 % of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with this statement
The data collection gathered high number of examples of alignment between national priorities and the programme	Key informant interviews	 Examples of alignment (many general/others more specific) between national priorities and the programme were reported by at least half of interviewees
	Case studies	 Examples (general to more specific) of alignment between national priorities and the programme were reported by at least one type of interviewee per case study

Among the sources analysed, the results of **key informant interviews** (national level) show that most respondents have a positive opinion on this evaluation question. Interviewees (i.e. policymakers and key stakeholders spread over the sectors covered by Erasmus+) were asked to indicate the main policy priorities/needs in their sector and give an appreciation on whether Erasmus+ priorities and actions are relevant to address those.

As Table 4.5 shows, the general appreciation is that Erasmus+ (in terms of design, priority objectives or actions) aligns well with the vast majority of policy priorities/needs commonly reported per sector.

Table 4.5 Most commonly reported national priorities/needs per sector against Erasmus+ suitability

School education							
National priorities/needs	Equipping learners with relevant skills/competences	Improving pupils' language competences	Tackling early school leaving	Modernising school education (overall)	Improving education standards ¹¹²	Fostering social inclusion/equity	Improving communication with stakeholders
E+ suitability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
VET							
National priorities/needs	Equipping learners with relevant skills/competences for labour market	Widening access to disadvantaged groups of learners	Tackling youth unemployment	Modernising VET systems	Improving the image of VET		
E+ suitability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Adult learning							
National priorities/needs	Increasing learners' participation (incl. disadvantaged)	Developing/upgrading learners' skills and competences	Recognising adult learning's outcomes	Improving information and guidance	Improving quality of adult learning/adult learning providers	Fostering cooperation between adult learning and the labour market	
E+ suitability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HE							
National priorities/needs	Supporting individual motilities abroad	Fostering graduates' employability	Improving equity to access HE	Supporting staff's development/mobility	Furthering HE/HEI internationalisation ¹¹³	Modernising HE systems	

¹¹² I.e. improving teaching quality and/or pupils' performance.

¹¹³ Including global competitiveness of HE systems.

School education							
E+ suitability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Youth							
National priorities/needs	Tackling high unemployment	Improving youth/youth work skills	Increase youth participation	Supporting entrepreneurship skills development	Fostering intercultural dialogue		
E+ suitability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Sport							
National priorities/needs	Funding the sport sector	Increasing the outreach to the general public incl. hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups	Developing professional development of athletes and future career prospects				
E+ suitability	Mixed views	✓	✓				

Source: ICF (based on key informant interviews)

The information above outlines the most commonly reported priority areas per sector where alignment with Erasmus+ priorities is found at national level. Meanwhile, interviewees rarely further commented on the extent to which (e.g. strong, medium, limited) they consider the programme as suitable to address each of the priority areas they initially listed¹¹⁴.

The following illustrative perceptions (drawing on interviewees who were felt to be confident) can be nevertheless outlined.

- School education: the responsiveness of Erasmus+ is considered particularly high for supporting the development of teachers (via mobility actions and related opportunities to learn and test alternative training methods and new ideas). Less convincing is the appropriateness of the programme to help address early school leaving.
- VET: building on the legacy of LLP and developments pursued under Erasmus+, the responsiveness of the programme was valued for the different needs outlined above.
- Adult learning: the responsiveness of Erasmus+ is acknowledged for the different needs outlined above. In comparison to the LLP, there is the sentiment that less explicit emphasis is put on the concept of 'lifelong learning' under Erasmus+.
- Higher education: the responsiveness of Erasmus+ to the need for international experience for learners and the internationalisation of HEIs is perceived as the highest. Views were more mixed on staff mobility¹¹⁵ or labour market-related priorities¹¹⁶. An area which was felt insufficiently addressed regards VET-HE permeability¹¹⁷.
- Youth: the responsiveness of Erasmus+ is considered high, through the mobility opportunities it offers to address the need for young people's skill (including soft skills and values) and competence development and to support their employability.
- Sport: focusing more on general issues and broad topics, or on problems that are not specific to the sector, the design of Erasmus+ generally fails to be fully appropriate in the sector.

With the exception of the sport sector, the programme is considered well aligned with the main policy priorities defined per sector at national level. This finding could be reasonably expected considering that the policies of the programme countries (and Member States particularly), in particular in education and training and youth, align themselves with EU-level ones as per the OMC and common efforts to attain the EU 2020 objectives.

With regard to the sport field, there is a perceived misalignment (also confirmed by experts survey results – see below) in spite of the existence of the EU Work Plan for Sport agreed by the Council and reflecting the Member States' national priorities and closely linked to the Erasmus+ priorities. This may be attributable to the following:

¹¹⁴ Key informants at national level were primarily asked to indicate whether they considered that Erasmus+ priority objectives align well with national-level ones in their sector and to specify those areas. Meanwhile, considering the length of the topic guides (and in order to avoid interview fatigue), interviewees were not directly prompted to compare the degree of suitability of the programme from one priority area to another.

¹¹⁵ Although Erasmus+ offers a range of activities to support academic staff mobility, the feedback from the interviews was not conclusive. On the one hand, Erasmus+ helps to develop academics' qualifications. On the other hand, more incentives are felt to be needed to ensure that more staff use this opportunity in the future.

¹¹⁶ Information collated suggests that there is not a consensus among the KIIs in this area. A number of interviewees expressed the view that Erasmus+ is probably not the best instrument for targeting the labour market.

¹¹⁷ The sentiment was that Erasmus+ does not seem to support the Member States enough in their efforts to better link VET and HE systems.

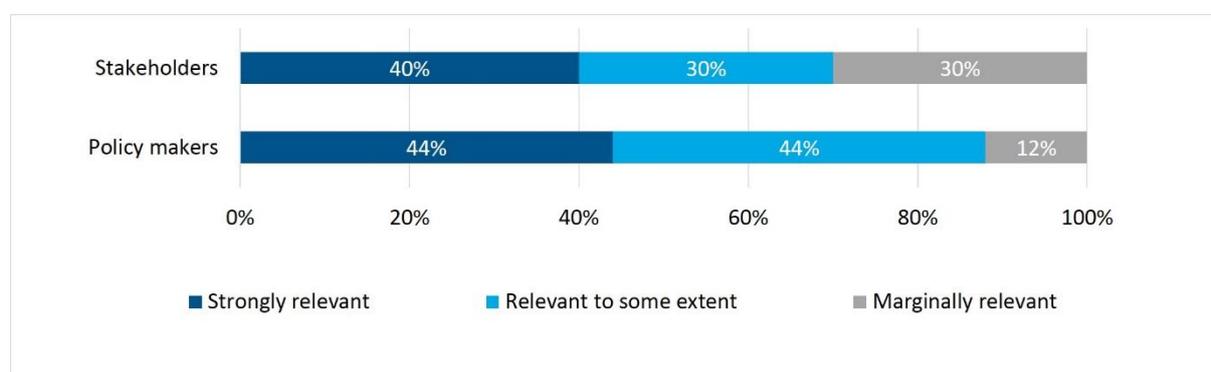
- at EU/programme level: the sector is still in its infancy as it is for the first time ever integrated into an EU-level programme. In comparison with education and training and youth, the sport sector cannot build on the knowledge and experience gained from actual predecessor programmes.
- at national/practitioners level: sports organisations appear to primarily be interested in national projects. A commonly expressed perception is that organisations see the programme as a tool to finance their usual activities without considering the aims of the programme. Meanwhile, funding cuts at national level increasingly place them into a position where international opportunities might be the best (if not the only) option.

In addition to the above, though the sentiment is overall positive, some variations are found in the way Erasmus+ is perceived as strongly relevant or relevant to some extent across all sectors between interviewed stakeholders and policymakers. This is illustrated in the following figures¹¹⁸.

The following figures show that despite some variations, stakeholders were in general much more complimentary (i.e. perceiving the programme as strongly relevant) about the alignment of the programme with national challenges than policymakers in VET, adult learning, HE and youth. In the school education sector, the share of policymakers with a strong positively feeling of alignment was conversely slightly higher.

The most noticeable difference was found in the sports field. Figure 4.10 demonstrates an interesting division in opinion between the stakeholders and policymakers. The percentage of the interviewees that considered Erasmus+ to be only marginally relevant is comparable in both groups and makes up the least visible sentiment within both groups. Interestingly, only the policymakers identified Erasmus+ as strongly relevant to solving the national challenges (25 % of the policymakers). This translates to a much wider distribution of opinions between the policymakers while the vast majority of stakeholders have concentrated on the notion that Erasmus+ is somewhat effective (70 % of the stakeholders when compared to 50 % of the policymakers). While this still suggests that overall Erasmus+ is making a noticeable (however not a major) contribution to tackling challenges in the sport sector, the differences in opinion (at least based on insights gained through key informant interviews) between the stakeholders and the policymakers do suggest that there is a difference in how the programme is perceived on the two different levels.

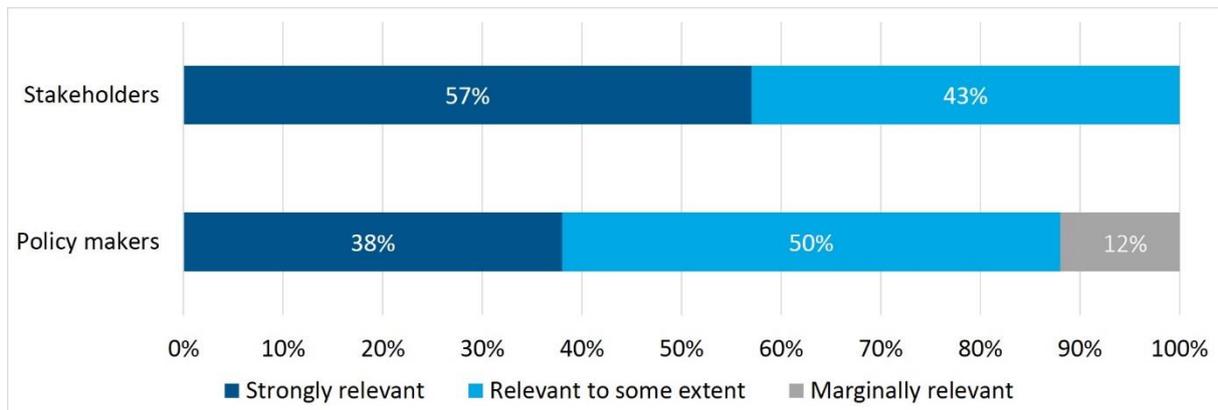
Figure 4.5 Sentiment about the relevance of Erasmus+ to national challenges in school education



Source: ICF/Technopolis (based on KIIs (national level/school education))

¹¹⁸ Note: these figures are to be considered as illustrative examples of sentiments expressed by (a non-representative) number of respondents at national level.

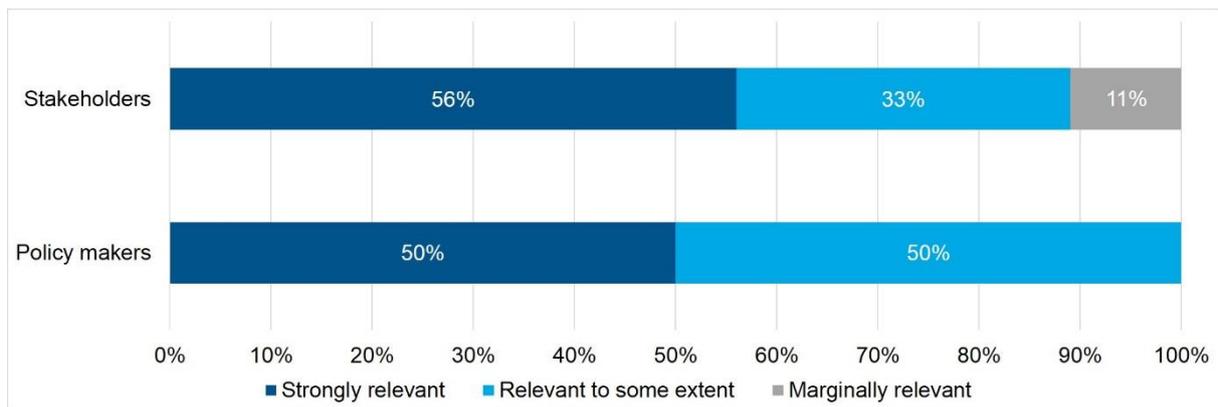
Figure 4.6 Sentiment about the relevance of Erasmus+ to national challenges in VET



Source: ICF/Technopolis (based on KIIs (national level/VET))

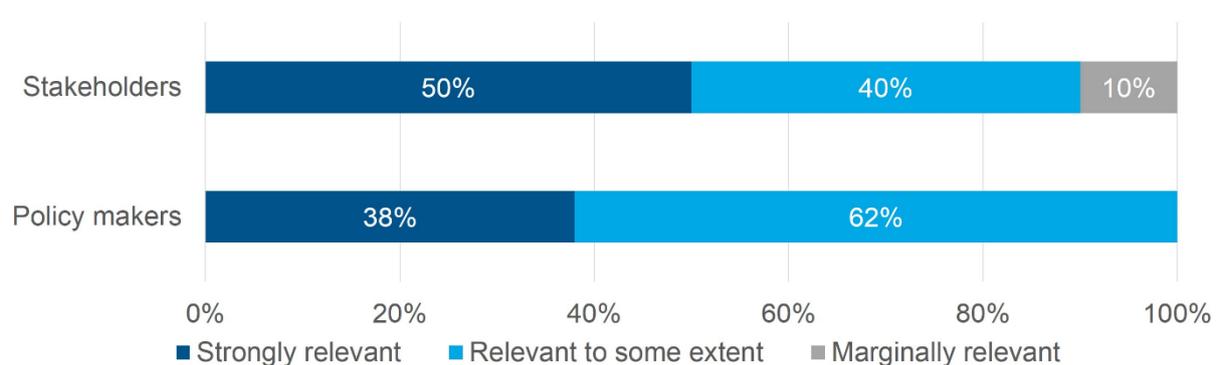
Sentiment about the relevance of Erasmus+ to national challenges in adult learning

Figure 4.7 Sentiment about the relevance of Erasmus+ to national challenges in adult learning



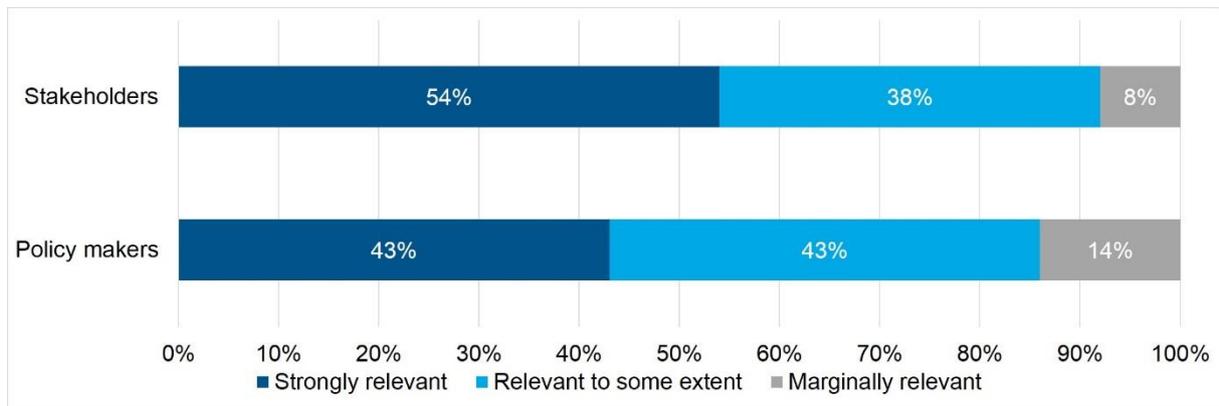
Source: ICF/Technopolis (based on KIIs (national level/adult learning))

Figure 4.8 Sentiment about the relevance of Erasmus+ to national challenges in higher education



Source: ICF/Technopolis based on KIIs (national level/HE sector)

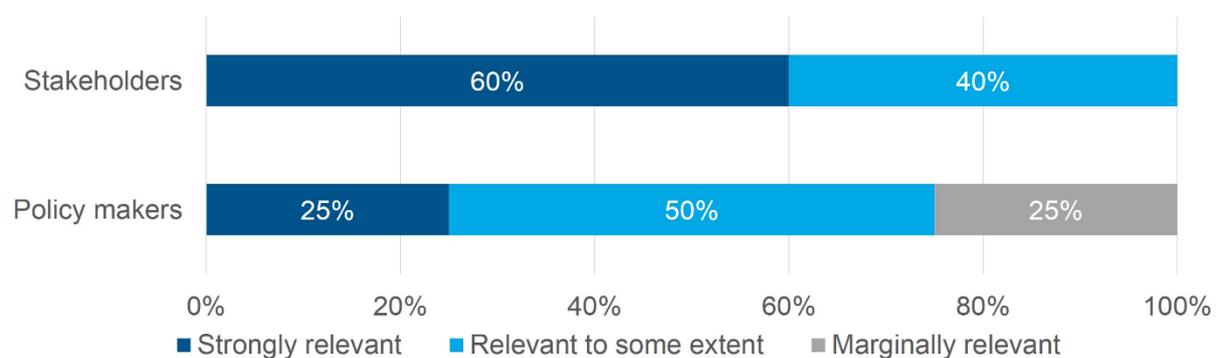
Figure 4.9 Sentiment about the relevance of Erasmus+ to national challenges in youth



Source: ICF/Technopolis (based on KIIs (national level/youth))

Sentiment about the relevance of Erasmus+ to national challenges in sport

Figure 4.10 Sentiment about the relevance of Erasmus+ to national challenges in sport



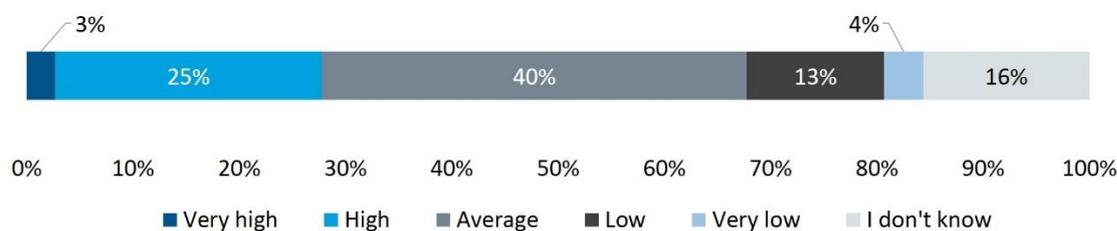
Source: ICF/Technopolis (based on KIIs (national level/sport))

The alignment of the programme with national policies was also confirmed by other respondents including project assessors (experts thereafter) and staff from programme agencies (NAs/EACEA¹¹⁹).

The analysis of the **experts survey** provides rather similar conclusions as for the question on the alignment of the Erasmus+ projects with EU-level priorities. Overall, 68 % (versus 73 % for alignment with EU priorities) of respondents estimate that a high share of the projects funded align very highly to fairly with national-level priorities.

¹¹⁹ The analysis was conducted only on the opinions collected from experts collaborating with the national agencies or with both the national agencies and the EACEA; the experts assessing projects solely for the EACEA were excluded.

Figure 4.11 Share of projects in Erasmus+ focusing on issues of relevance to the national policy agenda

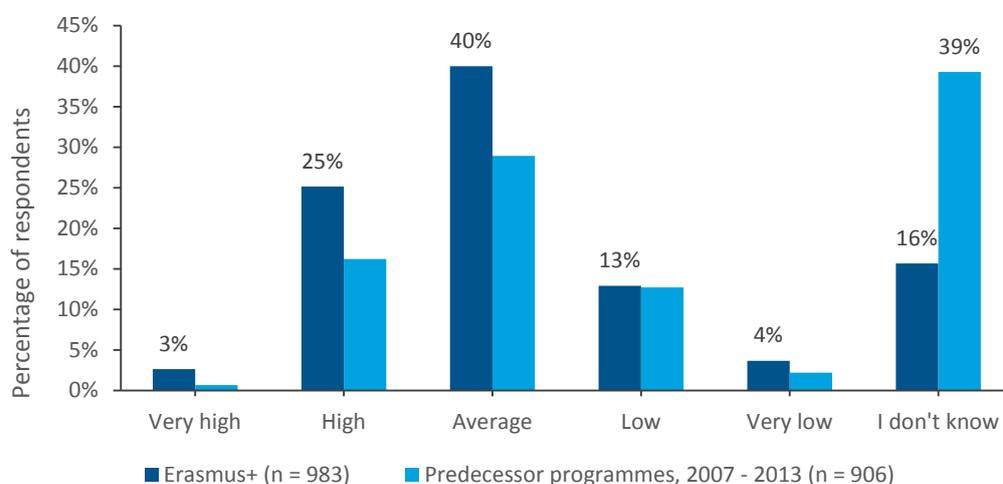


Source: ICF experts survey

Microdata analysis shows that more projects seem to be well aligned with the EU policies than national policies, which signifies some possible discrepancies between the policy focus of the country and the EU.

Comparing the main results above with those gathered for the predecessor programmes, the analysis shows again an improvement under Erasmus+. Overall, the share of projects funded under the predecessor programmes that were perceived as aligning very well, well or to a medium extent with national policy priorities represented 46 % (versus 68 % for Erasmus+ ones). The share of projects aligning to a low or very low extent has remained rather stable over the two programming periods. Interestingly, the share of respondents who replied 'I don't know' drastically dropped (from 39 % to 16 %).

Figure 4.12 Comparison between Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes: The share of projects that focus on issues that are high on the policy agenda of my country



Source: ICF experts survey

Under the predecessor programmes, microdata analysis reveals that the highest share of projects which are well aligned with their respective national policy agenda are in Romania and Denmark. The data suggests that the least aligned projects are in Belgium, the Netherlands and Hungary. For Belgium this is observed under Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes¹²⁰. However, it is to be noted that the number of experts

¹²⁰ These findings draw on quantitative data analysis only. No related qualitative data was available, making it difficult to further interpret the findings.

focusing on only one country was low. Therefore, the above is to be interpreted cautiously.

On a less positive note, the results of the programme agencies survey reveals that most respondents disagree (37 %) or strongly disagree (23 %) with the following statement: Erasmus+ funds actions that are more aligned with national priorities than predecessor programme.

Lastly, the above was also confirmed by a high share of respondents (through key informant interviews and case studies). Examples of illustrative quotes are outlined in the next table.

Table 4.6 Illustrative examples of perceived (mis)alignment of E+ with national policies (KIIs and case studies)

	Examples from KIIS	Examples from case studies
School education	<i>'There is a small mismatch at school level. For instance the programme is meant to address early school leaving. It is really hard to see how a European programme is supposed to make a difference. The solution probably lies elsewhere. The Erasmus+ priority matches the national priority, but the programme might not be the right or main tool.'</i>	<i>'E+ priorities generally reflect wider EU policy while it's difficult to connect this policy to the national level. In countertendency, national policy has reduced attention to second languages (beyond English) and this is not in line with EU objectives.'</i>
VET	<i>'When it comes to a work-based practice, Erasmus+ creates a space that allows seeing how a modern workplace can look like – for young people such a possibility and such a trip are a life-changing experience.'</i>	<i>'The objectives are largely the same: to train well-skilled labour force who are able to adapt to new situations flexibly and are able to learn lifelong.'</i>
	<i>'Learners are best addressed through the programme. It has influence on students' vocation preferences.'</i>	
Adult learning	<i>'In adult learning, Erasmus+ is aligned with national priorities. The issue in the Czech Republic is a lack of focus at the national level on other activities than requalification for the labour market and the Qualifications Framework.'</i>	<i>'Certainly yes, mainly by increasing the quality of adult learning provision and improving the consistency of adult learning with other policy areas (for instance migration policy by country).'</i> <i>'Greater inclusion of adult learners through promoting learning opportunities for adult learners with learning disabilities seems to be an objective that is also being pursued by the Flemish government.'</i>
Higher education	<i>'Erasmus+ (and its predecessors) have played an important role in supporting the Member States in the implementation of the Bologna process, for example in the introduction of the ECTS.'</i>	<i>'It increases our international activities of student and staff mobility, so at the same time once staff return from the exchange, knowledge sharing happens and good practices ensure we increasingly modernise our institution.'</i>
	<i>'The enhanced focus (and support) on socioeconomically disadvantaged students is positively perceived by most interviewees.'</i>	

	Examples from KIIS	Examples from case studies
	<p><i>'In the Czech Republic, Erasmus+ is the first channel for supporting HE students' mobility. The "Erasmus" label is most well known for this aspect of the programme.'</i></p>	
	<p><i>'In Denmark, had it not been for Erasmus+, HE students would have been much more oriented towards the Anglo-Saxon countries. Erasmus+ fosters intra-European interaction.'</i></p>	
Youth	<p><i>'I would like to value Erasmus+ support in youth work, volunteering areas such as Strategic Partnerships where the youth organisations can cross-collaborate. Programme actions are well aligned with national priorities. The programme provides some possibilities we do not have on a national level.'</i></p>	<p><i>'For all that is related to democratic values [and] citizenship, the Erasmus+ programme is a great opportunity. However, the number of young people doing an EVS could be higher. It has an incredible impact on a young person's life.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'Internationalisation of youth work definitely is a priority that is being addressed, networking and professional development of young people is another.'</i></p>	
Sport	<p><i>'Erasmus+ stresses the importance of promoting physical activity through the dissemination of information on opportunities relating to sport.'</i></p>	<p><i>'The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has adopted a strategic document called "Sport 2025". The document has got an international dimension (cooperation in sport). The goals of our Erasmus+ projects are fully in line with the national strategy.'</i> (Practitioner from CZ)</p>
	<p><i>'Erasmus+ seems to focus more on scientific issues or general issues in sports, or on social problems that are not necessarily specific to sport.'</i></p>	<p><i>'Yes, in the sense that sport gets more visibility and takes place on the agenda, and also has a special focus on social inclusion.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'At the grassroots level, there are continuing issues around retaining volunteers to support local clubs and local organisations (not reflected in Erasmus+ priorities).'</i></p>	

Source: ICF (quotations from KIIs and case studies)

4.3 The programme's responsiveness to stakeholders' and sectors' needs

This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

To what extent are needs of different stakeholders and sectors addressed by programme objectives?

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?

Overall, the needs of stakeholders are addressed well by the programme. Satisfaction of beneficiaries is especially high in mobility actions. Learners/youth and practitioners are highly satisfied with their mobility experience (across all sectors). Still, some stakeholders have suggested that socioeconomic inclusiveness of these actions for youth from all backgrounds has to be improved.

The relevance of programme actions at organisation level varies across sectors and organisations, with bigger organisations possibly tending to benefit more and smaller organisations being left out.

The actions at system level (KA3) are welcomed by stakeholders as relevant to the needs of national education and training systems, and data from different sources supports the conclusion that system-level actions in VET are particularly appreciated.

System-level actions are welcomed by stakeholders as a way to address system-level policies and to give voice to different stakeholders at policy level. System-level actions are perceived to be highly relevant in the sectors of schools, VET and youth policies. Examples from VET, in particular, seem to suggest that there is a perceived need for system-level actions there. The relevance of system-level actions for adult learning and higher education needs to be improved.

With regard to key informants' views about actions that have been discontinued, not all interviewees were able to comment on this. Among the small number who did so, concerns were most commonly expressed about the following:

- Discontinued learner mobility actions in school education and adult learning (to a small extent): in the current configuration of Erasmus+, this is rather indirectly under KA2. Many key informants argue for concrete coverage under KA1.
- Discontinued YiA local youth initiatives: those were considered to be very helpful as opposed to current transnational youth initiatives, which are seen as too complex for informal groups of young people to apply.

Table 4.7 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Share of respondents of various types who consider the needs of learners are met by the programme	Key informant interviews	 A vast majority of key informants indicated that among the four levels of intervention (learner, practitioner, organisation, system) Erasmus+ best addresses learners' needs
	Survey of programme agencies' staff	 The consensus among agencies' staff is that learners' needs in HE and VET are met by both KA1 and KA2 strands of the programme, but the needs of school pupils are partially or weakly met by KA1, despite the fact that teachers take part in the action
The motivations of learners to participate in mobility actions are aligned with programme objectives	Programme data analysis – analysis of monitoring surveys	 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 %)
Participants' satisfaction with their mobility experience	Programme data analysis – analysis of monitoring surveys	 Participants' satisfaction is very high. The share of learners claiming to be very or rather satisfied with their mobility experience ranges between 81 % and 98 %. The share of staff satisfied with mobility experience is between 98 % and 100 % in all types of mobility actions
The data collection gathers a number of strongly illustrative examples demonstrating relevance of the programme to learners' needs	Key informant interviews and case studies	 Many examples in key informant interviews suggest strong relevance of the programme to learners' needs
Share of respondents of various types who consider the needs of practitioners are met by the programme	Key informant interviews	 Key informant interviews at national level confirm that Erasmus+ actions are relevant in terms of their positive effects at practitioner level. Practitioner mobility is particularly relevant to promote and share innovative teaching methods for practitioners and to broaden international cooperation and networks
	Programme agencies' survey	 The consensus among agencies' staff is that the needs of practitioners are strongly or partially met by both KA1 and KA2. At least 50 % of agencies' staff believe that Erasmus+ meets the needs of target groups better than predecessor programmes
The data collection gathers a number of strongly illustrative examples demonstrating relevance of the programme to practitioners' needs	Key informant interviews and case studies	 A number of examples in key informant interviews suggest strong relevance of the programme to learners' needs
The motivations of staff to participate in mobility actions are aligned with programme objectives	Programme data analysis – analysis of monitoring surveys	 Motivation of practitioners is overall aligned with programme objectives – the motivation to improve professional competences and to learn from good practice is high in all sectors, and so is the motivation to cooperate (particularly in HE and VET)
Share of respondents of various types who consider the needs of organisations are met by the programme	Key informant interviews	 Key informants give mixed reports on the programme's ability to meet the needs of education, training, youth and sport organisations. The needs of small organisations especially (the predominant type in some sectors, such as adult learning) are not met sufficiently
	Programme agencies survey	 Agencies' staff consider that needs of some types of organisations (e.g. schools, large national and international youth organisations, higher education institutions, vocational training centres) are met. Programme is less relevant to local and regional policymaking bodies and social partners
The data collection gathers a number of strongly illustrative examples demonstrating relevance of the programme to organisations' needs	Key informant interviews and case studies	 Key informants give mixed reports on the programme's ability to meet the needs of education, training, youth and sport organisations. The needs of small organisations especially (the predominant type in some sectors, such as adult learning) are not met sufficiently
Share of respondents of various types who consider the needs of systems are met by the programme	Key informant interviews	 System-level actions are welcomed by key informants at both national and EU level, not only policymakers but also other stakeholders. Especially in VET, positive examples of impact are perceived
	Programme agencies survey	 Agencies' staff consider that the needs of schools systems, VET systems and youth policies are addressed by KA3 actions (highly relevant). Relevance for HE and adult learning systems is only moderate. National agencies' staff do not see the needs of local, national or regional policymaking bodies being reflected in KA3 actions
The data collection gathers a number of strongly illustrative examples demonstrating relevance of the programme to system-level needs	Key informant interviews and case studies	 Some illustrative examples of relevance of the programme, e.g. at VET-system level, have been collected
Views of key informants about actions that have been discontinued	Key informant interviews	 Anecdotal evidence that some respondents regret the absence in particular of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual mobility for pupils/adult learners under Erasmus+ KA1 - local youth projects for specific types of organisations (entry into the programme)

4.3.1 Learners' needs

There is a reasonable amount of data to support the claim that the programme meets the expectations of large sections of learners, particularly in mobility actions.

The Erasmus+ monitoring surveys firstly offer some interesting insights on learners' motivation (in terms of the needs they expect to address) to take part in mobility. Evidence overall suggests that while differences are found from one sector to another the need for improving foreign language skills is cross-cutting. Most noticeable variations are outlined below.

- In the VET sector, learning new technical/professional skills is a priority in mobility actions (nearly 80 % of learners), with a need for foreign language skills following as a close second, and personal skills in third place.
- In the HE sector, the needs and motivation differ between mobility for studies and for traineeship. The top three needs and motivation distribute as follows:
- mobility for studies (HE study learners): to live abroad and meet new people (78 %), to learn a foreign language (77 %) and to gain knowledge of another country (61 %);
- mobility for studies (HE international learners¹²¹): to experience different learning content/curricula (73 %), to live abroad and meet new people and to learn a foreign language (66 % each);
- mobility for traineeships: to live abroad and meet new people (57 %), to learn/improve a foreign language (56 %) and to do a traineeship in another language (55 %). In general, HE trainees mention motivations less than HE learners for study mobility and there is also lower variability¹²².
- In the case of European Volunteer Service (EVS) participants, the most frequent motivations include personal development (80 %), discovering new cultures and lifestyles (70 %) and learning foreign language (64 %).

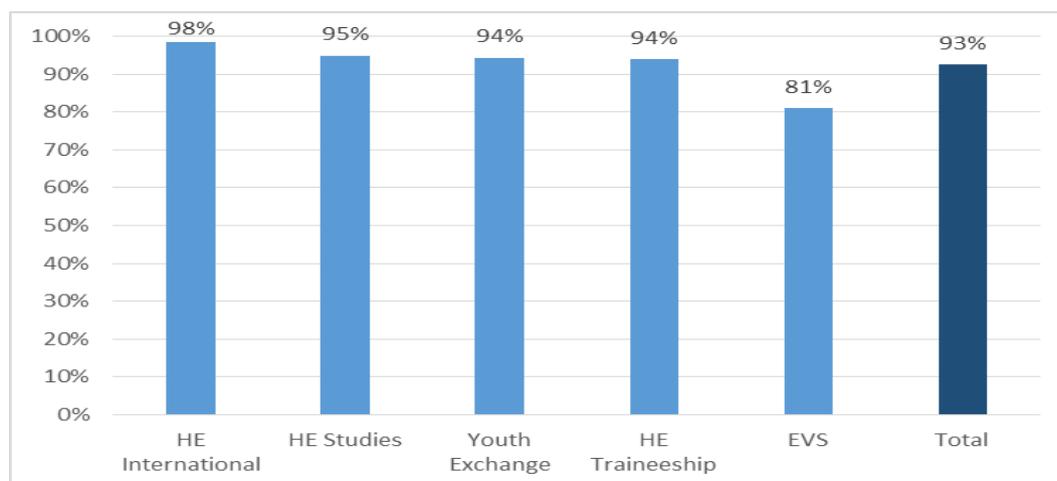
With regard to the level of satisfaction of learners with their mobility experience, findings suggest that across all sectors (except VET, for which data was not available) and types of mobility report, these are generally very satisfied. The share of learners claiming to be very or rather satisfied with their mobility experience ranges between 81 % and 98 % depending on the type of mobility action, with EVS at 81 % scoring lower than other types of mobility but still very high.

Note: EVS participants are the least satisfied group but it needs to be noted that the question asked to this group is different. EVS participants were asked how they evaluate the overall success of their project, which is in fact aiming on a slightly different opinion than asking purely about satisfaction with the programme. Even if this question is slightly different, the satisfaction expressed is still very high. It is visible that the satisfaction is very high overall, therefore we might conclude that the Erasmus+ programme is successful in addressing at least some of the learners' needs.

¹²¹ I.e. mobile students taking part in international credit mobility (KA 107). This sub-action falling under KA1 enables HEIs from programme countries to send and receive students and staff on mobility to and from certain partner countries.

¹²² In fact, in the case of HE studies and HE international studies, the number of learners specifying each motivation varies from 35 % to almost 80 %, whereas for HE trainees the variability is only from 41 % to 57 %, which can give us a hint that the needs in the HE traineeship subsector are not as pressing as in the case of HE study mobility.

Figure 4.13 Share of learners satisfied with their mobility experience



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

Note: Share of learners who were very satisfied or rather satisfied with the mobility experience, For EVS the question is 'How do you evaluate the overall success of your project?' Sum of answers 'Very good' and 'Good'. No data available for VET.

Learners' needs as defined by key stakeholders (key informants) are different from learners' expectations as defined by participants in monitoring surveys (learners themselves). Key informants focus on needs that have a social or labour market dimension. Thus, interviews highlight the need to improve soft skills and additional support to address the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils (school sector) as well as creating more options and learning opportunities for young people, addressing educational needs of refugees, facilitating the transfer from school to VET and access to proper career counselling (VET sector). HE-sector informants see the need for mobility experience as crucial.

A vast majority of key informants interviewed in the sector at national level indicated that among the four levels of intervention (learner, practitioner, organisation and system), Erasmus+ best addresses learners' needs. At the same time, several key informants interviewed for this evaluation mentioned a potential risk for Erasmus+ to become too 'elitist'. EU stakeholders seem to agree that the socioeconomic needs of students could be better addressed and the funding mechanism adjusted to allow more students to take part in mobility.

The consensus among national agencies' staff is that learners' needs in HE and VET are well met by both KA1 and KA2 strands of the programme, but that the needs of school pupils are partially or weakly met by the mobility opportunities offered under KA2.

According to the survey of programme agencies, Erasmus+ mobility actions (KA1 – individual mobility) are particularly relevant to the current and emerging needs of the following groups of learners:

High and medium relevance:

- Volunteers in programme countries
- Apprentices and students in VET
- Higher education students from the EU and other programme countries
- Young people in partner countries
- Volunteers in partner countries
- Higher education students from partner countries (international level)

Relevance to the needs of apprentices and students in VET and to the needs of young people in programme countries is evaluated by respondents as considerable.

The perception of uneven impact of programme actions on schools and school-related EU policy targets is shared by key informants interviewed for this evaluation. The key informants valued the programme's contribution to improving educational standards, particularly in teaching. On the other hand, contribution to solving the problem of early school leaving was seen as insufficient: key informants argued that the duration and scope of the projects they are aware of do not allow for systemic impact on early school leaving.

Key informant interviews and case studies also confirm the benefit of Erasmus+ actions for individual learners in different sectors. A few illustrative examples extracted from case studies at organisation level are outlined below.

Examples of responsiveness to learners' needs reported by interviewees (case studies)

- *'It (Erasmus+ mobility action) was perfectly in line with my needs and expectations. I will try to work with the same precision and same attitude as what I saw abroad.'* (VET sector learner)
- *'The main needs [of learners in my HEI] are reflected in Erasmus+ projects: learning of other languages, and learning about life, study and work in Europe. Erasmus+ gives the possibility to study and do practical training abroad.'* (HE sector administrator)
- Several learners reported they had wanted to gain new skills and complete new courses (not available in their home universities) and that the Erasmus+ programme made this a reality. E.g. *'Now I even have a separate subject "knowledge management" within my master-level programme, and I've started research activities in this field too. So, there is a direct correlation with my needs.'* (HE learner)
- *'Erasmus+ actions help to integrate immigrant pupils in mainstream school environment, integrating immigrants into communities.'* (school-sector practitioner)

4.3.2 Practitioners' needs

The opinions of practitioners who took part in mobility actions show that the needs differ by sector; however, there is a shared perception of the need for professional development: learning from good practice and acquiring new skills, as well as need for cooperation and building up contacts. The need to increase cultural, social and linguistic competences follows as a third general priority, but with somewhat less support from practitioners. Compared to learners, practitioners do not rate the need to increase foreign language skills quite as highly.

According to the Erasmus+ monitoring survey, the most important motivations for mobility vary by sector.

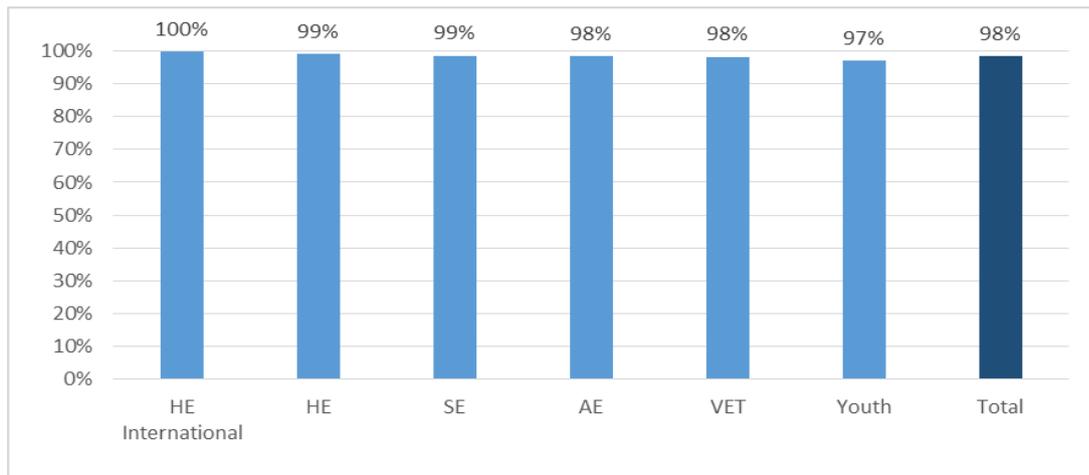
- Adult learning and VET: to learn from good practice abroad (81 % and 79 % respectively) followed by the need to acquire new skills in the case of adult learning (74 %), and learning and VET the need to build new professional contacts in the case of VET (69 %). For both adult practitioners, the need to develop social, linguistic and cultural competences follows as a close third (67 % and 64 % respectively).
- Higher education: to build connections abroad (77 %) and to reinforce cooperation (72 %), followed by the need to acquire knowledge from good practice abroad (68 %).
- Among general education (school) practitioners, leading motivations are to improve teaching competences (81 %), acquire knowledge from good practice abroad

(78 %) and gain practical skills (74 %), followed by the need to improve foreign language skills (72 %).

- Among youth sector practitioners, the leading motivation by far is to acquire competences for personal and professional development (78 %), followed by the motivation to meet new people (62 %) and to develop new training methods.

Practitioners are exceptionally satisfied with their mobility across all sectors (the lowest satisfaction rate is 97 %).

Figure 4.14 Share of practitioners satisfied with their mobility experience



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

Note: Share of learners and staff who were very satisfied or rather satisfied with the mobility experience. For youth exchange the question is 'How do you evaluate the overall success of this Youth Exchange?' Sum of answers 'Very good' and 'Good'. No data available for VET.

Interviewees at national level (KIIs and case studies) confirmed that Erasmus+ actions are relevant in terms of their positive effects at practitioner level. Interviewees stated that practitioner mobility is particularly relevant to promote and share innovative teaching methods for practitioners and to broaden international cooperation and networks for both practitioners and organisations.

Examples of responsiveness to practitioners' needs reported by interviewees (case studies)

- 'Concerning teachers – we receive new, dynamic experience. While travelling abroad our colleagues become aware of new practices and programmes that schools like ours are working with. This is an extremely valuable benefit.' (VET practitioner, administrator)
- 'Teachers are also stakeholders. Erasmus+ allows them to participate in study visits abroad, observe new training contents, materials and methods and to apply them in their own classroom. This is a big chance for them.' (School-sector practitioner, partner country)
- 'The Erasmus+ programme helps youth experts and youth workers to gain international experiences and collect good practices, furthermore [it] brings in some additional financial resources.' (Youth sector administrator)
- 'My needs were met in a very satisfactory manner, expectations were even exceeded.' The training programmes offered by the interviewee's association

are based on the experience acquired through Erasmus+ and LLP Grundtvig projects. Up to today, the association has been developing more and more ambitious projects as well as concrete partnerships and collaborations at local and national level (adult learning-sector practitioner).

According to the programme agencies survey, Erasmus+ mobility actions (KA1) are relevant to the current and emerging needs of the following groups of practitioners:

High and medium relevance:

- VET teachers
- Youth workers and staff in youth organisations in partner countries
- Youth workers and staff in youth organisations in programme countries
- Adult learning teachers/trainers
- Higher education teaching staff from the EU or other programme countries
- School teachers
- Other non-teaching staff in higher education institutions
- Leadership in schools
- Leadership in adult learning organisations
- Higher education staff from partner countries (international level)

On the other hand, respondents believe that KA1 actions have low relevance for stakeholders not engaged directly: employers and non-teaching staff in schools, vocational training institutions and adult learning organisations.

High or medium relevance of KA2 actions is perceived by national agencies' staff for all leadership groups and for teaching staff and youth workers, namely:

- Leadership in schools
- Leadership in higher education institutions
- Leadership in adult learning organisations
- Leadership in vocational training institutions
- Youth workers and staff in youth organisations in programme countries
- School teachers
- Adult learning teachers/trainers
- Higher education teaching staff from the EU and other programme countries

The above complements more general insights gained from the key informant interviews (KIIs). According to the KIIs, while practitioners are targeted by the programme, it is less clear whether all their relevant needs are effectively addressed and to what extent positive impacts are clearly identifiable.

Some EC-level interviewees highlighted that evaluating the impact of the mobility on teachers (and how this translates into positive impacts on students) was a challenge. This can be linked back to evidence from different sources that the needs of schools such as preventing drop-out are not clearly addressed by Erasmus+ actions (although national stakeholders seem positive about the impact of Erasmus+ actions on the quality of school teaching).

4.3.3 Organisations' needs

EU-level stakeholders' views on whether the programme meets the needs of education, training, youth and sport organisations are mixed. For example, it was argued that in higher education, there are geographical disparities and generally funding appears to be more crucial for HEIs based in 'poorer' Member States.

In the youth sector and in the adult education sector, interviewees were rather critical about the programme meeting organisations' needs. Overall, the complexity of the

Erasmus+ programme favours large, professional organisations at the expense of the small grassroots organisations which would need most support to be able to implement their projects. In the youth sector, interviewees were rather critical (in particular EU stakeholders). Several of them claimed that financial support to youth organisations is decreasing or stagnant whereas these organisations are multipliers of activities for young people. Youth organisations would welcome more investment in structures, rather than in individuals. Similar considerations were expressed for the adult education sector (where key informants mentioned that the sector was very fragmented with many small organisations – especially in central and southern Europe). Smaller/local institutions looking for financing find themselves in a disadvantaged situation.

Comments from interviewed organisations' representatives active in the sport sector were along the same lines. Organisations' needs would not be met according the vast majority of them. Organisations' needs are not met according the vast majority of them. The sector is characterised by fragmented and diverse grassroots organisations. For such small organisations, applying for Erasmus+ grants is too difficult (whereas pan-European associations benefit the most from the programme architecture).

In view of the objective to bring the programme closer to the grassroots level (through increased decentralisation in comparison to its predecessors), this is an area where Erasmus+ needs to improve its relevance.

EU organisations (in particular those which have operated to a large extent with EU funding in the past) have the feeling that they have to compete more than in the past. This is partly due to the decentralisation of the programme. Across all sectors interviewees consider that availability of funding does not meet expectations.

Some interviewees have pointed out as a positive feature that the needs of diverse types of organisations are met and that Erasmus+ helps organisations to highlight the benefits of the EU at a time of widespread scepticism.

Example of responsiveness to organisations' needs reported by interviewees (case studies)

- Several interviewees reported that they took part in the programme to achieve internationalisation of their HE institutions, e.g. *'Our internationalisation would have continued without Erasmus+ but it would have been enormously limited (perhaps to 10 % of what we do now). The Erasmus+ programme brings additional financial resources also from the national level. It is integrated in the whole institution.'* (HE sector, leadership)
- *'Our school management feels obliged to offer an attractive curriculum, where mobility and international projects are an inherent part of the activities. E+/LLP supports these activities financially and this is why they are able to take place – there would hardly be any national funds which would replace this grant scheme.'* (School sector, leadership)
- Erasmus+ is meeting the schools' needs and is of high interest to them. This is especially the case now, against the backdrop of the rise of populism and scepticism concerning the EU. This gives Erasmus+ activities in schools also a political dimension (i.e. politicians become more interested in how schools raise the European spirit). (School sector, policymaker)

Respondents to the programme agencies survey have a somewhat more optimistic outlook on the programme's relevance to the current and emerging needs of

organisations. They believe that the programme's KA2 and KA3 actions are relevant to the following organisations' needs (high and medium relevance):

- Large national and international youth organisations – high relevance
- Higher education institutions in programme countries – high relevance
- Schools – high relevance
- Local or regional policymaking bodies (sectors schools and adult education) – medium relevance
- Other policymaking, funding, regulating, quality assurance bodies in programme countries (sector adult education) – medium relevance
- Social partners and sectoral bodies (VET sector) – medium relevance
- Ministries/departments in charge of education and training in programme countries (schools and adult education sector) – medium relevance
- Vocational training centres – medium relevance
- Providers of adult education – medium relevance

On the other hand, agencies' staff think that KA2 and KA3 actions are less relevant or not relevant to a number of types of organisations:

- Ministries/departments in charge of education and training in programme countries and in charge of sport – low relevance
- Other policymaking, funding, regulating, quality assurance bodies in programme countries (transversal actions sector (such as KA3)) – low relevance
- Local or regional policymaking bodies (higher education sector, transversal actions sector (such as KA3)) – no relevance
- Social partners and sectoral bodies (transversal actions sector (such as KA3)) – no relevance

The latter set of opinions is rather alarming as it suggests national agencies' staff do not see the needs of local, regional and national policymaking bodies being reflected in KA3 actions. No further details on reasons why the above was considered of low or no relevance were supplied by respondents though.

In addition to the above, complementary insights were gained from the socioeconomic actors survey on the main types of motivations per groups of respondents. The survey which has been completed by three main groups of respondents (companies, public authorities and civil society and youth organisations) comprises respondents from organisations which have taken part in Erasmus+ (64%) and in predecessor programmes (36%).

Survey results reveal overall that the most commonly reported motivations expressed for applying for Erasmus+ grants by these groups relate to the following interests or needs:

- to cooperate with other European countries (67,7%)
- to offer new opportunities for learners (64%)
- to support staff development (38,6%)

The above constitutes the top 3 motivations for companies and public authorities with higher shares of respondents for public authorities respondents in particular in the areas of cooperating with other European countries and staff development are (74,6% versus 67,7% and 48,8% versus 38,6% respectively)).

In the case of civil society and youth organisations, shares are similarly high in the first two areas (78,3% and 65,4% of respectively) whilst 'raising the organisation's profile or visibility' is ranked third (i.e. selected by 47,7% of respondents). This is followed by the motivation to support staff development (43,1% of respondents).

Conversely, survey results reveal that funding-related motivations or expectations from the programme to help address gaps encountered in their organisation (i.e. work- or skills- related) were less commonly chosen as the following shares show:

- interest in the funding available: 34,7% of overall respondents (the highest and lowest shares are found amongst civil society and youth organisations (38,7%) and companies (24,9%) respectively)
- expectation to address gaps in certain skills areas in the context in which their organisation works: 26,6% overall (the highest and lowest shares are found amongst civil society and youth organisations (30%) and companies (24,9%) respectively)
- expectation to address gaps in certain skills areas in their organisation: 16, 3% overall (the highest and lowest shares being again found for civil society and youth organisations (19,8%) and companies (9%) respectively).

The survey did not offer insights on respondents' views on whether and/or to what extent to Erasmus+ has effectively helped addressed these aspirations though. For further details on the survey, see Annex 5.

4.3.4 System-level needs

The needs of national education systems as reflected in key informant interviews are diverse and range from prevention of early school leaving to ensuring transition from school to working life, internationalisation of higher education and supporting socially vulnerable students to succeed.

A vast majority of key informant interviewees (EU stakeholders and both national policymakers and stakeholders) value the increased attention (and funding, in comparison to predecessor programmes) devoted by the programme to the system level. A number of key informant interviewees (EU stakeholder organisations' representatives) also found KA3 actions (Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects) particularly interesting as a means for them to be better heard and engaged in policymaking.

Example of responsiveness to system-level needs reported by interviewees (case studies)

- A beneficiary described how the KA3 action fits the needs of HE institutions: The call defined the aim as a more streamlined recognition of foreign qualifications, taking away some of the obstacles. This 'fits in nicely' with what the organisation was already trying to do with previous projects. They were convinced that this was a good step to take and they could quite easily envisage the kind of direction they wanted to go in. This project was about taking their work one step further. They started out with the recognition networks, they then reached out to universities by building platforms and manuals, and this call gave them the chance to interact and collaborate with many universities (a total of 23 HE institutions) and look deeper into their daily practices.

In the VET sector, Erasmus+ is, in addition to other benefits, perceived as a useful tool to increase the attractiveness of the sector (in particular in countries where VET has a low profile). In this area, system-level actions are of particular relevance to national stakeholders in the context of increased attention paid at policy level to work-based learning and apprenticeships.

Additional insights were also gained from the programme agencies survey. Respondents were prompted about where and to what extent activities under KA3 are relevant to challenges at the system level. Findings suggest that KA3 activities are considered highly

relevant to schools systems, VET systems and youth policies-related challenges in the EU and programme countries. They consider that relevance of KA3 activities for higher education (in both programme and partner countries) and adult learning systems is only moderate and low for youth policies in partner countries.

4.3.5 Elements that have been discontinued and could have a possible value added in future generation of programmes

The merger of the predecessor programmes into a single integrated programme has led the EC to reduce and streamline the overall number of actions and activities supported in the predecessor programmes. For the education and training and youth fields, this has resulted in the current configuration spread across the three KAs. For Jean Monnet, former actions have been transferred into Erasmus+ while sport actions largely build on those supported under the Preparatory Actions.

This approach was informed by the results of the impact assessment for Erasmus+¹²³ that showed that the architecture of the predecessor programmes (LLP and YiA primarily) was too complex. In the case of the LLP this had generated an excessive number of objectives translated into a large number of specific actions per (sub)field: 6 subprogrammes¹²⁴ with more than 50 objectives and 75 activities.

A clear duplication of efforts was also found between YiA and LLP. YiA focused on the mobility and (non-formal) learning of young people while around 80 % of the LLP funding also addressed youth. As a consequence, some actions lacked the critical mass required for long-lasting impact, or had a high administrative cost. International cooperation in higher education was also characterised by the fragmentation between different EU instruments¹²⁵ implementing similar objectives and actions.

The rationale for simplification and streamlining was hence to get a less complex programme that would generate economies of scope and scale in management delivery mechanisms among other things. The majority of former LLP and YiA actions have been streamlined under Erasmus+. A small number have been discontinued. This general approach has been to discontinue actions that were considered too vague, not focused enough (e.g. former LLP multilateral projects and networks) or overlapping with others (e.g. Comenius or Grundtvig assistantship actions with the Erasmus one).

The table below outlines the main discontinued actions from predecessor programmes.

Table 4.8 Overview of main discontinued actions from predecessor programmes (LLP and YiA)

Programme	(Sub)field	Level of intervention	Action
LLP (Comenius)	School education	Individual mobility (learner -	Individual pupil mobility (IPM)

¹²³ Impact assessment accompanying the document 'Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing "ERASMUS FOR ALL": The Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/ia_carried_out/docs/ia_2011/sec_2011_1402_en.pdf

¹²⁴ I.e. the four sectoral subprogrammes, the transversal and Jean Monnet ones.

¹²⁵ I.e. Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, EU-US/EU-Canada cooperation agreements, the cooperation programme with industrialised countries.

	n	Individual mobility) (staff	- Comenius assistantships ¹²⁶
LLP (Leonardo da Vinci)	VET	Individual (learner/apprentice mobility)	- People on the Labour Market (-> transferred into ESF)
		System	- Study visits for education and VET specialists and decision-makers (covered under LLP transversal KA1)
LLP (Grundtvig)	Adult learning	Individual (learner mobility)	- Senior volunteering projects
		Individual (staff	- Grundtvig
LLP (Erasmus)	Higher education	Individual (linguistic support to learner mobility)	- Erasmus intensive language courses - (replaced by OLS)
Youth in Action – Action 1: Youth for Europe	Youth	Organisation/system	- Local youth initiative - Youth Democracy Projects - Thematic Networking Projects
Youth in Action – Action 1: Youth support systems	Youth	System	- Support to bodies active at European level in the youth field adding to the value of the programme

Source: ICF (based on desk research)

The assessment of the evaluation question focusing on discontinued actions¹²⁸ has been informed by KIIs (EU and national level) and the review of the National Authorities' (NAU) Erasmus+ implementation reports). Complementary information can be found in Section 6.

Overall, a small share of key informants (in particular at national level) were able to address this question. This can be explained by the fact that not all of them had taken part or had specific knowledge of given predecessor programme(s). Besides, for those who had such experience, the question required from them to have some knowledge of one or several of those actions that were discontinued. This was not always the case.

Some interesting anecdotal insights were nevertheless gained across each of the fields above (excluding HE, as the discontinued action has been replaced by the OLS whose relevance and usefulness are not to be demonstrated by the OLS, whose relevance and

¹²⁶ 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?

¹²⁷ Under Erasmus+, assistantships have been maintained for higher education students only.

¹²⁸ I.e. EQ3 under Relevance: '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?'

usefulness are not to be demonstrated – see Section 6 for related data on results) and for several related discontinued actions.

Among all the discontinued actions discussed, former LLP **learner mobility actions in the school and adult learning fields**, and more specifically the fact that they are not covered under Erasmus+ KA1, were most commonly referred to by interviewees. A similar sentiment (in particular in school education) was identified through other sources reviewed, among which the NAU Erasmus+ implementation reports. This review showed that several reports (e.g. CY, DK, IT) raise the same concern, adding that the (alternative) possibility to get this covered under KA2 is not appropriate and does create some confusion among schools.

In the youth sector, the **'local youth initiative'** action was considered very positive by several interviewees (EU level). Transnational youth initiatives currently in place are seen as too complex for informal groups of young people to apply. Projects with neighbouring countries (previously under YiA Action 3) have more budgetary limitations. Some NAs also miss the small local actions (e.g. former **'national youth initiatives'**, which were a stepping stone in YiA to bigger projects). Demand for related actions (e.g. structural dialogue, for which there is little budget available under Erasmus+) is high.

In VET, the discontinuation of **'People in the Labour Market (PLM)'** and subsequent integration under ESF was briefly discussed. The broadness of ESF (i.e. the main scope of action is not individual mobility) was considered a deterrent to the visibility of the action. **'Study visits for education and VET specialists and decision-makers'** was also discussed (see details in box below).

Further details can be found across the sample of illustrative quotations set out below.

Illustrative quotations (KIIs and NAU reports)

School education

- *'Pupil mobility, which was not included when the new Erasmus+ programme was established, should be reconsidered. From an equality point of view, the exclusion of pupil/student mobility in Erasmus+ makes the programme only accessible to a certain group of students/pupils in Finland.'* (NAU report)
- *'Erasmus+ beneficiaries in the school education sector regret that as a result of merging of its predecessor programmes, a separate long-term pupil mobility action became an integral part of Strategic Partnership projects. Not only [was] this action very popular and beneficial, but also the previous model of funding (lump sum) was more convenient than the new one (unit cost).'* (NAU report – LT)
- *'Introduction of pupil mobility (short-term mobility, i.e. one–two weeks) as a KA1 activity, in which pupils can participate with their teachers as accompanying persons (like the former Language Projects). The long-term mobility, eligible under KA2 projects, does not seem to be working – it does not work at all for Cyprus (no requests for this type of mobility so far).'* (NAU Cyprus)

VET

- *'Study visits for education and VET specialists and decision-makers which were formally offered under LLP. Those provided an excellent opportunity to trade unionists and teacher trade unionists to participate in visits and get better insights on aspects such as increasing participation of learners and practitioners in such programmes.'* (KII EU level)

Adult learning

- *'In KA1 we have only staff mobility now. We try to work in a very learner-centred way in KA2 projects but it is difficult to say. We used to have senior volunteering where learners could actually participate but this disappeared.'* (KII EU level)

Youth

- *'Under the Youth in Action programme, there were youth initiatives – young people could initiate their own projects, not necessarily international but with a local focus. When Youth in Action finished, this was discontinued in Erasmus+. This is a shame as these actions were very beneficial for the whole community and young people.'* (KII national level)
- *'Due to the subsidiarity principle, youth initiatives at local and national level previously funded under YiA were discontinued under Erasmus+. Transnational youth initiatives are placed under KA 2 which are too complex for informal groups of young people to apply [for] and to implement. Youth democracy projects were discontinued.'* (KII national level)
- *'The group of "NEETs" can be most efficiently reached by youth organisations. They are very often the target groups of calls for proposals; however, they don't always have the capacity and experience to apply for these. They are not able to prepare an application for a European project, they should have something smaller. Previously the youth exchanges served this purpose and as 'entry level', though this is not part of the programme anymore unfortunately.'* (KII national level)

4.4 The programme's suitability for attracting different target audiences

This section addresses the following evaluation question:

How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope

Drawing upon the analysis of data collected, it can be concluded that the programme is well suited to attract a wide range of target audiences and groups across the fields it covers.

It is particularly successful in reaching learners with fundamentally different profiles, however with one area for improvement. It appears that, despite the concentrated efforts, a lot is still to be desired regarding the involvement of the disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. In the meantime, it was found that Erasmus+ is both well-known and increasingly attractive to an array of organisations, active in the different sectors within the programme's scope. On a less positive note it was evidenced that the extent to which Erasmus+ is capable of reaching out to potential organisations shows differences (most remarkably regarding the field of youth) across the different sectors.

Table 4.9 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Attractiveness to different profiles of learners	Beneficiaries surveys	 Learners with different backgrounds can benefit from the programme. The attractiveness of disadvantaged groups is an area for improvement though
Stakeholders' views about programme's attractiveness to learners	Key informant interviews	 Most interviewees find the programme relevant to address learners' needs and successful in attracting learners
Stakeholders' views about programme's attractiveness to organisations	Key informant interviews	 Though the programme outreaches to a wide range of organisations, a large share of the stakeholders flagged the issue of involving small, relatively inexperienced organisations
Share of experts who consider the project applications are of high quality	Survey of programme experts	 While most frequently (42 %) found to be of average quality, almost one third considered these as high quality, while a small fraction found them to be very high quality. Improvement in quality is found between E+ and predecessor programmes
The competition for grants is balanced	programme data analysis	 The competition for grants is rather unbalanced, suggesting great differences among the sectors within the programme's scope
	Survey of programme experts	 The experts survey reaffirmed above finding by identifying major unbalances in competition for grants among the different sectors
Degree of repeated participation in the programme	programme data analysis	 A positive combination observed concerning the participating patterns: the degree of repeated participation appears to be low regarding learners, while repeated participation can be observed for staff

Analysing the results of the **beneficiaries survey** confirms that the programme is also suitable and attractive to learners with significantly different profiles. As presented in detail in Section 6, results show that learners regardless of their background are able to participate in the different actions offered by the programme. Nevertheless, the share of disadvantaged groups remains low (9 % of KA1 participants according to programme data) despite the programme's specific efforts in the area.

Notwithstanding this, the positive appreciation of the programme's attractiveness to learners is also confirmed by a high share of key informants, both at national and European level. The majority of the interviewees estimate that the programme strongly contributes to addressing the socioeconomic needs of the learners, which makes it appealing to them. In addition, it was also found that Erasmus+ is effective in increasing the attractiveness of the different sectors that it covers (predominantly HE and VET). That being said, it reaches out to learners with substantially different profiles. On a less positive note, the review of the interviews reveals that attracting hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups is yet to be better addressed. Still, according to the key informants, the programme appeals to a wide array of different organisations active in the fields it covers. In general, Erasmus+ is appreciated by the majority of interviewed stakeholders for its structure and characteristics, notably that a diverse range of organisations with different profiles can benefit from it. Among the interviewed stakeholders, the judgements are particularly positive in the field of higher education, while, in the meantime, the youth sector tends to perform well to a lesser extent. A few examples are outlined in the box below.

Illustrative examples reported from the key informant interviews

- Participation of disadvantaged groups: *'The EC should further encourage the Member States to co-fund and top up the Erasmus+ student mobility grants to widen access to disadvantaged learners, among others, through regional and social funds. The availability of such funding could be included in the semester reports as one of the indicators for equity and social inclusion, which might also motivate other countries to follow suit.'*

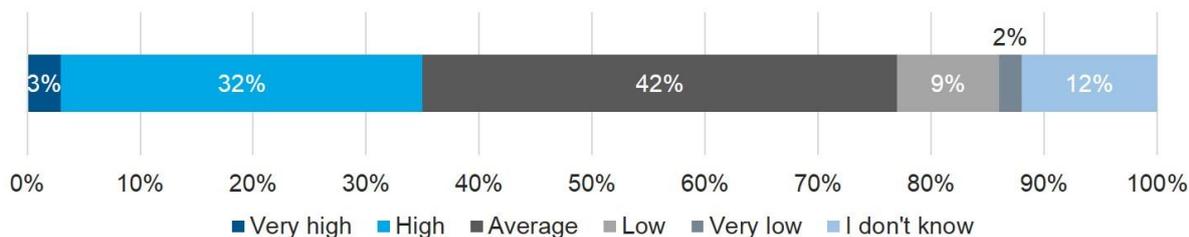
'Young people with disabilities or special needs are less represented among participants in the programme activities. There are specific measures to foster their participation, but somehow they are not as represented as other groups of youth with fewer opportunities.'
- Attractiveness of the programme at individual level: *'Erasmus+ stimulated the participation to adult learning and VET through the projects it supports. The party who benefits most from the programme are the learners. I believe it has not yet created the desired impact at the system level.'*
- Attractiveness to organisations: *'From the perspective of the education policy, the programme is broad enough that everybody can fit policy priorities in it. While the objectives are broad and coherent with ET 2020, in reality the application forms go very much in line with annual priorities, with very specific actions, which some small organisations could not necessarily work with; this also restricts them from applying.'*

In parallel, a number of constraints were expressed as well, revealing hindering tendencies. One of the most recurrent views is that the competition is unbalanced, showing vast differences across the different type of actions and sectors, in particular with regard to KA2 – Strategic Partnerships – which the key informants recognised as being the most competitive. When discussing those actions, discrepancy between the high efforts required to prepare a proposal and low success rates was reported by a number of key informants (though improvements are to be pointed out – in particular for the school education and adult education sectors for 2016 – as Figure 4.15 below shows).

Despite it being managed at decentralised level, the application requires a level of understanding and composition of partnership that sets difficulties (e.g. understanding the programme guide, finding the right partners and preparing the application) for organisations without rich international experience to get involved and apply for Erasmus+ grants. According to the interviewees, this often prevents smaller organisations from participating and, in the meantime, results in the dominance of bigger ones. Additionally, in relation to the field of youth a strong need was articulated (both at EU and national level) for capacity-building project funds, operation grants and a higher intensity of support in order to maintain the programme's attractiveness in the future.

The initial assumption was that there is a strong correlation between the programme's ability to attract the correct and qualified target groups and the quality of the applications submitted. To further substantiate the above findings, the share of applications that are of good quality serves as an important indicator. The analysis of the **programme experts survey** confirms and, in parallel, to some extent appears to contradict the above.

Figure 4.15 Respondents' perception of the quality of applications (Erasmus+)

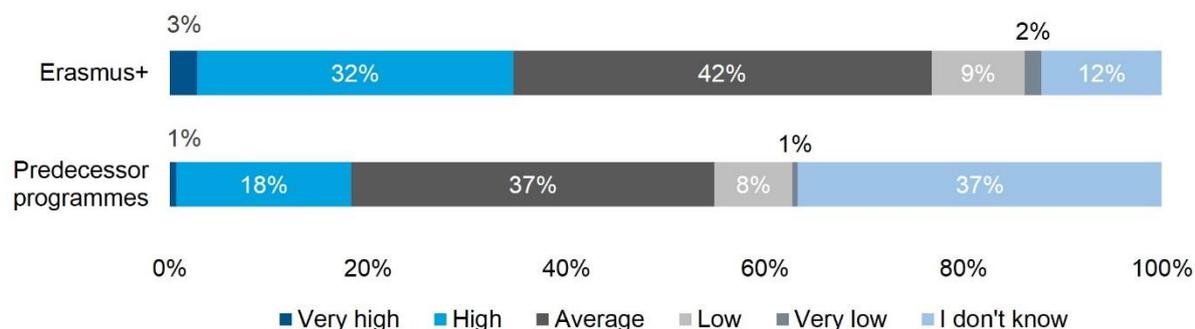


Source: ICF experts survey

The chart reveals that while the applications are most frequently (42 %) of average quality, almost one third were considered as high quality, while a small fraction were found to be of very high quality. Less positively, the share of low and very low quality applications is 11 %. This data confirms the above findings that Erasmus+ is accessible to a wide range of organisations. This furthermore contradicts those views that the programme is available only to a limited and highly experienced group of organisations.

Comparing the main results above with those gathered for the predecessor programmes, the analysis presents an improvement under Erasmus+ with regard to the quality of the applications. The development is most remarkable concerning the share of high-quality applications whereas the predecessor programmes represented 18 % (as opposed to 32 % under Erasmus+). Importantly, this change did not lead to a drop in average quality applications, thus moving towards a programme with elitist¹²⁹ characteristics.

Figure 4.16 Respondents' perception of the quality of applications (Erasmus+ v predecessor programmes)



Source: ICF experts survey

Reviewing the **programme data** provides additional evidence with regard to the attractiveness of the programme. The analysis examines the demand and success rates across the sectors. As for the learner mobility actions, it is necessary to differentiate between the many different forms of quality assessment. For example, the quality assessment of projects in the HE sector takes place in the framework of the ECHE award, rather than the project application stage. Similarly, in the VET Charter, the quality assessment takes place during the application for the charter rather than the project application stage. In the current programme, youth exchanges are highly competitive as on average less than one in three projects is selected. Interestingly the situation is quite

¹²⁹ I.e. a programme where the group of successful applicants is rather restrictive, leaving only little chance for the less experienced to successfully apply for a grant.

different for EVS, where nearly two in three projects get selected. In the predecessor programmes the adult learning workshops and senior volunteering projects were the most competitive actions while the Erasmus intensive programmes and intensive language courses had a high success rate (three in four projects were selected).

The data also shows great variations across years. For certain actions the success rates vary by more than 20 percentage points from one year to another – in particular in the youth sector (EVS and youth exchanges).

Concerning the cooperation projects, it appears that these actions are more selective than the competitive actions funding different types of mobility. Selection rates above 50 % are rare in this category of actions while they are more common for mobility actions.

The table below gives an overview of selection rates for a number (not all) of Erasmus+ types of actions. It shows that across the previous selection years there were a number of highly selective actions funded (equal to or less than 20 % success rates), in particular:

- centralised sport actions;
- strategic partnerships for youth, for adult education, for schools as well as for higher education.

It must be, however, noted that the 2016 selection year resulted in improved success rates and shows a more balanced picture regarding the abovementioned actions. Compared to other strands of the programme, Jean Monnet actions were significantly less selective; however, a drop in the success rates can be observed from 2014 to 2016.

Table 4.10 Overview table of success rates for Erasmus+ (2014, 2015 and 2016)

	Type of action	Success rate 2014	Success rate 2015	Success rate 2016
Key action 2 – decentralised	Strategic Partnerships for School Education	19 %	20 %	24 %
	Strategic Partnerships for Schools only	17 %	21 %	31 %
	Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education	16 %	18 %	26 %
	Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education	17 %	16 %	19 %
	Strategic Partnerships for Vocational Education and Training	23 %	22 %	24 %
	Strategic Partnerships for	15 %	11 %	14 %

	Type of action	Success rate 2014	Success rate 2015	Success rate 2016
	Youth			
Erasmus+ centralised	Capacity Building in Youth	25 %	21 %	11 %
	Knowledge Alliances	4 %	5 %	10.64 % ¹³⁰
	Sector Skills Alliances	13 %	22 %	22 %
Jean Monnet	Jean Monnet Modules	40 %	26 %	20 %
	Jean Monnet Chairs	46 %	26 %	39 %
	Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence	58 %	51 %	38 %
	Jean Monnet Associations	64 %	53 %	35 %
	Jean Monnet Network	41 %	26 %	23 %
	Jean Monnet Information Project	44 %	31 %	27 %
	Jean Monnet total	43 %	30 %	26 %
Sport centralised	Support for not-for-profit European sport events	3 %	5 %	24 % ¹³¹
	Support for collaborative partnerships	13 %	17 %	

Source: European Commission (2015), Erasmus+ programme Annual Report 2014. Annex 1 – Statistical Annex; European Commission (2017), Erasmus+ programme Annual Report 2015; EACEA data and EPlusLink BO Report EP014 (accessed 21.07.2017)

The key findings of the **programme experts survey** similarly confirm a high, and at the same time, unbalanced competition across the different sectors covered. According to the

¹³⁰ This figure was provided by EACEA, corresponding to 20 Knowledge Alliances projects selected out of 188 applications in 2016.

¹³¹ For 2016, the success rate for sport actions could not be disaggregated into the two different types of actions. An overall figure for sport actions in that year has thus been indicated.

results, five out of the seven fields within the programme's scope were highly competitive:

- school education;
- vocational education and training;
- higher education;
- youth;
- adult learning.

At the same time, sport and Jean Monnet actions were deemed less competitive, which is only partially confirmed by the above concluded programme data.

The analysis of the **programme data** on participation patterns furthermore reveals the extent to which it is each time a new cohort who benefits from the programme and how the programme selection avoids repeated participation. Based on the available data, it can be concluded that 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, in particular when it comes to transversal competences and attitudes and behaviours, are likely to diminish with repeated participation (i.e. the development is stronger the first time a person participates and subsequent exchanges add less value). Concerning staff mobility, big differences can be seen as for the number of times they participated in the Erasmus+ programme (i.e. based on participation data between 2014 and 2016). 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.

4.5 The programme's visibility

This section addresses the following evaluation question:

How well is the Erasmus+ programme known to the education and training, youth and sport community?

The assessment of this evaluation question is overall very positive. Indeed, all of the sources reviewed (social media analysis, national agencies survey, Eurobarometer survey and the Erasmus+ 30 years anniversary campaign) show that Erasmus+ is very visible.

The large visibility of the Erasmus+ programme is also striking when taking into account the benchmark analysis¹³² with other European programmes such as Horizon 2020, Europe for Citizens or EU Aid Volunteer, which are discussed on social media in much lower amounts.

The English language is not the most frequently used language; Spanish is the most frequently used language among social media users. Multilingualism is therefore crucial to ensure high visibility for the Erasmus+ programme in the future.

As noted in the table below, the following key indicators have been considered to assess the programme's visibility:

- knowledge about the Erasmus+ programme among general public;
- share of programme agencies that agree that the single programme is more visible;
- volume of exchanges about the programme in social media;
- characteristics of the population talking about the programme;
- range of topics most associated in social media exchanges about Erasmus+.

¹³² The benchmark analysis has the same scope as the main social media analysis, e.g. using the same sources, and done on the same data and languages as the main social media analysis.

Table 4.11 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Knowledge about Erasmus+ programme among general public	Eurobarometer survey	 53 % of the general public have heard about the Erasmus+ programme, an increase by 23 percentage points since 2009
Share of programme agencies which agree that the single programme is more visible	Survey of programme agencies	 78 % of national agencies and the EACEA believe that the single programme is more visible
Volume of exchanges about the programme in social media	Social media analysis, Erasmus+ anniversary campaign	 Erasmus+ is widely shared on social media; in total 725,678 posts were generated on the Erasmus+ topic in one year
Characteristics of the population talking about the programme	Social media analysis, Erasmus+ anniversary campaign	 The posts on Erasmus+ come from all over the world; the most frequently used language is Spanish
Range of topics most associated in social media exchanges about Erasmus+	Social media analysis, Erasmus+ anniversary campaign	 Variety of different topics ranging from programme actions to social life on Erasmus+

As Figure 4.17 shows, according to the Eurobarometer survey¹³³ the Erasmus programme is visible among the general public: 53 % of respondents have heard of the Erasmus programme. This is a positive result especially when one compares it with the previous Special Eurobarometer in 2009¹³⁴, where on average only 30 % of respondents had heard about the Erasmus programme. This is a huge increase of 23 percentage points.

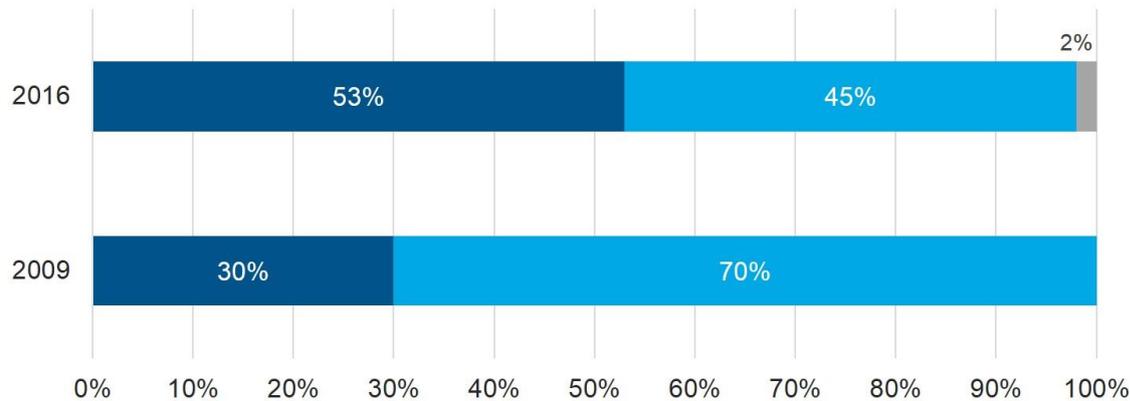
That being said, the knowledge about Erasmus+ differs significantly by country: whereas in Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal and Belgium more than 75 % of the population have heard about the Erasmus programme, in Romania and the UK only 30 % have heard about it. The biggest increase in knowledge about the existence of the programme can be found in Lithuania and Latvia (increase of 38 and 37 percentage points respectively). Moreover, there are also expected differences by age – the younger population is more knowledgeable about Erasmus than the older one (63 % of people born after 1980 and 60 % of those born between 1965 and 1980¹³⁵ have respectively heard about Erasmus, compared to only 34 % of people born before 1946). Finally, 72 % of students have heard about the programme; the programme is therefore very visible among the target groups.

¹³³ Standard Eurobarometer 86 – Wave EB86.2, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2017/surveyKy/2137>

¹³⁴ Special Eurobarometer survey 316 (EB71.2), European Employment and Social Policy, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2009/surveyKy/820>

¹³⁵ I.e. embedding the first generation that benefited from Erasmus.

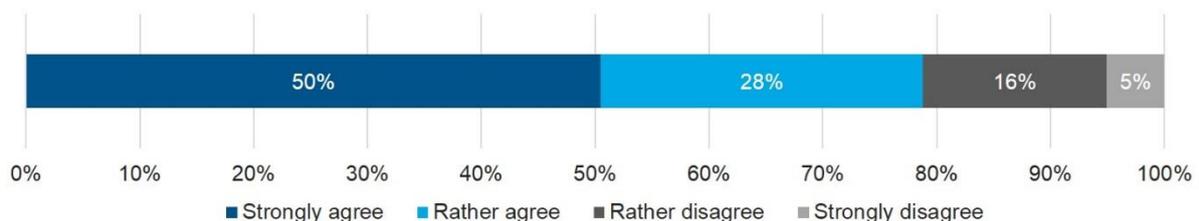
Figure 4.17 Knowledge about Erasmus(+) 2009 v 2016



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 86 and Special Eurobarometer survey 316

The overall high visibility of the programme is further supported by the **programme agencies survey**, as 78 % of the national agencies and EACEA representatives believe that the Erasmus+ programme is more visible or better branded than the predecessor programmes. However, there can be found differences among the sectors: whereas 92 % of the respondents in the HE and VET sector believe that the programme is now more visible, in the adult learning sector this share is lower at 83 %. Finally, only 77 % in the school education sector believe that the programme is now more visible, and in the youth sector this opinion is shared by 71 % of people.

Figure 4.18 The single programme is more visible/better branded than the predecessor programmes



Source: ICF programme agencies survey

Moreover, further assessment of the visibility can be analysed using social media and the amount of posts and activity connected to the topic of Erasmus+. For the assessment, the evaluation team carried out a **social media analysis** on posts between November 2015 and 2016. The 30 years anniversary social media campaign was also reviewed. Both of these sources again support the previous findings of the very high visibility of the Erasmus+ programme. Other sources concurring with the above were also identified, on a more sporadic basis, at national level. These were not the object of a systematic review as part of this evaluation but rather served to complement the above through illustrative examples. These included for instance YouTube channels such as in France Génération Erasmus, whose mini-series *Erasmus, un bagage en plus* enjoyed 800,000 views. According to the analysis, the total number of posts discussing Erasmus+ is 725,678 between November 2015 and 2016. This means that, on average, every day almost 2,000 posts were generated or shared on the topic of Erasmus+. Moreover, the 30 years anniversary campaign managed to reach a very large audience: the campaign website attracted 195,000 visits worldwide, most of them from Europe, but also from countries outside of Europe (with the highest share coming from Asia). Within Europe, the highest

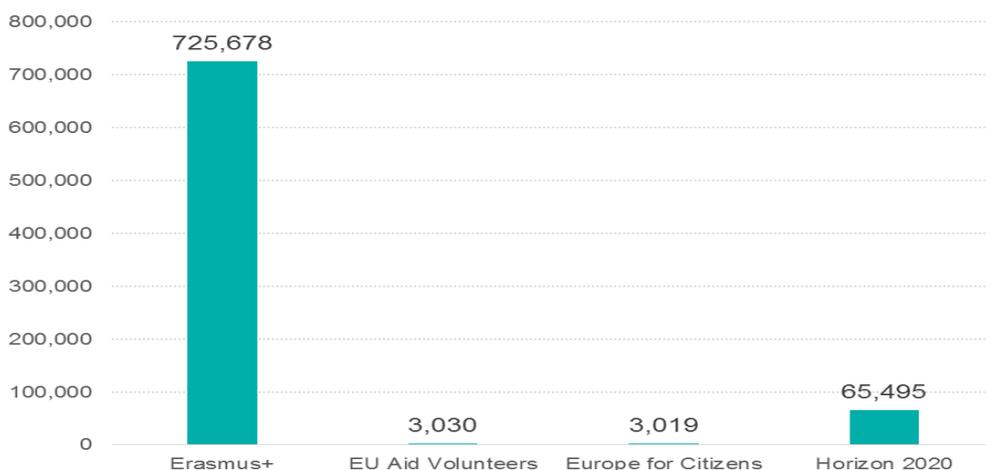
number of visitors come from Spain, Italy, Belgium and Germany. Moreover, 22,506 articles were found mentioning Erasmus+ from 1 January to 31 March 2017 and social media posts have been seen in total more than 20 million times (this includes Twitter and Facebook accounts for the campaign).

Social media analysis also enabled the benchmark analysis of the Erasmus+ programme with the following three similar EU programmes:

- EU Aid Volunteers;
- EU for Citizens;
- Horizon 2020.

The results of the social media analysis in all languages in the period between 5 November 2015 and 4 November 2016 show that the Erasmus+ is more discussed on social media by a very high margin. While the number of posts on Erasmus+ is more than 725,500, the smaller programmes EU Aid Volunteers and Europe for Citizens have only about 3,000 posts and reposts, and the significantly larger programme Horizon 2020 has 65,495 posts and reposts. This indicates that Erasmus+ is very well known among social media users and it overtakes not only the smaller programmes but also the significantly larger programme Horizon 2020.

Figure 4.19 Volume of posts for Erasmus+ and other EU programmes



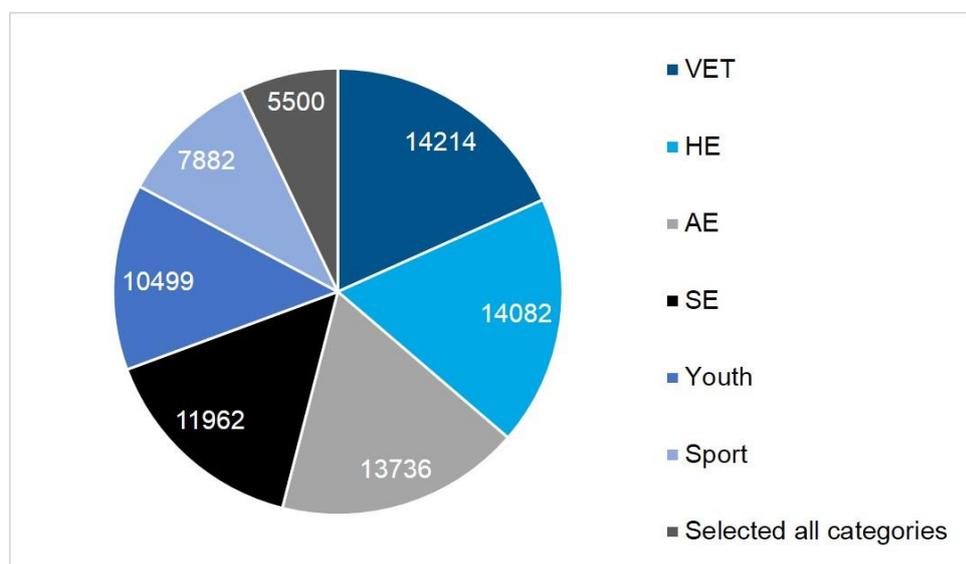
Source: ICF social media analysis

There are several important findings concerning the characteristics of the population communicating about Erasmus+ on social media. Discussion about Erasmus+ is greatest in Southern and Western Europe, with Spain (29 %), France (11 %), Italy (10 %) and the UK (10 %) leading with the highest number of posts. Out of the 725,678 posts on social media, the number of posts in English for the same period was 120,204, which shows that the English language is not the most used communication language concerning Erasmus+. According to our analysis the most used language was Spanish and the second most used language was English, followed by French and Italian. Similarly, there is also large variety in the location of the audience of the Erasmus+ 30 years anniversary campaign website. Most visitors come from Spain, followed by Italy and Belgium. As the discussion on Erasmus+ is not restricted just to one location and the social media users discuss Erasmus+ in their own native language, a multilingual

communication for Erasmus+ in general might be beneficial for reaching a larger audience. Erasmus+ social media discussions and posts also cover a very large variety of topics; in fact, the topics range from various programme actions to topics about the social life experienced during Erasmus+. For example, one of the main topics appearing in the results of social media analysis is 'Novia de Erasmus' (in Spanish) meaning 'Girlfriend from Erasmus' in English. This shows that the social factor of Erasmus+ is very strong. The other four key topics are: Programa Erasmus, Becas Erasmus (Erasmus grants), ErasmusPlus, and Erasmus students, and they mostly include subtopics such as experience, scholarships, mobility, but also topics such as Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus for young entrepreneurs. Moreover, a recurrent subtopic was also Brexit.

A large variety of topics and audience interests is also reinforced by the distribution of Erasmus+ newsletter subscribers; in total there are 19,151 subscribers to the Erasmus+ newsletter. As the following figure shows all sectors are interested in Erasmus+.

Figure 4.20 E+ campaign's newsletter subscribers by sector



Source: Presentation E+ campaign state of play (August 2017)

4.6 The programme's suitability for addressing hard-to-reach groups

This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

To what extent is the design of the programme oriented and focused towards the hard-to-reach groups or specific disadvantaged groups¹³⁶ of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational activities?

Different sources (desk research, key informant interviews, case studies and programme agencies survey primarily) were used to inform this question, as Table 4.12 outlines. Overall, the analysis of data collected reveals that in its design the programme is to a

¹³⁶ These terms are understood as interchangeable. As per the Erasmus+ Programme Guide (p. 9), they comprise individuals with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities such as disability (i.e. participants with special needs); educational difficulties (e.g. low achievers, early school leavers, etc.); economic obstacles (people with a low standard of living, low income, unemployed, etc.); cultural differences (e.g. immigrants or refugees); health problems; social obstacles (people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, etc.); people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky behaviours; people in a precarious situation; geographical obstacles (people from remote or rural areas, etc.).

rather high extent oriented and focused towards hard-to-reach or specific disadvantaged groups. Most of the respondents acknowledge recent shifts in the programme to focus more on social inclusion (e.g. focus on refugees or migrants). However, over half of them also estimate that there is a gap between the programme's ambitions and its actual capabilities to reach out to the groups above in an effective way (this aspect is further discussed in Section 6).

While there is a general consensus that Erasmus+ offers possibilities for disadvantaged groups (though variations are found from one sector to another), at least in theory, findings also suggest that opinions whether the programme offers more opportunities than its predecessors are mixed.

In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?

The evaluation allowed for identification of several barriers to the participation of these groups based on various sources. These can be categorised according to financial awareness and social/administrative skills-related obstacles to mobility. At individual level, the prevailing view is that special groups need special funding. However, apart from a few targeted measures such as the higher education sector (see details below) or youth¹³⁷, this is currently insufficiently reflected in the financial support provided by the programme.

There are also awareness-related limitations stemming from insufficient knowledge about the opportunities offered by the programme (e.g. among parents) as well as from existing beliefs about the (low) value of international mobility for young people.

A tendency can be also observed to understand 'disadvantage' in terms of physical disability rather than economic or social restraints more specifically. At organisational level, there is a prevailing view that Erasmus+ has limited potential to reach those organisations that address problems specific to this group of people. The application process is perceived as too lengthy and complicated for those organisations and they also lack resources and experience to prepare and manage mobility projects (as often reported by interviewees involved in such organisations). At the same time, several interviewees reported that other organisations (with a wider remit, addressing different target groups) that apply for the programme funds usually do not have capacity to host or identify such disadvantaged persons

¹³⁷ In 2014, Erasmus+ KA1 extended to other action fields, beyond youth, with additional financial support to people with fewer opportunities, from a disadvantaged background or from remote areas, in order to make the mobility programme more accessible and inclusive. The action continues to support participants with special needs. Erasmus+2014 work programme available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-annual-report_en.pdf

Table 4.12 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Existence of features aimed to support participation of hard-to-reach groups	Desk research – review of programme documentation	 There is a clearer focus on supporting refugees and other marginalised groups, in particular since 2016 in Erasmus+ programme documentation
Number of programme agencies' respondents who put in place specific actions to increase participation of hard-to-reach groups	Survey of programme agencies	 Overall, 100 respondents described specific actions put in place to increase participation of hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups
Comparison in participation of disadvantaged groups with other programmes	Survey of programme agencies	 Most respondents see high or equivalent level of participation of the disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups in Erasmus+ compared to other national or international programmes
Barriers faced by disadvantaged groups	Survey of programme agencies Key informant interviews Case studies	 Financial, awareness/social and administrative skills-related obstacles for disadvantaged groups to participate in Erasmus+ have been identified by respondents
Barriers faced by organisations with large population of disadvantaged learners	Key informant interviews Case studies	 Considerable barriers prevent organisations from benefiting from Erasmus+ programme due to the lack of adequate resources, capacity, and experience to apply and manage mobility projects, difficulties with finding partners and building partnerships, problems with finding co-financing

The review of programme documentation shows that changes were made in the design of the programme to make it more oriented and focused towards the hard-to-reach groups or specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational activities.

Several references to disadvantaged persons (as per programme guide definition) can be found in the programme's legal basis and work programme. The EU Regulation No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing Erasmus+ clearly refers to 'a need to widen access for members of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and actively to address the special learning needs of people with disabilities in the implementation of the programme'. It further states that targets '*improving the educational opportunities for children with a migrant background and those at a socio- economic disadvantage*' should be prioritised in order to improve equity and inclusion within school systems and institutions.

In the context of persistent consequences of economic crisis on youth unemployment added to 2015 terrorist attacks and radicalisation in different parts of Europe since 2016, an increased attention has also been given in the programme to social inclusion. For instance, the 2016 programme guide has been updated to address issues around social cohesion and the integration of refugees and migrants. More specifically, youth projects across all KAs and the KA2 Strategic Partnerships have updated priorities to enable organisations to work with these identified target groups (in line with the Paris Declaration). This shift continues in the Erasmus+ work programme for 2017, which places special attention on social inclusion by providing support for projects that aim to enhance the access, participation and learning performance of disadvantaged learners, among others.

As such, the programme aims to:

- support the professional development of educators and youth workers, especially in dealing with learners with disadvantaged backgrounds and diversity in classrooms, by mobility activities (KA1) that can increase their ability to address the needs of the disadvantaged groups;
- support schools in tracking disadvantage to enable success for all students, including children with a migrant background who might face specific (e.g. linguistic) challenges;
- promote social inclusion and 'combine higher levels of excellence and attractiveness with increased opportunities for all, including those at disadvantage' by mobility activities at systemic level (KA2);
- place special attention to disadvantaged students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds and to students with special needs in capacity-building actions (under KA2) in HE in which projects that are addressing the integration of refugees from conflict-affected countries will be given special attention, and;
- in the field of international higher education, to ensure the participation of vulnerable groups and individuals, less developed regions and disadvantaged institutions and to offer support for conflict affected and fragile countries.

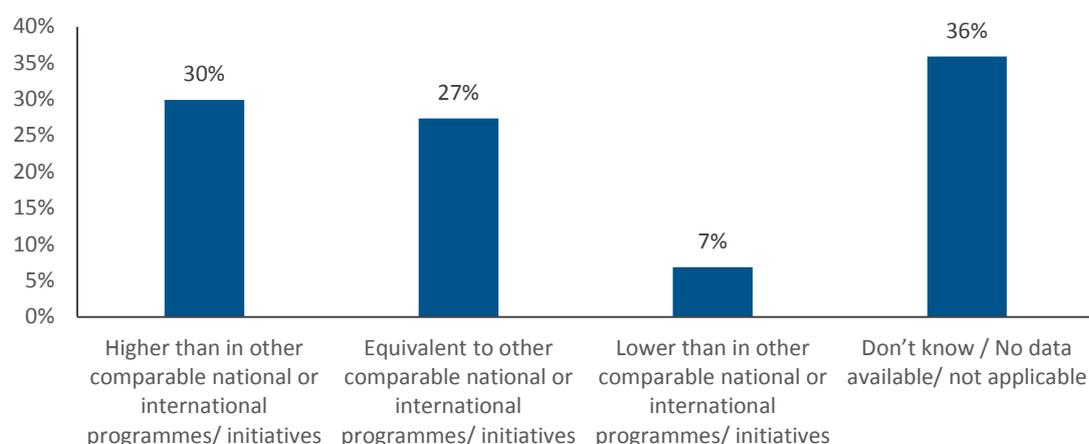
As further indicated in scoping interviews at the EU level, HE (and youth to some extent) is so far the main sector where most targeted measures seem to mostly take place. Here changes introduced under individual mobility include additional financial support (top-up grants) offered to students with socioeconomic disadvantaged backgrounds, students/staff with disabilities as well as students from outermost regions and overseas countries and territories (OCTs)¹³⁸.

When comparing the actual participation of disadvantaged groups in Erasmus+ with other national or international programmes, the analysis of the programme agencies survey shows that slightly more than half of respondents (57 %) perceive the number of such participants as higher or the same in Erasmus+.

As the following figure shows, there is a similar share assessing the level of participation of the disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups as higher and as equivalent to other programmes (30 % and 27 % respectively). In case of responses with more negative assessment of Erasmus+ achievements in attracting these groups, their number was visibly lower (7 %). It should be mentioned, however, that for more than one third of respondents (36 %) from surveyed agencies the absence of relevant statistical data was an obstacle to providing any estimates on this issue.

¹³⁸ Special funding rules have been set by the Erasmus+ legal basis to support expensive travel costs of participants from outermost regions and OCTs that are insufficiently covered by the standard funding rules (based on contribution to unit costs per travel distance band).

Figure 4.21 Perceived level of participation of disadvantaged groups (E+ v other comparable national/international programmes)



Source: ICF programme agencies survey (n= 117)

Overall, 100 NA respondents reported specific actions put in place to increase participation of hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups. The same survey further revealed that the number of Erasmus+ projects addressing these groups has increased since 2014, according to some agencies. In their view, such an impact is to be expected in the future given that disadvantaged groups are clearly favoured in calls for proposals according to some respondents.

Currently, the most frequently targeted groups addressing disadvantaged persons include: NEETs, unemployed and underemployed, individuals with physical impairments, and minorities, as the expert panel assessment of Erasmus+ project outputs reveals (Annex 10).

In countries where there are no mobility programmes targeting disadvantaged groups specifically other than Erasmus+, the programme is appreciated for its very presence. If programmes supporting mobility exist, they do not have such a priority at all or – if they do – they do not promote it to such an extent as Erasmus+ does. Also, national funding schemes are often limited to supporting the disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups only in a home country, as indicated by respondents from national agencies.

Among the comparator schemes, there are three schemes that pay particular attention to the participation of disadvantaged groups (Causeway, Nordplus Higher Education and Nordplus Adult). These comparators provide either additional funding to the disadvantaged groups and/or have specific measures in place to facilitate their participation. One additional comparator (AKTION) offers very generous grants/scholarships to participants, so special needs can be covered from the 'standard' grants/scholarships. For the remaining comparators, a conclusion can be made that these do not specifically promote the inclusion of disadvantaged groups

If compared to previous programmes, the participation of disadvantaged learners has already been at a good level and remained the same under Erasmus+ (especially in the youth sector), according to some key informant interviews. For others, Erasmus+ is more visible when it comes to promoting the participation of young people who are more disadvantaged than their peers, particularly those with specific profiles (e.g. from migrant families).

Illustrative quotes from respondents

- *'It is more likely that [youth mobility participants] have a university degree, have earned a certain education. They are also from big cities or graduated from HEIs in big cities. They are not marginalised or excluded, but are often already working and want to change what they do, or take a year off and think about it. Not quite sure if E+ is for them.'* (Staff member from youth organisation (case study))
- *'Those who participate are better organised. Those who are not, stay at home.'* (Key informants from school education sector)
- *'The programme pretends to be inclusive but it's not perceived like that at all by the users.'* (One of the responses from the national agencies survey)
- *'Engaging disadvantaged youth is not an easy process and it is not enough to say: We have a programme and we can send you abroad.'* (Staff member from youth organisation (case study))

As for opportunities offered by Erasmus+ if compared to its predecessors, they have been viewed more critically by the programme agencies' respondents than participation. Even though there is a general consensus that Erasmus+ does provide possibilities for disadvantaged groups, opinions whether it offers more opportunities than its predecessors are mixed. The survey shows that half of the indications point to a strong or less strong agreement that Erasmus+ offers more opportunities for disadvantaged groups, whereas a quarter disagree with such a statement.

Among other sources analysed from this angle, the KIIs (national level) assessed the relevance of Erasmus+ to hard-to-reach or specific disadvantaged groups positively almost in all sectors. In school education, VET, youth and adult learning sectors, the interviews with national-level key informants showed that the priority to reach out to disadvantaged groups is well reflected in Erasmus+ and the respondents are well aware of measures in place in this regard. In the sport sector, around half of the KIIs agreed that Erasmus+ focuses on targeted hard-to-reach groups, such as refugees, but it was difficult for some of them to list specific projects within their country that used sport as a medium for social inclusion. Only respondents from the HE sector had more mixed views on how Erasmus+ supports these groups within the population. Their sentiment was that Erasmus+ better targets students with health disadvantages than their socially and economically disadvantaged peers.

Against this background emerges a rather critical assessment provided by the expert panel assessment regarding the project outputs' ability to address disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups under Erasmus+. It suggests that, while a good share of projects viewed considered different disadvantaged groups, this was often not substantiated with concrete actions. On the contrary, it remained an ambitious but unaddressed objective from the proposal without developing suitable outputs specifically for the disadvantaged. Additionally, the expert assessment found that some projects lacked a narrow focus on a clearly identified group (i.e. young people with disadvantages), making it unlikely to identify and meet their probable needs.

Overall, while the efforts of Erasmus+ in this aspect are being recognised by a majority of interviewees, there is a shared perception among all groups of respondents that there are still important flaws or limitations in the programme design in terms of disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups.

Accordingly, limited or no capacity to increase participation of disadvantaged learners was reported at both EU and national levels and in various sectors. Several groups of obstacles can be distinguished from the information gathered throughout the study. These are related to:

- financial support;
- awareness of programme priorities and the possibilities it offers;
- readiness for mobility.

In terms of **financial support** available for disadvantaged groups, it has been clearly articulated that special groups need special funding, which is not evenly reflected in the programme at the moment. While additional financial support is offered in the higher education sector (i.e. to students with socioeconomic disadvantaged backgrounds, students from outermost countries and regions/overseas territories, and students and staff with special needs and their accompanying person when needed), the fact that Erasmus+ does not allow for covering costs related to specialised support needed (e.g. covering costs of interpreters for a deaf persons or the real costs of travelling from rural areas) was pointed out by some key informants interviews (representing other sectors) at the EU level.

Also, some national agencies, which generally had more positive views on this issue, expressed opinions that the programme does not offer additional funding and does not create specific additional possibilities to include participants with fewer opportunities in the projects. Therefore, it does not provide motivation or initiative to involve these groups since such support is not always available. Finally, insufficient financial support is also seen as the main obstacle across various sectors as well, with more pronounced weight on HE (i.e. despite the abovementioned measures), VET and youth.

In addition to funds, the findings also disclose some **awareness-related obstacles** in order for disadvantaged groups to participate. In relation to the HE sector, it has been pointed out in the key informants interviews at the EU level that one out of five respondents to the EUA survey (2016)¹³⁹ claimed that they were not aware of Erasmus+ priority areas, including those aimed at widening access to HE to the most disadvantaged groups of learners (e.g. vulnerable groups of learners).

In the youth sector, a low awareness of the needs of hard-to-reach groups stemming from the lack of common understanding of what these groups are across different countries and regions was highlighted. There is also a tendency to think about exclusion mainly in terms of people with disabilities, even though Erasmus+ brings the attention to different cohorts that fall into this category. The overall perception among key informants was that Erasmus+ opportunities are perhaps less visible to some groups of disadvantaged learners. Too many target groups and too many priorities addressed by the programme were also listed by this group as blurring the programme's attention directed towards disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups.

The **insufficient foreign language skills**, or a lack thereof, among both learners and trainers/practitioners have also been mentioned as important factors that limit the access of hard-to-reach groups or specific disadvantaged groups to transnational activities, particularly in adult learning and VET sectors. In case of VET, it has been highlighted that the lack of (adequate) knowledge of a foreign language can be a considerable obstacle for students who are linguistically neglected. This is particularly relevant in cases where vocational schools do not place sufficient emphasis on learning foreign languages and

¹³⁹ European University Association (EUA, EU member consultation – A contribution to the Erasmus+ mid-term review, 2016. Available: <http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/eua-membership-consultation-2016-mid-term-review-of-erasmus>

require less from their students in this respect. Also, the language skills of students are highly differentiated as well as their readiness for mobility to the disadvantage of less advantaged and hard-to-reach young people (based on case studies). Finally, according to a number of respondents from the key informants group, Erasmus+ in general has limited potential to attract organisations that work with disadvantaged groups. Administrative, resources-related, and organisational aspects of applying for Erasmus+ projects have been listed as limiting their access to the programme. Also, in the programme agencies' survey it has been mentioned (though to a lesser extent) that the programme does not promote simple local-level projects, which limits the access to these target groups to the programme.

All these issues are considered as preventing to a vast extent the participation of grassroots organisations that target hard-to-reach and marginalised people. Being too absorbed by their ongoing responsibilities, they also rarely have time to engage in highly competitive calls, as reported in some countries. Even if they manage to win a project, involving disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups in mobility activities requires significant long-term efforts from their side without any guarantees that they will bring positive results. As for organisations with a more complex profile (i.e. addressing various groups, not only the disadvantaged), they rarely have the ability to identify, reach and host such persons. They also do not have qualified employees to work with this group. Overall, it was felt that such organisations do not know how to reach out to the most disadvantaged groups and do not have the right tools to do so (based on case studies).

Overall, based on analysis of different sources that informed the evaluation questions discussed in this section, it can be assumed that Erasmus+ is not fully effective when it comes to reaching out to disadvantaged and hard-to-reach persons. As the above presented findings show, despite some progress made in the programme design, these particular groups are less represented among participants in the programme activities. Even if there are specific objectives and measures to foster their participation under Erasmus+, the relevance of on-the-ground activities for disadvantaged groups is rather indirect. To put it differently, there is a dissonance between often ambitious programme and project objectives and actual development of suitable outputs specifically for the disadvantaged. This indicates barriers in the programme that prevent their full participation, as described above.

The views whether more can be done at European level to address these challenges were somewhat mixed among some groups of respondents (national-level policymakers). Some of them expressed doubts whether European-level interventions are the adequate way to address this issue if compared to national approaches. They were also not sure if Erasmus+ can facilitate real ongoing engagement with these groups.

5 Coherence of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

5.1 Summary of main findings

This section offers an overview of the main findings emerging from the analysis supplied below on the internal and external coherence of the Erasmus+ programme. This summary also reflects key findings of additional sources (focused evaluation on the Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF), synthesis of the Open Public (OPC) consultation results and synthesis of the National Authorities' (NAUs) reports¹⁴⁰), whose detailed analysis forms part of standalone documents. With regard to the Jean Monnet programme the review of Erasmus+ programme documentation (legal basis and programme guide notably) does not suggest any specific inconsistencies. The objectives of the Jean Monnet programme which aim, among other things, to foster quality improvements in teaching and research at the level of education and training institutions and help inform policy developments in education and training primarily can be hence seen as complementary to the objectives of main Erasmus+ programme. No further insights were gained though on this through as the focused evaluation was not assessed against the coherence criterion.

5.1.1 Internal coherence

The assessment of the internal coherence of the programme (including comparison with that of its predecessors where appropriate) has been informed by five evaluation questions that looked into the following:

- extent to which the objectives of the different fields within the Erasmus+ programme are consistent and mutually supportive;
- existence of synergies between the different programme fields and actions – and how they are dealt with;
- existence of duplications, overlaps, or other disadvantageous issues between the programme fields – and how they are dealt with;
- degree of coherence and complementarity among the centralised and decentralised actions;
- extent to which the programme's internal coherence improved through the introduction of an integrated programme.

Based on the analysis of the different sources referred to in the following subsections, the assessment of the internal coherence of the programme is generally positive. Some room for improvement is found in certain areas, such as in improving synergies (or overlaps) and identification or addressing some persisting dissatisfaction about given decentralised action(s).

The objectives of the different fields within the 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** (Section 5.2.1). Those are perceived and valued by a vast portion of the respondents approached during this evaluation.

As such, the programme is often perceived as:

- clearly drawing on the legacy and lessons learnt from the predecessor programmes – e.g. addressing the key recommendations of both predecessor programmes' mid-

¹⁴⁰ Key findings of the focused evaluation on the Jean Monnet programme are not reflected in the present summary.

term evaluations¹⁴¹ and the Erasmus+ impact assessment¹⁴², and offering a simplified architecture;

- balanced in its objectives – which are in turn well reflected across the three main Key Actions (KAs) and fields;
- enabling mutually supportive actions: the programme allows cross-fertilisation between the different fields to support the engagement of a wider variety of people.

Some reservations are made with regard to the complementarity of the youth or sport actions with other parts of the programme. Some respondents felt that the objectives set for the youth field are coherent (and mutually supportive) with those of the other fields and aligned with programme objectives. This, however, creates some trade-off with internal coherence: in this process of alignment with programme and EU objectives and targets, the specificities of the youth sector have become less visible than in the past.

Echoing observations made earlier (see Section 4), concerns were also expressed about the sport chapter. Stakeholders' views, in particular at national level, were that while its objectives align well with EU priorities in the field, those are not always well comprehended by potential applicants at national level. This may have deterrent effects on the effectiveness and quality of cross-sectoral approaches (i.e. as a 'selling' point of the programme, aiming to foster synergies and mutual learning across sectors and hence increase the programme's internal coherence), which are some of the ultimate aims, among other things.

Another concern relates to the integrated architecture of the programme¹⁴³, which is not always well reflected at the national level. For example, different NAs continue to deal with one specific sector, replicating the way they functioned under the prior programmes.

Moving from the general issue of internal coherence to specific examples of **synergies or overlaps** among programme fields and actions more specifically, a more nuanced picture emerges (Section 5.2.2).

On the one hand, most respondents (i.e. interviewees and respondents to the programme agencies survey) agreed that the integrated programme enables (or has the potential for) increased synergies among programme fields and actions. No specific overlaps were reported. On the other hand, providing concrete examples of synergies was difficult for most respondents – particularly interviewees at national level. This may mean that the programme is not easy to comprehend by all stakeholders yet and/or that individual KAs' scope may be too broad to easily help users identify such concrete examples. This may also suggest that there is a need to enhance the practical implications and synergies of the integration brought about by Erasmus+. Findings

¹⁴¹ Interim Evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013), https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/lifelong-learning-programme-evaluation-2011_en.pdf; Youth in Action Interim Evaluation, https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth-in-action-interim-evaluation-2011_en.pdf; Interim Evaluation of Erasmus Mundus II (2009–2013), https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/erasmus-mundus-ii-evaluation-2012_en.pdf; Mid-term evaluation of Tempus IV, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/documents/mid-term-evaluation-tempus-iv_final-report.pdf; Evaluation of Preparatory Actions and special events in the field of sport, https://ec.europa.eu/sport/sites/sport/files/preparatory-actions-evaluation-2011_en.pdf

¹⁴² Impact assessment accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'ERASMUS FOR ALL': The Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport (http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/ia_carried_out/docs/ia_2011/sec_2011_1402_en.pdf).

¹⁴³ I.e. the purpose of merging the predecessor programmes and three fields into a single integrated programme was to get a more coherent, less complex and more accessible programme.

emerging from the NAUs' reports also confirm that there is no systematic exploration of potential synergies between different types of actions. This is particularly visible in six reports (BEnl, EE, HU, NO, SI and SK).

On the issue of complementarity and coherence between **centralised and decentralised actions**, findings lead again to mixed conclusions, which varied by type of respondents (i.e. among interviewees and respondents to the programme agencies survey).

A commonly shared sentiment refers to the rationale for increased decentralisation: bringing the programme closer to citizens and beneficiaries. This was positively viewed by the vast majority of respondents. However, there was no consensus on the complementarity or coherence between centralised and decentralised actions. Very few interviewees directly commented on this. Many actually rather referred to the advantages (or disadvantages) of having certain actions decentralised. In general, policymakers were more positive than key stakeholders (particularly those at EU level). The latter were the most critical and gave a few concrete examples of perceived incoherencies in this area (Section 5.2.3).

The findings emerging from this evaluation suggest that with decentralisation EU priorities become a bit 'lost', while nationally driven agendas and varying national priorities prevail. On the other hand, having more decentralised projects helps to reach actors on the ground and to engage local partners. The main critical perceptions relate to KA2 (Strategic Partnerships) suggesting that decentralisation to the national agencies (NAs) may result in differences in the implementation of programme rules and criteria. Similar concerns are expressed across the OPC (i.e. particularly by authors of some position papers issued in the context of the OPC). Key findings refer for instance to the Erasmus+ guidelines, award criteria, and grading of applications that are said to be applied inconsistently by NAs¹⁴⁴.

With regard to the **improvement of internal coherence**, the different sources analysed (including NAUs' reports and the OPC) suggest a clear consensus on the added value of the integrated structure. Erasmus+ is considered as having improved the coherence of the programme compared to the previous situation, according to the vast majority of respondents (interviewees and programme agencies survey respondents). The most commonly reported 'biggest advantage' is the clarity of the new structure (i.e. drawing upon the three main KAs applicable to education and training and youth, and two separate chapters (sport and Jean Monnet)). An area where findings are more contrasted, though, concern opportunities for cross-sectoral approaches (also reported in the OPC). While a number of respondents (including a high share of programme agency respondents and several NAU reports¹⁴⁵) see this as a clear improvement of the programme, others (key informant interviews (EU/national) from the different fields) are more critical.

According to the findings of parallel DG DEVCO evaluation¹⁴⁶, 'the merger of Tempus, Alfa III and Edulink into the Erasmus+ Capacity Building action allows for a strengthening of

¹⁴⁴ One EU-level organisation representing the interests of more than 150 million parents; one EU-level organisation representing 39 European organisations active in the field of education and training; one EU-level organisation representing over 30 education employer organisations from 16 European countries.

¹⁴⁵ DK, EE, NL, PL, PT, NO and SI reports notably.

¹⁴⁶ Particip (2017) Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014)

co-operation between different regions, however the focus on intra-regional co-operation for partner countries remains limited’.

On the other hand, the national respondents highlighted a series of advantages and disadvantages with regard to the new programme structure. The most commonly reported ones are outlined below.

- Commonly reported advantages:
 - greater visibility among policymakers due to the size and multidisciplinary scope of the programme: valued by a vast number of key informants (particularly in VET, youth, adult learning and HE). For most of them the increased policy visibility of the programme has enabled it to focus on new European challenges such as the integration of refugees;
 - standardised administration: valued by a number of key informants in various sectors (school education and youth in particular);
 - improved transparency, accountability, streamlining of the rules: particularly reported by HE key informants;
 - greater visibility of the opportunities offered by programme: some respondents find it easier to have one place to look for funding opportunities.
- Commonly reported disadvantages:
 - the specificities of certain sectors (e.g. adult learning, youth or sport) are not visibly enough covered by the programme. Some respondents highlighted the potential danger of ‘vanishing’ of certain areas due to the absence of adequate emphasis. This is also reported across several NAU reports (e.g. CY, EE, HU, SI);
 - reduced reflection of national priorities compared to the predecessor programmes: particularly echoed by respondents in the fields of youth and HE. There is for instance the sentiment that the integration of the programme committees has led to discussions becoming much more abstract.
 - a less flexible and increasingly bureaucratic programme: a side effect of the standardised forms and procedures introduced across the programme is that these are perceived as much more time-consuming than similar applications or project reporting in the past by some interviewees (particularly reported in the school education field).

5.1.2 External coherence

The assessment of the external coherence of the programme (including comparison with that of its predecessors where appropriate) has been informed by four evaluation questions that looked into the following:

- extent to which Erasmus+ is coherent with relevant EU policies and programmes with similar objectives and complementary with other EU interventions/initiatives in the field of education and training, youth and sport;
- extent to which the Erasmus+ design provides appropriate links and support to the EU policy agendas;
- extent to which Erasmus+ is coherent with various interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives and complementary to other Member States’ interventions/initiatives in the field of education, training, youth and sport.

The evaluation results show that Erasmus+ is complementary with a number of other EU policies and programmes of relevance in education and training, youth and sport.

At programme level, insights on the **complementarity and coherence** of the programme against **other EU-level programmes** were gained from both key EU-level informants and programme agencies survey respondents. These provided examples of (potential) synergies or overlaps among Erasmus+ and other EU-level programmes.

Overall, complementarities (rather than actual synergies) among actions of a similar nature in cross-cutting areas are found between Erasmus+ and ESF, Horizon 2020, the Third Health programme in the field of sport, INTERREG and the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme (EYE). Potential synergies not taking place so far were identified in particular between Erasmus+ and the following: ETF work, Europe for Citizens and Culture programme; the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) which has a component of entrepreneurship education; the Development of Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) action under DEVCO which has the aim to raise awareness about global issues through education and thus could link to both formal and non-formal education strands. No concrete examples of duplications are found. Interviewees rather referred to potential duplications (e.g. very similar projects funded under Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020¹⁴⁷, potential overlaps with ESF (Strategic Partnerships could happen under ESF through transnational cooperation). On a related note, the findings of the SLGF-focused evaluation suggest ongoing discussions at the German national bank KfW to extend its national loan scheme in the context of the EFSI and not under the SLGF¹⁴⁸.

Most of the examples supplied were rather general, failing to offer concrete information on how those synergies materialise. The vast majority of interviewees (EU level) felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge of Erasmus+ or the other EU programme discussed to be able to identify concrete examples. Most of them also suspected lack of effective communication among the different DGs or units responsible for the different programmes above and for Erasmus+. The Erasmus+ legal basis¹⁴⁹ and its call for action to ensure complementarities with other EU funding programmes (in particular ESF, ERDF and Horizon 2020) was discussed in a few cases. Interviewees were not aware of any formal actions in this area.

Most of the examples supplied were rather general, failing to offer concrete information on how those synergies materialise. Several interviewees (EU level) felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge of Erasmus+ or the other EU programme discussed to be able to identify concrete examples. Most of them also suspected lack of effective communication among the different DGs or units responsible for the different programmes above and for Erasmus+. The Erasmus+ legal basis¹⁵⁰ and its call for action to ensure complementarities with other EU funding programmes (in particular ESF, ERDF and Horizon 2020) was discussed in a few cases. Interviewees were not aware of any formal actions in this area.

Similar findings emerge from the OPC and the NAU reports synthesis. The OPC results outline the need to promote further synergies or complementarity in specific areas, in particular:

- between Erasmus+ and the ESF, for instance via a harmonisation of funding rules¹⁵¹;

¹⁴⁷ This was considered as a potential duplication as the respective project references could not be supplied.

¹⁴⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/events/2015/docs/kfw-financing-education_en.pdf

¹⁴⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1288&from=EN>

¹⁵⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1288&from=EN>

¹⁵¹ One EU-level organisation representing 50 regional and local stakeholders in the field of E&T; one national-level organisation representing more than a hundred HEI directors; one national-level

- between Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, notably regarding technology transfers;¹⁵²
- between Erasmus+ and EIT¹⁵³;
- between Erasmus+ and INTERREG¹⁵⁴.

At policy level, the topical coverage of the selected project reports reviewed reveals a clear alignment with **different EU-level policies** (e.g. EU 2020, ET 2020, European Youth Strategy, EC Communications on 'New Skills Agenda for Europe' or 'European Higher Education in the World', etc.). Additional insights gained through key informants (EU level) confirmed that most interviewees perceive the design of Erasmus+ as coherent with the main EU-level policy agendas and could give examples of complementarities (e.g. clear linkages between Erasmus+ and ET 2020 working groups' agenda; contribution of the programme to the implementation, monitoring and support to policymaking in various areas such as EU-level recognition and validation tools).

With regard to the coherence with **interventions pursued at national and international level** that have similar objectives as Erasmus+, evidence of complementarities are found in a number of cases. Interviewees from the VET sector suggested that the most often mentioned area in which the Erasmus+ programme is more frequently seen as coherent with interventions pursued at national level is school and work alternation/work-based learning. Similar perceptions were captured during the interviews for HE, which offered examples of national-level programmes that show significant coherence with Erasmus+ (e.g. Nordplus Higher Education (Nordic countries); CEEPUS (various countries); National Science Centre programmes (PL); Norway/EEA funds instrument (various countries)).

This concurs with insights gained from the NAUs' reports. Several of these reports confirm that actions/initiatives of a similar nature as those developed under Erasmus+ exist in different countries in the form of:

- mobility programmes (in education and training) for students and teachers: initiatives developed by higher education institutions (e.g. DK, CY, EE, FI, HU¹⁵⁵);
- some relevant initiatives in the field of youth: e.g. the Estonian NA for youth implements the national programme 'Youth meetings' and the ESF action 'Development of youth worker training'.

A few NAUs' reports (e.g. FR) also mention a few cases where synergies could be improved. For instance, those NAUs consider that it would be advisable to think of a more flexible future version of the Europass that has a fixed part and a more adaptable part that allows for information to be adapted to the context requirements.

The benchmarking of comparator programmes also offered additional insights on this evaluation question. Key findings notably confirm that the 18 programmes reviewed (for details see Annex 12) feature as follows.

organisation representing more than 30 VET institutions; and one organisation representing the interests of a region.

¹⁵² One EU-level organisation representing 50 regional and local stakeholders in the field of E&T; one national-level organisation representing more than a hundred HEI directors; two sub-national organisations representing the interest of their respective regions.

¹⁵³ One organisation representing the interests of a region.

¹⁵⁴ One national-level organisation representing 12 organisations working in the fields of education, research and innovation; one national-level organisation representing more than 30 VET institutions.

¹⁵⁵ E.g. the International Placement Program managed by Cyprus University of Technology or the Danish PIU scheme (scheme for practical training abroad for apprentices in VET).

- High level of (implicit) alignment with EU priorities: None of the comparator schemes' objectives were in contradiction with the objectives of the European Union.
- Very good level of alignment with Erasmus+: Both Erasmus+ and the majority of its comparators aim to achieve comparable goals, although in some individual cases, the focus is narrower for the comparator schemes in comparison to Erasmus+.
- Average alignment with Erasmus+ actions: This can be explained by the broad focus of Erasmus+, so a large number of the national schemes fit into this focus.
- Many similarities between comparators' and Erasmus+ target groups: The alignment is high in higher education, VET and youth and lower in school education, adult learning and sport.
- In many cases, the same national agency/organisation runs both the schemes and Erasmus+.

A possible improvement in terms of external coherence would be the improvement of communication on parallel funding opportunities to the general public. Indeed, despite the fact that several NAs run some of the schemes mentioned above in parallel to Erasmus+, many interviewees (in particular from those beneficiary organisations approached for the case studies) claimed they were not aware of any national programme supporting similar actions as Erasmus+.

5.2 Internal coherence

5.2.1 To what extent are the objectives of the different fields within the Erasmus+ programme consistent and mutually supportive?

The assessment of this evaluation question is generally positive. Both the information reviewed and collected confirm that specific attention has been paid in the programme's design to make the objectives of the different fields consistent and mutually supportive.

Table 5.1 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Logical linkages between objectives and actions within the programme	Desk research – review of programme documentation	 Specific attention has been paid to (better) link programme's objectives and actions in programme's design
Share of stakeholders who consider the objectives of the programme and the different fields and actions are mutually supporting	Key informant interviews	 Most interviewees (EU/national) consider that Erasmus+ objectives and actions are mutually supportive in the different fields. However, many found it difficult to identify how and if such coherence and complementarity have materialised

The existence of **logical linkages between the programme's objectives and actions** is clearly evidenced across programme documentation (programme guide and subsequent work programmes) and other literature reviewed.

The key conclusions emerging from the **review of programme documentation** are as follows.

- Erasmus+ clearly draws on the legacy and lessons learnt from the predecessor programmes – e.g. addressing the key recommendations of both predecessor programmes' mid-term evaluations and the Erasmus+ impact assessment.

- Erasmus+ is divided by Key Actions (KAs¹⁵⁶), which offer a streamlined and simplified programme architecture. This structure applies to the education and training sector as well as to the youth chapter¹⁵⁷ of the Erasmus+ programme. In addition, specific activities relate to European integration through Jean Monnet and in the field of sport, resulting from the Lisbon Treaty.
- These actions and related objectives¹⁵⁸ are not isolated but complementary and mutually reinforcing.
- Erasmus+ objectives are expected to deliver results at more than one level¹⁵⁹. Taken together, they should help achieve the wider objectives set at policy level in the areas covered (i.e. under ET 2020, European Youth Strategy and EU Work Plan for Sport) to ultimately contribute to the overarching EU 2020 ones.
- Common horizontal policy priorities apply to KA2 and KA3 for the following sectors: higher education; school education; vocational education and training; adult education, and youth.
- Mutually reinforcing approaches are supported by common instruments: the extensive work carried out in education and training (in the past) in line with the development and implementation of EU-level transparency and recognition tools (e.g. EQF, EQAVET, ECTS, ECVET, etc.) and the knowledge base in the area of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning are expected to be of benefit for the youth and sport fields.
- Erasmus+ subsequent work programmes have all stressed the importance accorded to mobility actions (KA1) and the need to ensure the link between the activities under institutional cooperation (KA2) and support for policy reform (KA3) respectively and the broader political objectives.

The above is confirmed by other sources, including for instance the EP Policy Department study *Erasmus+ decentralised implementation – First experiences*¹⁶⁰, the 2014–2015 National Authorities' (NAUs) reports or the common input for the mid-term evaluation 2017 from the NAs Erasmus+ Youth in Action¹⁶¹.

Drawing upon key respondents' views, these sources supply further evidence concurring with the above. Key messages from the latter include the following.

- Erasmus+ is seen as balanced in its objectives¹⁶².

¹⁵⁶ Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals; Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; Key Action 3: Support for policy reform.

¹⁵⁷ I.e. as officially referred to in the Erasmus+ programme legal basis.

¹⁵⁸ I.e. as per legal basis.

¹⁵⁹ For instance, activities under one particular action may inspire or feed into activities under other actions. E.g. KA2 Strategic Partnerships developing into KA3 Forward-Looking Cooperation projects or policy experimentations; or elements of KA3 policy experimentations leading to further piloting at grassroots level.

¹⁶⁰ European Parliament (2016), *Erasmus+ decentralised implementation – First experiences*, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU\(2016\)585877_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU(2016)585877_EN.pdf)

¹⁶¹ Document supplied by the client to ICF.

¹⁶² As reflected in both the European Implementation Assessment undertaken by the European Parliamentary Research Service (which looked at both centralised and decentralised implementation) and the EP Policy Department study (focusing specifically on decentralised implementation). Available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/586619/EPRS_ATA\(2016\)586619_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/586619/EPRS_ATA(2016)586619_EN.pdf) and [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU\(2016\)585877_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU(2016)585877_EN.pdf)

- The integration of the different programmes in a single integrated manner and the way this was done is positively perceived by most respondents.
- A 'huge step' has been made 'towards further integration and cooperation between educational sectors, enabling mutual learning', according to one of the sources¹⁶³.

Despite this promising picture, some reservations are found in the youth field¹⁶⁴.

- Though the objectives set for the field are coherent (and mutually supportive to those of the other fields), the Youth in Action chapter and its specificities are considered less visible.
- Compared with its predecessor (YiA), Erasmus+ is said to be less aligned with the priorities of youth policy and the practice of youth work, but more to overarching – and too abstract, as stakeholders in the field reported to different NAs – EU policy targets, e.g. EU 2020.
- The aims of the youth chapter are clearly linked with youth policy and youth work but the yearly work programme for the implementation of Erasmus+ is lacking the youth policy priorities. The separate chapter in the programme is also not mirrored in the programme guide.

With regard to the sport field, complementarities can be seen for instance between the promotion of voluntary activities objective and those applying to the range of volunteering activities supporting the youth field under EVS¹⁶⁵. More generally, the objectives applying to the field do align with the core values supported across the education and training and youth fields, namely social inclusion, equal opportunities and access for all. The objectives supported in the field also embed another dimension which is of relevance for the other two fields, namely well-being and health-enhancing physical activity.

As part of the present evaluation, insights were gained from the interviews with key informants (EU and national level). The reservations outlined above in the youth field were echoed by interviewees (EU level). The main messages (mostly based on feedback from NAs) include the following.

- A rather widespread sentiment¹⁶⁶ among 'old' beneficiaries experienced with YiA that it is hard(er) to work under Erasmus+, as they feel the former YiA was more targeted. This is particularly noted in the case of the KA2 Strategic Partnerships, which are broad in scope, and for which some beneficiaries estimate they lack proper guidance to effectively prepare themselves to apply for and /or handle such projects.
- Some NAs miss the small local actions (e.g. former 'national youth initiatives' which were a stepping stone in YiA to bigger projects). Demand for related actions (e.g. structural dialogue for which there is little budget available under Erasmus+) is high.

For the rest, the vast majority of interviewees (at EU and national level) considered the objectives of the programme and the different fields and actions as **mutually supporting**.

¹⁶³ European Parliament (2016), *Erasmus+ decentralised implementation – First experiences*, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU\(2016\)585877_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU(2016)585877_EN.pdf)

¹⁶⁴ E.g. reflected in the common input for the mid-term evaluation 2017 from the NAs Erasmus+ Youth in Action.

¹⁶⁵ Raising awareness of the value of volunteering for young people and for communities as well as strengthening the recognition of the skills and competences gained are also important elements of a Strategic EVS Project.

¹⁶⁶ In particular in the first two years of implementation of the programme.

The streamlined architecture was deemed to be generally positive by most interviewees (both EU and national level). The most common remark was that the current structure is clearer and easier to understand than the previous one.

Meanwhile, very few could give precise examples. At EU level, EU stakeholders were generally more sceptical than EC-level actors. Some attempted to provide further explanations. Erasmus+ could for instance in principle foster more permeability across sectors (e.g. between HE and VET) thanks to the integration of formerly standalone programmes under a single programme. The new integrated architecture was also considered advantageous by several youth organisations, as their work is at the crossroads between education and youth.

Other examples of more sporadic considerations made by interviewees are as follows.

- The HE sector appears to be the 'big winner' from the reorganisation. In the same vein, HE stakeholders are apparently among those who have understood the programme very well and are perceived to be much more successful in the competition for funding than applicants from the other sectors.
- The sport chapter is not well integrated, comprising too broad objectives.
- The 'integrated' architecture at the level of Erasmus+ was not always well reflected at the national level and that different NAs continue to deal with specific sectors, replicating the way they functioned under the prior programmes.

5.2.2 Synergies and duplications

What evidence exists of synergies between the different programme fields and actions? How well do different actions work together?

To what extent do there exist duplications, overlaps, or other disadvantageous issues between the programme fields and how are they dealt with?

The review of the different sources (key informant interviews (KIIs), case studies and programme agencies survey) offer mixed results on both evaluation questions. A general conclusion that emerges though is that most respondents perceive complementarities rather than synergies but in any case few overlaps between the different programme fields and actions. Getting concrete examples (of synergies or overlaps) has proven to be much more difficult. Despite its streamlining, this may hence suggest that the programme is not easy to comprehend and the scope of its main actions may be too broad.

Table 5.2 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Frequency with which synergies were mentioned by interviewees	Key informant interviews Case study interviews	 Around half of respondents commented on the topic. Information collated most commonly came from interviewees at EU level and to some varying extent from policymakers or project leaders at national level
Share of programme agencies that perceive synergies and absence of overlaps	Survey of agencies	 Most agencies perceive synergies and lack of overlaps across programme actions
Number of respondents who were able to identify concrete examples of synergies or overlaps/duplications	Key informant interviews Case study interviews	 Concrete examples were supplied in a small number of cases (7 out of 22 respondents – KIIs at EU level)  The provision of concrete examples by interviewees at national level was considered difficult and hence nearly inexistent
Examples of synergies or overlaps/duplications between different types of actions and in different sectors	Key informant interviews Case study interviews	 Some concrete examples of synergies or overlaps were reported. Not all respondents were able to give examples. When doing so, most were general

During the inception phase of the assignment, the evaluation team made some assumptions based on the review programme’s documentation¹⁶⁷, on possible examples of synergies or overlaps that might emerge from data collection. These are outlined in the following table.

Table 5.3 Examples of anticipated synergies and overlaps

	Synergies	Overlaps
Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Across education and training: between VET and adult learning (e.g. in the remit of CVET, ECVET, recognition of non-formal and informal learning-related cooperation projects or policy reform support actions) or VET and higher education¹⁶⁸ for given types of actions - Between education and training and youth fields: seeing similarities in most of the specific objectives for both fields; emphasis put on cross-sectoral cooperation and themes of common interest (e.g. recognition of non-formal and informal learning¹⁶⁹, social inclusion, prevention of violence or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be identified: areas of expected synergies made explicit in programme documentation .

¹⁶⁷ I.e. programme guide and subsequent work programmes mostly.

¹⁶⁸ The Erasmus+ legal basis states: ‘In order to better address youth unemployment in the Union, particular attention should be paid to transnational cooperation between higher and vocational education institutions and businesses, with a view to improving students’ employability and developing entrepreneurial skills.’

¹⁶⁹ The Erasmus+ legal basis states: ‘Bringing formal, non-formal and informal learning together in a single programme should create synergies and foster cross-sectoral cooperation across the various education, training and youth sectors.’

	<p>radicalisation, active citizenship, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between sport and one or both of the other fields: e.g. through cross-sectoral cooperation projects 	
KAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Partnerships (KA2): by essence cross-sectoral. Synergies (or overlaps) are expected to be found among Strategic Partnerships and/or with other KA2 partnership cooperation actions - Capacity building (KA2) – international dimension of the programme: if no clear synergies, at least mutual learning from experiences from projects carried out in youth and higher education - Individual mobility (KA1): if no direct synergies, at least mutual learning from experiences gained in education and training and youth - KA2 and KA3 actions in general: they have to address common transversal objectives in education and training and youth - Policy experimentations and Forward-Looking Initiatives (KA3): in their design (one is more top-down, the other is bottom-up in orientation), these actions are meant to be two sides of the same coin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility opportunities under KA1 and KA2: overlaps or synergies? - KA2 and KA3: KA2 (Strategic Partnerships) and KA3 (Forward-Looking Cooperation Initiatives) notably: overlaps or synergies? - KA3 in youth and education and training: ‘structured dialogue’ (youth) and ‘stakeholder dialogue’ in education and training): overlaps in or synergies?

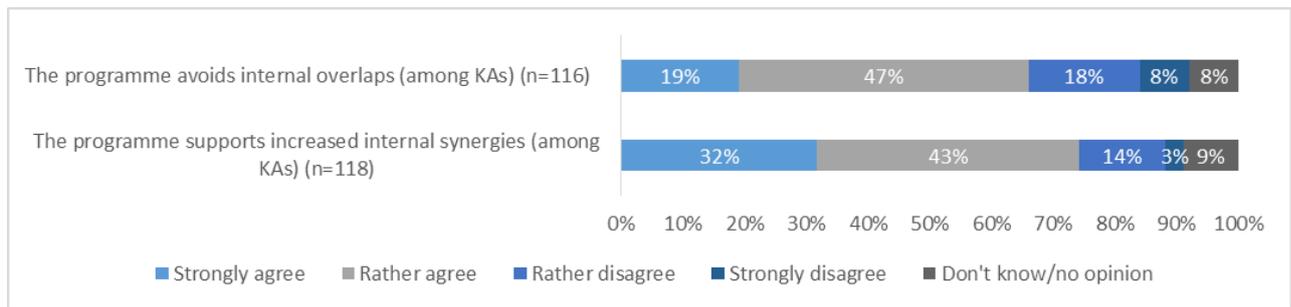
Key findings reveal, on the one hand, that the results of the programme agencies survey show the positive sentiment of respondents on the existence of synergies within the programme. These offer some general insights on their perception about complementarities in the programme:

- 73 %¹⁷⁰ feel the integrated programme enables increased synergies among Key Actions;
- 66 % of respondents estimate that the programme avoids internal overlaps. For those 27 % who rather or strongly disagreed with the statements, no specific reasons or examples were supplied.

Further details can be found in the following figure.

¹⁷⁰ Comprising 31 % and 42 % of respondents, who strongly and rather agree on the fact that the programme supports increased internal synergies respectively.

Figure 5.1 Respondents' perceptions on synergies and overlaps in the integrated programme



Source: ICF (based on programme agencies survey)

On the other hand, the sentiment of key informants interviewed is more nuanced. The majority (at both EU and national level) was generally positive about the articulation of the programme in regard to its objectives and priority actions per and across the sectors (for related details see Section 4.2). These were considered balanced in most cases. A few examples are outlined in the box below.

Examples of synergies reported by interviewees (KIIs)

- Synergies between youth and education objectives and actions of the Erasmus+ programme. Example given in the field of youth: *'Our organisation takes part in an activity under KA3 in the youth chapter [Structured dialogue with young people] and uses the outputs for advocacy in the education field.'*
- Synergies between given HE- and VET-related objectives: The New Skills Agenda calls for increasing the permeability between both sectors. Synergies in the field of individual mobility: Example given in the field of youth: *'Yes there are synergies when it comes to individual mobility. It is more likely that a young person who has done an Erasmus will also go on youth exchanges or EVS projects. These are natural synergies that show that some actions encourage one another. Yet a distinction should be made: there are no institutional synergies being encouraged, but the synergies are natural or informal.'*
- There is evidence of education institutions successfully applying under the sports field to implement sport projects that are also tied to the education and youth field. Generally, it is agreed that university-led projects will have higher synergies due to targeting at least two fields (sports and youth or sports and education most frequently). While this facilitates synergies within Erasmus+, it also acts as an exclusionary force that diminishes the participation of purely sport-focused organisations.
- Synergies reported at national (organisation) level between eTwinning and Erasmus+ KA1 and KA2 (in the school sector).

Meanwhile, the question about synergies among Key Actions was considered more difficult to address, in particular when respondents were asked to provide concrete examples. This finding is observed at both EU and national level but more visibly at national level (also including information collated through the case studies).

At this level, most interviewees who self-assessed as having a fair to high level of knowledge of the programme confessed their limitations on this question. In theory, synergies were assumed to be ensured by the programme across the three main KAs (and sub-actions) by most of those interviewees who attempted to address the question. However, comparing Erasmus+ main types of actions among each other to make a judgement on whether they are synergetic or overlapping was generally considered difficult for the following reasons.

- The broad(er) scope of Erasmus+ main types of actions – particularly under KA2 – was often said to make it difficult to make a reliable assessment.¹⁷¹
 - Taking the example of KA2 Strategic Partnerships, the key features of individual projects may greatly vary both within and across sectors. This may explain why no clear picture could be captured from the question on comparing the latter and KA3 Forward-Looking Cooperation projects for instance. For some, clear synergies were noted, while others rather perceived overlaps.
- Many of those interviewees acknowledged that they have gained specific knowledge of given Erasmus+ (sub-) actions based on their direct experience with related funded projects but that:
 - the comparison they can make is so project specific or anecdotal that it may not necessarily be representative
 - several tend to focus on given types of (sub-) actions, acknowledging that their limited or lack of knowledge of other (sub-)actions prevents them from having an accurate view on the question.

At EU level, when discussing this part of the question, respondents usually supplied rather general examples, like those highlighted in the box above. Unlike national-level respondents, some among the latter supplied examples (or issues) among the programme's actions. Examples (also collated through desk research) are outlined in the following box.

Examples of overlaps or issues (desk research¹⁷² and KIIs at EU level)

- *'It is difficult to compare the different actions and activity types, as they all have their specific, short- and long-term relevance for the programme and their impact on young people, youth workers, youth work and youth policy. As such, it is very important to have in the programme the right balance between different activity types' (desk research).*
- *'The division logic between [the three KAs] in principle makes sense. But for Erasmus+ Youth in Action the logic is not kept ... KA1 and KA2 in Erasmus+ seem to be partly overlapping in practice, although the intention was to complement with the three actions at the individual, organisational and systemic level. This leads to the point that applicants are partly going for their mobility projects to KA2 because of the higher funding' (desk research).*
- *'[The] difference between KA1 and KA2 (mobility strand) is not always clear to many. There might be overlaps in terms of project proposals.*

¹⁷¹ I.e. broader than that of similar types of actions supported under predecessor programmes.

¹⁷² From common input paper from NAs responsible for youth (document supplied by DG EAC – not publicly released).

Suggestions for improvement could be: 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' (desk research).

- *Sentiment of some overlaps between KA2 and KA3: 'Same stakeholders can apply for both and KA2 is often used for policy reform too at national level' (KII).*
- *'Overlaps happen because organisations do not understand the Key Actions well enough, it is due to the misunderstanding by organisations but not due to the way the programme was designed' (KII).*

Overall, the fact that a majority of respondents could not supply concrete examples of synergies or overlaps signals the following: to get a fair overview, in particular at the level of the programme's actions, a good understanding of the different programme actions is required. Despite the simplification of the programme – and streamlining resulting in a much lower number of actions than its predecessor, LLP in particular – the different (main) types of actions offered under the programme are not well known or understood by a number of respondents (as interviews (KIIs and case studies) at national level often confirmed)

At organisation level, findings of the KIIs and case studies suggest that beneficiary organisations generally have a good knowledge about the possibilities offered by the action(s) through which they receive grants. Meanwhile most acknowledged that they have a very general or superficial comprehension of the programme, not enabling them to cite other actions covered in their fields or in others.

The sector-based approach largely prevails while the cross-sectoral opportunities offered are not always well understood despite the information role played by the NAs and the EACEA. On several occasions, interviewees from a given sector questioned whether they could apply for a given action in another sector. This was particularly the case in the HE and adult learning sectors where some respondents were unclear on whether their organisation could apply for funding in the field of VET. Most KA2 projects (Strategic Partnerships in particular) also seem to keep building on existing partners.

From the above the following considerations can be drawn:

- no synergies or overlaps perceived does not mean those are inexistent but rather suggests the need to continue raising awareness on the programme and the opportunities it can offer overall;
- despite its streamlining, the programme is not easy to comprehend and the scope of its main actions may be too broad, making it difficult to identify many concrete examples of synergies or overlaps.

5.2.3 Centralised and decentralised actions

To what extent are the centralised and decentralised actions coherent? How do they interact/complement each other?

While the rationale towards increased decentralisation of the programme is generally comprehended and valued by most respondents, the issue of the coherence between centralised and decentralised actions was most often not directly discussed. Rather, insights collated focused on the advantages/disadvantages of the increased decentralisation. More importantly, respondents' views differed, with some actors more critical than others on the topic.

Table 5.4 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Logical coherence between centralised and decentralised actions	Desk research – Erasmus+ legal basis, programme guide	 The rationale for increased decentralisation means links between centralised and decentralised actions are made explicit in programme documentation
Perception of the coherence by programme agencies	Programme agencies survey	 The coherence of the programme between centralised and decentralised actions is valued by most respondents
Perception of the coherence by the key informants	Key informant interviews	 No clear consensus on respondents' views. Increased decentralisation not positively perceived by some respondents
Examples of incoherencies (if any)	Key informant interviews Desk research	 Both examples of coherence and incoherencies

As outlined above (see Section 2), decentralisation has become the norm under Erasmus+, more so than in the predecessor programmes (LLP and YiA¹⁷³). The rationale for this approach is to bring Erasmus+ as close as possible to its beneficiaries and to adapt to the diversity of national education, training and youth systems¹⁷⁴.

The **programme documentation** (programme guide and legal basis notably) makes it explicit that most actions of the programme are decentralised through indirect management by national agencies (NAs) designated by the National Authorities (NAUs). Some actions are however centralised and managed by the Executive Agency (EACEA). Those include (though the following is not exhaustive) international higher education-oriented actions (capacity-building projects, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees), Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances, KA3 centralised activities as well as actions under the sport and Jean Monnet strands of the Erasmus+ programme.

Overall, between 2014 and 2016, the programme's budget has distributed as follows.

Table 5.5 Share of E+ budget allocated to decentralised and centralised actions¹⁷⁵

	Decentralised actions	Centralised actions	Other ¹⁷⁶
KA1 (education and training and youth)	87 %	10 %	3 %
KA2 (education and training and youth)	74 %	25.6 %	0.4 %

¹⁷³ I.e. Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and the Preparatory Actions in Sport were managed centrally.

¹⁷⁴ European Commission (2016), *Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2016*.

¹⁷⁵ The shares presented are an average for years 2014, 2015 and 2016. They were calculated based on information supplied in the subsequent programme guides.

¹⁷⁶ Other comprises: Award Procedure for European Label or Charter, Principles and conditions applicable to financial instruments, grants to bodies or for actions as per Art. 190.1(c), (d) and (f) RAP, in-house and public procurement.

KA3 (education and training and youth)	8 %	61 %	31 %
Jean Monnet	0 %	99 %	1 %
Sport	0 %	93 %	7 %

Source: ICF (based on Erasmus+ work programmes 2014, 2015 and 2016)

The distribution of roles and responsibilities of the Commission, EACEA and NAs as set by the Erasmus+ legal basis (see below) is clearly and consistently presented.

Table 5.6 Overview of division of roles between Commission, EACEA and NAs in Erasmus+

Role	European Commission	EACEA	NAs
Manages the budget	✓		
Sets the priorities, targets and criteria	✓		
Guides and monitors the general implementation	✓		
Evaluates E+ at EU level	✓		
Supervises and coordinates NAs	✓		
Implements centralised actions		✓	
Analyses grant requests for centralised actions		✓	
Monitors projects related to centralised actions		✓	
Launches specific calls for proposals		✓	
Promotes the programme		✓	
Carries out research and studies through the Eurydice network		✓	
Disseminates and exploits programme's results		✓	
Manages contracts and finances E+ funded bodies/networks		✓	
Manages calls for tenders		✓	
Implements decentralised actions			✓
Provides information on the programme			✓
Runs selection process for project applications at national level			✓
Monitors and evaluates the implementation of E+ at national level			✓
Provides support to project applicants and participating organisations			✓
Collaborates with other NAs and EC			✓

Ensures the visibility of the programme			✓
Promotes the dissemination and exploitation of results at local and national level			✓
Carries out activities that improve the quality of implementation of E+			✓
Carries out activities that trigger policy developments in the fields of E+			✓
Supports cooperation with other bodies to increase the impact of E+ in the country			✓

Source: ICF analysis based on Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2016

Unlike the predecessor programmes, the national agencies (NAs) have integrated responsibilities for several fields of the programme. In 12 programme countries¹⁷⁷ there are single, integrated NAs to implement the Erasmus+ programme in all fields. In most of the programme countries (21)¹⁷⁸ though, there is more than one NA, with a separate NA to implement the youth chapter of the Erasmus+ programme. In Germany, there are four separate NAs in charge of higher education, VET and adult education, school education and youth chapters, respectively. Ireland has a separate NA to implement the programme actions in higher education while Italy also has a separate national agency for VET-related actions. Based on the information reviewed and collected, both types of configuration are relevant.

Table 5.7 Overview of centralised and decentralised actions of the Erasmus+ programme

Field / Key Action	Mobility of learners (KA 1)	Mobility of practitioners (KA 1)	Strategic partnerships (KA 2)	Capacity-building (KA 2)	Support to policy reform (KA3)
Higher education	✓ Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree	✓	✓ Knowledge Alliances	✓	✓
VET	✓	✓	✓ Sector Skills Alliances		✓

¹⁷⁷ BG, CZ, DK, EE, FI, HR, MK, MT, PL, RO, TR.

¹⁷⁸ AT, BE, CY, ES, FR, EL, HU, IS, LI, LT, LU, LV, NL, NO, PT, SE, SI, SK, DE, IE, IT, UK. In the case of Greece, the youth part of the programme has been suspended since December 2014 because the national authorities were unable to designate/form a national agency to manage the youth chapter of Erasmus+.

School education		✓	✓		✓
Adult education		✓	✓		✓
Youth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Large scale EVS events				Annual grants for National Working Groups
Sports (collaborative partnerships; small collaborative partnerships; not-for-profit European sport events) ¹⁷⁹					
Jean Monnet actions (Modules; Chairs; Centres of Excellence; Support to associations; Networks; Projects)					
Centralised actions					
Decentralised actions					

I
CF
based
on
Erasmu
s+
Progra
mme
Guide
(2016)

Further insights were gained from respondents, mostly from two sources: a programme agencies (NAs and EACEA) survey and key informant interviews (KIIs). Related results offer a rather contrasted picture.

Indeed, the findings of the **programme agencies survey** reveal that:

- over half of respondents estimate that the balance is well struck between centralised and decentralised actions (i.e. 50 % 'rather agree' and 18% 'strongly agree');
- in a slightly lower proportion (i.e. 46 % 'rather agree' and 10 % 'strongly agree'), respondents consider that the clarity between centralised and decentralised actions improved compared to the predecessor programmes;
- the vast majority (81 % strongly agreed) support the idea that the decentralisation part of the programme makes it more closer to EU citizens and accessible to small organisations.

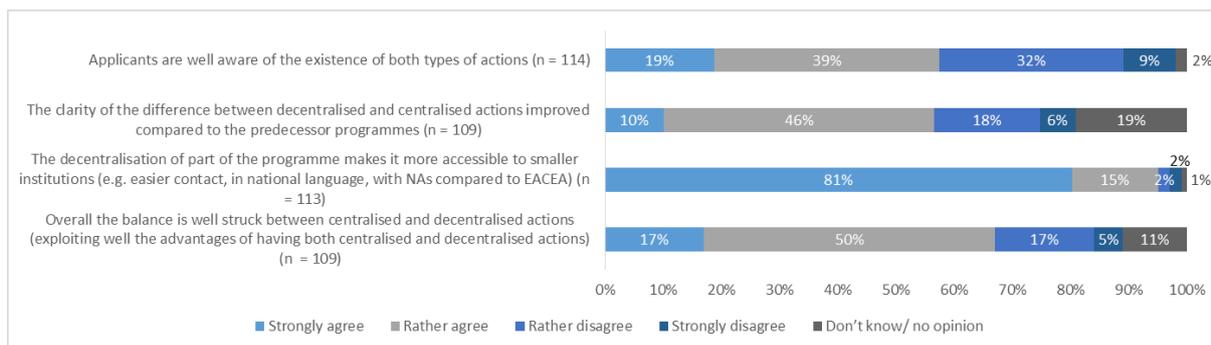
On the latter point, insights gained from KIIs are more contrasted. A number of interviewees (in particular in the sport sector) claimed that Erasmus+ centralised funding is mostly targeted at improving the European dimension and international cooperation but is not well suited for projects at national level. Some added that sport organisations appear to be interested primarily in national projects. This and the fact that applications have to be submitted at central level (EACEA) may result in low application rates for

¹⁷⁹ Sport organisations and individuals are furthermore eligible for activities funded under KA1, KA2 and KA3.

Erasmus+ from sport organisations. In other sectors (e.g. VET), some interviewees highlighted a potential danger for certain areas to ‘vanish’ due to the absence of adequate emphasis on national specificities.

Note: these findings relate to others that have served the evaluation team to inform efficiency-related questions. Further considerations on the articulation and efficiency of the programme’s articulation can be found in Section 7.

Figure 5.2 Respondents’ views of the increased decentralisation of the programme



Source: ICF (based on programme agencies survey)

In some regards the findings above concur with the information collated through **key informant interviews**. The rationale for increased decentralisation (i.e. bringing the programme closer to citizens and beneficiaries) was, in particular, positively viewed by the vast majority of respondents.

Meanwhile, there was no consensus on the ‘complementarity’ or coherence between centralised and decentralised actions. In general, policymakers were more positive than key stakeholders (particularly those at EU level). The latter were the most critical and gave a few concrete examples of perceived incoherencies in this area. These are outlined in the box below.

Examples of incoherencies reported by interviewees¹⁸⁰

- Having KA2 actions (Strategic Partnerships) run at the national level is seen as a problem: as per interviewees there is less coordination between Member States (e.g. a project on validation can be submitted in BE while a very similar project is submitted in DE); there is also a lack of visibility of projects/project results¹⁸¹.
- Decentralisation through management by NAs may result in differences in the implementation of programme rules and criteria.
- Small organisations may be disadvantaged: they cannot apply for KA3 project grants offered at centralised level¹⁸². The only possibility for them is to apply at national level (NAs). This increases competition for the same grants

¹⁸⁰ From interviewees at EU level. No concrete examples were reported at national level.

¹⁸¹ The latter was also reported by other EU-level interviewees, including EC staff.

¹⁸² Key Action 3 is divided into two main types of activity: decentralised activities and centralised activities. Decentralised activities are run by the Erasmus+ NAs while centralised activities are run by the EACEA.

between national-based and European-level organisations.

- European-level organisations need to apply for decentralised actions just as the local- and national-level organisations do: this creates competition.
- Less funding available at centralised level means more competition, with organisations competing for centralised actions.

According to EU-level stakeholder organisations, the above is said to result in lack of capitalisation, impact and outreach of well-established European networks. As a result, several called for a partial re-centralisation of the programme – regarding KA2 in particular.

Though very positively perceived in general, some of the incoherencies above are reported through the programme agencies survey results. Among the small share of respondents who were not fully convinced about the increased decentralisation of the programme, some supported the view that while mobility actions are to be managed by NAs, cooperation and partnership projects should rather be managed centrally – but with the contribution of the NAs for ‘better steering’. Others argued that the role of NAs and the EACEA should be better clarified.

At national level, most respondents did not have specific views or did not perceive any incoherencies. Most believed both type of actions are equally important and can be easily distinguished from each other both in terms of objectives and potential beneficiaries.

On the one hand, some interviewees (mostly at national level) felt they could not reply due to insufficient knowledge of both types of actions.

Sector-wise, the only notable exception was found in higher education. There, a clear divide was noted between the policymakers and the stakeholders. While policymakers do not seem to have any views on the interaction between the centralised and decentralised actions, there are mixed views among the stakeholders. The latter offered rather critical perceptions, which relate mostly to KA2 and can be summarised as follows.

- Decentralisation of KA2 can generate a lack of coherence within the topics. It may be that it is easier to get a project approved with one agency than with another simply because there is higher demand in the latter. Furthermore, the funding is based on the size of countries, and within those budgets, the quality of proposals is decisive. Over half of respondents (the vast majority of which were EU-level key stakeholder organisations in higher education) estimate that this can lead to a motivation to apply for funding with national agencies in larger countries, as there might be higher chances to get the project approved.
- Decentralisation of the international credit mobility actions might have generated a further lack of coherence. In terms of attracting talent to Europe, it seems to make more sense to have the actions centralised.

In light of the above, the following points are put forward for consideration.

- A partial re-centralisation of the programme is legally difficult to address: Re-centralising given actions is not foreseen in the Erasmus+ regulation¹⁸³.
- Constraints reported by EU-level Belgium-based NGOs¹⁸⁴ being addressed by the EC: Since 2014, the EC has topped up the funds allocated to Belgium. For 2017, this top-

¹⁸³ The derogation (Article 28(4)) only applies to certain stages of the process, i.e. the selection and award decisions; it however implies that all the other stages remain the responsibility of the national agencies.

¹⁸⁴ I.e. seeing themselves as disadvantaged as having to apply for grants to the Belgium NA.

up will again be increased, from 10 % to 50 % of the overall decentralised funds allocated to Belgium.

- Erasmus+ offers various opportunities for civil society organisations: Besides KA1 mobility grants and the structural support to European NGOs under KA3, these can also apply for grants under calls on social inclusion and Forward-Looking Cooperation projects. KA2 Strategic Partnerships are also addressed to European NGOs, in particular in the field of youth.

5.2.4 Integrated programme

To what extent was the internal coherence improved through introduction of an integrated programme?

The review of the different sources reviewed to inform this evaluation question confirms that the introduction of the integrated programme has led to improved internal coherence within the programme.

Table 5.8 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Change in logical coherence of the types of actions in an integrated programme	Desk research – Erasmus+ legal basis, programme guide	 Programme’s documentation clearly sets the rationale for the integrated programme. Information on the architecture of the programme is outlined in several key programme documents
Views of programme agencies on the benefits of the integrated programme	Programme agencies survey	 Respondents’ views on the benefits of the integrated programme are positive to a rather high extent
Views of key informants on the benefits of the integrated programme	Key informant interviews	 Respondents’ views on the benefits of the integrated programme are positive to a rather high extent
Examples of improved coherence	Key informant interviews Desk research	 Concrete examples of improved coherence so that areas where there is room for improvement have been supplied

Drawing upon the lessons learnt from the mid-terms evaluations of the predecessor programmes, the **Erasmus+ legal basis** makes it explicit that the programme has been designed in such a way that it offers, at least on paper, ‘a simpler, more user-friendly and more flexible approach’ for implementation. Its integrated framework also helps address the fragmentation issues noted in the past, both within and between the education and training fields (including international higher education cooperation programmes) and youth field.

The review of the specific objectives set for the different fields in their legal basis helped provide evidence that clear attention has been paid to the above in the programme design. This is particularly visible in the education and training and youth fields, where the first four specific objectives¹⁸⁵ (for details, see Annex 1) closely align. Nevertheless, in these fields, all the actions aimed at transnational cooperation (KA2) and policy reform support (KA3) draw upon common horizontal priorities. Meanwhile, cross-sectoral cooperation (in particular under KA2 Strategic Partnerships) is encouraged. The more recent example of the Paris Declaration-related call for action (i.e. to be addressed as a

¹⁸⁵ I.e. focusing on improving learners’/young people’s level of skills and competences; fostering organisations’ quality, innovation opportunities and internationalisation; complementing policy reforms at national and sub-levels; enhancing the international dimension of both sectors.

cross-cutting priority embracing all the fields of policy cooperation and to be reflected in the implementation of all three of the programme's KAs as well as in the actions in the field of sport) is a clear sign of the EC's continued intention to foster consistency and mutually reinforcing approaches within the programme.

With regard to the sport field, complementarities are found between the promotion of voluntary activities objective and those applying to the range of volunteering activities supporting the youth field under EVS¹⁸⁶. More generally, the objectives applying to the field align with the core values supported across the education and training and youth fields, namely social inclusion, equal opportunities and access for all. The objectives supported in the field also embed another dimension which is of relevance for the other two fields, namely well-being and health-enhancing physical activity. Meanwhile, findings (in particular from the Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys) suggest that though in theory the sport and youth strand were seen as distinct, in practice they attract somewhat similar types of projects which means that the borders between the participation of sport organisations in the youth strand and the sport strand are rather blurred. This is further discussed in section 6.

Beyond the specific objectives, intermediate sectoral priorities apply to each field and are specified and continuously adjusted through the subsequent annual Erasmus+ work programmes.

Based on the above, from the programme's design perspective, the assessment of the (continued) improvement of the internal coherence of the programme is positive.

The evaluation question was further informed by **respondents** who were asked to give their views on the perceived (dis)benefits of the integrated programme. Those included programme agencies' staff members and key informants at EU and national level.

Across all respondents there is a consensus about the integrated nature of the programme. Erasmus+ is overall considered as having improved the coherence of the programme compared to the previous situation. The most commonly reported 'biggest advantage' is the clarity of the new structure¹⁸⁷. The fact that Erasmus+ pays more attention to evidence of impacts at all three levels of intervention (individual, organisation, system) is also positively perceived.

For a number of respondents in the HE sector, embedding the four predecessor programmes (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa and Edulink) under a single programme is valued, though many estimate that there is still room for improvement (e.g. in terms of better communicating on the international dimension of the programme, including with partners outside Europe).

Overall, respondents' sentiments are very much in line with the following findings from desk research, showing Erasmus+ as:

- capitalising on the positive experience of the past so that objectives and projects are better defined and more focused¹⁸⁸;
- ensuring alignment with the new strategic approach towards greater synergies, efficiency and simplification. It is also more result oriented than in the past (which should link with more consistent objectives);

¹⁸⁶ Raising awareness of the value of volunteering for young people and for communities as well as strengthening the recognition of the skills and competences gained are also important elements of a Strategic EVS Project.

¹⁸⁷ I.e. spread into three main pillars of intervention (individual, organisation, system) and two separate chapters (sport and Jean Monnet).

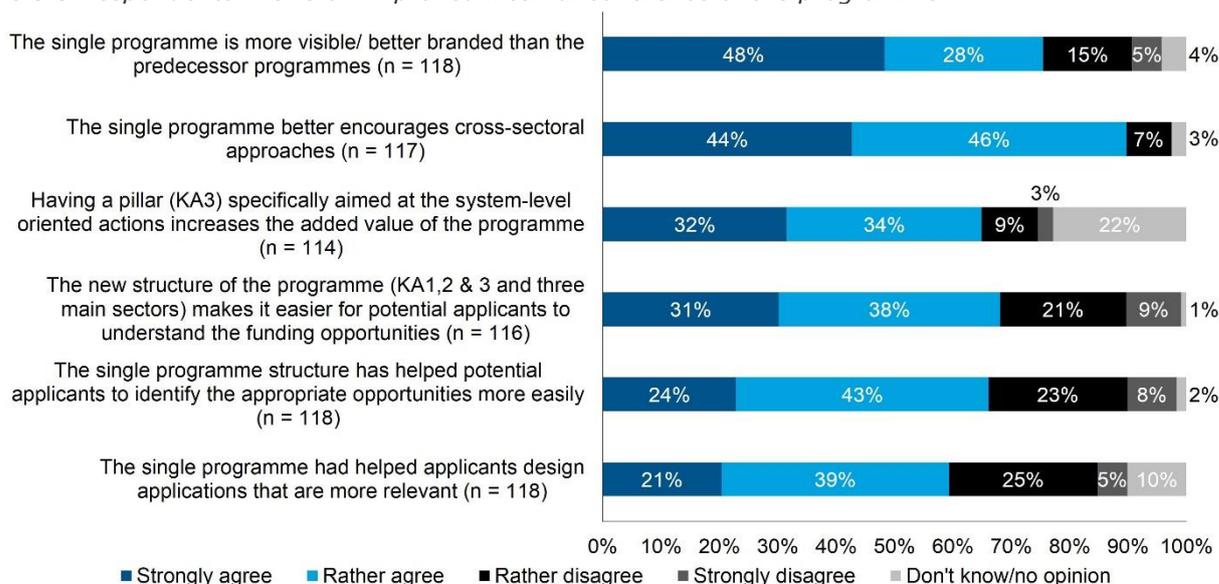
¹⁸⁸ As reflected in the Erasmus+ 2014 work programme.

- allowing cross-sectoral cooperation, which was not always possible in the past;
- having a clear external dimension now (in higher education and youth).

As Figure 5.3 shows, the results of the programme agencies survey reveals that at least half of respondents strongly or rather agree with each of the statements below about presumed improvements. In particular, the highest share of positive ratings is found about the following.

- 90 % strongly or rather agree that the single programme better encourages cross-sectoral approaches.
- 76 % strongly or rather agree that the single programme is more visible/better branded than the predecessor programmes – i.e. contrasting with initial fears of sectors.
- With regard to the first result above, it is to be noted that this contrasts greatly with insights gained from over half of interviewees (at the national level in particular) but also from desk research (e.g. review of several OPC position papers) – both of which were more critical overall, in particular on the extent to which this new of partnerships actually materialises.

Figure 5.3 Respondents' views on improved internal coherence of the programme



Source: ICF (based on programme agencies survey)

The above concurs with the results of other sources such as the social media analysis (see Section 4.5), which confirms the high visibility of the programme and improvement in the branding. Meanwhile, the high level of positive perceptions on the cross-sectoral opportunities offered by the programme needs to be nuanced, depending on the angle considered to address this question. If one discusses the increased cross-sectoral opportunities offered (on paper) in the programme, this indicator is positively rated by the vast majority of respondents across the different sources reviewed. If on the contrary focus is put on how this materialises, more contrasted results are obtained.

Based on the information collated through both key informants' interviews, the programme agencies survey and the case studies (to a slightly lesser extent though, as the question was rather indirectly discussed), results show that at least half of the

respondents are either not interested to take part in cross-sectoral projects¹⁸⁹ or estimate more generally that this does not work. A few examples of related considerations extracted from the programme agencies survey (though complimentary about cross-sectoral opportunities to a high extent) are outlined below.

- 'There could be more cooperation efforts between some sectors. Nonetheless, the programme provides a maximum of possibilities for these projects. However, this is a very small portion of the applications.'
- 'This has great potential. Unfortunately the cross-sectoral approach is not so strong as expected in the beginning of the programme'.
- '[The] lack of special strand (and budget line) for cross-sectoral projects does not support this good and needed idea.'
- 'Potential beneficiaries find it difficult to identify opportunities available to them that are outside of their particular sector. For example, lack of clarity for providers of both VET and HE [on] whether they can participate in both strands.'

As a complement to the above, a few illustrative examples of perceived advantages and disadvantages of the integrated programme by key informant interviewees are presented in the following table.

¹⁸⁹ When discussing cross-sectoral opportunities offered under KA2 Strategic Partnerships with case study interviewees, several indicated that they tend to keep collaborating with the same partners and/or clearly identified partners in the same sector over time. Identifying the right partners in other sectors is not always easy.

Table 5.9 Examples of perceived advantages and disadvantages of the integrated programme (KIIs per sector)

Sector	Advantages	Disadvantages
School education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European added value: Erasmus+ is seen as a programme that contributes enormously to European integration and to the creation of a European identity. <i>'Had it not been for Erasmus+, the "centrifugal" trends in Europe would have probably been much worse.'</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erasmus+ brand: though evolving, Erasmus+ is still associated with higher education (former LLP Erasmus). Feeling that instead of gaining visibility, the school sector is getting lost among other fields.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standardised administration: There is a single place to look at for funding opportunities while previously this information could be found at several different sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less flexibility: Erasmus+ became less flexible and increasingly bureaucratic (e.g. <i>'now schools are required to complete a form of more than 80 pages in order to participate in the programme'</i>).
VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced gaps between the educational areas and lifecycle approach – as opposed to segmented approach in the past. - Greater visibility among policymakers due to the size and multidisciplinary scope of the programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are still significant differences between centralised and decentralised actions/activities. - Potential danger of 'vanishing' of certain areas due to the absence of adequate emphasis.
Adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater visibility of the opportunities offered by programme. - Cross-sectoral cooperation opportunities. - Person-centred approach: more focus on disadvantaged people and/or citizens as a whole. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erasmus+ is seen as a compromise that 'keeps the identities of the old sub-programmes'. This makes it difficult to have real cross-sectoral approaches. - The adult learning sector is perceived as somewhat neglected.
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved transparency, accountability, streamlining of the rules and increased political visibility, allowing for dealing with new European challenges, such as the integration of refugees. - Improved national dialogue: all stakeholders operate within one single programme framework. - One place to look for funding opportunities. - Clearer focus on the disadvantaged target groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced reflection of national priorities (compared to the predecessor programmes). The integration of the programme committees is believed to have led to discussions becoming much more abstract.

Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased visibility, awareness, and political weight: 'E+ is considerably more visible than the predecessor programmes.' - Standardised procedures, governance framework, rules, and implementation. - Increased possibilities for cooperation with other fields. - A more visible youth sector – though mixed views on the topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One-size-fits-all: concerns that standardisation led to a programme that does not take local realities and priorities into account, therefore is less effective¹⁹⁰. - Erasmus brand: though acknowledging the improved visibility of the programme, still some confusion between Erasmus/Erasmus+ branding.
--------------	--	---

Source: *ICF* (based on *KIIs*)

¹⁹⁰ For instance, what is perceived is that projects respond to actual, standalone issues to a lesser extent than before. As an example, young people have considerably different needs in Nordic countries than in the region of Eastern Europe.

5.3 External coherence

To what extent is the Erasmus+ programme coherent with relevant EU policies and programmes with similar objectives? To what extent has the Erasmus+ programme proved complementary to other EU interventions/initiatives in the field of education and training, youth and sport?

The assessment of this evaluation question is fairly positive though leading to some considerations for improvements in the future. Based on information collated through desk research, key informant interviews (KIIs) and insights gained from the programme agencies survey, the general appreciation is that Erasmus+ is coherent (at least on paper) to a rather high extent, with relevant EU policies and programmes with similar objectives. Meanwhile, not many concrete examples of existing synergies or overlaps could be collated, signifying a gap in this area – which is further discussed below.

With regard to the complementarity of the programme with other EU interventions/initiatives in the field of education and training, youth and sport, the information collated mainly through the benchmarking of comparator programmes offered interesting insights. Based on the latter and additional findings (KIIs), it can be concluded that Erasmus+ complements the latter to a high extent.

Table 5.10 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Existence of policies and programmes with similar objectives	Desk research and key informant interviews	 Evidence of EU-level policies and programmes with similar objectives as Erasmus+ is found across different sources
Examples of complementarities	Key informant interviews Desk research	 Synergies (or potential synergies) between Erasmus+ and other EU-level policies and programmes are perceived by most respondents. However, giving concrete examples was more difficult (in particular for EU-level programmes) for most respondents
Existence of overlaps and examples	Key informant interviews Desk research	 Potential overlaps between Erasmus+ and other EU-level policies and programmes are perceived by some respondents. However, giving concrete examples was more difficult (in particular for EU-level programmes)
Views of programme agencies about complementarities	Programme agencies survey	 Programme agency respondents to a high extent have positive views about complementarities

From the programme design point of view, the Erasmus+ legal basis¹⁹¹ clearly states (Article 25) that the Commission jointly with the Member States ‘shall ensure the overall consistency and complementarity’ of the programme with both:

- relevant policies and programmes: i.e. those relating to culture and the media, employment, research and innovation, industry and enterprise, cohesion and development policy, as well as enlargement policy and initiatives, instruments and strategies in the field of regional policy and external relations, and;
- EU-level relevant sources of funding in education, training, youth and sport: primarily comprising the ESF¹⁹² and key instruments supporting employment and social inclusion, the ERDF¹⁹³, Horizon 2020 and other financial instruments in the fields of justice and citizenship, health, external cooperation programmes and pre-accession assistance.

¹⁹¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1288&from=EN>

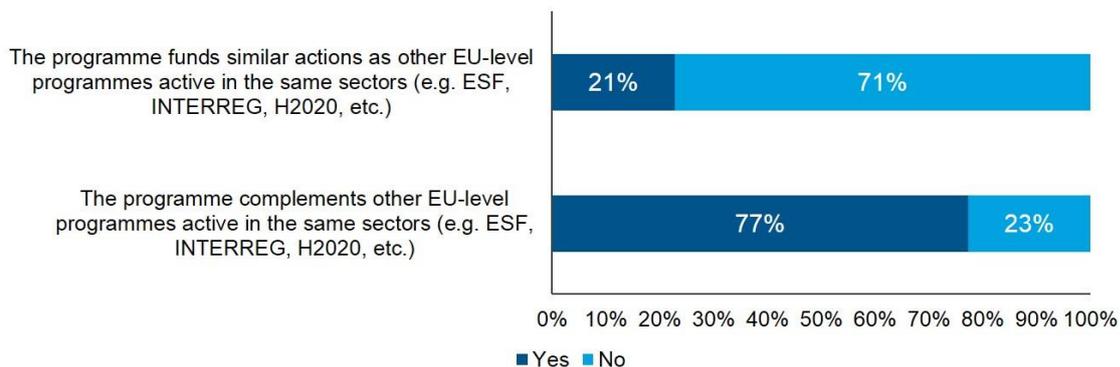
¹⁹² European Social Fund.

¹⁹³ European Regional Development Fund.

Secondly, the overall sentiment emerging from both the programme agencies survey and KIIs (EU level) is positive confirming that the programme is seen as complementary with other EU policies and programmes.

As Figures 5.4 and 5.5 below reveal, a vast majority (75 % and 77.3 % respectively) of respondents to the survey estimate that Erasmus+ complements other EU programmes active in the same sectors (e.g. ESF, INTERREG, Horizon 2020, etc.) and does not fund similar actions as the latter.

Figure 5.4 Respondents' views on complementarities and absence of overlaps between E+ and other EU programmes



Source: ICF (based on programme agencies survey)

Some additional insights come from key informant interviews (KIIs). To the question on whether existing or potential synergies or overlaps are perceived between Erasmus+ and other EU-level programmes (including per given types of actions), about half of interviewees agreed on the existence of synergies or at least potential synergies. Meanwhile, almost as many respondents also identified areas of overlap.

Through initial desk research, the evaluation team had identified examples of actions/activities of a similar nature to Erasmus+ supported through other EU programmes. This was not meant to be exhaustive but rather to be used as an illustrative list of possibly complementary or overlapping actions that could be further discussed or at least help guide discussion with interviewees. These included:

- Horizon 2020: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions; capacity building-related actions supported under 'Spreading excellence and widening participation' action¹⁹⁴.
- European Social Fund (ESF): e.g. systemic-level actions to improve the quality of education systems (lifelong learning, VET, HE, school system);
- EASI programme: PROGRESS axis;
- INTERREG European Territorial Co-operation programme;
- Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYF) action;
- Creative Europe programme;
- European Globalisation Fund (EGF): mobility allowances to support workers to move to new jobs outside their region;
- Pilot Action of EU Aid Volunteers: European volunteers support and complement humanitarian aid in third countries;

¹⁹⁴ Discussion on the coherence between Erasmus+ actions in higher education and these (DG RTD-led) actions will also involve the Jean Monnet programme.

- other international development activities in the field of education and training (e.g. Pan-African programme, EU SHARE programme).

The information set out in the following table offers an illustrative overview of respondents' sentiments (both KIIs and respondents to the programme agencies survey) on whether synergies or overlaps (i.e. existing or potential) are perceived between Erasmus+ and other EU programmes.

This overall shows that:

- existing or potential synergies were more often reported than overlaps across the nine programmes discussed;
- programmes where most synergies are perceived primarily include ESF and H2020. A few concrete examples could be supplied;
- in most cases interviewees could not give concrete examples (in particular focusing on actions such as those listed above). Rather assumptions on potential synergies or overlaps were made.

The following consideration can be drawn from the above: while Erasmus+ is generally seen as complementary with a number of other EU programmes active in the same fields, the extent to which and how this materialises is less clear. More specifically:

- despite the call for action at both Commission and Member State level, set in the Erasmus+ legal basis, no clear evidence was found on concrete actions for effectively ensuring the above consistency and complementary. In particular, no clear example of monitoring tools or structures¹⁹⁵ at DG EAC or wider EC level was reported;
- though only based on a small number of interviewees and all with EC staff members, very few concrete examples could be given on the topic;
- the lack of communication between DG EAC and other relevant DGs (e.g. DG HEALTH, DG CONNECT) or units (e.g. ESF Unit, unit managing Erasmus+, unit managing Erasmus for EYE) was reported.

The above hence suggests that there is room for improvement in this area. Latest developments such as with the cross-cutting Solidarity Corps initiative (which Erasmus+ and also the EaSI, ERDF, Europe for Citizens, Asylum and Migration Fund and LIFE programmes fund or contribute to) may possibly help in taking actions in this direction in the future.

¹⁹⁵ The setting-up of an inter-service group to discuss EYE, also involving DG EAC, was mentioned, though its main focus is not on Erasmus+.

Table 5.11 Examples of respondents' sentiments on synergies or overlaps between Erasmus+ and other EU-level programmes

EU programme/action	Synergies	Overlaps
ESF	<p>✓✓</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Erasmus+ is like a laboratory of implementing actions. ESF will follow up only on those that appear successful': there could be some follow-up of projects (e.g. KA2 Strategic Partnerships¹⁹⁶), which could be financed under ESF - ESF could be used for sending EVS volunteers abroad - ESF transnational cooperation: potential synergies with Erasmus+, e.g. in inclusion, youth employment, skills and education areas - Erasmus+ mobility grants can be topped up by ESF - Former LLP 'People on the labour market' initiative is now run through ESF: 'The ESF operational programmes could be aimed more at providing mobility activities for people on the labour market. Priorities and procedures should be streamlined where possible' 	<p>✓</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transnational cooperation: possible risk of overlap with Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships¹⁹⁷ - 'Even though it might be intentional that some of these programmes fund similar actions, a clearer distinction should be made on why. For example, why does ESF fund projects to establish placement/internship structures if Erasmus+ has done so for the past 10 years (and beyond)?'

¹⁹⁶ ESF may also support activities which are complementary to activities supported by Erasmus+ under one of the relevant investment priorities set out in the ESF Regulation. For instance, under the investment priority 'Improving the quality of tertiary education', the ESF may support activities to encourage the development of Erasmus activities in a university.

¹⁹⁷ There is possibly a risk of double funding of cooperation projects eligible under ESF Article 10: the *Transnational cooperation in the ESF: Introductory guide 2014–2010* states that 'these activities should be only complementary to the activities supported by Erasmus, as double funding of activities is not permitted'.

EU programme/action	Synergies	Overlaps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More synergies should be encouraged between KA3 (policy) actions for designated bodies and ESF - In the ESF legal basis, there is a recommendation to take up good practices from Erasmus+ to further develop them under ESF 	
ERDF		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓
Horizon 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓✓ - Third Health programme in the field of sport: synergies could relate to areas such as active ageing, helping people recover from surgeries, tackling child obesity, etc. - Horizon 2020 has a component on youth research and tackles other learning components at a larger scale, but there are very small synergies so far - <i>'E+ complements H2020 very well since the focus of each programme is rather complementary and partly intends to fulfil the same goals. e.g. Joint Master's Degrees (Erasmus Mundus) in Erasmus+ and Joint Doctorates in Marie Curie Actions'</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ - In Horizon 2020, Priority 6 on societal challenges can also finance projects on education, training and skills; there may be some overlap - Horizon 2020 tackles many of the same issues as Erasmus+, on a larger scale but there is no synergy with Erasmus+. For example, early school leaving was addressed as a topic under Horizon 2020 in 20 to 30 projects.
INTERREG	✓	

EU programme/action	Synergies	Overlaps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some INTERREG thematic priorities align well with Erasmus+ (E&T, social inclusion, institutional cooperation and dialogue between citizens and institutions) - <i>'Some synergies could take place, but until now the two programmes seem to coexist in a rather isolated manner'</i> - Some INTERREG projects prepare the framework for and facilitate mobility activities in Erasmus+ (e.g. DK-German INTERREG projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>'Some projects funded under INTERREG could also be Erasmus+ projects'</i>
Young Entrepreneurs Programme (EYE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ - Synergies are visible in the fact that many EYE participants have gone through Erasmus mobility while they were students. Individuals are then more open to international mobility - For the rest there are different target groups, hence no overlap 	
Europe for Citizens and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ - Potential synergies though no concrete example reported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ - Potential overlaps though no concrete example reported
Creative Europe		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ - Potential overlaps though no concrete example reported
European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 	

EU programme/action	Synergies	Overlaps
Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EaSI has a component of entrepreneurship education and could be linked to Erasmus+ but synergies are so far very limited 	
Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ - The aim to raise awareness about global issues through education could link to both formal and non-formal education strands of Erasmus+. 	

Source: ICF (based on KIIs (EU level))

With regard to complementarities between Erasmus+ and other EU interventions in the field of education and training, youth and sport, there was a consensus on the following among KIIs:

- for most, Erasmus+ is said to be consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy (and relevant priorities in the fields covered by Erasmus);
- in the field of education and training, the programme is perceived as mirroring to a high extent the priorities set out in the strategic framework for education and training ET 2020;
- in the field of youth, similar views are perceived on the consistency of the programme with the objectives set out in the European Youth Strategy. However, as noted above, young people and their specificities are considered less visible.

In the field of education and training, the most commonly reported examples of EU-level initiatives which are well complemented by Erasmus+ included:

- in VET: Erasmus+ priorities are often understood as coming from the EU agenda on VET, the Copenhagen process, the Bruges Communiqué, the ET 2020 policy, and the Riga Conclusions, among other things. The contribution of the programme to implementation or follow-up of EU-level instruments and initiatives targeted at the sector (e.g. EQAVET, ECVET, EQF, or the European Alliance for Apprenticeships) was also often emphasised.
- in higher education: strong consistency is perceived between the programme and the 2011 Modernisation of Higher Education Agenda (the designing of the programme and higher education-related priorities is thought to be largely inspired by this agenda). To a lesser extent, reference was made to the international dimension of the sector (e.g. European higher education in the world Commission Communication). In this area, findings of the evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)¹⁹⁸ reveal for instance that 'Bologna Process features have increasingly been applied in a rapidly growing number of HEIs, although sometimes only in a 'piecemeal' manner. The most important exception being Latin America'. It also highlights that Erasmus+ Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) for 2014-2020 confirms that the Bologna Process 'provided a shared framework for national reforms'.¹⁹⁹

With regard to the field of sport, a number of respondents estimated that Erasmus+ is probably consistent with the EU Work Plan for Sport but many had no clear views (in particular at national level) on this. This echoes the observation made above under Section 4 regarding the relative misalignment of the sector internally and in particular the possible discrepancy between the objectives defined for the field at EU level, those defined at national level and the actual needs at grassroots level. This was emphasised by most key informants interviewed at national level (both policymakers and stakeholders), both through the KIIs and the case studies.

To what extent does the Erasmus+ programme design provide appropriate links and support to the EU policy agendas?

The sources analysed to inform this evaluation question suggest that the programme design provides appropriate links with and support to EU policy agendas to a high extent.

¹⁹⁸ Particip (2017) Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

Table 5.12 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Share of projects funded related to EU priorities	Project mapping	 Project mapping results show that the vast majority of funded projects relate to EU priorities set in different EU agendas
Share of respondents who perceive linkages	Key informant interviews	 Most interviewees (particularly at EU level) perceive linkages between Erasmus+ programme design and support to key EU policy agendas in education and training, youth and sport
Examples of alignments with EU policy agenda	Key informant interviews, desk research	 Examples of alignments of the programme with EU policy agendas were easily identified through desk research or collated from interviewees (mostly EU level)

Complementary with the above, additional research was conducted to assess the extent to which the programme’s design offers appropriate links with and support to the EU policy agendas of relevance in the fields of education and training, youth and sport. The evaluation question has been informed by four main sources: a mapping of selected funded projects, desk research, key informant interviews, and case studies.

According to the legal basis²⁰⁰, Erasmus+ aims to contribute to the achievement of:

- the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, including the headline education targets;
- the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), including the corresponding benchmarks;
- the sustainable development of partner countries in the field of higher education;
- the overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018);
- the objective of developing the European dimension in sport, in particular grassroots sport, in line with the EU Work Plan for Sport;
- the promotion of European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty.

In line with the above (and similar to its predecessors), the priority actions of the programme align with the EU policy priorities defined in the different areas it covers. Built on the subsidiarity principle, Erasmus+ aims at supporting and supplementing the actions taken by the Member States and other participating countries, while fully respecting their responsibility for the content of education and training systems, actions in favour of the youth and sport sectors and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

Similarly to its predecessors but now in a streamlined manner, the programme is aimed at supporting the development of actions, cooperation and tools linked to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and its flagship initiatives, in particular the implementation of country-specific recommendations and of the policy priorities agreed at European level in the framework of the Open Method Of Coordination (OMC) in education and training and in youth. It also supports work linked to the priorities of European external actions and to those of the EU Work Plan for Sport, in particular grassroots sport.

²⁰⁰ 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/EC2.

A few examples identified through desk research are outlined in the box below.

Examples of Erasmus+ support to the EU policy agenda

- **Erasmus+ and ET 2020 working groups:** the reviewed ET 2020 priority actions for 2016–2018 call for increased synergies with Erasmus+, in particular KA3 policy experimentation. The WGs now have a mandate, as a recurrent activity, to support the incubation and follow-up of Erasmus+ KA3 policy experimentation. In 2016, thematic areas where synergistic approaches with Erasmus+ were found included: 'Strengthening teacher training and education by using the opportunities of new technologies'²⁰¹; 'VET teachers and trainers in work-based learning/apprenticeship (VET)'²⁰²; 'Employment and skills: validation of informal and non-formal learning in education and training', etc.
- **Erasmus+ and support for the review of several EU recognition and validation tools** (e.g. Europass, EQF): building on the legacy of the LLP, Erasmus+ supports a number of actions supporting recent or ongoing review of given tools but more generally their implementation, monitoring and mutual learning (e.g. through the ECVET Secretariat, EQAVET, Euroguidance networks, national Europass centres and EQF Coordination Points, etc. funded by Erasmus+).

Across these different sources, a high share of respondents or projects reviewed confirmed the consistency of the programme's design in regard to the links it formally makes to those EU policy agendas. The assessment of this evaluation question is thus considered satisfactory.

To a high extent the above concurs with the views expressed by key informants interviewed, in particular at EU level. In general, most interviewees not only considered the design of Erasmus+ (at least in an area they were more knowledgeable of) as coherent with the main EU-level policy agendas (and related strategic frameworks or documents), but also saw the potential of the programme to contribute to the latter in different areas.

More specifically, the findings emerging from the **review of selected projects (386²⁰³)** suggest that a vast portion (80 %) was linked to and aimed to contribute to the six main EU policies/strategic documents analysed:

- EU 2020;
- Education and Training Strategic Framework (ET 2020);
- European Youth Strategy;
- EU Work Plan for Sport;
- EC Communication 'New Skills Agenda for Europe';
- EC Communication 'European higher education in the world'.

²⁰¹ WG on Schools Policy.

²⁰² WG on VET.

²⁰³ The sample has the following characteristics: 292 projects are funded by LLP (of which 100 are transversal actions), 24 by YiA and 70 by Erasmus+; 250 projects are centralised and 136 are 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), transversal KA1-KA4 (100).

As Table 5.13 below further outlines, among those well-aligned projects, over half (64 %) focus on ET 2020, with particular attention given to the issue of social inclusion. The issue of social inclusion is also the most addressed when looking at the projects (around 20 %) that refer to EU 2020 strategy.

Going deeper into the key priorities that the respective projects aimed to address, the review reveals that the top three topical areas covered by projects aligning with ET 2020 priorities are:

- enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship;
- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

These were found (though varying in order) in all (sub)sectors (including youth, Jean Monnet and sport). A noticeable finding was that, across the sampled projects in higher education, two focused on the attainment headline target²⁰⁴. In school education, only a very small number dealt with early school leaving.

Considering that the topics are a clear challenge and/or a key priority at EU level (both set under ET 2020 and EU 2020), this is rather surprising.

In addition to the above, clear links were found (per sector), in particular with the following EU policies/strategic documents:

- VET – New Skills Agenda for Europe: The vast majority of projects reviewed clearly align with a number of priorities set under the agenda. Strong emphasis was found on the development of high-quality VET and work-based learning in over half of the projects.
- Higher education – Modernisation of Higher Education Agenda and others: As mentioned earlier, Erasmus+ objectives in the sector are thought to clearly align with a number of EU/European policies and priorities including the Modernisation of Higher Education Agenda and the Bologna Process or the internationalisation-targeted initiatives (e.g. EC Communication on ‘European higher education in the world’). Unsurprisingly, a strong alignment is found in the topic coverage of the projects reviewed.
- Adult learning – EU 2020/ET 2020: The vast majority of projects make an explicit reference to contributing to the above strategic documents. Thematic focus is strongly placed on promoting social inclusion and cohesion of adult learners who are feared to be at risk of being marginalised.
- Youth – Youth Strategy but also EU 2020, ET 2020, New Skills Agenda for Europe: Among the projects clearly aligned with Youth Strategy priority themes, the most commonly encountered topics related to promoting young people’s active participation in society and providing more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the job market.
- Sport – EU Work Plan for Sport: Over half of the projects reviewed aligned with priority objectives listed in the latter plan. The strongest focus was found on ‘Sport and society’, mainly supporting events for the European Week of Sport.

Though some possible links were found with at least one ET 2020 priority²⁰⁵, the Jean Monnet projects, whose main purpose is however specific (i.e. to integrate teaching about the EU into higher education institutions), appear to be the least aligned. Based on other findings (see separate Jean Monnet chapter for further details), this may signify that Jean

²⁰⁴ The Europe 2020 strategy sets out a target 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.

²⁰⁵ I.e. to increase active citizenship.

Monnet projects are still addressing a more elite-focused agenda based on academic teaching which is still not widely communicated to the public. This was also confirmed through other sources. A message emerging from the survey (conducted as part of the evaluation) of Jean Monnet beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries suggests that the programme is elitist and not very open to the public.

Table 5.13 Overview of coherence reference across project reports mapped

Coherence and contribution to EU Policies ²⁰⁶	School	VET	HE	AL	JM ²⁰⁷	Youth	Sport	KA
ET 2020	47	15	18	27	19	21	0	98
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training Promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 13 24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 4 8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 4 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 5 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 1 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 0 19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 29 42 27 	
EU 2020	11	6	6	10	0	6	4	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving social inclusion; Increasing % of 30–34-year-olds completing third-level education Reducing school drop-out rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 0 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 0 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 0 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 1 8
European Youth Strategy	10	18	0	0	0	24	0	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage young people to actively participate in society To provide more and equal opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 10 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 9 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 10
EU Work Plan for Sport	0	0	0	0	0	1	14	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrity of sport Sport and society The economic dimension of sport 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 14 	
EU Communication 'European higher education in the world'	2	0	15	0	0	0	0	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve earlier educational outcomes Internationalisation of HE Knowledge Triangle (linking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 4 3 5 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 10 2 1

²⁰⁶ In many cases a project shows alignment with different EU policies, therefore some projects are double counted compared to the total highlighted in the last row.

²⁰⁷ The Jean Monnet (JM) projects are all geared towards styling and better understating the EU integration process, politics and policymaking. Given the wider rationale of JM projects, when the team analysed the sample of 50 projects it was difficult to make a direct link with the six policy areas identified.

Coherence and contribution to EU Policies ²⁰⁶	School	VET	HE	AL	JM ²⁰⁷	Youth	Sport	KA
<i>HE, Research and Business)</i>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Modernisation of HE Agenda (i.e. curricular reform, funding reform)</i> 								
New Skills Agenda for Europe	2	18	0	0	0	0	0	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Development of high-quality VET with a strong WBL component</i> ■ <i>Enhancing the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC)</i> ■ <i>Recognition and certification of skills and competence</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 ■ 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 17 ■ 1 ■ 0 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 ■ 3 ■ 2
TOTAL	72	57	39	37	19	52	18	152²⁰⁸

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?

Evidence reviewed suggests that the Erasmus+ programme is coherent, to a high extent, with interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives. The information collated primarily through benchmarking of comparator programmes offered interesting insights, as did KIIs and desk research on examples of complementarities at both levels. With regard to examples of complementarities with other Member States’ interventions/initiatives at policy level in the remit of the OMC, related examples can be found above (see section 4).

²⁰⁸ In many cases a project shows alignment with different EU policies, therefore some projects have been double counted compared to the total highlighted in the last row.

Table 5.14 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Existence of policies or programmes with similar objectives at national level	Benchmarking Erasmus+ against comparator programmes Programme agencies survey	 Through the benchmarking task carried out to inform this indicator over 50 schemes run at national or transnational level that support actions similar to E+ ones were initially identified. Eighteen of those were benchmarked against Erasmus+ The existence of such policies or programmes is also confirmed by many NAs. Several NAs run such programmes in parallel to E+. Examples of complementary schemes are also found across a few OPC position papers
Existence of complementarities and examples	Key informant interviews Programme agencies survey	 Examples of complementarities were found across the two main sources considered
Share of respondents who identify concrete complementarities	Key informant interviews	 Among those interviewees aware of comparable national or international initiatives, most were able to supply examples of complementarities. However, many Erasmus+ beneficiaries (national level) interviewed through KIIs or case studies were not always aware of such parallel opportunities.
Examples of overlaps	Programme agencies survey Key informant interviews	 No specific examples of overlaps were reported

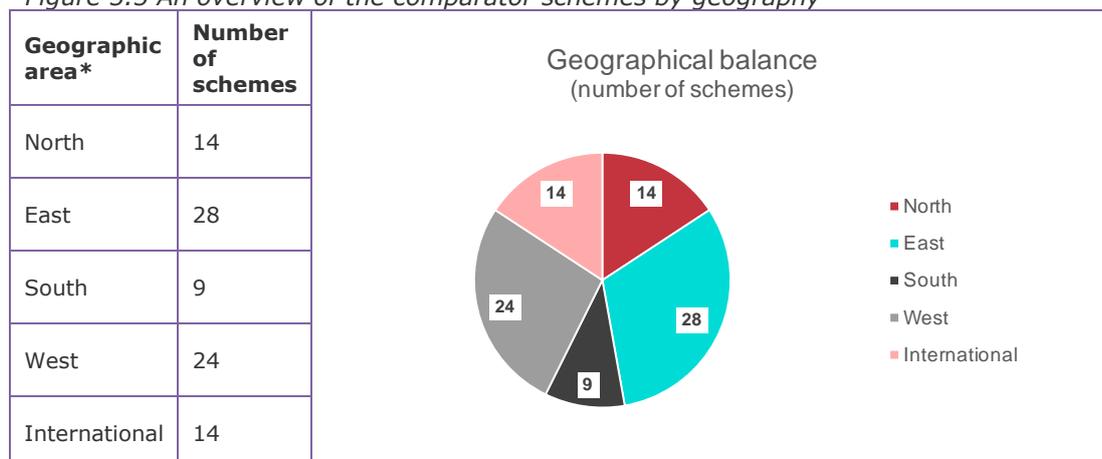
Moving from the coherence with EU policies and programmes, the evaluation looked into the coherence with various interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives. Overall, Erasmus+ is considered to be well aligned with the national priorities in all the sectors analysed.

The following interesting insights were gained from four main sources: benchmarking of Erasmus+ against comparator programmes, programme agencies survey, desk research and key informant interviews.

Both the benchmarking and the programme agencies survey reveal that there exist **policies or programmes** (though to a varying level from one Member State to another) that have **similar objectives as Erasmus+ at national (or international) level**.

The benchmarking enabled the evaluation team to identify 58 schemes across Europe and beyond (for details on the methodology followed, see Annex 12). Geographically, these were spread as shown in the following figure.

Figure 5.5 An overview of the comparator schemes by geography



Note: 'North' – Scandinavian countries, 'East' – Central and Eastern European countries, including the Baltic countries and the programme countries from the Balkans, 'South' – Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, 'West' – EU-15 countries (excluding Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece but including Switzerland), 'International' – all the other countries.

The largest group of the identified schemes covers Central and Eastern European countries, including the Baltic countries (28). The second largest group (24) covers Western European countries, i.e. the 'old' EU Member States (EU-15), excluding Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece. Northern European countries are represented by 14 schemes and Southern European countries by 9 schemes. We identified 14 international schemes, i.e. those that involve a country not belonging to any other group. The United States often participates in these schemes.

In terms of the level of education and the field of activity, the largest group focuses on the school sector (23). The higher education sector comes second with 21 schemes, followed by schemes involving young people (10) and schemes at the VET level (9). Adult learning is represented by six schemes and sport by two schemes.

Action-wise, the vast majority (73 %) support mobility for learners or practitioners²⁰⁹. The remainder are split into strategic cooperation projects and support activities.

Based on a set of selection criteria tailored for the purpose of the evaluation, the long list was narrowed down to 18 comparator (i.e. national and international) schemes spread as follows: higher education (7), VET (5), schools (4), youth (2), sport (2), adult learning (1). Action-wise, the vast majority support mobility for learners or practitioners (for further details see Annex 12).

Key findings from the latter are as follows:

- **High level of (implicit) alignment with EU priorities:** None of the comparator schemes' objectives were in contradiction with the objectives of the European Union. For most of the schemes, the alignment is somehow implicit as their objectives are too specific and therefore it makes it rather difficult to assess the relation. However, in the cases of several schemes the reference to the objectives of the European Union has been made more explicit. For example, in the Handbook for the Nordplus Adult programme, the programme is said to encourage 'applications aiming at integration of refugees and immigrants in education and training within all sectors

²⁰⁹ Mobility is the core focus of the schemes, of which short-term mobility of learners is the most frequently supported action, followed by long-term mobility of learners and short- and long-term mobility of practitioners.

- and for all Nordplus programmes', which is in line with multiple EU objectives, such as promoting peace, contributing to solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, protection of human rights and development of international law.
- **Very good level of alignment with Erasmus+:** Both Erasmus+ and the majority of its comparators aim to achieve comparable goals, although in some individual cases the focus is narrower for the comparator schemes in comparison to Erasmus+. This is very likely caused by the size of Erasmus+ and the pan-European coverage.
 - The level of alignment is particularly high in the case of schemes in formal education (higher education, VET and schools) and lower in the field of sport.
 - None of the comparator schemes' objectives are in contradiction with EU-level objectives.
 - The level of alignment is the highest among the schemes the geographical coverage of which does not extend beyond Europe²¹⁰.
 - **Average alignment with Erasmus+ actions:** This can be explained by the broad focus of Erasmus+, so a large number of the national schemes fit into this focus. . A little misalignment is observed in the cases of the schemes that support either mobility actions only or strategic institutional projects and partnerships only.
 - **Average alignment of Erasmus+ with comparators in terms of duration of the activities:** For example, some comparator schemes, especially at the school level and in adult learning, offer much longer average mobility stays for the practitioners. In these fields, this is notably the case of five schemes²¹¹. For details, see Annex 12.
 - **Most national schemes operate on a bilateral basis:** This is a difference with Erasmus+, which is primarily a pan-European multilateral programme²¹². The difference is particularly pronounced in bilateral schemes with a European country as a donor and non-European countries as beneficiaries.
 - None of the schemes implemented from the national level can match the pan-European focus of Erasmus+.
 - **Many similarities between comparators' and Erasmus+' target groups:** The alignment is high in higher education, VET and youth and lower in school education, adult learning and sport.
 - **In many cases, the same national agency/organisation runs both the schemes and Erasmus+:** This allows for a better use of resources, sharing good practice and personnel development. However, there are risks of insufficient interaction internally between the teams involved in Erasmus+ and those involved in the other schemes.

Examples of E+ added value versus comparator programmes

- Erasmus+ offers some unique activities that none of its comparators do (or at least the offer is not as systematic as that of Erasmus+), such as collaborative platforms (eTwinning, EPAL etc.) and stakeholder dialogue and knowledge building for evidence-based policymaking. This might be considered as a real added value of Erasmus+.
- Erasmus+ is a very powerful tool for internationalisation of higher

²¹⁰ Actual reasons explaining this difference were not explicitly explored.

²¹¹ I.e. the Baltic–American Freedom Foundation professional internship programme; Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP); German–French elementary school teacher exchange; IACOBUS Programme and Nordplus Adult.

²¹² Although in some cases, it operates on a network of bilateral (institutional) agreements.

education, capturing a wide geography. It is also a more generous scheme (financially) in many cases – though some exceptions are found.

- Erasmus+ has a clearer focus on disadvantaged target groups (in particular in higher education): only three comparator schemes pay special attention to the participation of disadvantaged groups (e.g. the Causeway programme, the Nordplus Higher Education and Adult programmes and UK Sport's IDEALS programme in sport).

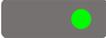
The following overview tables offer additional details on the assessed level of alignment between the national schemes reviewed and Erasmus+ against:

- Erasmus+ objectives; and
- Erasmus+ actions.

Table 5.15 shows that there is a high level of alignment of objectives between Erasmus+ and the set of comparators. The level of alignment is particularly high in schemes in formal education (higher education, VET, schools) and relatively lower in the field of sport.

The table below uses the 'traffic-light' visualisation method to showcase the alignment of the objectives of Erasmus+ with those of the comparator schemes. As stated above, Erasmus+ has a much wider range of objectives than any of the comparator schemes. Therefore, when assessing the alignment of objectives of Erasmus+ with its comparators, we assessed whether any of the comparators' objectives were not in line with what Erasmus+ aims to achieve, rather than the opposite.

Table 5.15 Traffic-light visualisation of the alignment of the objectives of the comparator schemes with Erasmus+

Comparator scheme	Field	Focus	Key objectives	Alignment of the objectives of Erasmus+
AKTION	Higher education	Cooperation/ capacity-building projects Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To foster mutual understanding between countries and to support the enhancement of bilateral cooperation in research and education in all scientific areas 	
Baltic–American Freedom Foundation professional internship programme	Higher education, Schools	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide all-inclusive internships for Baltic state students in the USA and opportunities for Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians who wish to pursue postgraduate studies in the United States To strengthen ties between the Baltic countries and United States To invest in the development of young Baltic leaders and entrepreneurs 	
Causeway – British-Irish Exchange Programme for Youth	Youth	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen and improve the relationships between young people, and between those who work with them, on the islands of Britain and Ireland 	
CEEPUS	Higher education	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote cooperation in the field of higher education, with a focus on regional cooperation within networks of universities 	
Charles de Gaulle Trust partnerships	VET	Cooperation/ capacity-building projects Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support collaboration between the UK and France through education partnerships that offer young people an international and intercultural experience 	

Comparator scheme	Field	Focus	Key objectives	Alignment of the objectives of Erasmus+
Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP)	Adult learning	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the educational profile of the four nations/UK Broaden the personal and professional experience of participating teachers by providing an opportunity to enhance skills and knowledge gained in a different teaching environment Contribute to the enrichment of participating host schools Promote networking between teachers, schools and students Foster communication and the exchange of education ideas between Commonwealth countries 	
Denmark–USA programme	VET	Cooperation/ capacity-building projects Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support transatlantic cooperation within technical and vocational training, and the internationalisation and exchange of best practices to benefit the further development of education systems and practices 	
German–French elementary school teacher exchange	Schools	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary school teachers live and work in the host country for one term and teach their pupils their native language 	
Gjør Det! (Do It!)	VET	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide Norwegian apprentices and students an internship at a relevant school or business in Germany to create insight into the German labour market and culture, strengthen partnerships between educational 	

Comparator scheme	Field	Focus	Key objectives	Alignment of the objectives of Erasmus+
			institutions and industry in Germany and Norway, and increase general knowledge about Germany	
IACOBUS Programme	Adult learning	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support collaboration and cross-border staff exchange between different university communities 	
International Inspiration Programme	Sport	Cooperation/capacity-building projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enrich the lives of children and young people of all abilities, in schools and communities across the world, particularly in developing countries, through the power of high-quality and inclusive physical education (PE), sport and play 	
Nordplus Adult	Adult learning	Cooperation/capacity-building projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen adults' key competences and recognition of adults' informal and non-formal learning To support adult education and learning to meet the challenges of modern citizenship To strengthen the link between adult learning and working life 	
Prämienprogramm	Schools	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To foster the German language internationally by giving full stipends to pupils between the age of 15 and 17 who performed especially well in their German class 	
Programme for Cooperation of	Schools, Higher	Cooperation/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To contribute to the reduction of economic 	

Comparator scheme	Field	Focus	Key objectives	Alignment of the objectives of Erasmus+
Schools and Scholarships (EEA and Norwegian funds)	education	capacity-building projects	<p>and social disparities in the European Economic Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen bilateral relations between the donor state(s) and the beneficiary states 	
The Fulbright Programme Italy	Higher education, Adult learning	Cooperation/ capacity-building projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote study, research and lectureship opportunities in Italy and in the US through the Fulbright scholarships for Italian and American citizens (70 scholarships a year) Organise and sponsor cultural and educational activities with both a national and international outreach Offer an information service on the Fulbright Programme and on study and research opportunities in the US and in Italy 	
The German–Turkish Youth Bridge	Youth	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To intensify exchange between young people from Germany and Turkey with a view to strengthening relations between the two countries in the long term 	
The Nordplus Higher Education Programme	Higher education	Cooperation/ capacity-building projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To link private and public higher education institutions (HEIs) in the participating countries, offering recognised tertiary-level qualifications, establishing networks for exchanging and disseminating experiences, best practices and innovative results To contribute to cooperation between HEIs and other institutions or organisations involved in or having vested interests in the area of higher education 	

Comparator scheme	Field	Focus	Key objectives	Alignment of the objectives of Erasmus+
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To contribute to cooperation between HEIs and the labour market To facilitate high-quality individual academic or workplace-based exchanges for students and teachers in Nordplus countries 	
UK Sport's IDEALS programme (International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport)	Sport	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inspire the next generation of globally aware leaders through sport 	

Note:  - full alignment,  - partial alignment,  - little or no alignment of the objectives

As noted above, the type of actions offered through the national schemes reviewed are considered to align to an average extent overall with those of Erasmus+. This distributes as follows: in half of the cases, there is full alignment while in the remainder the alignment is rather partial or inexistent (one case). The latter refers to UK Sport's IDEALS programme (International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport), which supports mobility of individuals in sport but is not supported by Erasmus+. The overview of the alignment is presented in the table below.

Note: the yellow colour was used for the comparator schemes that support either mobility actions only or strategic institutional (cooperation) projects and partnerships only, not both (i.e. there is only partial alignment with the actions supported in Erasmus+). The red colour was chosen for one specific scheme (UK Sport's IDEALS programme (International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport)), which supports short-term mobility of individuals in sport (i.e. there is no alignment with Erasmus+ because these actions are not supported in Erasmus+).

The findings of the **programme agencies survey** confirm the existence of such programmes, at least in some Member States. More specifically, the NAs were asked whether they were aware of any national or international programmes supporting similar actions (i.e. mobility of learners/youth; mobility of staff/practitioners; cooperation actions among organisations) aside from Erasmus+ in their country.

Based on the responses²¹³ supplied (except for the field of sport, for which data is not available), the data shows that such programmes (i.e. in the form of any national programmes run by individual NAs (where applicable) and/or other programmes²¹⁴) are known in less than half of cases by respondents. In line with the findings above, higher education is the sector where most respondents ticked 'yes' overall. Besides higher education, the other sectors where such programmes are known are, in order, youth, school education, VET and adult learning. The number of responses received per sector is summarised in the following overview table.

Table 5.16 Total number of positive/negative responses per sector²¹⁵

Sector	Yes	No
School education (n= 24)	31	41
VET (n= 26)	30	48
Higher education (n= 25)	44	29
Adult learning (n= 27)	25	56
Youth (n= 27)	33	48
Sport (n= 24)	(:)	(:)

Source: ICF (programme agencies survey). (:) no data available

A number of NAs (58 % of survey respondents) are particularly aware of such programmes as they are responsible for those in parallel with Erasmus+.

A detailed overview per sector and types of action supported by the national or international programmes identified (mobility of learners/young people, mobility of staff, cooperation actions among organisations) can be found in Annex 4.

Overall this shows that, where existing, the key features of these programmes are:

- the programmes support mobility actions in all sectors (except sport and Jean Monnet);
- the programmes support cooperation actions in all sectors;
- the responses do not show clear variations among the different types of actions except in higher education and adult learning:
 - in higher education, the programmes known by respondents seem to mostly support mobility actions (both learners and practitioners);

²¹³ The number of respondents who answered this question varies across the sectors, ranging from 24 to 27.

²¹⁴ No comprehensive overview of the programmes considered by respondents is available as the latter often failed to specify the programme(s) they know.

²¹⁵ Respondents were not only asked to answer 'yes' or 'no' but to specify their choice per type of actions: mobility of learners/young people, mobility of staff/practitioners, and cooperation actions among organisations. The total number of responses is therefore higher than the number of respondents per sector.

- in the adult learning sector, identified programmes seem to support more cooperation actions.

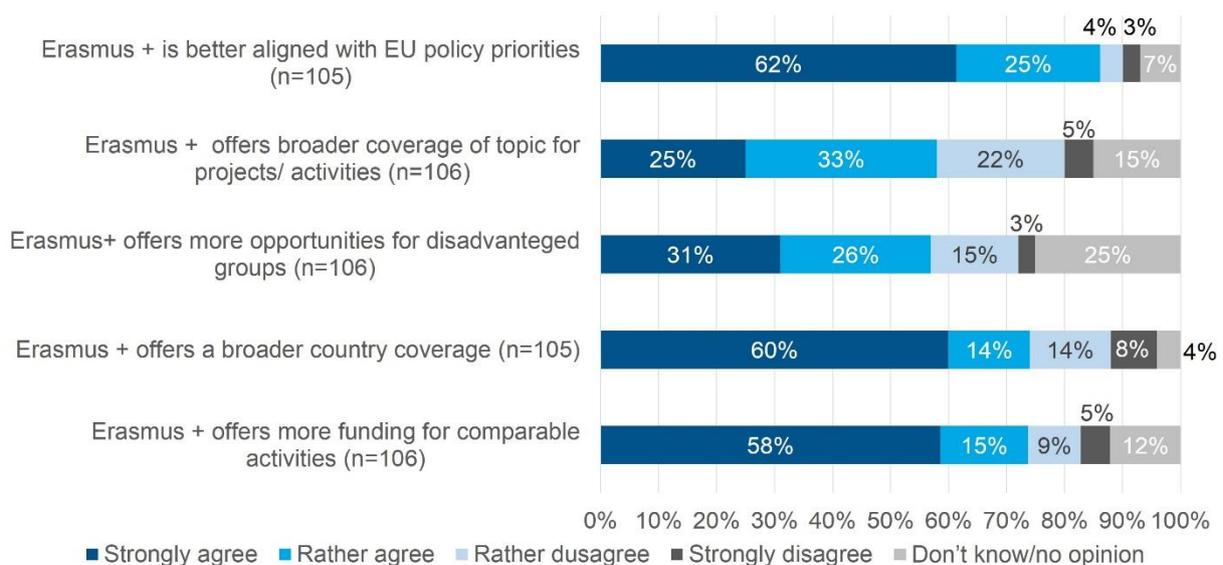
The survey results also indicate respondents' perceptions on five main areas where Erasmus+ seems to do better or less well than the programmes discussed above. These areas relate to:

- better alignment with EU policy priorities;
- broader programme country coverage;
- more opportunities for disadvantaged target groups;
- broader programme topic coverage for projects/activities;
- more funding for comparable activities.

Key findings reveal that:

- over half of respondents strongly or rather agree that Erasmus+ is doing better than the other programmes in all five areas considered;
- the top three areas (all sectors except sport) where over half of respondents strongly agree that Erasmus+ does better concern the first three areas above. However, some differences are found across the sectors:
 - the better alignment of Erasmus+ with EU policy priorities is only ranked first in youth and HE. The share of respondents who strongly agree is high (72 % and 66 % in youth and HE respectively);
 - the perception that Erasmus+ offers more funding for comparable activities is ranked first in school education and VET (though equalling with 'broader programme's country coverage');
 - in the field of adult learning, the vast majority of respondents (85 %) strongly agree that Erasmus+ offers a broader country coverage. Conversely, only 15 % strongly agree that the programme offers more opportunities for disadvantaged target groups. This is the lowest share of respondents in this category. The highest share of respondents who strongly agree that the programme does so is found in youth (44 %).

Figure 5.6 Respondents' sentiments on five main areas comparing Erasmus+ and comparable programmes



Source: ICF (programme agencies survey)

Where comparable programmes were reported, respondents were furthermore asked whether their agency takes specific actions to ensure complementarity between Erasmus+ and the latter. Over half of them (54 %) confirmed this was so. A few provided examples. Those most often referred to ensuring common approaches between Erasmus+ and other programmes in the form of joint/common events, information sessions and dissemination practices.

Additional insights were gained through **key informant interviews** (national level mostly, with managers of national or international comparator programmes). In the vast majority of cases, interviewees agreed that the Erasmus+ programme is well aligned with the national priorities of the programme they manage so that the national priorities in the sector are covered by both programmes.

Complementarities were found to a high or average extent in most cases, primarily in regard to the similar objectives and approaches pursued in the implementation of the respective schemes. The UK Sport's IDEALS programme mentioned earlier was considered as an interesting example of complementarity with Erasmus+, which does not support individual mobility yet in the sector. With the exception of this programme and two others (Causeway programme and the Nordplus Higher Education and Adult programme), the attention paid by Erasmus+ to widening participation of disadvantaged target groups was seen as complementary in most other cases. The following national or multilateral schemes were considered as the most aligned with Erasmus+: Nordplus Higher Education, CEEPUS and Norway/EEA funds instruments.

Overall, no specific overlaps were reported. Meanwhile, interviewees (in particular in higher education) felt that there is some room for improvement, especially when it comes to coherence with other European-level initiatives, in particular with the structural funds and operational programmes.

6 Effectiveness

The assessment of the effectiveness criterion was based on 13 evaluation questions which were grouped around the following main issues:

- The extent to which the programme delivered expected outputs and results;
- The extent to which it led to effects at the level of organisations and systems;
- Comparison between the results achieved and types of actions/ sectors;
- Results for disadvantaged groups;
- Dissemination;
- Effect of programme integration; and
- Sustainability.

The analysis for this section was based on a combination of all the sources presented in the methodology section. The main source of evidence are DG EAC programme data and Erasmus + monitoring surveys, the ICF surveys of beneficiaries (learners and staff) and in terms of qualitative assessment the case studies, key informant interviews as well as expert panel assessment of selected outputs. However other sources of data are also used across the report.

6.1 Summary of main findings

The programme reaches or exceeds the vast majority of its targets when it comes to outputs. The output indicators not met can be found under Student Loan Guarantee which is missing the target by a high margin and Jean Monnet. For Jean Monnet the programme data available for the output indicator on students reached is not reliable. This means that it is not possible to say with confidence what the number of students reached by this strand was.

Key findings concerning outputs compared to predecessor programmes are:

- Strong increase in higher education students participating in mobility and also in international mobility;
- Strong increase in mobility of staff in VET, schools and higher education international;
- Strong increase in number of projects in higher education sector (including international);
- Strong decrease in number of projects in all other sectors. It needs to be noted though that the number of projects decreased also because the programme focuses on funding fewer but larger scale projects.

Other key findings concerning outputs are:

- 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 contrary fewer outputs with clearer added value would be needed to enhance the 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);
- Significant decrease in the number of pupils participating in cooperation actions (KA2 and equivalent across the two programming periods)
- Most learners taking part in mobility under the VET strand take part in traineeships in enterprises as part of initial VET. Though the number of VET learners reached is stagnating compared to predecessor programme it is likely that the programme now reaches more typical VET learners in initial VET. Predecessor programme covered also traineeships in companies for young graduates from other sector of education and training;

- The number of adult learners reached through blended mobility actions under E+ is comparable to those reached by volunteering actions in predecessor programme.
- Youth sector strongly contributes to the international dimension of the programme
- Actions in the sport sector remain small in numbers however sport organisations take part in other sectors of the programme.
- Adult education and 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 centrality and interconnectedness of countries in the programme network is changing. Small countries and countries from central and eastern Europe are better integrated
- Multiple participation of individual persons (learners and staff) in mobility actions seems to be reasonably low. Multiple participation of organisations remains unclear

Compared to the predecessors, the current programme has 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) reaches more than double the number of people than what was 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) shows some inconsistencies that suggest the quality of the data is, for some types of actions specifically, questionable²¹⁶. The data from predecessor programmes is incomplete and hence there is not a good basis for across programme period comparison. The targets in this area have been exceeded however there are some concerns about the reliability of the data used to calculate this indicator. When compared with other sources of evidence it seems that the programme data of DG EAC overestimates the participation of disadvantaged learners.

Other findings about participation of disadvantaged (in particular based on case studies) suggest that:

- Beneficiaries interviewed see that participation of disadvantaged learners is more emphasised under current programme compared to predecessors; but
- The programme reaches out to those who can be seen as more easy to reach among the disadvantaged learners. Participation of people who are disengaged or at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or dropping out is likely to be minimal. This is in particular because the education and training organisations that implement the actions tend to select those who are motivated and have good performance. Selectivity is also present in the youth sector in EVS. The persons reached through youth exchanges are a more diverse group as the mobilities are short term and do not require the same level of engagement and commitment from the side of the learner as EVS or student mobility. However there is little data on their profile beyond the already mentioned indicator on fewer opportunities (i.e. it is not clear to which of the groups under the definition of 'fewer opportunities they fall). Some of the adult education actions appear, based on case studies, to be working with hard to reach groups. But the scale of this sector is small.

6.1.1 Results for learners and staff

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

²¹⁶ This refers mostly to the data on participants with fewer opportunities under the youth exchanges which accounts for a great share of the beneficiaries in this category.

indicators where the target values were not reached, the values of these indicators are rather high. For none of the indicators the performance values appear to be particularly low.

It needs to be noted though that the legal basis indicators on results are defined as measuring beneficiaries' self-perceptions about improvement. There is only a limited number of indicators that refer to objective facts (such as the extent to which a learner received recognition). Most of the indicators measure the extent to which beneficiaries believe the programme helped them improve in a given area.

The most factual result indicator in the strategic plan is the rate of formal recognition of participation. This rate is high. The rate of recognition of learning outcomes is also rather high.

The evaluation found, using a variety of sources (including a quasi-experimental design), clear evidence of results for mobile learners but also those learners taking part in KA2 blended learning mobility and its equivalent. The programme shows clearly positive results when it comes to:

- Foreign language skills development – even though the progression is better for those with low entry levels than those at higher levels;
- Feeling of belonging to the EU and willingness to be mobile and to work abroad;
- Shorter transition to employment for those who take part in KA1 type of mobility (this has not been demonstrated for other types of actions);
- Positive feeling towards education and training organisation where the person is studying which is an important factor associated with retention in education and training;
- Similarly positive perception of the value of education is an important factor associated with retention in education and training;

In line with the above points, the programme is associated with stronger rate of completion of studies (in a typical duration – i.e. without repeating a class) for those in KA1 type of mobility. This could however be the effect of selection into the programme rather than a result of the programme;

This study as well as other sources found a range of other softer results for learners.

The case studies in particular emphasised the positive influence the programme plays in personal development, maturity and autonomy of young people. Confidence, independence and open-mindedness were frequently emphasised.

Erasmus + monitoring surveys show that learners themselves are very positive how they perceive the added value of the programme. The vast majority agree that the programme helped them improve more than six competences. However there are notable differences between the sectors. While overall the scores reported are high, the students in higher education who are mobile for studies within programme countries are the least enthusiastic about how they see the programme contributing to their competences.

Staff also shows high degree of satisfaction with the mobility experience and according to the Erasmus + monitoring surveys are very positive about the contribution to their competence development.

Recognition mechanisms for staff are less formalised than for learners. While most staff see informal recognition by peers and hierarchy, formal recognition is less common.

According to the evaluation surveys which included a quasi-experimental design, the areas with clear differences for beneficiary staff 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 staff.

Overall the staff themselves strongly appreciate the fact that the programme gives them opportunity to grow personally and professionally. It is an opportunity to go 'outside of the ordinary' which can be important for retention and wellbeing. In particular in the education and training sectors (schools and VET), the programme gives them space to experiment and spend time doing something else than the curriculum. This is less the case in the youth and sport sectors and adult learning where the freedom available within their routine tasks is much stronger. In higher education, the staff interviewed particularly emphasised the internationalisation dimension and professional development linked to cooperation (also present in the other sectors).

6.1.2 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;
- Quality frameworks for youth work.

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

Though staff 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 of a larger scale, analysing the effects on a larger number of organisations in each of the sectors would be needed to see these types of results.

A blind spot of the programme is the quality of outputs produced under actions comparable to the current KA2 and KA3. While there is a lot of 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 the innovation within the programme. 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 activities.

System level changes through Erasmus + happen through the following channels:

- The programme funds activities of the Open Method of Coordination at EU level in fields of education, training, youth and sport²¹⁷. While the OMC as such is not part of Erasmus +, the programme largely contributes financially to its activities. As the

²¹⁷ There is no formal OMC in the field of sport but activities of this type are in place under the umbrella of the EU Work Plan for Sport

OMCs are influencing national systems, the programme is contributing to these evolutions;

- The programme funds projects that are specifically aimed at supporting system level change - KA3 of the current programme and comparable actions in predecessor programmes. The programme also funds KA2 projects which in some cases manage to have system level effects. Overall there is ad-hoc evidence of learning and mainstreaming from specific projects but this remains rare. It is more common in cases where a country (national authority) organises specific actions to identify and learn from these practices;
- System level effects also happen by reaching a critical mass of organisations and persons. If these are well aligned with the system level priorities the programme could spur bottom up evolutions. This is partly the case in some sectors but in others (adult learning, sport) the reach is too small as the number of organisations taking part in the programme is very low compared to the size of the sector.

The main impact legal basis indicators for this programme are related to the EU2020 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 improve 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 deep contribution, not only for the individual learners who directly take part, are:

- 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 greatest scale within this programme. This action has also 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.
- 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; and
- Positive attitude towards the EU. The programme is associated with 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 to people directly.

6.1.3 Enablers and barriers

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 and the support received.

The following enabling factors for learners have been identified:

- Signing a learning agreement is a strong predictor for recognition (see section on recognition);
- Support received by learners in the host organisation and their integration among other students and local communities;

- Having received foreign language learning support is associated with stronger perception of improvement in foreign language.

At the level of staff, a key enabler is the reasons and motivations to participate, most staff are motivated by the willingness to develop professionally their own skills and by the attractive networking and social capital enhancing potential of the programme. Motivations reflecting the expectations about changes at the level of organisations are less common. As staff are less interested in improving their organisations than improving themselves it is not surprising to find that the effectiveness analysis shows clearer contribution to development of staff than hard evidence of evolution of institutional practices.

For projects under KA2 and KA3 (and equivalent) important enablers are:

- A selection process that does manage to identify those projects with most promising approaches that turn result in key changes. There are several issues with the selection process though: there is not a strong relationship between quality scores at project selection and the final report/ product quality scores. In fact frequently applications are scored higher than the final outputs. The assessors consider that the quality of applications selected is in general average. When this is the case it is difficult to assess what is likely to be outstanding and what not.
- Projects producing outputs that are likely to lead to sustainable results. The analysis of selected project outputs shows that in many cases the enabling factors for sustainable change at the level of institutions and beyond them are not clearly present in the projects funded. Many projects would benefit from a critical quality board and external support (mentoring or capacity building) which is currently not provided to selected projects
- Needs analysis – most projects do not build on a solid needs analysis.

The data used for this section is a combination of large scale monitoring surveys, case studies and expert panel assessment of KA2 and KA3 outputs. The quality of the data is considered good to answer this evaluation question. The only limitation is that for most of the enablers it was not possible to systematically assess and link the presence of a given enabler with an improved result indicator as it was done for recognition and self-perceived improvement of foreign language skills.

6.1.4 Results for disadvantaged learners

The evidence that disadvantaged learners would benefit more from the programme than other groups is patchy. The surveys carried out under this assignment show that being from a disadvantaged background is associated with statistically significantly different results than for other learners in some result areas. In other words, disadvantaged learners do show some more positive results than the others however this could also be linked to selection into the programme.

The other evidence collected is mostly from case studies and the case studies were only able to document ad-hoc examples suggesting that the programme benefits specifically to disadvantaged learners.

Most of the existing research and evidence from case studies is about participation of these groups. The case study findings suggest that the programme organisations do indeed mostly select those who, though disadvantaged, are not disengaged, demotivated or marginalised. In other words the programme reaches out to the less stigmatised group of disadvantaged learners, the high achievers among disadvantaged learners. This is not specific to this programme and other programmes struggle with the same challenge. The following could be done to enhance the positive effects on disadvantaged learners:

- Target specifically those organisations that work with the hardest to reach. The emphasis should be on organisations as multipliers who would then bring these groups into the programme;
- Use peer-examples as ambassadors to motivate these groups. Given that the programme succeeds in reaching the high achievers in these groups use them as ambassadors to attract other young people who could identify themselves with these examples.

The evidence on this issue is rather patchy and more research would be needed to understand differences in some specific outcomes such as motivation. A particularly under-researched area is the role of staff and the multiplier effect from staff to disadvantaged groups.

6.1.5 Dissemination

Results are positive about the effectiveness of the dissemination and exploitation approaches of the programme. However, those are to be distinguished according to the levels they apply to:

- At EU level, the existence of an overarching dissemination and exploitation (D&E) strategy, the first of its kind at DG EAC level, that sets clear requirements and rules at different levels (project and actions, national and EU levels) and of a single dissemination project results platform (Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (EPRP)) among other things represent an improvement in comparison to the past.
 - At national level, the assessment is positive in particular about the D&E strategy, with the exception of the dissemination at system level - and more specifically the lack of clear evidence of use of project results by policy makers and effective engagement of the latter. Perceptions on the project results platform are more mixed: though valued by over half of respondents 37% of survey respondents don't agree that the platform is user-friendly. This negative sentiment concurs with insights gained from KIIs (national level).
- At project level findings show that dissemination is an important component of projects' lifecycle across the different sectors and/or types of actions. Project beneficiaries are aware of the D&E strategy requirements. Meanwhile, related requirements at their level are often burdensome. Despite the standardised processes in place and whilst interesting outputs may emerge from individual projects, effective dissemination and exploitation of results cannot be solely ensured at this level: individual project leaders/consortia do not have the capacity (e.g. human resources, time, knowledge-wise, financial) to effectively achieve this all by themselves.

With regard to EPRP, a general conclusion is that, though there are mixed views on its user-friendliness, the platform is another clear improvement in comparison to the past. It offers a common and accessible space for disseminating most project results whilst also showcasing good practices and success stories (including from predecessor programmes) can be seen as a clear improvement in comparison to the past.

One of its key advantages (and value in comparison to the past) is that it constitutes a valuable material to inform the work of policy makers (EU level notably). A potential limitation (content-wise) in its current configuration regards the lack of complementary thematic insights (publications or other) that could be inspirational for users who would be looking for solutions to address given issues such as for example ESL.

6.1.6 Integrated programme

Two main dimensions have been considered to assess the effectiveness of the integrated programme: the integrated programme as a vector (or not) to greater effectiveness and visibility for the EU's activities in the field of education and training, youth and sport.

On the first dimension (greater effectiveness), the integrated nature of the programme is valued by a vast majority of respondents (KIIs, programme agencies survey). Many see it as effectively supporting and generating:

- Increased capacities for better and more consistent programme's alignment with ongoing and emerging policy priorities applicable to education and training, youth and sport.
- More transparent, rationalised and systematic approaches
- Opportunities for cross-sectoral cooperation
- A much larger scope of action

Related findings include:

- The clarity of the new structure is seen as a main advantage of the integrated programme for over half of respondents (KIIs)
- Mixed views on the new pillar (KA3) offered to support system level-oriented actions: For instance, most respondents welcome this development seeing it a clear(er) space for action at this level in the programme. The extent to which this effectively helps generate more system level impact than similar actions under predecessor programmes is unclear to many though
- Mixed views on effectiveness of the integrated programme in terms of:
 - making it easier for potential applicants to understand the funding opportunities
 - enabling potential applicants to identify more easily appropriate opportunities
 - helping applicants to design applications that are more relevant

The integrated programme and the **cross-sectoral cooperation** opportunities it offers was also discussed. Evaluation results reveal some contradiction between the findings from interviews (KIIs), surveys (programme agencies survey's respondents) and programme data analysis. Interviewees are most often sceptical about the extent to which the programme achieves higher degree of cross-sectoral cooperation. This contrasts with the survey of programme agencies who, to a very high extent, value this form of cooperation (and its effectiveness). In the same vein, the network analysis shows promising results in the form of an increase in number of sectors participating per projects.

This contrasted picture suggests that there is room for improvement in particular at the level of potential beneficiaries: need to better defining and communicating about cross-sectoral opportunities and what these entail.

Overall, despite room for improvement in certain areas, evidence suggests that the integrated programme has helped promoting greater effectiveness of programme's (and wider EU's) activities education and training, youth and sport to a rather high extent. The integrated approach is meanwhile not to be seen in isolation but against other accompanying approaches (e.g. changes in types of actions, enhanced scale of the programme, etc.). The gains in effectiveness cannot be hence interpreted in the sole light of the integrated programme.

With regards to the second dimension (greater visibility), results are very positive showing that the branding (Erasmus+) which had originally generated fears (at given sectors level) is both well-known and increasingly well accepted across the different sectors and by a wide range of target audiences.

Findings show that Erasmus+ is both highly visible and discussed on social media. Posts about Erasmus+ emanate from a wide range of individuals and organisations based in European countries and beyond. It is also found that the strong brand of Erasmus has helped communicating on and enhancing the visibility of the Erasmus+ programme.

6.1.7 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. Though other sectors such as VET also have high demand for mobility grants there is little evidence that mobility would be common outside international (or national) funding schemes.

One sustainable result of the programme and its predecessors is the cultural shift in the perception of mobility and its positive image in particular in higher education sector. These changes are long term but are yet to fully materialise in other sectors.

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).

6.1.8 Results from the OPC, national reports, Student Loan Guarantee and Jean Monnet

The findings of the **OPC** confirm that the programme is seen as having a positive contribution to young people, staff and beyond. The objective which most respondents see as being achieved by the programme is the development of skills and competences of individual learners (86 % thought that this was being achieved to a 'very large' or 'large' extent (n = 1440)). Also 80 % respondents reported the programme was meeting its objectives when it comes to promoting the European dimension of education and youth activities (n = 1412). These two objectives were also seen as the most relevant for the Programme by respondents.

Several other objectives were seen as being largely on track:

- 78 % of respondents thought that developing the skills and competences of individual practitioners was being achieved to a 'very large' or 'large' extent (n = 1358);
- 77 % reported that improving the teaching and learning of languages and to promote the Union's broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness had been effective to a 'very large' or 'large' extent (n = 1406); and
- 74 % thought the same for improving the quality, innovation and internationalisation in education, training and youth organisations (n = 1333).
- 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).

However, the OPC also confirms that there is room for improvement with regard to system level effects of the programme. Less than half of respondents (46%) reported

that the Programme had been effective in modernising and supporting policy reforms at national level and supporting the modernisation of education and training systems and youth policies (n = 1206).

The synthesis of **national reports** shows that countries most frequently report on the improvement of key competences and skills, language skills and cultural awareness; and the impact of Erasmus+ on the quality of education and training, the professionalization of youth work and the internationalisation of participating organisations. There is less information on the effects of Erasmus+ in the promotion of a European lifelong learning area and the enhancement of the international dimension of education and training, and youth activities.

Reports most frequently mention results at the level of individual learners, followed by results at the level of individual professionals, organisational results and results at policy level. By sector, more results are mentioned in the school, higher education, youth and VET sectors. A lower number of results is mentioned in the case of adult education and only a few countries refer to results in the Sport sector. Only one report refers to results from Jean Monnet programme. More policy-level results are mentioned in the youth sector.

With regard to the **SLGF** the separate volume concludes that:

- the scheme which fails to attract financial intermediaries in sufficient numbers – especially for the incoming student segment.
- the pilot of working with universities has limited potential of replication. The scheme has been effective at being innovative and piloted a collaboration with a university - which fits well with the pilot nature of the scheme. In many countries however, universities would not have incentives to act as financial intermediaries, like the University of Luxemburg is doing, either because fee levels are low or because they have limited financial autonomy.
- Some specific features are also questioned. Notably, the no-payment-during-studies condition, which does not allow financial intermediaries to collect 'symbolic' (interest) repayments during the loan on an automatic basis, is seen as counterproductive in terms of promoting responsible lending. There are additionally further questions about the maximum loan amount, which can be too small to cover the necessary costs in some countries/programmes.
- In addition to these issues related to the attractiveness of the scheme per se, it is clear that a lot remains to be done to raise awareness levels all the way through the supply chain (among financial intermediaries and students, but also among the multipliers – e.g. universities). Despite their fairly international profiles, the vast majority of respondents met at student fairs (93 %) had no prior knowledge of the E+ master's degree loans and the same was the case for the exhibitors (80 %).
- First final beneficiaries are generally satisfied with the loan, which has been instrumental in triggering their mobility. Close to 75 % of the first beneficiaries (n= 109) said that they would not have been able to study for their master's abroad without the E+ loan. They are also generally satisfied with the implementation of the scheme (speed of approval, interest rates offered, etc.).

The separate volume on **Jean Monnet** concludes that Jean Monnet programme is successful in reaching high numbers of higher education students and producing a variety of outputs even though it cannot be said with precision what the number of learners reached is. The programme is also successful in improving learners' knowledge and understanding of the EU. However an important share of the learners reached are enrolled in EU studies or students who study more than one course about the EU. The programme therefore primarily reaches out to those who are likely to develop better understanding of the EU anyway. The evaluation also identified several areas for

improvement. The context of the programme has changed radically since the programme was founded. There is substantial volume of teaching and research about the EU outside JM in particular in EU countries. Therefore the EU added value arising from EU funding for teaching and research about the EU in the sector of higher education is somewhat limited, in particular within the EU.

Overall, the underpinning need for an EU programme that funds teaching and related research predominantly in higher education about the EU in the current form is not clear cut. Higher education is the sector that already offers most opportunities for teaching about the EU and it is also the sector in which there are most knowledgeable students about the EU. There are other target groups such schools which have lower opportunities to access teaching about the EU or who have much lower levels of understanding of the EU that should be addressed in the future call for proposals.

6.2 Outputs delivered

To what extent have the various programme fields (both within Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes) delivered the expected outputs?

Comment: This section is supported by an in-depth analysis of programme data about Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes, which is presented in Annex 2. The annex includes analysis of the following data:

- Outputs: numbers of projects funded, numbers of organisations participating, numbers of learners and practitioners taking part, etc. This data is based on extractions from different databases about Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes as presented in the methodology section.
- Participation patterns: profiles of beneficiaries and beneficiary organisations based on a combination of programme data and data from surveys carried out by ICF as part of primary research for this assignment.

The findings in this section also use the results of the network analysis.

Summary

Overall the Erasmus+ programme is on target with regard to the majority of output indicators. In several instances the targets set are largely surpassed. However, it seems that this is due to the fact that the targets were set too low in the first place (sometimes below predecessor programme levels). The strands of the programme not meeting the targets are:

- the Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF); and
- incoming mobility of students from the international higher education strand which is due to the fact that the action started with one year delay (but the overall trend is positive).
- For Jean Monnet actions there is no exact data on numbers of students reached as per the key performance indicator, but it is likely to be below the target. The reason why the indicator is likely to be below target are discussed in the separate volume on Jean Monnet and only a summary is presented in the text below.

For Jean Monnet actions there is no exact data on numbers of students reached as per the key performance indicator, but it is likely to be below the target.

The data on participation of disadvantaged groups seems to be outperforming the target but the quality of this data is unclear.

Table 6.1 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Numbers of mobile learners (as per legal basis)	Programme data analysis	 Above target with the exception of Student Loan Guarantee
Numbers of mobile practitioners (as per legal basis)	Programme data analysis	 Above target
Numbers of projects funded (as per legal basis)	Programme data analysis	 Above target
Types of outputs produced by cooperation projects	Mapping of selected projects	

The analysis in this section has been undertaken using a wide variety of different sources. For example, the data for Erasmus+ has been collected from the Erasmus+ dashboard, the annual reports, the Business Objects (BO) reports and the EPlusLink and Mobility Tool databases. The quality and availability of data varies significantly between programmes. Data quality and coverage can also vary within programmes and can vary between different indicators and subprogrammes, and a number of examples have been provided above in Table 6.1. The most significant gaps relate to the predecessor international HE programmes, and Alfa and Edulink in particular. In these cases, it was not possible to access data except for some consolidated findings from other research reports. The table below provides a summary of the data coverage of some of the key output indicators.

Table 6.2 Coverage of programme databases

Indicator	Programmes covered	Programmes not covered
Number of practitioners supported	Erasmus+ LLP decentralised Youth in Action Tempus Erasmus Mundus	Alfa Edulink Other LLP and YiA centralised actions
Number of learners supported	Erasmus+ LLP decentralised Youth in Action (EVS participants) Erasmus Mundus Tempus	Youth in Action (Youth exchange participants) Centralised LLP and YiA predecessor programmes Alfa Edulink
Number of projects	Erasmus+ LLP Youth in Action Jean Monnet (predecessor) Erasmus Mundus Tempus	Alfa Edulink
Number of organisations	Erasmus+ (although there are issues around the coverage of organisation type) LLP (although it is not possible to identify unique organisations) Youth in Action (although more	Alfa Edulink

	detailed data is only available for the lead organisation) Erasmus Mundus Tempus	
Grants provided	Erasmus+ LLP Youth in Action Erasmus Mundus Tempus	Alfa EduLink

6.2.1 Overview of Erasmus+ outputs compared to the legal basis indicators, DG EAC strategic plan indicators and compared to predecessor programmes where available

The regulation establishing the Erasmus+ programme (1288/2013) defines a series of indicators for programme monitoring. These indicators can be broken down into indicators on outputs, results and impacts. This section gives an overview of the output indicators. The result and impact indicators are discussed in later sections.

In summary, the output indicators were exceeded in most cases. However, the fact that these indicators were in many cases exceeded substantially suggests that (i) they were not sufficiently ambitious in the first place and (ii) they were not based on a thorough assessment of past years under the predecessor programmes. This is on the one hand due to the fact that equivalent data was not available during predecessor programmes (for example, about numbers of organisations involved). On the other hand, it could suggest lack of critical assessment of predecessor programmes' outputs. In several cases the target values were set below the predecessor programme values. For example the 2014 VET learner mobility target is set slightly above the 2011 level (but much below the 2012 level). The higher education 2014 learner mobility target is set at slightly more than the 2010 level (but far below the 2011 level).

The following indicators are underperforming according to the targets.

- Student Loan Guarantee – the numbers of beneficiaries are very strongly behind and increasing only slowly. It is clear that the expected target will not be reached.
- Incoming students from partner countries – the number is somewhat below the target, which is possibly due to the absence of mobility to and from partner countries under Erasmus+ in 2014 (except a very small number of Erasmus Mundus students for joint degrees).
- Number of students benefiting from Jean Monnet – though the official indicator refers to students, the actual data collected concerns participants (including participants in actions such as debates, who are not necessarily students).

For most of the indicators the data quality is good; however, for two indicators there are concerns whether the programme data available is sufficiently reliable.

- It is not clear how the indicator on participation of disadvantaged groups is computed (i.e. what is the source of the data). Firstly there are differences in how it is computed across types of actions and sectors. While in higher education individual mobility the data comes directly from mobile persons, this is not the case in other sectors/types of actions, where this information comes from application forms of organisations. In application forms organisations applying for grants have to specify the number of learners falling into one of the categories of disadvantage. This means the indication is provided before the learners have actually been selected and it can therefore be considered as indicative at best. It is also not clear on exactly what information base organisations fill in this data and identify who falls into which

category. If this is the information used to compile the data, it is likely to have low reliability. Other sources of data (such as participation of disadvantaged schools or the survey carried out for this evaluation) indicate that the participation of disadvantaged groups is more modest. It is likely that the performance against this indicator based on programme data is overly positive; however, it is not clear whether the difference is small.

- Data on participants versus students specifically in Jean Monnet but also other actions. The indicator for Jean Monnet is defined as numbers of students reached; however, there is only data on numbers of participants on the DG EAC dashboard. Other legal basis indicators do not refer to participants but data on number of participants is available also for other actions. According to the DG EAC Erasmus+ Reporting Glossary, 'participants' include non-funded participants in KA1, KA2 and KA3; this includes all participants, even those in multiplier events. This means that for Jean Monnet these are likely to be not only students (who mainly take part in chairs and modules taught) but also a variety of other target groups who take part in debates or seminars. The data on participants is in general to be treated with caution as it is likely to include double counting (people involved in a project take part in several activities and are hence counted multiple times). Furthermore, it seems that this data is taken from application forms rather than final reports. It therefore represents the ambition rather than the reality and would be better defined as expected participants.
- Specifically in the case of Jean Monnet, the data on participants reported in the programme data appears to be substantially overestimating the situation. In the volume on Jean Monnet the evaluators compared the data on participants with (i) data on reported numbers of students reached in selected project reports and (ii) data on students reached as reported by survey respondents. In both cases the average number of participants per project is substantially lower than the average number of 'participants' per grant reported on the dashboard.

Table 6.3 Overview of output legal basis indicators and strategic plan indicators

	Legal basis	Target			Total applicable	State of play (if 2014–2016)	Judgement	Comment	Source	Definition
		2014	2015	2016						
Learning mobility opportunities through Erasmus+										
- Higher education (without international)	✓	236,000	239,000	248,000	723,000	869,615	Substantially above target		D	Number of students and trainees participating in the programme, by country, sector, action and gender
- 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	
Practitioners supported by the programme (Erasmus+, 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	Number of practitioners supported by the programme, by country and in the sector of education and training
- 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	
Participants with special needs or fewer opportunities										
Education and training	✓	15,000			Assuming even distribution across years: 45,000	Special needs (4,034) Fewer opportunities (9,580)	Substantially above target according to programme data but issues of data	The categories are not mutually exclusive. Summing up the different categories would lead to double	D	Number of participants with special needs or fewer opportunities supported by the programme

	Legal	Target		Total	(if State of play	Comment	Source	Definition	
Participants with special needs or fewer opportunities (youth)	✓			21,600 (2017)	Assuming even distribution - 64,800	Disadvantaged background (51,852)			
						Outmost regions (9,148) - used in HE			
						quality		counting. However, indicator of disadvantaged young people in higher education alone is substantially above the target	
						Special needs - 6,551			
						Fewer opportunities - 76,737		Substantially above target	
International higher education									
Involvement of non-EU higher education institutions from partner countries	✓	n/a	1,000	1,100	2,200	2,523 in 2015 alone		Substantially above target	AR
								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	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

	Legal	Target		Total	(if State of play		Comment	Source	Definition
							programme countries)		
EU students and practitioners going to partner countries and vice versa	✓				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 learners) (2,670	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 learners) (16,413	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)	✓	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	✓	21,000	21,000	22,000	64,000	101,437	Substantially above target	D	Number of practitioners supported by the

	Legal	Target			Total	(if State of play		Comment	Source	Definition
(Erasmus+, youth)										programme, by country and for the youth sector
Involvement of EU and non-EU youth organisations (Erasmus+)	✓	5,500		5,600	Assuming 2015 is the same as 2014: 16,600	87,773 (mobility) and 3150 (Strategic Partnerships)	Substantially above target		AR	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	✓ (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)	✓	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)
Jean Monnet										
Students trained through Jean Monnet	✓	215,000	235,000	260,000	710,239	667,199	Below target according to	The indicator on number of	D	Number of students receiving training

	Legal	Target		Total	(if State of play	Comment	Source	Definition	
activities						programme data and issues of data quality		through Jean Monnet activities	
Worldwide scope of Jean Monnet activities		78	80	81	81	On target	D	Number of countries where Jean Monnet activities have been performed successfully, increasing knowledge in partner countries	
Sport									
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	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	

Legend: D = DG EAC dashboard; AR = Annual report; ICF survey = ICF survey of beneficiaries; O = Other Commission data (annual reports)

6.2.2 Summary of main predecessor programme outputs and comparison with Erasmus+

The table below shows the following main trends when comparing the last three years of predecessor programmes and Erasmus+.

- With regard to learner mobility there is a notable increase in the number of mobile higher education students and mobile students in the international higher education stand of the programme.
 - There is a small decrease in the number of mobile volunteers through the EVS.
 - Compared to the predecessor programmes, Erasmus+ no longer funds individual mobility (equivalent to KA1) in the sectors of schools and adult learning.
 - Overall the numbers of learners benefiting from mobility actions equivalent to KA1 have slightly decreased in the first three years of Erasmus+ compared to the last three years of predecessor programmes. However, given the upward trend Erasmus+ is highly likely to exceed the overall predecessor programme numbers.
- An area that has seen a clear increase is practitioners mobility. This is notable in all sectors where reliable data is available except the sector of adult learning. There is no reliable data on practitioners mobility for predecessor programmes in the sectors of youth and international higher education.
- On the other hand, Erasmus+ funds far smaller numbers of projects than the predecessor programmes. This is true in total but it is particularly notable for projects funded under KA2 and equivalent. Overall the number of projects funded fell by more than 50 % compared to the last three years of predecessor programmes. When looking at projects comparable to KA2 only, the decrease is even greater (by more than 80 %). This decline is most notable in the school sector and adult learning sector. The fact that these two sectors see a sharp decrease in the number of projects is not due to a decrease in their share of the funding. The share of school sector funding has not changed over time and the share of adult learning sector funding has declined a little. The main reason for this decline is the fact that Erasmus+ no longer funds very small local projects which were in particular present in the school sector but also the youth and adult learning sectors. The decline in numbers of projects is not observed in all sectors though, as the sectors of higher education and international higher education have seen a strong increase. Jean Monnet also saw an increase in the number of projects granted. Given that sport was covered only by Preparatory Actions in the predecessor programme period, it is in line with the expectation that the sector would see a strong increase in numbers of projects.

Table 6.4 Main output indicators for predecessor programmes and comparison with Erasmus+

Indicator	Data – full programme (2007–2013)	Last 3 years period predecessors	First three years Erasmus+	Erasmus+ first 3 years compared to last 3 years of predecessor
Learner mobility (numbers of mobile learners) – individual mobility equivalent to KA1				
Schools	3,871	3,256	0	Individual mobility is no longer funded Mobility is possible under Strategic Partnerships but that is not the same as individual mobility under predecessor programme
VET	426,746	279,912	279,982	No change
Higher education (programme countries)	1,618,473	792,872	869,615	Strong increase
International higher education	14,468 ²¹⁸	6,156 (only Erasmus Mundus)	19,616	Strong increase
Adult learning	23,039	15,663	0	Individual mobility is no longer funded Mobility is possible under Strategic Partnerships but that is not the same as individual mobility under predecessor programme
Youth (EVS)	43,127	23,417	21,101	Small decrease
Youth participants in general (EVS as well as other mobility-type)	785,736	394,371		The data is not comparable with Erasmus+ KA1 youth mobility as it covers also KA2 type

²¹⁸ Erasmus Mundus, Edulink and intra-ACP.

Indicator	Data – full programme (2007–2013)	Last 3 years predecessors	First three years E+	Erasmus+ first 3 years compared to last 3 years of predecessor
actions that involve young people)				mobilities/ exchanges
Total	2,868,911	1,492,230	1,447,126	Slight decrease
Practitioner mobility				
Schools	89,010	42,846	54,341	Strong increase
VET	70,832	43,544	50,556	Strong increase
Higher education (programme countries)	305,513	156,637	159,177	
International higher education	3,748 (only partial coverage of the data)	Data not reliable as it is only available for a share of the actions	20,365	Strong increase
Adult learning	21,393	13,576	12,971	No change
Youth	n/a	n/a	101,437	Data on youth practitioners is not available separately from what is reported above on youth participants in general
Total	181,235 (without HE)	99,966 (without HE and youth)	117,868 (without HE and youth)	Strong increase (likely to be even stronger if reflecting higher education practitioners)
Number of organisations taking part				
Education and training	569,876	354,768	231,040	Strong decrease
Youth	50,462	25,772	11,268	Strong decrease
Total number of projects (all types of action)				

Indicator	Data – full programme (2007–2013)	Last 3 years predecessors	First three years E+	Erasmus+ first 3 years compared to last 3 years of predecessor
School sector	131,930	69,018	10,020	Very strong decrease
VET sector	37,542	20,159	13,755	Strong decrease
Adult learning sector	32,636	18,505	1,941	Very strong decrease
Higher education sector	25,647	13,681	19,259	Strong increase
International higher education sector	2,121	1,133	3,169	Strong increase
Jean Monnet	1,155	635	762	Increase
Youth	48,603	21,792	17,019	Decrease
Sport	77	47	265	Strong increase
Total	298,746	155,616	67,125	Strong decrease
Number of projects in actions funding cooperation between organisations (KA2 and equivalent)				
School sector	50,752	25,164	2,783	Strong decrease
VET sector	14,803	7,514	1,262	Strong decrease
Adult learning sector	13,856	7,348	765	Strong decrease
Higher education sector	5,533	3,033	584	Strong decrease
International higher education sector (partial coverage of predecessor programmes – see introduction)	919	508	288	Strong decrease

Indicator	Data – full programme (2007–2013)	– full period	Last 3 predecessors	years First three years E+	Erasmus+ first 3 years compared to last 3 years of predecessor
Jean Monnet	1,155		635	595	Moderate decrease
Youth	6,862		3,883	1,043	Strong decrease
Sport	77		47	265	Strong increase
Total	94,261		48,238	7,459	Strong decrease

6.2.3 Outputs not covered by legal basis indicators

According to programme data for Erasmus+, the projects contracted by the end of 2015 were planning to deliver 15,750 intellectual outputs and 9,400 multiplier events in 2014 and 2015.

These intellectual outputs and multiplier events are not categorised in the programme data, but the EPlusLink database does provide the title and a brief description of each intellectual output and multiplier event. This information has been used to provide insights into the type of outputs and events that are being delivered by these projects by searching for common words in the title of each intellectual output and multiplier event. Similar terms have then been consolidated (such as guides, handbooks and manuals). The most common words are presented in Table 6.5, alongside the approximate number and percentage of titles containing each word. These figures should be treated as indicative and can only be approximate due to the use of different languages, typos, etc. within the programme data.

The figures in Table 6.5 show that these projects are delivering a broad range of intellectual outputs. The most common type of intellectual output produced by KA2 project is guides, handbooks and/or manuals. These were mentioned in almost 1,000 of the titles of intellectual outputs, representing approximately 6 % of all intellectual outputs delivered by 2014 and 2015 projects. The other most common intellectual outputs included: reports, curriculum/syllabus, tools/toolkits, and courses. The table includes only the top 20 types of intellectual output but there are many other examples of common words that fall outside this list including games, surveys, presentations, strategies, catalogues, campaigns, standards, brochures, etc.

The range of different multiplier events is narrower and the top 12 types of event are presented below. Conferences were identified as the most common type of multiplier event, accounting for more than 1,400 events being delivered by 2014/2015 projects (i.e. 15 % of all multiplier events). Other common types of multiplier events included workshops, seminars, training courses, presentations, meetings, exhibitions and festivals. The list also includes some generic terms such as event, dissemination, multiplier and online, which could be used to describe a variety of different events.

Table 6.5 Common types of intellectual output and multiplier events (2014–2015)

	Type of intellectual output	Approx. number/% of intellectual outputs		Type of multiplier event	Approx. number/% of multiplier events	
		Number	%		Number	%
1	Guide/Handbook/Manual	953	6 %	Conference	1,431	15 %
2	Report	691	4 %	Event	1,051	11 %
3	Curriculum/Syllabus	655	4 %	Workshop	934	10 %
4	Tools/Toolkit	635	4 %	Seminar	906	10 %
5	Course	627	4 %	Dissemination	872	9 %
6	Materials	604	4 %	Multiplier	672	7 %
7	Analysis/Assessment	566	4 %	Training/Course	539	6 %

	Type of intellectual output	Approx. number/% of intellectual outputs		Type of multiplier event	Approx. number/% of multiplier events	
		Number	%		Number	%
8	Project	534	3 %	Presentation	430	5 %
9	Methodology	468	3 %	Meeting	254	3 %
10	Online	432	3 %	Online	74	1 %
11	Platform	416	3 %	Exhibition	58	1 %
12	Programme	400	3 %	Festival	47	0.5 %
13	Module	369	2 %			
14	Guidance/Guidelines	361	2 %			
15	Study	349	2 %			
16	Evaluation	321	2 %			
17	Website	272	2 %			
18	Research	269	2 %			
19	DVD/Video/Film	268	2 %			
20	E-learning	238	2 %			

Source: ICF calculations based on the EPlusLink database

The mapping of a sample of 386 projects provided further confirmation of the above. It showed that the majority of these projects develop some form of networking platforms, handbooks, methodological guidelines, analysis or studies (see Table 6.6). Most projects develop more than one output. The category of 'Other' comprises items such as:

- mobile learning applications (games, other study apps);
- educational videos (not with promotional purpose);
- online learning repository;
- webinars;
- different contests and awards;
- flash mobs corresponding to the project's objectives;
- concluded cooperation agreements.

The mapping suggests that an average project across the two periods developed 2.3 outputs.

If we assume that these projects are broadly representative of the overall population (they were indeed selected at random), a conservative estimate suggests that the predecessor programme produced:

- around 2,000 new courses and curricula;
- over 10,000 handbooks, methodological tools and guidance materials; and
- over 4,000 studies.

This represents a huge volume of materials. It poses the question of whether the outputs are expected to be valuable in their own right (outside the project circle) or whether they are rather a milestone to drive the cooperation process forward, the process being the main vehicle of results in this programme. This issue is also discussed later in the report under results.

Table 6.6 Overview of outputs of cooperation projects (equivalent to KA2)

Type of output	Schools	Higher education	Jean Monnet	Adult learning	VET	Sport	Youth	LLP KA1–KA4	TOTAL
Analysis and studies	12	16	17	8	20	1	3	36	113
Guidance material	18	10	12	9	23	2	4	30	108
Handbooks	13	9	18	14	13	3	3	21	94
Methodological tools	15	11	3	9	17	1	8	38	102
Networking platform	25	10	11	15	22	3	17	41	144
New courses	7	7	1	4	3	0	1	9	32
New curricula	3	3	2	3	7	0	2	6	26
New education programmes	2	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	10
Others	15	13	8	3	16	9	3	33	100
Promotional output (newsletter, leaflet, etc.)	29	13	16	16	24	16	16	59	189
TOTAL	139	94	88	82	147	35	58	275	
No of projects mapped	65	25	50	33	49	22	42	100	

Source: ICF mapping of selected projects

6.2.4 Summary of other key findings arising from programme data analysis of outputs

This section identifies a selection of key findings that arise from the analysis of programme data presented in Annex 2. These findings were selected as they are useful to underpin understanding of other findings in this report.

Dominance of higher education sector in both programming periods – Main new development in the field of mobility is the increase of traineeships and international mobilities

Higher education is the sector which receives the greatest share of the funding (50 % in predecessor programmes and 48 % so far in the current programme), and this is subsequently reflected in its dominance with regard to other outputs.

- Practitioner mobility is much more frequent in higher education than in other sectors (more than schools, VET and adult education together). This raises a question of added value as higher education practitioners have more opportunities for being

mobile because of other European, international, national or even institutional actions.

- Student mobility in higher education remains the flagship action of the programme and thus the numbers outweigh those of all other sectors.

The main new trend in the field of student mobility is the growing share of students taking part in traineeships and the increase in the number of internationally mobile students.

Significant decrease in the number of pupils participating in cooperation actions (KA2 and equivalent across the two programming periods)

Learners benefit directly not only from mobility actions but also from activities embedded in cooperation projects. These projects frequently integrate a combination of short-term exchanges and other forms of cooperation (i.e. blended mobility). Both Erasmus+ and LLP datasets contain some data on pupils participating in these types of actions but it is likely that the two sets are not comparable. Nevertheless, there appears to be a strongly declining trend of pupils' participation between the two programming periods. While in 2013 over 1 million pupils are reported to have taken part in various forms of Comenius partnerships (LLPlink data), the data reported in the dashboard as well as the DG EAC annual reports on the programme are significantly lower²¹⁹. It is therefore likely that the decreased number of projects and in particular local projects in the school sector led to a decrease in pupils' participation in the programme.

Mobility in VET is dominated by traineeships in companies. Furthermore, though the number of VET learners declined slightly compared to the predecessor programme it is likely that the programme now reaches more typical VET learners

In addition to mobility actions dedicated for learners in initial VET, the predecessor programme included mobility actions for young graduates to support transition into the labour market. This was however not restricted solely to VET graduates but graduates in general. This action represented 25 % of mobile learners. Given that the difference in numbers of mobilities per year in the last years of LLP and first years of E+ is minor, this suggests that a higher number of beneficiaries are VET learners still in initial education. On the other hand, this is also associated with a decline in the duration of mobilities. Under the predecessor programme there was a much greater share of mobilities that lasted between three and six months but also those that lasted between one and three months. Currently short-term mobilities dominate, while mobilities lasting more than three months are an exception. This difference is strongly linked to the fact that the programme is more focused on young people still studying in initial VET, while the predecessor programme served a higher number of graduates.

The data also shows that three quarters of VET learners take part in traineeships, which is a completely different trend than in higher education, where one quarter of learners take part in traineeships. This illustrates the structural differences between the contribution of the programme to these sectors.

²¹⁹ The data in the dashboard does not seem to contain all information as it is very low, but even the data on numbers of participants reported in Commission annual reports is 10 times lower than for the predecessor programme.

The number of adult learners reached through blended mobility actions under E+ is comparable to those reached by volunteering actions in the predecessor programme

Individual mobility actions under LLP served around one thousand people per year under LLP. This action has been discontinued and there is no longer any KA1 mobility under Erasmus+. There is nevertheless blended mobility under KA2. In 2014 this benefited more persons than volunteering actions under LLP, suggesting an inverse trend compared to what most stakeholders believe about adult learning sector actions in this programme. Nevertheless, this number is very small and unlikely to achieve any scale effects.

Youth sector strongly contributes to the international dimension of the programme

International cooperation in the youth sector benefits more organisations than in the higher education sector. Some 9,400 organisations from partner countries took part in actions under the youth strand in the first three years of Erasmus. There were 2,100 in the higher education sector.

Actions in the sport sector remain small in number; however, sport organisations take part in other sectors of the programme

The numbers of projects in the sport sector are growing but remain very small. Interestingly, sport organisations represent a minority of organisations receiving funding from this strand (see Table 6.7). In fact most sport organisations benefiting from grants were in the youth sector rather than in the sport sector (see Table 6.8). There is also a significant number of sport organisations taking part in the VET sector. Only slightly more than one third of sport organisations that take part in the programme do so through the sport strand.

Table 6.7 shows that more than 1,400 organisations participated in sport actions between 2014 and 2016. The data suggest that around one in four (23%) of these organisations were classed as sport organisations, while the most common type of organisations were civil society organisations (38%). Other organisations participating in sport-related actions included higher education institutions, public authorities and research bodies.

Table 6.7 Number of organisations participating in the sport sector

Type of organisation	2014		2015		2016		Total (2014-16)	
	No/	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of total
Sport organisations	117	32%	110	24%	102	18%	329	23%
Civil society organisations	85	23%	204	45%	243	42%	532	38%
Higher education institutions	77	21%	48	11%	93	16%	218	16%
Public authorities	45	12%	50	11%	104	18%	199	14%

Research bodies	20	5%	8	2%	12	2%	40	3%
Other	24	7%	36	8%	26	4%	86	6%
Total	368	100%	456	100%	580	100%	1,404	100%

Source: ICF calculations based on EACEA data

In total, almost 900 sport organisations have taken part in the Erasmus+ programme between 2014 and 2016, although only 329 of them participated in the sport strand. The number of sport organisations that have taken part in actions funded through other strands of the programme, in particular the youth strand, is actually higher than the number of sport organisations that have taken part in the sport strand.

Table 6.8 Number of sport organisations taking part in other sectors

	2014	2015	2016	Total (2014-2016)
Schools	1	0	1	2
VET	36	55	56	147
Adult learning	0	4	1	5
HE	0	0	0	0
Jean Monnet	0	0	0	0
Youth	128	141	140	409
Sport	117	110	102	329
Other	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	282	310	300	892

Source: ICF calculations based on EACEA data and E+ Dashboard (accessed 20.07.2017)

The majority of projects in the sport sector focus on topics that represent a certain overlap with other sectors (in particular youth)

One of the challenges of the sport strand is that relatively small (though increasing) number of projects funded per year is spread across a rather high number of topics. Furthermore two of the topics are clearly dominating the strand and these are social inclusion through sport and promotion of EU physical activity guidelines. Together these two priorities represent 65% of projects that received funding in the period covered. The more technical topics are covered by less than 50 projects each (41 projects on combating violence, 39 on dual careers, 23 on good governance, 22 on combating doping, 8 on combating match fixing). However to achieve a broader system level change in these areas which are core to sport and not tackled by any other actions within the programme there would be a need for a much higher number of projects per topic.

When looking at the projects on social inclusion in sport or projects on activities to enhance physical education, there appear to be some overlaps with other types of actions as illustrated in box below.

Examples of sport related projects funded under other strands of Erasmus +

Project: Sports for All (2015-3-ES02-KA205-007265)

Key action: strategic partnerships for youth

Description (from EPRP): the project aims at creating an adapted non-formal learning environment for disabled youngsters, focusing on allowing their integration in sports activities. In fact, the access to sport is an important component of an inclusive society as it helps to build team spirit and to strengthen ties between youngsters.

Project: Teaching Awareness of Ethical Governance in Sport (2017-1-UK01-KA203-036695)

Key action: Strategic Partnerships for higher education

Description (from EPRP): This project is a direct response to the EU motion passed on the 12 December 2016 and adopted on the 2 February 2017 on an integrated approach to Sport Policy: good governance, accessibility and integrity.

This approach combines different types of evidence to provide a more complete response to the need to develop and enhance the awareness, skills and knowledge of higher education students on the issues of good sports governance. Via a systematic and progressive process of data collection including surveys, case studies and qualitative feedback, the intellectual outputs will incorporate information relating specifically to the needs and preferences of key stakeholders such as sports governing bodies (NGBs) and non-partner HEIs.

Project: Sport for Community Regeneration and Empowerment: Integrating Sport Event Management into Youth Work for Enduring Social Impact (573312-EPP-1-2016-1-BG-EPPKA2-CBY-ACPALA)

Key action: Capacity Building for youth in ACP countries, Latin America and Asia

Description (from EPRP): SCORE is an initiative combining the efforts of 1 sport organization and 2 higher education institutions from Programme countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania and Turkey) and 3 grassroots youth organizations dedicated to achieving social impact through the use of sport in Botswana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. SCORE's overall objective is to raise the capacities of youth organizations in Partner Countries to develop and implement social-impact driven sport initiatives through exchange of good practices and development of youth work and non-formal education methods and open access training materials (Open Educational Resources) in the fields of sport event management, social impact and social entrepreneurship and innovation

Source: EPRP

Examples of sport strand actions that could have been funded under other strands of the programme

Project: INclusion4ALL: sport as a tool for community inclusion (590565-EPP-1-2017-1-ES-SPO-SSCP)

Key action: Collaborative Partnerships for sport

Description (from EPRP): The project is aimed to foster interpersonal relationships and social inclusion, to increase awareness and knowledge about the current situation, to encourage the practise of sport and physical activity among vulnerable groups as a source of health and wellbeing. On the view of the participating organisations, all of them are targeted to support vulnerable groups and have sport and physical activity as an important tool to promote healthy lifestyles and wellbeing, foster interpersonal relationships and social inclusion.

Project: S.P.I.N. Sport, Partnership, Inclusion and Network (557027-EPP-1-2014-1-IT-SPO-SCP)

Key action: Collaborative Partnerships for sport

Description (from EPRP): SPIN aims to promote the cooperation and the creation of collaborative partnerships in the sport field, by promoting synergies between youth policies and sports with/among local, regional, national, international stakeholders. SPIN will involve in the project 14 private and public bodies from 7 countries to develop and test training and educational program of social inclusion for young people with fewer opportunities through their involvement in sports.

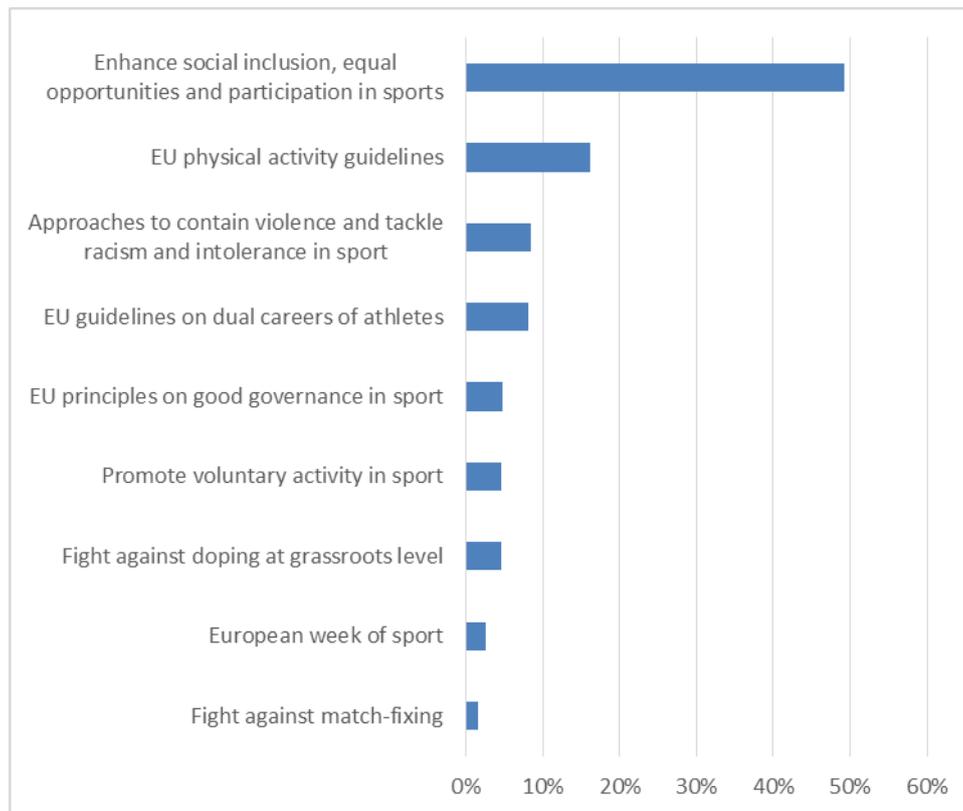
Project: Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe (556994-EPP-1-2014-1-DK-SPO-SCP)

Key action: Collaborative Partnerships for sport

Description (from EPRP): There is only a limited knowledge on the political conditions for and structural characteristics of sports clubs that promote social inclusion and volunteering in sport. Most of the existing knowledge is, furthermore, context-specific tied to individual member states within the EU. There is, therefore, a distinct lack of knowledge on social inclusion and volunteering that is comparable across European countries and takes into account both the influence from national sports policies and differences between sports clubs. The provision of such knowledge is essential in order to provide well-substantiated and precise guidelines for evidence-based sports policies, such as it is an ambition for the EU. This project seeks to provide the required knowledge on social integration and volunteering, convert it into concrete suggestions for action, and disseminate this knowledge to politicians and sports organizations in Europe.

Source: EPRP

Figure 6.1 Share of projects funded under each of the topics (2014-2016)



Source: ICF Calculations based on Pegasus, n=484

6.3 Participation patterns

This section highlights selected key findings about participation patterns in the programme. The details are presented in Annex 2.

The reach of Erasmus+ beneficiaries compared to population size

This ambition of the Erasmus+ programme can be compared to the reach rates of its key activities in the main education and training sectors achieved so far in the programme. The annual reach rate is calculated by dividing the number of Erasmus+ participants in a given sector by the total number of students/practitioners in the respective sector. Overall, the reach rates are higher for practitioners than learners, but, with the exception of the HE sector, the programme is not reaching in any of the sectors more than 4 % of the target population on an annual basis.

In relation to learners, in the VET sector, the Erasmus+ programme reached below 1 % of all VET students around Europe. The reach rate in the HE sector was in comparison higher, at around 1.5 % across Europe. In both sectors, there were significant country variations, with particularly high reach rates in the VET sector in Cyprus, Estonia, Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia and in the HE sector in Belgium, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia.

In relation to practitioners, reach rate comparisons were possible in the schools, VET and HE sectors (Tables 6.7 and 6.8 respectively). Overall, the practitioner reach rate in the programme is higher compared to the learner reach rate. The practitioner reach rate is highest in the HE sector (around 4 %), followed by VET (around 2 %) and lastly the

school sector (below 1 %). Again, there are pronounced country variations in the reach rate. The rate is particularly high in the HE sector in the Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia, in the VET sector in Cyprus, Lithuania and Malta, and in the schools sector in Cyprus, Finland and Slovenia.

Table 6.9 Erasmus+ participants in a given year as share of the overall population (learners or practitioners)

Target	E+ participants		All population		Reach of Erasmus+	
	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
VET learners	95,118	84,905	10,075,189	13,131,722	0.9 %	0.6 %
HE learners	275,065	285,795	18,874,170	19,581,528	1.5 %	1.5 %
School practitioners	18233	15498	4867796	4624342	0.4 %	0.3 %
VET practitioners	19558	13593	739105	827314	2.6 %	1.6 %
Higher education practitioners	50280	55224	1430568	1246509	3.5 %	4.4 %

Source: ICF calculations based on Eurostat and EPlusLink

Generalisable highlights about the profile of learners

Except gender, DG EAC does not collect other background variables about learners taking part in mobility (KA1 or KA2 blended mobility). Therefore trends about learners' profile are extracted from the survey of learners. Though these trends cannot be generalised to the whole programme population with certainty, given that it is not possible to identify the extent to which the sample of respondents matches the population of participants, the large sample size (see method section) enables to provide high-level trends with sufficient confidence. These are as follows.

- Pupils reached (KA2 blended mobility) are primarily at upper secondary level.
- VET learners are also mostly at upper secondary level. They are spread in a balanced manner between apprentices and those in school-based VET.
- A large majority of young people taking part in youth exchanges or EVS are highly educated. The vast majority of them have been actively engaged in youth organisations prior to taking part in the programme.
- Beneficiaries of mobility actions in higher education represent a broad diversity of education fields. Economics with business and administration combined appears to be the most common field of study followed by engineering, manufacturing and construction, and languages²²⁰. This is in line with the fact that these sectors attract a high share of tertiary education students in general. The fields of study that appear to be underrepresented compared to the overall share of students are health and welfare and education.

²²⁰ The fields of study which appear to be least common are: agriculture, forestry and veterinary, psychology, journalism, history and archaeology, services, philosophy.

Generalisable highlights about the profile of practitioners

As for learners, there is little data on the background characteristics of practitioners taking part in KA1 and KA2 equivalent predecessor actions. Therefore the survey is used to identify the main trends.

- The practitioner beneficiaries represent a broad and balanced range of seniority levels when it comes to the number of years in current role.
- As for pupils, the school practitioners reached are primarily at upper secondary level. No practitioners from pre-primary education responded to the survey, suggesting they represent a very small minority of beneficiaries. An important share (nearly half) of school practitioners are foreign language teachers, which can be explained by the need to communicate in a foreign language during projects or exchanges. However, the trend is different in VET, as discussed below, showing the potential of the programme to reach also other groups of teachers.
- The teaching practitioners taking part in the VET sector represent a more balanced sample of subjects than school practitioners, with foreign language teachers being as present as teachers of technology subjects.
- An important share of practitioners in the adult education sector teach primarily young people (aged below 24). This suggests that many beneficiaries do not have a clear-cut adult education profile. This is consistent with the below findings about the profile of organisations in the sector. A high share of practitioners in the adult education sector are also teachers of a foreign language. Practitioners focusing on digital skills, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue also represent strong groups. Practitioners involved in literacy and numeracy training (i.e. basic skills) are rather less commonly taking part.
- Practitioners from higher education cover a balanced range of subjects. Humanities and education are more commonly present among teaching practitioners than among students.
- In the sectors of school, VET and higher education, the programme reaches also practitioners in leadership positions but only a small number of them. This is different for practitioners in adult learning, youth and sport, where those in leadership positions are more common among participants. This can also be explained by the smaller size of such organisations and the fact that the surveys were directed to main contact persons in participating organisations.

Additional data about participation of disadvantaged groups

As noted earlier, the programme data suggests that disadvantaged groups are more common in some sectors (namely youth) than others. However, there are concerns about the reliability of this data given the data collection method, differences in definitions and also the breadth of the definition used in the youth sector. The data below suggests that the differences between sectors are much smaller. The data also shows that a high proportion of those tagged as disadvantaged do not feel that they are disadvantaged (subjective measure). In the survey, 14 % of learners state that they identify themselves with one of the possible sources of disadvantage but state that they do not feel disadvantaged.

The ICF surveys collected several indicators about disadvantage.

Firstly, learners were asked about whether they faced one of the disadvantages named in the survey. The survey used an objective measure (statement that the learner belongs to one of the categories) as well as a subjective measure of disadvantage (statement that the learner belongs to the category and feels disadvantaged by it). The categories of disadvantage included those used in the youth sector – i.e. the very broad definition – but also additional categories of potential discrimination (sexual orientation or religion).

As a reminder, the programme data shows that of the young people participating in the youth strand, 30 % are classed as having fewer opportunities. This is broadly consistent with the survey data, though the survey shows an even higher participation of young people who fall into one of the categories of possible disadvantage, which is expected given that the definition was even broader than the one used in the youth sector.

However, the survey does not show notable differences between the sectors, as is apparent from the programme data. In fact, the participation of young people with different profiles is very consistent across the sectors, according to the survey patterns.

Furthermore, there are major differences between the measures of subjective disadvantage and objective possible disadvantage, the latter being a lot higher. For all types of disadvantage except economic or 'other', the share of learners who state they feel disadvantaged according to their belonging to a given category is marginal (1 % or 2 %). Objectively falling into one of the categories of potential disadvantage but not feeling disadvantaged by it is much more common.

There are also major differences between the different types of disadvantage.

- The smallest group are those with learning difficulties (4 % of the sample when combining both objective and subjective measures). They are marginally more present among pupils and VET learners.
- Those from a migrant or minority background also represent a small part of the sample.
- Young people with physical, mental or health problems represent a bigger group of all beneficiaries when combining both subjective and objective measures.
- Young people with economic disadvantage or those with another form of disadvantage (religion, sexual orientation, and rural area) are much more commonly taking part in the programme.

Another measure of disadvantage used in the survey involves looking at the responses of practitioners about their organisations. The practitioners were asked about the extent to which their organisations served young people with different types of possible disadvantage. When asking the practitioners there are more notable differences between sectors than when looking at learner profiles alone. This suggests that, though some sectors of the programme reach organisations with more disadvantaged audiences, those who are directly benefiting (i.e. those who go on mobility) are those who are least disadvantaged and therefore the differences between the sectors fade out.

The following trends can be noted when looking at the measure of participation of disadvantaged groups according to practitioners.

- Few practitioners state that their organisations serve a high share of disadvantaged learners (all forms of disadvantage combined). There are particularly few in the higher education sector and most in the youth sector.
- Youth and adult learning practitioners state most commonly that their organisations serve high numbers of learners who have as a first language a different language than the one of instruction.
- Youth and VET practitioners state most often that their organisations serve a high number of learners with economic disadvantage.
- Sport organisations indicate the same trends as VET and schools.
- The school strand followed by VET perform best with regard to reaching out to rural areas. When excluding higher education²²¹, 16 % of practitioners state that their organisations are in rural areas (20 % for schools).

²²¹ As universities tend to be in urban areas.

A third measure of disadvantage used by the evaluation team in addition to the programme data is the participation of disadvantaged schools. The analysis of programme data shows that, of those schools that are on a list of disadvantaged schools²²², only a small number apply and participate in the programme (7 % and 4 % respectively). However, there are notable differences within the group as schools with this background from Portugal participate much more frequently than those from other countries analysed (33 % against less than 4 % in BE, FR, IE and RO).

The evaluation of international actions in the higher education sector carried out by DEVCO²²³ showed that participation of vulnerable groups or those underrepresented in higher education was low in the programmes funded. The evaluation also showed that there was a lot of room for improvement when it comes to participation of organisations which are in poor or geographically distant regions (in other words disadvantaged organisations).

Adult education and the VET sector are the most diverse sectors in terms of types of organisations participating

Caveat

The below analysis is based on the indicator on 'Type of organisation' available in DG EAC databases. Note however that there is a high share of organisations in the 'Unknown' category, which means that the analysis should be taken as an indication of trends rather than a fully reliable record of participation patterns.

The below analysis concerns KA2 and KA3 and equivalent actions under predecessor programmes (both programming periods). They exclude mobility actions.

There are major differences between the sectors in terms of the diversity of organisations taking part. The most diverse sectors are VET and adult learning. Jean Monnet and the schools sector are on the other hand the most homogeneous ones. It is notable that in the adult education sector, adult education organisations are in fact a minority (19 %) while the largest group are civil society organisations. However, a rapid review of the names of organisations under the category 'civil society' shows that many 'adult learning associations' have classified themselves as civil society despite having education, training or even adult training in their name. Next to these organisations, however, there is also a great variety of other types of associations and bodies.

The below discussion of the changes across the programming period needs to be taken with caution, bearing in mind the fact that nearly 20 % of the sample of organisations used for the social network analysis were tagged as an 'unknown' category. The interviews with the team in charge of data collection suggests that this is due to the late set-up of the Erasmus+ IT tools and the fact that beneficiaries were not fully familiar with them in the first and second year of the programme. It is likely that certain organisation types are more frequently tagged as unknown than others. That is why in the below only the general trends are presented, without the exact percentages.

The most notable changes between the two programming periods are as follows.

- Overall in the whole programme, the share of schools dropped radically while the share of higher education institutions grew. The decrease in the share of schools is notably due to the drop in the share of schools in the school sector. The increase of

²²² These are lists established often to provide additional funding or support from the state.

²²³ Particip (2017) *Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014)*

higher education organisations on the other hand is due to the increase of their presence in all other sectors than the HE sector and Jean Monnet.

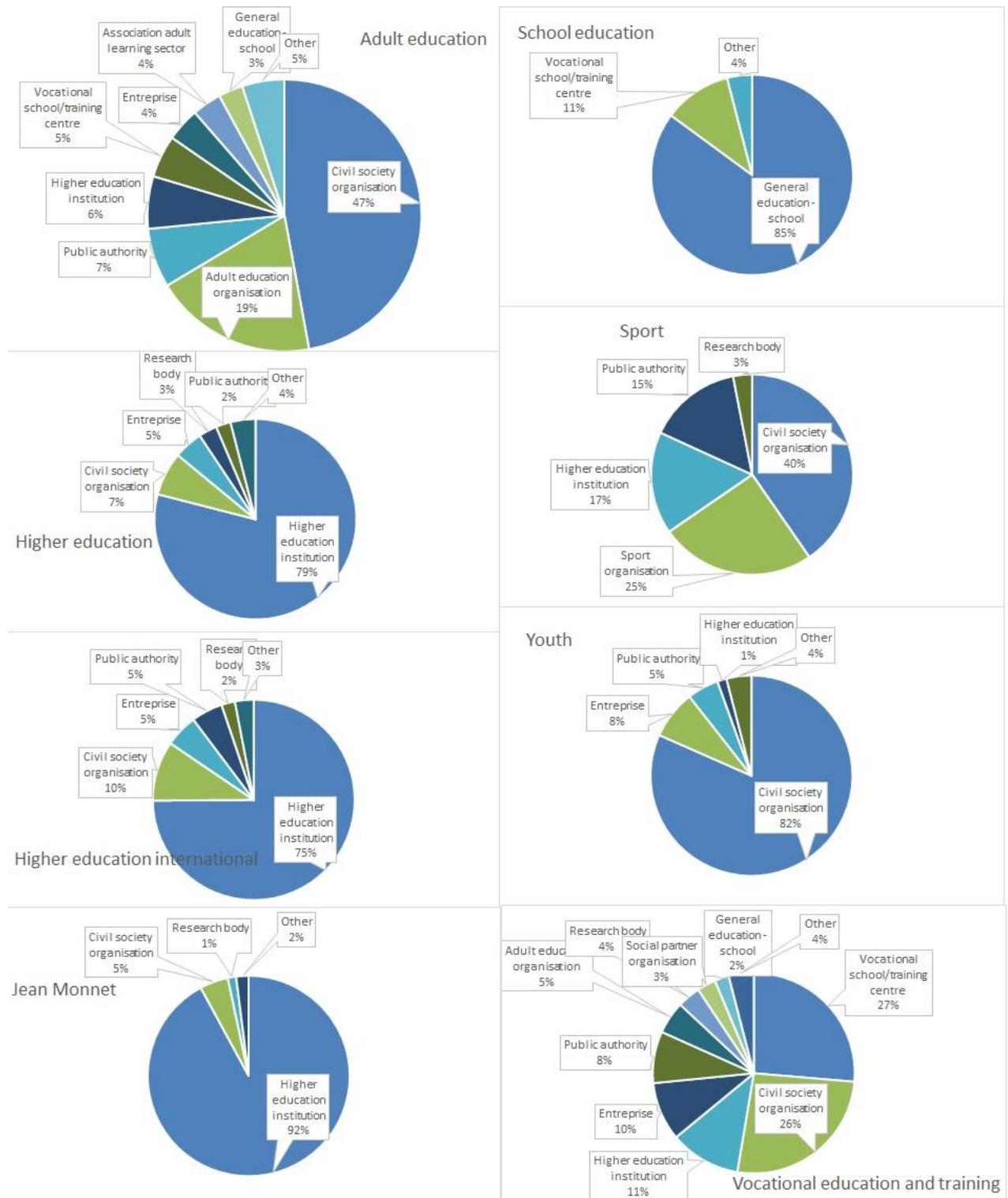
- More specific sectoral trends are:
 - The share of higher education institutions in the HE sector decreased while the share of enterprises and public authorities grew. This is in line with the expectations as the new actions introduced are encouraging university–business cooperation more than in the predecessor programme.
 - The share of schools in the school sector dropped while the share of higher education organisations, VET schools, civil society organisations and public sector organisations grew. The drop in the share of schools could be partly linked to the high number of organisations that are tagged as unknown. On the other hand, it could also reflect the concern raised during interviews that the approach to Strategic Partnerships, in particular in the early years of the programme, was too complex for schools.
 - In the VET sector the share of VET schools and civil society organisations decreased while the share of higher education institutions and enterprises increased.
 - In the youth sector the share of enterprises dropped but this could be a simply statistical effect as the youth sector data from the previous programming period has a very high number of organisations tagged as unknown.
 - In the adult education sector the share of adult education organisations and civil society organisations dropped while the share of higher education institutions and enterprises grew.

Table 6.10 Evolution of the participation of main types of organisations between programming periods (KA2 and KA3 and equivalent, difference between predecessor programmes and Erasmus+ in percentage points)

	School education	Vocational education and training	Adult education	Higher education	Higher education international	Youth	Total
General education - school	↓		↗			↗	↓
Vocational school/training centre	↗	↘		↗		↗	↗
Higher education institution	↗	↗	↗	↘	↑	↗	↑
Adult education organisation	↗	↗	↘			↗	↗
Association adult learning sector		↗	↗				↗
Civil society organisation	↗	↘	↘	↗	↘	↗	↗
Entreprise	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↘	↗
Public authority	↗	↗	↗	↗	↘	↗	↗

Source: ICF calculations based on data on types of organisations from DG EAC dashboard

Figure 6.2 Share of organisations of a given type in all projects contracted in a given sector (KA2 and KA3 and equivalent – 2007–2016)



Source: ICF calculations based on programme data

The analysis of types of organisations can also be looked at in another manner. One can look at the share of projects which include at least one organisation of a given type. This

analysis gives a different perspective on programme participation. This analysis is less sensitive to the occurrence of unknowns.

The high-level programme findings are as follows.

- Nearly one project in two under Erasmus+ includes at least one civil society organisation (not to be confused with youth sector civil society organisations, which are analysed as a separate category). This is more than twice that observed under the predecessor programme.
- Under E+ one in five projects includes public authorities. This is an important increase compared to predecessor programmes, where it was one project in ten. This should strengthen the potential for mainstreaming of innovative solutions.
- Nearly one in seven projects includes a company in E+, whereas it was one in fourteen under the predecessor programme.
- Under E+, only one in ten projects include adult education providers while universities are present in one third of projects, schools in nearly one third and VET providers in nearly a quarter.
- The main findings are summarised in the table below.

The main findings are summarised in table below.

Table 6.11 Share of projects across organisational types – Summary of key findings

Sector	Summary of findings
Overall	<p>Overall at programme level under Erasmus+ most projects include civil society organisations (46 % of projects), universities (33 % of projects), schools (29 %), VET providers (23 %), public authorities (21 %), enterprises (15 %) and adult education organisations (10 %)</p> <p>The most notable changes are the following increases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - civil society organisations (by 23 %) – but note that the data on YiA had a high share of organisations tagged as unknown - higher education institutions (by 18 %) - public authorities (12 %) - enterprises (by 7 %) <p>And a decrease in schools (20 %)</p>
School sector	<p>The share of projects which include at least one school is stable across the programming periods</p> <p>It is at 83 % in E+</p> <p>The share of projects that include at least one HEI increased strongly (from 1.2 % to 16.5 %)</p> <p>The share of projects that include public authorities increased strongly from 1 % to 14.9 %. The share of projects that include VET providers increased from 23.4 % to 37.1 % and those that include civil society organisations increased from 0.6 % to 12.7 %</p>
VET sector	<p>The participation of VET providers decreased slightly (from 55 % to 50 % of projects including at least one VET organisation)</p> <p>The participation of these organisations increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enterprises (from 31 % to 39 %)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - higher education institutions (from 33 % to 44 %) - public authorities (from 27 % to 34 %) <p>The participation of social partners is stable at around 12 %</p>
Higher education	<p>The higher education sector saw an increase in the share of projects with the following types of organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VET providers (from 1 % to 16 %) - public authorities (from 4 % to 24 %) - enterprises (from 8 % to 20 %) - civil society organisations (from 16 % to 28 %) <p>The share of projects that include higher education organisations is stable – at around 90 %</p>
Adult education	<p>The share of projects that include adult education organisations is 35 %, which represents an important decline compared to the predecessor programme (50 %)</p> <p>The vast majority of projects include civil society organisations – 78 % (stable)</p> <p>The strand saw an increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - higher education institutions (from 20 % to 36 %) - enterprises (14 % to 31 %) - cultural organisations (3 % to 14 %)
Youth	<p>The vast majority of E+ projects include at least one civil society organisation (80 %), which was already the case under the predecessor programme. Note that under the predecessor programme, most civil society organisations were active in the youth sectors. Under E+, the activity sector is most often not specified. It is likely safe to assume that youth is still the predominant activity sector of those organisations under E+</p> <p>The only other type of organisations in this sector which take part in more than 10 % of projects under E+ are public authorities (15 %)</p> <p>In this sector there was also an increase in the share of projects involving culture and audiovisual sector organisations (from 0 to 9.2 %), public authorities (7 to 15 %) and higher education organisations (0.3 to 7.6 %)</p>
Sport	<p>No comparison can be made with the predecessor period</p> <p>40 % of projects include at least one sport organisation</p> <p>27 % include at least one higher education organisation</p> <p>59 % include civil society organisations</p> <p>49 % include public authorities</p>
Jean Monnet	<p>Most projects include higher education organisations (85 %)</p> <p>And civil society organisations (15 % under E+ compared to 3 %)</p>

Source: ICF based on social network analysis

The level of cross-sectoral cooperation increased under the current programme

Erasmus+ aimed at increasing the extent of cross-sectoral co-participation (i.e. cooperation of organisations from different sectors on the same projects) across all programme sectors relative to the predecessor programmes. The social network analysis confirms this trend. In the current programme the share of links between organisations can be considered as heterophilic in 50 % of cases (i.e. half of the organisational pairs formed through the co-participation of organisations in E+ projects involve organisations from different sectors (e.g. school–higher education) while the other half involve organisations from the same sector (e.g. school–school) – see methodology section for indicators used). This figure was 33 % of cases under the predecessor programme.

The increase compared to predecessor programmes is due to increases in co-participation primarily between universities and enterprises (1.7 % to 4.9 %), universities and public authorities (1.8 % to 4 %), civil society organisations and enterprises (1.2 % to 2.6 %), and civil society organisations and public authorities (1.7 % to 3 %). A sharp decrease in school–school co-participation is also apparent and explains part of the overall increase in the share of heterophilic links in the current versus predecessor programme.

Key trends by project sector:

- School sector – The share of projects involving organisations from at least two organisational sectors (i.e. cross-sectoral co-participation rate) increased to 81 % under E+ compared to 28.1 % for the predecessor programme. This increase in the extent of cross-sectoral cooperation is also visible through the increase in the share of heterophilic links, which account for 55.7 % of all links under E+ compared to 16.6 % under the predecessor programme. This increase is mostly due to increases in the following pairs:
 - schools–higher education institutions;
 - schools–public authorities;
 - schools–VET.There is an important decrease in the share of school–school pairs in the current programme.
- VET sector – The cross-sectoral co-participation rate increased to 95.2 % under E+ compared to 84.3 % for the predecessor programme, which means that nearly all projects include organisations from at least two organisational sectors. VET providers are present in about half of projects both in the predecessor and current programme. The increase is mostly due to the growth in the share of the following pairs:
 - higher education–VET;
 - higher education–enterprise;
 - public authority–social partner.VET is the sector with the highest degree of cross-sectoral cooperation.
- Adult education sector – The cross-sectoral co-participation rate increased to 91.9 % under E+ compared to 81.5 % for the predecessor programme. This is mostly due to a decrease in the share of civil society–civil society homophilic pairs and an increase in the share of the following heterophilic pairs:
 - civil society organisation–enterprise;
 - civil society organisation–higher education institution.The adult education sector is the sector with the second highest degree of cross-sectoral cooperation.
- Higher education – The cross-sectoral co-participation rate increased to 74.7 % under E+ compared to 25.3 % for predecessors. This is due to an increase in the share of the following heterophilic pairs:
 - enterprise–university;

- university-VET.
This is associated with a sharp decrease in the share of homophilic co-participations among higher education organisations (i.e. university-university), which went from 70 % under the predecessor programme to 44 % under E+.
- Youth sector – The cross-sectoral co-participation rate remained relatively stable from the predecessor programme to E+, standing at 17.7 % under E+ compared to a slightly higher rate of 19.5 % for the predecessor programme. This only covers centralised projects. An increase in the share of heterophilic links was nevertheless observed under E+, with these accounting for 12.7 % of all links under E+ compared to 5.7 % under the predecessor programme.
The youth sector is the least cooperative sector compared to the others. This is however based on the assumption that:
 - all pairs formed by civil society organisations can be considered as homophilic (most are flagged with 'Other sectors or not specified' under E+); and
 - the unknown organisations, which are highly represented among the participants of youth projects under the predecessor programme, are randomly distributed across homophilic and heterophilic pairs.
- In the sport sector – A cross-sectoral co-participation rate of 49 % was observed for the sport sector under Erasmus+, with 51.6 % of all co-participations being heterophilic links. No comparison can be made with the predecessor programme as no projects were managed under this sector.

The centrality of countries in the programme network is changing. Small countries and countries from central and eastern Europe are better integrated

Cross-country cooperation is a key feature of the programme and as discussed below, internationalisation is one of the key results. The question can be asked whether and how integrated are the country networks.

The analysis shows an evolution in the ranking of countries (among all participation countries) in terms of their 'betweenness' centrality. This indicator measures how often a given node in a network (country) lies along the shortest paths between two other nodes that are not directly connected to one another. For example, this indicator would highlight countries (or organisations if used at organisational-level analysis) who play an important 'brokering' role, acting as a connecting link between countries who do not co-participate with one another.

Focusing on the 20 most central countries overall and by sector under Erasmus+, it appears that several medium-sized and smaller countries or countries from the enlargements in the 2000s have increased their degree of connectedness with other countries under the current programme. One such example is Slovenia and another one is Portugal in the overall programme (see table below).

It is normal that the large countries have a strong centrality score; the more a country participates in a network, the more opportunities it has to bridge other countries, bringing it closer to the centre of the network. This is the case for Germany, the UK, Italy, Spain and France. Other countries are also well connected, as shown in the table below.

When looking at the different sectors, there are notable differences. In the school sector in particular, a strong degree of connectedness of smaller or more peripheral countries in terms of geography or relationship with the EU is observed under E+. This means that these countries are playing a more prominent integration (brokering) role, relative to larger countries, in the network for the school sector. Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey all come in second place, on a par with Belgium and Norway, and Ireland ranks first. This

might be due to a major change in the way the programme has been managed/implemented in the school sector.

Figure 6.3 Evolution of the ranks of countries based on their betweenness centrality scores in the co-participation network of Erasmus+ and the predecessor programme, overall and per sector

Overall programme			School sector			VET			Higher education			Adult education			Youth		
Rank	Code	Change in rank	Rank	Code	Change in rank	Rank	Code	Change in rank	Rank	Code	Change in rank	Rank	Code	Change in rank	Rank	Code	Change in rank
1	DE	+3	1	IE	+24	1	DE	+2	1	UK	+1	1	UK	+2	1	IT	+2
2	UK	+3	2	BE	+5	2	FR	+11	2	IT	+3	2	IT	+9	2	ES	+3
3	IT	0	2	GR	+5	3	BE	+1	3	ES	-2	3	DE	+1	3	FR	+6
4	ES	-3	2	NO	+11	4	AT	+2	4	FR	-2	4	ES	+2	4	DE	-2
5	FR	-3	2	BG	+12	5	IT	-4	5	BE	-1	5	PL	+4	5	BE	+2
6	BE	0	2	TR	+13	6	UK	-1	6	PT	+5	6	FR	+2	6	UK	+5
7	PT	+8	7	DK	+8	7	PT	+11	7	TR	+5	7	NL	+7	7	PT	+9
8	PL	+5	8	PL	+4	8	DK	+1	8	DE	0	8	RO	-7	8	PL	+4
9	GR	-1	9	IT	-8	9	ES	-7	9	GR	+6	9	PT	+14	9	RO	-3
10	TR	+7	9	NL	-3	9	HR	+15	10	SI	+8	10	SE	+2	10	NL	+10
11	NL	-2	11	DE	-8	11	GR	-4	11	NL	-3	11	TR	-5	11	TR	+10
12	AT	-1	11	UK	-6	12	RO	-1	11	NO	+10	12	GR	-10	12	KE	+24
13	RO	-6	11	AT	-4	13	TR	-2	13	AT	+2	13	AT	+3	13	LT	+12
14	DK	+4	14	SK	+10	13	PL	+1	14	FI	-8	14	CZ	+15	14	SK	+3
15	BG	+1	15	RO	-11	13	MK	+19	15	PL	+3	15	BG	+3	15	HU	-11
16	SI	+6	15	CZ	+12	13	RS	+23	16	SE	+2	16	BE	-6	15	BG	-2
17	SE	-3	17	ES	-15	17	LV	+11	17	RO	-2	16	FI	0	15	SI	+6
18	CZ	+1	17	SE	-6	18	HU	0	17	EE	+4	16	SI	+4	18	GR	-10
19	NO	+5	17	FR	+1	18	NO	+6	19	CZ	+7	16	SK	+10	19	HR	+10
20	LT	+5	17	PT	+2	20	FI	+12	20	LU	+16	20	HU	-5	19	NP	+17

Note: The ranks column provides the positioning of countries under E+ (some countries are tied at the same rank). The change in rank column shows the number of places gained or lost in the ranking of all countries that participated in the predecessor or current programme. The table only presents the scores for the 20 most central countries under Erasmus+. Source: ICF calculations based on programme data

Multiple participation of individual persons (learners and practitioners) in mobility actions seems to be reasonably low – Multiple participation of organisations remains unclear

Having too many repeat participants can restrict the potential impact of the programme on individual persons, particularly when it comes to transversal competences and attitudes and behaviours, as the benefits are likely to diminish with repeated participation (i.e. the development is stronger the first time a person participates and subsequent exchanges add less value). This is most likely to be the case for individual learners, although repeated participation probably leads to diminishing outcomes for practitioners as well. On the other hand, repeated participation could enhance the benefits at the level of organisations. Therefore repeated participation at organisational level would be less problematic.

The ongoing Erasmus+ beneficiary monitoring surveys suggest that the vast majority of VET learners (95 %) and of students in international higher education mobility (91 %) are first-time participants in EU-funded mobility actions (Erasmus+ or LLP). The question was not asked to other groups unfortunately.

When asking about repeated participation of practitioners, there are big differences between sectors. The data suggests that while the majority of practitioners in schools, VET, adult learning and international higher education are first-time participants, most practitioners in youth and higher education are repeated participants. However, one needs to take these findings carefully as under the predecessor programmes, the names of programmes were different hence people could think of the Leonardo subprogramme and Erasmus+ as completely different programmes.

Unfortunately, the programme data does not allow for a sufficiently fine reliable analysis of repeated participation, as explained in the methodology section. This would require cleaning of over 60,000 records just for KA2 and KA3, which is not feasible. However, a rapid review of the programme data suggests that repeated participation of organisations is relatively common.

6.4 Results

To what extent have the various programme fields (both within Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes) delivered the expected outcomes (results and impacts)?

What are the long-term (and short-term) impacts of the predecessor programmes?

What are the unintended effects?

Table 6.12 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Legal basis indicators on results	Various	 The targets for most result indicators are met or exceeded
At individual level learners: the degree to which participation in the programme is associated with better skills, competences, attitudes/ behaviours and other results and impacts	Beneficiaries and control group surveys	 The surveys found positive association between programme participation and a range of results, this is the case for all sectors and types of actions though there are notable differences
At individual level learners: How beneficiaries qualify the most significant contribution of the programme	Case studies – most significant change	 Learners expressed a broad range of positive changes they associate with the programme. The sentiment expressed is strongly positive The changes cited cover a variety of skills but also more general developments such as becoming more mature and independent
At individual-level practitioners: the degree to which participation in the programme is associated with better skills, competences, attitudes/ behaviours and other results and impacts	Beneficiaries and control group surveys	 Surveys found that participation in the programme is associated with stronger attachment to the EU, networking, and greater use of digital resources The surveys also found an association (though a weaker one) with job satisfaction and in school sector use of strategies to improve attainment
At individual-level practitioners: recognition of achievements by their organisations	Beneficiaries	 The recognition of practitioners' achievement during mobility is uneven Only around half of the respondents state having received some form of recognition At the same time nearly half of respondents state that participation in the programme helped them achieve new roles or positions, which is a strongly positive finding
At individual-level practitioners: How beneficiaries qualify the most significant contribution of the programme	Case studies – most significant change	 All practitioners interviewed cited positive results on themselves as well as their learners and organisations The interviews identified a broad range of positive effects Professional development, motivation as well as open mindedness were commonly cited next to a range of skills
Evidence of the influence of the programme at system level based on desk research	Literature review	 System-level effects of the OMCs in education and training and youth which the programme co-fund have been documented by other evaluations

6.4.1 Legal basis results indicators based on programme data

The legal basis and DG EAC strategic plan define a set of performance indicators for Erasmus+. As shown in the table below, for the majority of these indicators the performance values are on or above target and some are below target (discussed below). However, as with the output data, it is not clear why certain targets were set at the value at which they are set. For all the indicators that are below target it is questionable whether the value was set at an appropriate level. But this also holds for several indicators where the values are above target, as the target values were set inexplicably low. As there was no baseline data for most of these indicators and also as there was no comparable data from the predecessor programmes, it seems that the targets were defined somewhat arbitrarily.

The following issues have been identified with the level at which indicator values are defined.

- Indicator on the share of participants indicating that participation in the programme contributed to finding a job (employment). This target value is set at 44 %. The indicator is defined as the self-perceived contribution of those who agree or strongly agree with a given statement. However, 44 % agreement would in fact be a very low performance (suggesting that most people disagree). People tend to be overly positive when responding to questions of this type. There is no basis to expect that a result of 56 % 'No opinion' or disagreement would in fact be a good performance.
- Indicator on formal recognition of participation in VET and youth. This indicator is set at 68 % for VET (much below the higher education target) and at only 34 % for youth. Given that recognition is one of the requirements emphasised in the VET Mobility Charter that hosting and sending organisations should respect and given that the indicator is about recognition of participation and not recognition of learning outcomes, the value appears to be set too low.

For youth, the indicator is in fact a negative one – i.e. a large majority (66 %) of persons are expected to receive no recognition. Given that the indicator is formulated in a very soft way (i.e. it is in fact about documentation by the hosting organisation, not recognition by the sending organisation), it is not clear why it would be so low.
- Indicator on perceived improvement of foreign language skills. It is not clear why the higher education target is set at a much higher level than that of VET. It seems the assumption was that, given that the mobility experienced is longer in higher education than in VET, the improvements in language skills should be stronger. There are however two flaws in this assumption.
 - Firstly, improvement of foreign language skills (as for any other skills) is not a linear progression. The improvements are quicker at lower levels and harder to make at higher levels. Given that for longer-term higher education mobility the entry level expected is already high (which it is not the case in the shorter mobilities in VET), the improvements are more likely to be smaller than for VET. This is by the way confirmed by the OLS data analysis.
 - Secondly, the indicator is not about the scale of improvement but a simple agreement with whether any improvement has been observed (large or small). People who see a small improvement and those who see a big improvement are likely to answer the same.

Furthermore, the value for higher education is set too high. It does not reflect the fact that (i) a small number of people will take part in a mobility where their main language used is their mother tongue²²⁴ and (ii) that many people who take part in higher education mobility have already very high entry-level skills in a given foreign language.

²²⁴ Either because the countries have the same language or because the courses are given in a major language (English typically).

Table 6.13 Overview of result legal basis indicators 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	87 % of beneficiaries state that they have improved six or more competences from the proposed list	Responses range from 71 % for HE studies (long-term mobility) to 88 % long-term mobility in VET	On target	Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiaries (learners)
				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			
Employability of participants (Erasmus+)	□	44 %	% of Erasmus+ participants indicating that participation in the programme contributed to finding a job	83 % of learners state that they believe they improved their professional skills	The responses range from 72 % for HE studies to 89 % for VET	Above target	Idem ICF survey of beneficiary learners
				88 % believe that their chances to find a job improved	From 82 % for HE studies to 90 % for international HE		
				92 % of respondents agree that their opportunities for finding a job improved	Ranging from 90 % for pupils (blended mobility) to 94 % for higher education		
Innovation from participating organisations (Erasmus+)		55 %	% of organisations that have developed/adopted innovative methods	Beneficiaries from VET and HE experience shorter transition to employment than control group	Taking part in an Erasmus+ intervention appears to improve the transition from education to employment with a 13 % increase in the indicator	On target (possibly above)	Erasmus+ monitoring survey of practitioner
				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	The Erasmus+ monitoring survey as well as ICF survey is based on a survey of practitioners taking part in		

Result indicator	Legal basis	Target	Definition in strategic plan	2014–2016 performance	Comment	Judgement	Source of data
			and/or materials, improved capacity; outreach methodologies, etc	happen 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 Introduction of new teaching materials (81 % schools, 72 % VET, 72 % HE, 77 % adult education) New assessment or evaluation methods (68 % schools, 63 % VET, 59 % HE, 68 % adult education)	the programme not organisations. Hence there is only a partial match between the definition and this data	There is not a perfect match with the definition but the data collected from mobile practitioners gives very positive feedback	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	100 % (estimate) 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+ funding, it can be assumed the rate of recognition of participation rate is 100 %	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)
		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			ICF survey of practitioners

Result indicator	Legal basis	Target	Definition in strategic plan	2014–2016 performance	Comment	Judgement	Source of data
				function/ level of seniority (36 % in schools to 48 % in adult education) 26 % received a financial reward (21 % in schools – 28 % in HE)			
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	
Youth							
Better skills for participants (Erasmus+, youth)	☐	77 %	% of Erasmus+ participants declaring that they	87 % of young people in youth exchanges state having improved six or more competences		Above target	Erasmus+ monitoring survey of

Result indicator	Legal basis	Target	Definition in strategic plan	2014–2016 performance	Comment	Judgement	Source of data
			have improved their key competences and/or their skills relevant for employability	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 %)			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	74 % of EVS participants state that they intend to participate more actively in social and political life of their community 73 % state that they are more interested in knowing what happens in the word daily 71 % are more aware of social and political concepts	The question asked in the Erasmus+ monitoring survey does not exactly correspond to the definition It is not clear why the target was set so high	Below target	Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiaries (learners)
				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. 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)	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 When looking at the detailed responses the differences with the control group are large in some cases (see left cell)		ICF survey of learners
Language skills of participants (Erasmus+, youth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	90 %	% of Erasmus+ participants in voluntary actions	81 % of participants in EVS state they improved their foreign language skills	Though the self-perceived improvement is below the target the improvement	Below target according to Erasmus+	Erasmus+ monitoring survey of

Result indicator	Legal basis	Target	Definition in strategic plan	2014–2016 performance	Comment	Judgement	Source of data
			declaring that they have increased their language skills		based on OLS is large and substantially greater than for other groups	monitoring data but strong improvement based on OLS	beneficiary learners OLS pre-post language tests
				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)			
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	67 % of respondents state that they used the results to improve governance or manage quality 27 % of respondents state that their project focused on the topic of good governance 31 % state that their project focused on dual careers (multiple choice question)	Data is not available through Erasmus+ monitoring surveys which are not carried out among sport beneficiaries The indicators are developed based on survey of sport organisations practitioners	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 % of Erasmus+ sport organisations) that	62 % of respondents state they used the results to combat threats to sport	Idem	Above target	ICF survey of sport practitioners

Result indicator	Legal basis	Target	Definition in strategic plan	2014–2016 performance	Comment	Judgement	Source of data
			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>			
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

More detailed analysis of the programme data and in particular the Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiaries underpinning these indicators is presented in Annex 2. The below presents selected main findings.

Levels of recognition of learning outcomes vary according to types of actions

Within the higher education sector there are notable differences in the degree of recognition between traineeships, studies and international mobility actions. The degree of recognition is highest among students in traineeships, followed by those in studies and lowest for those in the international sector (but the sample is small for the final category as at the time of the analysis many students in this sector were still on mobility).

Note that the data concerns those learners for whom recognition was finalised at the time of the survey. A substantial share of higher education students did not have their recognition finalised when taking the Erasmus+ monitoring survey. A follow-up survey was planned at the time of this evaluation.

In VET, the most common form of recognition is Europass, which is far more used than any other recognition tool. Europass however is rather a tool for documentation of learning outcomes and their visibility rather than a proper recognition tool. Recognition using ECVET credit (which is a relatively new instrument compared to ECTS or even Europass) remains low but is progressing (3 percentage points between 2014 and 2015).

The degree of recognition in the youth sector is higher for those on youth exchanges than for those on EVS. This is rather surprising given that the youth exchanges are much shorter than EVS. In fact, the rate of recognition in EVS is rather low compared to other sectors even though the data is not fully comparable as there are differences in how the concept of recognition is used between the sectors.

Learning agreement is an important tool to support recognition

In VET, the absence of a learning agreement is associated with a high rate of non-recognition. More than 50 % of learners without a learning agreement stated that they did not receive recognition. In contrast, 92 % of those VET learners with a learning agreement received recognition of their mobility.

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

In higher education, for those on mobility for studies there is a small difference in the recognition rate for those who sign the learning agreement later. For mobile trainees the incidence of non-recognition or partial recognition is higher when the learning agreement signature is delayed.

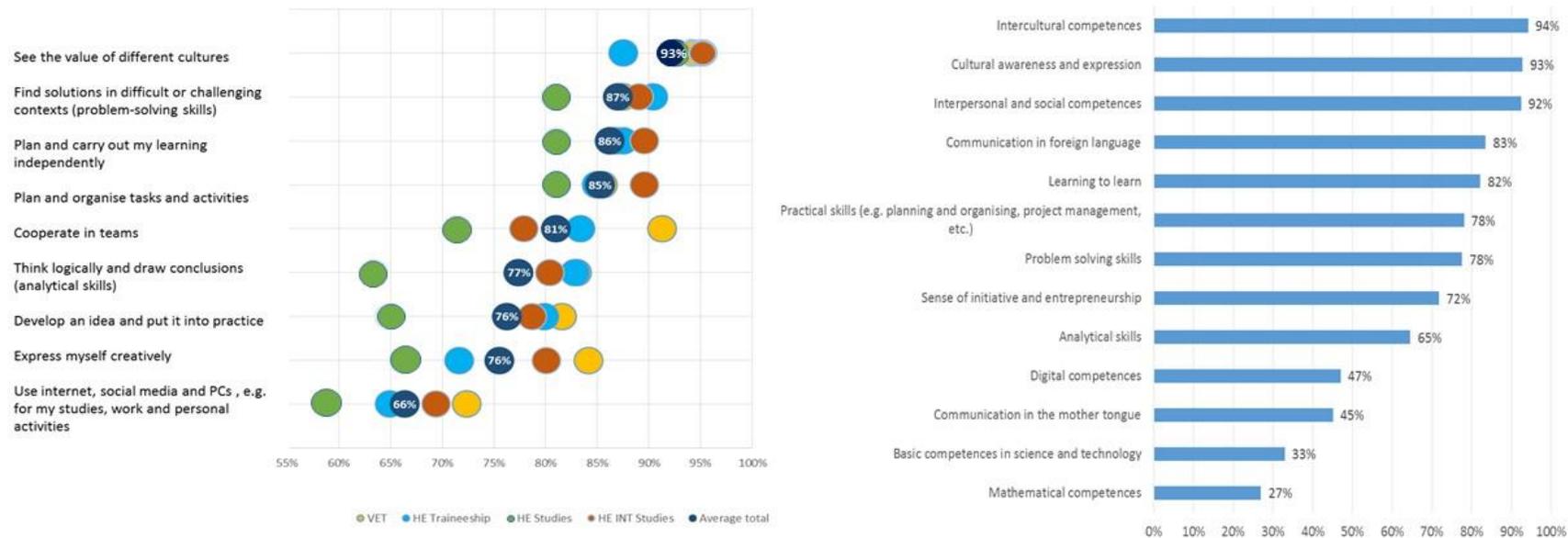
There is an important difference for those who never sign the learning agreement. They receive partial recognition more frequently, but they also represent only a very small share of students or trainees.

Learners are generally positive about the contribution of the programme to competence development but there are notable differences between sectors

In general programme beneficiaries agree that the programme helped them improve a range of competences. As shown below, for most of the competences about which they are surveyed, 75 % or more respondents expressed having perceived an improvement. However, there are notable differences between sectors. Young people in higher education studies express lower levels of agreement with statements about the contribution made by the programme to their development than all other groups. This is shown in both charts below (perceived contribution to specific competence and share of those who state having improved six or more competences). This could be explained by the fact that their competences are already at higher level when entering the

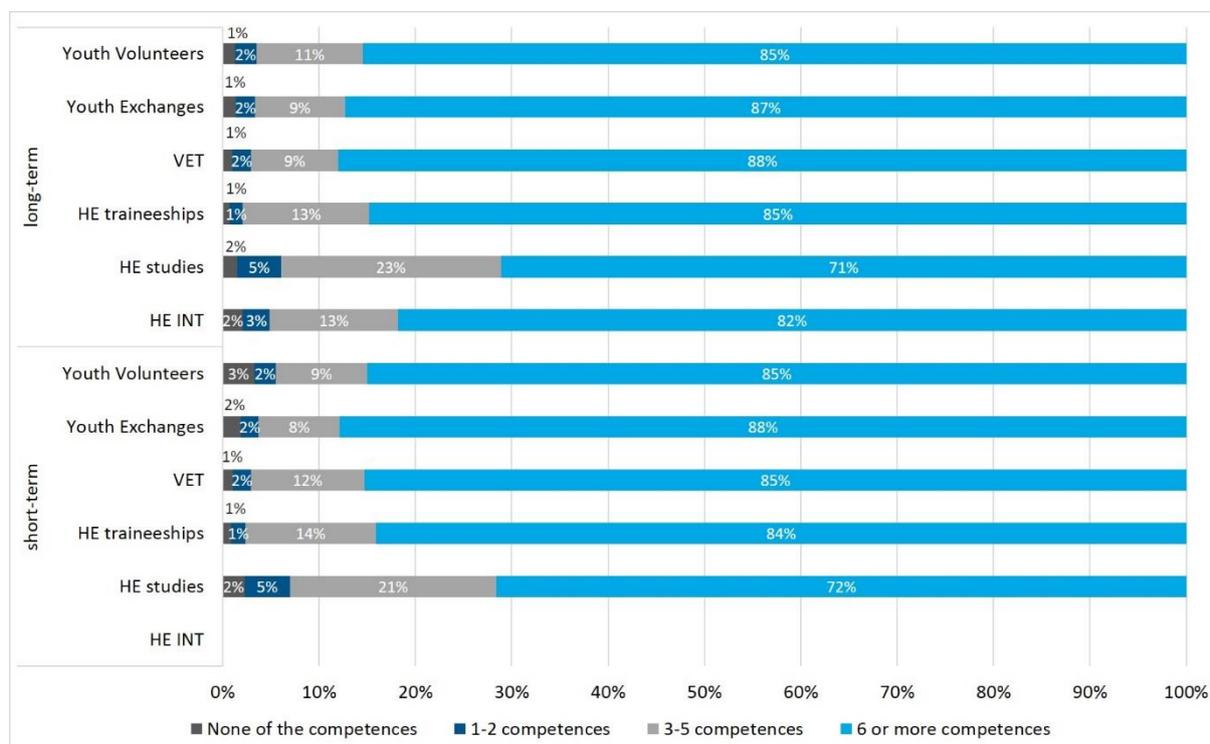
programme, if it were not for the fact that those higher education students in traineeships show a different pattern.

Figure 6.4 The share of learners who strongly agree or agree that they developed a given transversal competence



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ monitoring surveys. This is a multiple answer question therefore the data does not add up to 100 % (n=730,254)

Figure 6.5 Share of learners who declare having improved six or more competences from the proposed set of nine competences (see above)



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys, n= 512,600; Long-term: n (VET)= 123,940; n (HE traineeships)= 89,124; n (HE studies)= 262,326; n (HE INT)= 143. Short-term: n (VET)= 1,102; n (HE traineeships)= 9,161; n (HE studies)= 4,461 Youth exchanges: n= 15,365, EVS: n= 6,978

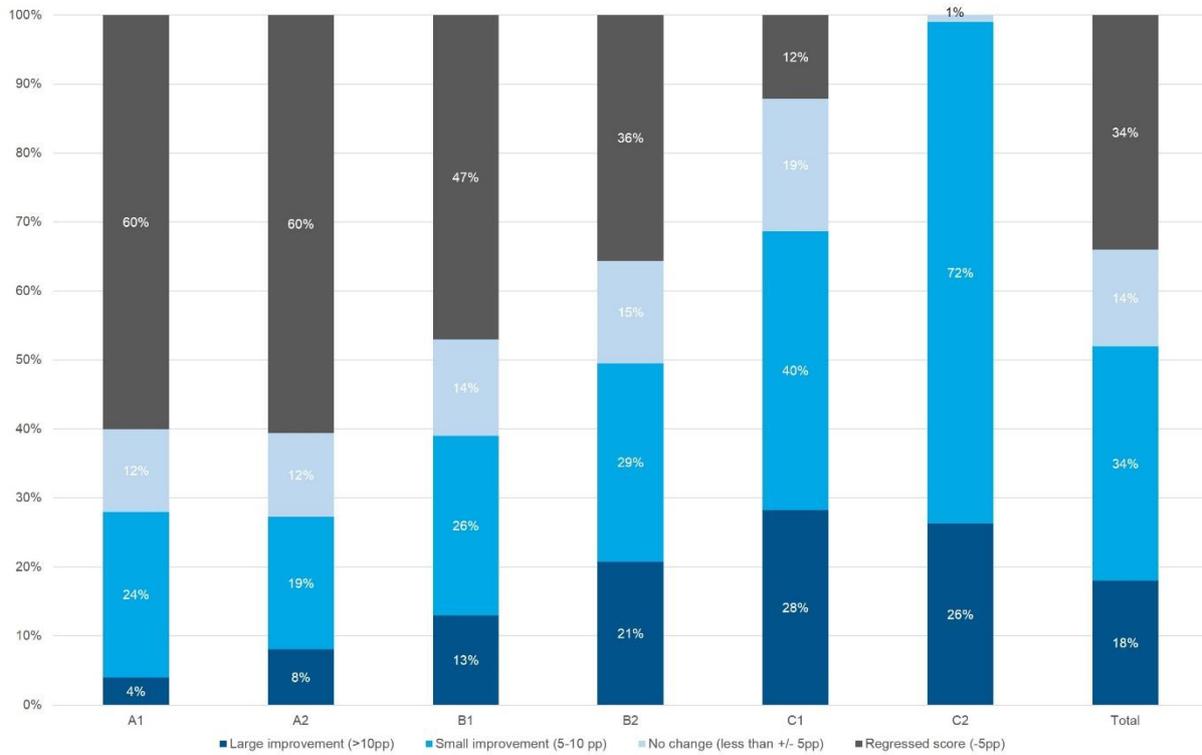
Foreign language skills development is stronger in those sectors where learners tend to have lower entry levels

Acquisition of a foreign language, as any other competence development, is not a linear process. Progress tends to be quicker at first, followed by a plateau and very gradual improvements. It is therefore not surprising that in terms of foreign language competence development those learners who have lower entry levels see more substantial improvements during mobility than those with higher levels of competence when entering the programme.

The analysis of OLS pre-post foreign language tests shows notable differences between sectors but these differences appear to be mostly linked to the entry level of learners. Those with lower levels of proficiency see clearer improvements than those with higher levels. The below shows that at the lowest levels of proficiency (A1 and A2) there are the highest numbers of learners who see large improvements in their test scores after mobility. The higher the entry level, the smaller the share of learners who make a large or even small improvement. Given that the number of learners with low entry levels is highest in VET and youth, mobility in these sectors makes a stronger contribution to foreign language skills development than in higher education, where the entry levels are higher. Changes are most notable in the youth sector, where there is not only a strong decline in numbers of learners with low levels of proficiency but also a strong increase at higher levels. In the VET sector, the share of students with low level of proficiency declines substantially but the improvements at higher levels are modest. In higher

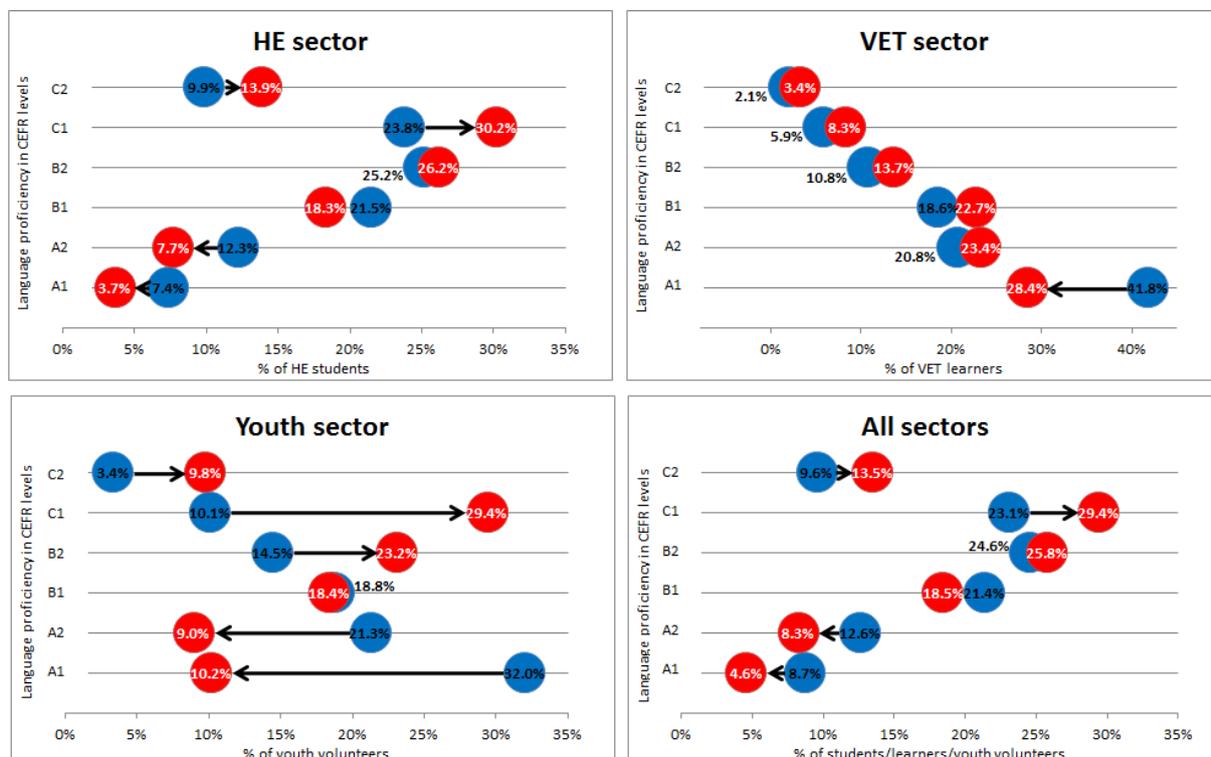
education there is a clearer progression of the share of learners with higher proficiency levels but the difference in before and after is smaller than in the youth sector.

Figure 6.6 Change in pre- and post-test score by foreign language proficiency level (share of learners who see a change)



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

Figure 6.7 Comparison of levels of proficiency before and after mobility, by sector (share of learners in a given sector at a given level of proficiency)



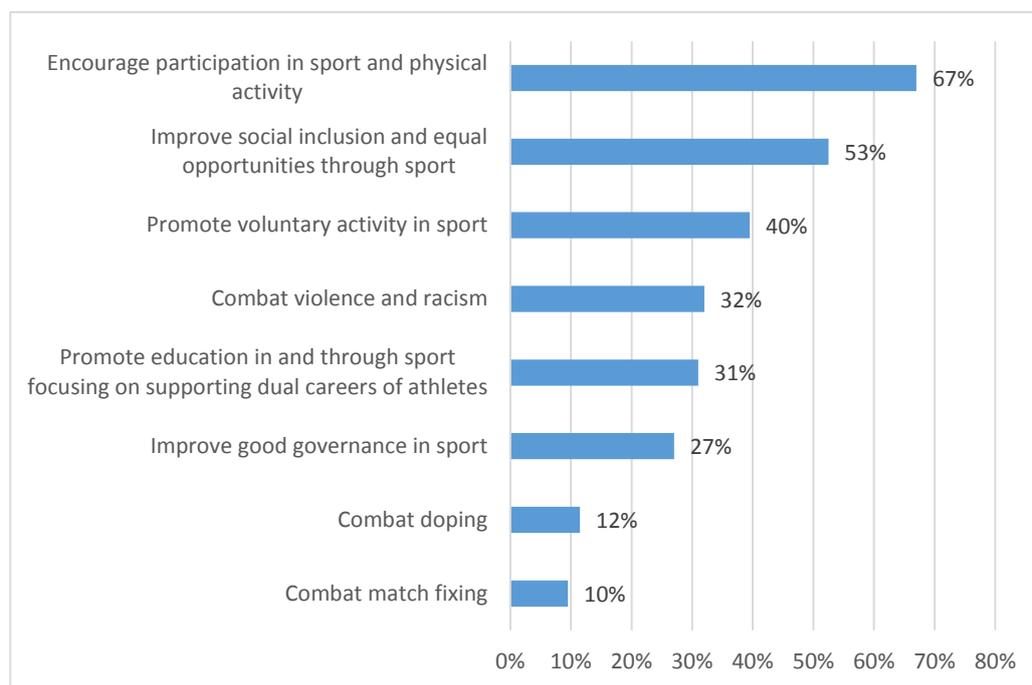
Legend: blue: before mobility (first language assessment), red: at the end of the mobility (final language assessment)

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

Most sport organisations taking part in the sport sector state they focus their actions on social inclusion and physical enhancement activities

The programme priorities in the sport sector cover on the one hand broader social issues such as social inclusion and physical activities and on the other hand much more sport-specific and targeted issues such as combating doping, match fixing or violence in sport. Based on the survey results, the majority of sport projects focus on the first set of issues (see figure below). The sport-specific threats are much less frequently tackled. This further confirms that though in theory the sport and youth strand were seen as distinct, in practice they attract somewhat similar types of projects which means that the borders between the participation of sport organisations in the youth strand and the sport strand are rather blurred. The sports week is one of the actions in the sport strand which has a clearly different profile compared to the other sectors. The grassroots projects however are much more similar to activities that could have also been funded through the youth strand, for example.

Figure 6.8 Did your project focus on any of the following topics?



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

Respondents (n= 200)

6.4.2 Individual results – mobile learners and practitioners – general level of satisfaction

This section summarises the results of the DG EAC survey of beneficiaries of KA1 when it comes to their level of satisfaction with their experience.

Learners and practitioners are in general very satisfied with their mobility experience and this is true across all fields and types of mobility. Over 90 % of respondents stated that they are satisfied with the experience. Overall, practitioners are more satisfied with their mobility experience (98 % on average) than learners (93 %) but the satisfaction for both groups is very high.

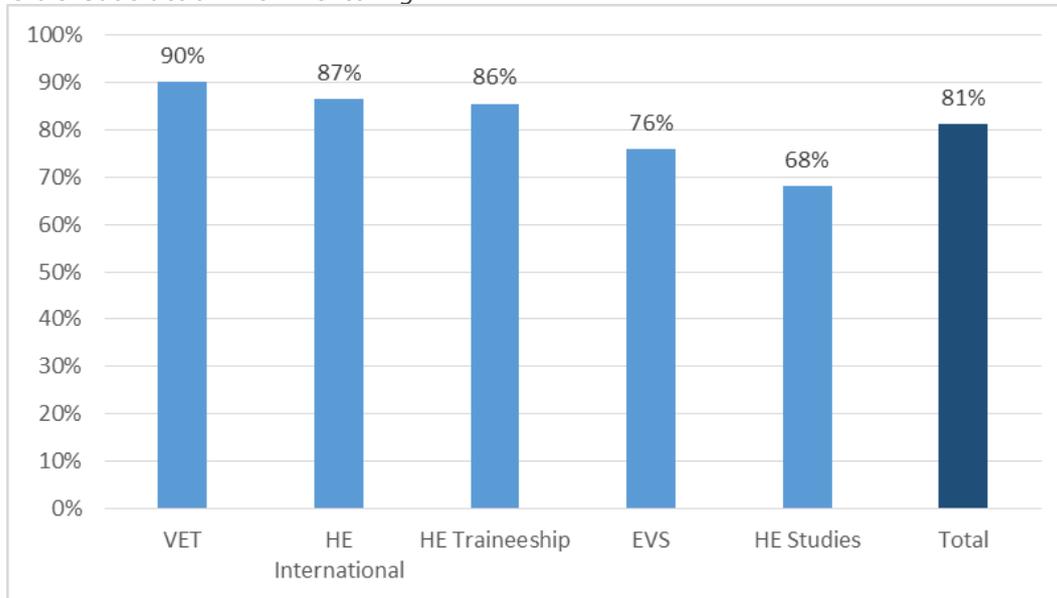
The differences among learners attending different types of mobility are not very big. International HE learners (student mobility with partner countries) have highest satisfaction with mobility, as 98 % of them are satisfied with the experience, followed by HE learners participating in studies abroad (95 % satisfied), and youth exchange participants and learners participating in HE traineeships (94 % of students satisfied). EVS participants are asked a different question from the other groups. They were asked how they evaluate the overall success of their project, which is in fact aiming on a slightly different opinion than asking purely about the satisfaction with the programme. Even if this question is slightly different the satisfaction expressed is still very high (81 %).

The questionnaires ask also questions about satisfaction with different types of support. When looking at these specific components, HE learners (student mobility with programme countries) are slightly more critical but overall still very positive.

Four out of five learners were satisfied with the mentoring received in the receiving institution (see Figure 6.9). But there is some variety across the sectors. VET participants are most satisfied with mentoring (90 % are very or rather satisfied), followed by international HE learners (student mobility with partner countries) and HE

traineeship participants (87 % and 86 % respectively). HE learners (student mobility with programme countries) within Europe are less satisfied with mentoring than the other groups (68 % said that they were satisfied or rather satisfied with mentoring).

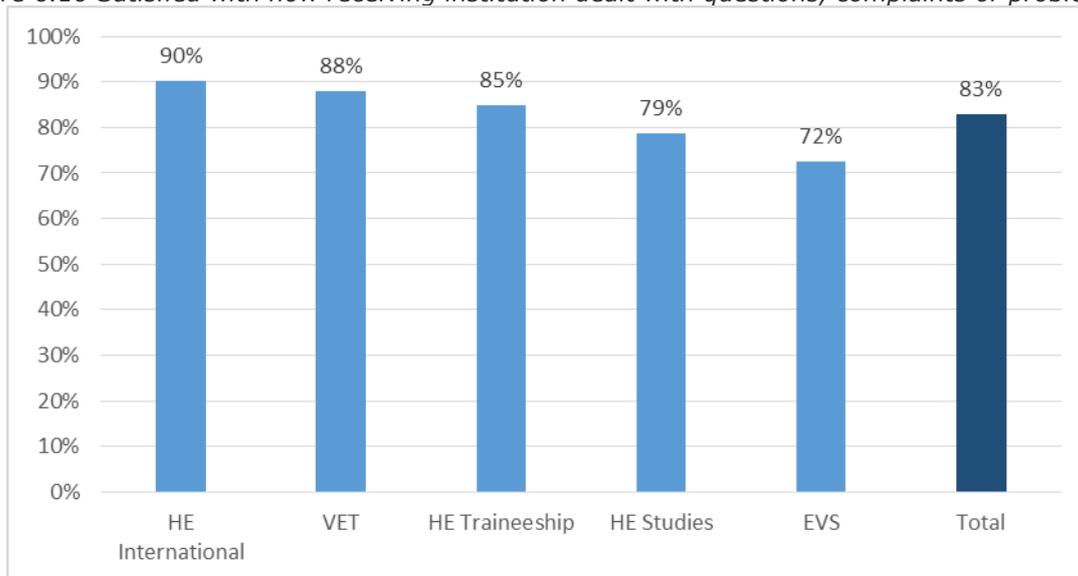
Figure 6.9 Satisfaction with mentoring



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys. Share of learners who were very satisfied or rather satisfied with mentoring

Students are overall satisfied with the way the receiving institutions deal with questions, showing good responsiveness from the side of hosting organisations (Figure 6.10). The satisfaction with this issue is highest among international HE students and VET students (90 % and 88 % respectively) and lowest among EVS participants (72 %).

Figure 6.10 Satisfied with how receiving institution dealt with questions, complaints or problems



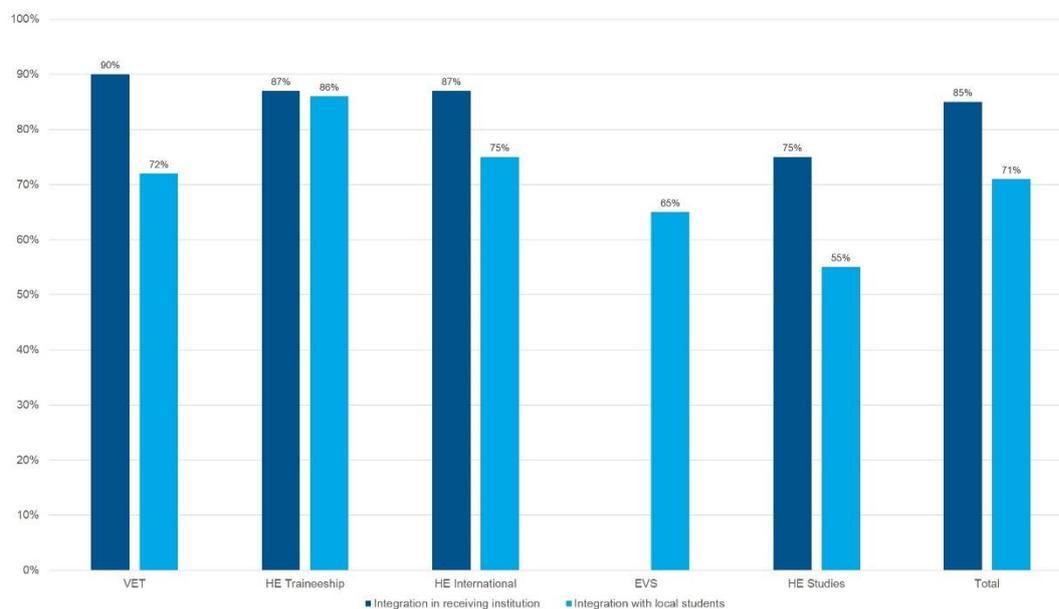
Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys. Share of learners who were very satisfied or rather satisfied

Most learners feel well integrated in the host institution and with local students even though the latter point is less well rated than other aspects.

Overall higher education students who are mobile for studies and from programme countries, though still showing high levels of satisfaction, are somewhat less positive about these two elements of their experience than learners from other sectors.

The data shows that integration into the local community of students or local community more generally is more difficult than integration within the host institution (Figure 6.11). HE traineeships are most successful in integrating trainees into the local community (86 % are satisfied). International HE learners (student mobility with partner countries) and VET participants are a little behind, with 76 % and 72 % of students respectively feeling integrated with local students; EVS is also lagging behind, with 65 % of participants feeling well integrated.

Figure 6.11 Satisfaction with integration of learners



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys. Share of learners who think their degree of integration in the receiving institution/local community was very good or good or in the case of EVS that they integrated fully or to a high extent

6.4.3 Individual results for learners – based on primary data collection

Participation in Erasmus+ (and predecessor programmes) is strongly associated with a short transition to employment and feeling of belonging to the EU. It is also associated with willingness to work or study abroad, more positive perception of the value of education and education/ raining completion rates within the typical programme duration. Another key result at the level of individual learners is the notable improvement in foreign language skills. However, the degree to which these positive results can be observed varies across sectors and even within sectors according to types of actions. Positive effects of the programme on learners are confirmed during interviews with young people, who associate participation in the programme with a range of personal developments, positive experiences and progress in maturity and autonomy.

The intervention logic of the Erasmus+ programme (and similarly for the predecessor programmes) shows that the programmes are expected to contribute to changes in young people’s skills and competences as well as attitudes and behaviours in the short

and medium term. In the longer term the programme is expected to result in better completion rates and more positive employment outcomes.

A key data collection method to gather evidence about impacts at individual level involved the surveys of programme beneficiaries. Table 6.14 Main areas of effectiveness at individual learner level below gives an overview of the types of skills, attitudes, behaviours as well as long-term results which were measured at the level of individual learners. It also summarises the types of questions that were asked to learners for a given area and the source from which the questions were taken.

Table 6.14 Main areas of effectiveness at individual learner level

Area	Description	Source of questions
Problem solving and autonomy	The questions asked respondents to self-assess themselves against a set of statements that described how they handle unforeseen circumstances and their general approach and attitude to problem solving	PISA background questionnaire to learners
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	The questions asked respondents to self-assess their capacity to come up with new suggestions or to invent new things against a set of statements capturing different levels of initiative	Vintage project – self-assessment of key competences
Civic participation and volunteering	Set of factual statements about individual's participation in various types of organisations	ICCS 2009 – Civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement
European citizenship	Statements about perceived citizenship and feeling of belonging to the EU	Standard Eurobarometer
Willingness to work or study abroad	Plans for moving to another EU country	Standard Eurobarometer
Racism and xenophobia	Set of statements expressing different degree of openness or on contrary resistance to other cultures	Different sources: ICCS, Eurobarometer 2000 on intercultural dialogue
Social and civic competences	Statements about perceived importance of behaviours for being a good citizen and statements about possibility that one would use certain forms of protest strategies to express his/her convictions	ICCS
Learning to learn	Statements about one's learning styles, ways of working and beliefs about one's learning capacity	Based on questionnaires used to test online learning readiness
Intercultural awareness and	Statements about one's confidence and ease in handling different examples of intercultural	Based on Fritz et al. (2002), <i>Measuring Intercultural</i>

Area	Description	Source questions	of
expression	communication	<i>Sensitivity in Different Cultural Contexts</i>	
Digital competence	Statements about various activities related to use of online resources	Based on European Commission digital skills indicator	
One's self-confidence in education	Statements that reflect beliefs about the relationship between education/learning and performance in school or a job	PISA 2012	
Only applicable to SE and VET: Feeling towards education and training	Statements expressing how good learners feel in their school/education organisation	PISA 2003	
Only applicable to SE and VET: perceived value of education/ training	Statements about how school/training is seen as contributing to the future career or life of young people	PISA 2009	
Only applicable to SE: foreign language skills*	The questions consisted of self-assessment statements where each statement corresponded to verbal expression according to one of the levels of CEFR. The respondent in the group of beneficiaries assessed their own level of proficiency in the language of the mobility/cooperation. For comparison purposes the control group was asked to self-assess themselves against the language in which they are most proficient Note: The language used during the mobility/cooperation experience is not necessarily the one in which the practitioners is most proficient. Therefore the question gives a slight advantage to the control group	Self-assessment text used in Europass language skills portfolio	

* For youth, VET and higher education data on improvement of foreign language skills is available from OLS (see details in Annex 2).

6.4.3.1 Methodological comment

This section is based on a combination of:

- a survey of the control group as well as programme participants (the analysis includes tests of statistical significance, regressions, pre-post measurement and propensity score matching);
- case study interviews; and
- findings from the literature review.

The detailed statistical analysis of survey results is presented in Annex 3. The annex shows for each of the indicators:

- the performance of Erasmus+ beneficiaries (broken down by sector, type of action and disadvantage) compared to non-beneficiaries;

- the tests to verify statistical significance of the difference;
- regression analysis showing which characteristics of respondents are associated with positive or negative results on a given indicator.

The text below gives only the most interesting findings and cites only the main figures. The detailed analysis is presented in the annex.

6.4.3.2 Programme-level findings

At programme level, all sectors combined, the survey found that there were statistical differences between the results of participants and non-participants in most (but not all) of the result areas. However, though the difference was statistically significant (meaning it was unlikely to be due to a sampling error), it was small in a number of result areas. The areas where the strongest positive difference was identified are:

- having experienced a short transition to employment (as opposed to a medium or long transition)²²⁵; and
- demonstrating a positive feeling of belonging to the EU.

Participation in the programme also leads to development of learners' social capital. Young people develop relationships which they maintain, according to the results of the survey. At programme level, 55.7 % of beneficiaries were in frequent contact with persons they met during participation in the programme (at least on a monthly basis) and another 30.8 % were occasionally in contact (at least once a year). The links created during mobility appear to be stronger for those young people who take part in higher education and youth strands of the programme. VET beneficiaries have more occasional or rare contact with people they met through the programme.

Figure 6.12 gives an overview of the areas in which statistically significant differences were found between the beneficiaries of Erasmus+ or predecessor programmes and the control group. The areas are ranked according to the degree of difference between the two populations. In those areas marked as dark green or green the beneficiaries showed more positive results than the control group. In the areas marked in yellow the beneficiaries also showed more positive results than the control group but the difference, while statistically significant, was minor (low practical significance). Finally, in the areas marked in red, the control group actually had higher scores than the beneficiaries.

The learner surveys measured some of the competences that are also reported in Erasmus+ monitoring surveys of learners. In the latter the learners are asked about how they perceive the contribution of mobility to an improvement in a given competence/attitude, etc. In the surveys carried out by the evaluation team they were asked factual questions which measured a given attitude/competence and the results were compared with a control group that was asked the same questions. Thus the two sources show different things.

- The Erasmus+ monitoring survey shows what people believe the mobility helped them to achieve. In other words it is their subjective evaluation of their experience.
- The evaluation surveys show more objectively whether the beneficiaries demonstrate different attitudes, competences or beliefs.

The evaluation surveys can show different values in a given result: for example, people may believe that the programme improved their competence in a given area without the surveys capturing this, and vice versa.

For example, the competence which most beneficiaries associate with an improvement in relation to mobility is openness to other cultures/intercultural awareness. The evaluation

²²⁵ Note that this result was not measured for pupils as they are still in education and training.

survey does measure a statistically significant difference with regard to this competence between the beneficiaries and the control group. However, the difference is rather small. At the same time, the reason why the difference is small can be also related to the fact that the scores reported by both groups are high²²⁶.

Figure 6.12 Programme level for learners: Comparison of results for beneficiaries and control group per result area (only areas where the difference is statistically significant)

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 beneficiaries surveys. For detailed analysis see Annex 3

The overview above shows the areas according to the degree of difference between beneficiaries and the control group. In addition, the evaluation team ran a series of regressions where the dependent variable was the final score on a given result area and the independent variables were various background characteristics as well as participation in the programme. Such regressions measure the extent to which a change in the dependent variable (indicator for a given result area) is associated with a change in a given independent variable (i.e. background characteristic or participation in the programme). In other words, whether the fact that the respondent participated in the programme influences the result indicator and/or whether other variables influence the result indicator. Through the regressions, participation in the programme was identified as a variable that is clearly associated with a higher score for the following result indicators:

- problem solving;
- feeling of being EU citizens;
- willingness to work or study abroad;
- openness to other cultures;
- perceived importance of civic and political engagement;

²²⁶ The total index for all beneficiaries is 86 while it is 85 for the control group.

- learning to learn;
- digital competence;
- short transition to employment;
- completion of studies.

Improved employability

The beneficiary surveys measured employability by assessing the period of transition into employment. Respondents who have completed their studies at the time of the survey²²⁷ were asked about how long it took them to find a job after they finished their studies²²⁸. The share of beneficiaries who took fewer than three months to find a job was, at the overall programme level, 68.5 %, while it was 59.2 % in the overall control group. As discussed below this trend is particularly strong for the higher education beneficiaries and VET beneficiaries but it does not hold true for beneficiaries from the youth sector, who experience longer transition periods than the control group, which could be due to the specific profile of this target group.

This confirms the findings of other studies that analysed the effects of learners' mobility on employability, as discussed in the sector-specific sections below.

It also mirrors the positive expectation about the perceived contribution of mobility towards the future labour market opportunities of participants. Beneficiaries are in general very positive about the fact that the mobility will contribute to their job prospects²²⁹.

Stronger feeling of belonging to the EU

The surveys measured the following:

- learners' positive feelings towards the EU (feeling proud and feeling part of the EU); and
- the feeling of being European (as compared to feeling primarily a citizen of one's country and a world citizen).

On both indicators the findings show a positive association between participation in Erasmus+ and the two indicators.

- 52.4 % of beneficiaries feel European compared to 43.4 % of the control group.
- The index on positive feeling towards the EU is 77.6 for beneficiaries while it is 73 for the control group²³⁰.

The association is particularly notable in the sectors of VET and higher education. Young people in the youth sector show very high scores on the index of feeling of belonging to the EU (78 points in general) but there is little difference between them and the control group of non-mobile young people in the youth sector, showing that young people actively engaged in the youth sector are generally more positive about the EU than their counterparts.

6.4.3.2.1 Summary findings of the quasi-experimental approach to analyse the survey data

In addition to the already mentioned tests of significance and regressions, the evaluation team carried out a quasi-experimental assessment of the results. For this purpose, we

²²⁷ There were 4,287 respondents in this category among the beneficiaries and 363 in the control group.

²²⁸ The options provided were 0–3 months, 3–6 months, 6 months to 1 year, over 1 year.

²²⁹ 92 % believe so according to the ICF beneficiary survey, ranging from 90 % of pupils to 94 % of higher education students.

²³⁰ See Annex 3 for the explanation of the index.

have developed an estimation of the counterfactual, using respondents who participated in the Erasmus+ programme and non-participants with similar profiles (i.e. non-participating higher education students, VET students, etc.) as the control group. A counterfactual consists in asking 'What would have been the outcome in the absence of the programme?' In an ideal world, the assignment to the programme would have been done on a random basis and the impact of the programme calculated by assessing the difference in outcomes between those in the intervention and those who did not take part. However, a random allocation is often neither feasible in practical terms nor desirable for ethical reasons. In this particular case we have compared outcomes between people who participated in the Erasmus+ programme and a group of people who are 'alike' but did not participate. Therefore, the challenge is to *attribute* the difference in outcomes between both groups to the programme, isolating any other underlying factor (attribution).

This can be achieved in econometrics: starting from raw data with treatment and control subjects and by matching respondents in the treatment group with 'similar' subjects in the control group, we come up with a 'matched sample' where subjects are similar in some background characteristics such as gender, age, etc. (called *covariates*).

We performed the analysis for those result indicators which were showing statistically significant difference based on t-tests.

The results of the analysis show that the treatment effect (i.e. participation in the programme) appears to make a difference to a range of results (see table below). The most notable results are as follows.

- Participation in Erasmus+ is associated with an increase in the feeling of being an EU citizen by 19 %.
- Beneficiaries are more willing to move abroad on a permanent basis than the control group. The participation is associated with a 31 % increase in willingness to move.
- Beneficiaries attach greater value to education. Participation is associated with an increase of 8.2 % in this result indicator.
- Taking part in an Erasmus+ appears to improve the transition from education to employment. There is an increase of 13 % in experiencing a shorter transition to employment among beneficiaries.

Additional explanation

At first sight it could seem that the findings presented in Table 6.11 and those presented in Table 6.13 are not fully aligned. However, they summarise different types of measurements.

The findings shown in Table 6.11 are based on the comparison of scores for a given variable between the control group and beneficiaries. That analysis looks simply at (i) whether the difference is statistically significant (i.e. it is unlikely to be due to error in sampling) and (ii) whether the difference is important in absolute terms (i.e. it is a difference of several percentage points).

Example of how to read findings in Table 6.11 (and related annex with detailed data): *Participants in Erasmus+ more often state that they are willing to move to another country than non-participants. The difference in these response patterns is statistically significant and it is of medium positive difference (the annex shows that the difference is 5 percentage points).*

The findings in Table 6.13 summarise the results of the counterfactual assessment, which estimates what would have happened in the absence of participation in Erasmus+. This results in an estimate of the probability that the score on a given indicator would have increased had a person participated in Erasmus+.

Example of how to read findings in Table 6.13: *Participants in Erasmus+ are 31 % more likely to state that they are willing to move abroad than non-participants.*

Table 6.15 Summary of treatment effect estimations

Result (indicator)	area	Potential outcome mean in control group	Average treatment effect on the treated	Is the difference statistically significant?	Conclusions
Self-confidence in one's education results – [Doing well is my choice]		0.83	0.017	Yes**	The programme seems to increase the confidence in how learner's own choices impact their success (by 2 %), for those participating in the programme
Feeling of being an EU citizen		0.45	0.085	Yes***	The intervention increases the feeling of being an EU citizen among those taking part of the programme by 19 %
Positive feelings towards the EU		0.74	0.044	Yes***	Taking part in the Erasmus+ programme increases the positive feelings towards the EU by almost 6 %
Completion of studies		0.89	0.017	Yes***	The programme appears to foster completion of studies instead of dropping out, with an increase of almost 2 %
Willingness to work or study		0.24	0.075	Yes***	Those respondents taking part in the intervention are more willing to move

Result (indicator)	area	Potential outcome mean in control group	Average treatment effect on the treated	Is the difference statistically significant?	Conclusions
abroad (permanent basis)					abroad on a permanent basis, this represents a 31 % higher willingness to move
Sense of initiative – new suggestions		0.71	0.008	Yes*	The programme has a positive impact on the sense of initiative, by 1.1 %
Problem solving attitude		0.77	0.012	Yes***	The programme has a positive impact on participants in their problem solving attitudes, by 1.6 %
Perception of immigration and minorities		0.78	0.02	Yes***	Programme participants are more open to immigration and minorities, with a difference of 2.6 %
Feelings towards learner's education organisation		0.72	0.025	Yes**	Programme participation increases the positive feelings towards their learning institutions by 3.5 %
Perceived value of education		0.61	0.05	Yes***	Their involvement in the programme appears to increase their perception of the value of education by 8.2 %
Short transition to employment		0.62	0.08	Yes**	Taking part in an Erasmus+ intervention appears to improve the transition from education to employment, with a 13 % increase in the indicator
Time to find a job		3.30	0.20	Yes***	Erasmus+ programme has a positive impact on transition from education to employment for those who participated, representing a 6 %

Note: numbers are rounded up to two decimals. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

6.4.3.2.2 Results of pre-post analysis for short-term mobility of pupils (and youth)

In addition to the comparison of learners' results after mobility with a control group (post survey), the evaluation team also implemented a pre-post survey for short-term mobility actions in schools (as part of KA2) and the youth sector (KA1 youth exchanges). The aim was to compare the evolution in results before and after the intervention. Unfortunately, despite best efforts, the sample size of pre-post responses to the youth survey was too small and the results are therefore not sufficiently reliable to be presented here (for transparency they are reported in the annex).

The pre-post analysis for pupils confirms the positive contribution of the programme in those result areas which are discussed below under sector-specific results. There are statistically significant differences in results across the pre- and post-survey of pupils in five areas, namely EU citizenship (+7 score points), digital competence (+4), racism and xenophobia (+3), self-confidence in education (+4), civic participation and volunteering (negative difference).

EU citizenship and attitudes towards racism and xenophobia are areas where the post survey of learners also showed significant differences for short-term actions in the school sector.

Languages and willingness to move are two further areas where some positive patterns are emerging, despite the results being not significant (higher share of respondents with skills at Level 4 in spoken interaction in the post survey, or higher share of respondents willing to move). These patterns are validated if comparing answers of pre-respondents with the answers of all school respondents in the learners' post survey.

However, the pre-post survey also shows that there is a significant difference between participants and the control group already at entry into the programme. In other words, participants have substantially different scores than non-participants. This suggests that there is likely to be selection into the programme at the level of schools. This is confirmed by the case studies, where some respondents noted that given that the whole class cannot participate in an exchange, the participation is seen as a certain form of reward. The following differences in participants' scores before mobility and the control group suggest that they have different profiles with regard to their levels of measured competences or attitudes.

- E+ participants more often already feel like EU citizens than the control group before going on mobility (+9 percentage points).
- E+ participants speak one other language than their mother tongue more often than the control group (+13 percentage points).
- Erasmus+ participants were more likely to agree that they have an organised approach to learning (+5 points in index score).
- E+ respondents had more positive perceptions of the value of their education (+4 points in index score).
- Erasmus+ participants have more positive attitudes towards their place of learning (+6 points in index score).
- E+ participants were more likely to agree with the statement on their confidence in their own education capacity 'If I put in enough effort, I can succeed in what I do'. No difference is to be reported on levels of agreement with the statement 'It is completely my choice whether or not I do well'.
- E+ participants had higher scores on the index capturing positive attitudes towards immigration and minorities (+6 points in index score).
- Cultural awareness was also higher for E+ participants, as measured by the index on attitudes towards interactions with different cultures (+7 points).
- E+ participants have scores on indexes mapping social and civic competences all in the range of 3 to 6 score points higher.
- E+ participants have a higher willingness to work or study abroad on a temporary basis – conversely more control group members prefer not to move. No difference exists when it comes to the willingness to work or study abroad on a permanent basis.
- The digital competence index is 5 points higher for E+ participants.
- A higher share of E+ participants were involved previously in civic or volunteering activities or alternatively were planning to get involved.

6.4.3.2.3 Main results as described by learners themselves

The surveys measure the relationship between participation in the programme and a predefined set of possible results, as defined by the evaluation team. These are the important results from the perspective of the programme performance. However, the learners themselves may judge the importance of what participation in the programme gave them completely differently. That is why during case studies, the evaluation team

asked beneficiaries to describe in their own words what the most important contribution of the programme was. They were asked to give three-word expressions or sentences.

Figure 6.13 shows the results of this exercise. In order to produce the figure the research team extracted all the mentions collected. These were subsequently coded into broader categories and testimonies falling into the same area were coded under the same word. In the image below the size of the font captures the frequency with which a given result was mentioned. Among the most cited results are:

- confidence;
- independence;
- language skills;
- intercultural awareness;
- skills in general; and
- open mindedness.

Figure 6.13 What do you see as the most important contribution of the programme for yourself?



Source: ICF case studies – interviews with learners. A total of 200 mentions or expressions were collected

6.4.3.3 School sector

Figure 6.14 shows that pupils who take part in Erasmus+ show more positive outcomes than pupils who don't in a number of areas, though the differences are rather small in some areas (see in yellow below). The results are connected to:

- European citizenship (having positive feelings towards the EU, feeling of being an EU citizen and being willing to live abroad);
- civic participation (perceived importance of political participation and community engagement);
- sense of initiative;
- learning to learn;
- attitude towards immigration and minorities and more generally intercultural awareness (being confident in interactions with people from different cultures);
- digital competence (use of online resources).

In other areas analysed the difference between the two groups was not significant.

The following observations can be made about the types of actions.

- The greatest range of results and clearer results are observed for learners who visit a school abroad (as opposed to those who received visiting pupils or who take part in eTwinning). Though the data shows that those pupils who receive pupils from other

countries also see a range of positive results, there is a challenge in interpreting this data as many pupils do both.

- Longer-duration exchanges (more than one month) are associated with a greater range of results.

The results below also indicate some trends about selection into the programme. As shown below there is a rather important difference in the share of pupils who have been involved in civic activities between the control group and the beneficiaries²³¹. This suggests that the participants in Erasmus+ actions tend to be more active prior to their participation in the programme. Similarly, the data suggests that pupils who speak several languages are more likely to participate in Erasmus+. There are significantly more pupils who take part in Erasmus+ and who speak three languages or more, and, on the other hand, there are significantly fewer beneficiaries who speak only one other language.

Figure 6.14 School sector: Areas with statistically significant difference between beneficiaries and control group of learners – breakdown by type of action

The values in the table show the difference between scores of Erasmus+ beneficiaries and the control group. Only those differences that are statistically significant are displayed

	All pupils	Visiting a school abroad	Receiving students from abroad	eTwinning	Other	Longer duration mobility (>1 month)	Short duration (<1 month)
Feeling as EU citizen		6.8					
Positive feelings towards the EU		3.2					
Willingness to work or study abroad (permanent basis)		6.6				13.4	
Perception of importance of civic participation	2.5		3.6	3.6	3.6		3.1
Attitude towards protest strategies			2.9				
Prior involvement in civic activities	7.1	6.9	11	7.6		7.9	7.1
Sense of initiative - new suggestions	2.7	2.5	3	3.6	3.8	3	
Problem solving attitude						2.9	2.6
Perception of immigration and minorities		2.5	3.7			3.5	
Learning to learn - learning strategies	1.8	2.1				3.4	
Positive interaction with people from different cultures	2.9	3.6	4			3.3	
Digital competence - use of online resources	3.4	4.4	2.8		3.8	9.6	2.8

Legend: the colour coding refers to the scale of difference between beneficiaries and control group

Source: ICF beneficiary surveys

6.4.3.4 VET sector

Participation in Erasmus+ actions in the VET sector is associated with a broad range of positive results, as shown in

²³¹ 74.7 % of beneficiaries were involved, while 67.6 % were in the control group.

Figure 6.15. Compared to other sectors, the difference between the results of beneficiaries and the control group is strong across a rather high number of indicators.

There are several outcomes for which clear positive difference has only been identified in the VET sector. In particular:

- self-confidence in one's education; and
- perceived value of education.

Furthermore, VET beneficiaries are also more likely to have positive feelings towards their learning institution or to use a range of learning to learn strategies. This suggests that for VET learners, participation in Erasmus+ is associated with strong educational outcomes. The above indicators suggest that VET beneficiaries have a more positive attitude to their education and training compared to the control group. Considering that the problem of early school leaving is particularly prominent in VET and given that a positive attitude to education and training is an important factor in retention, these findings could be significant. It cannot be excluded that this is observed due to selection into the programme rather than the actual participation in the programme. Nevertheless, the consistency across several indicators and the fact that these relationships are not observed so clearly for other target groups suggests that there is likely to be a relationship between participation and positive attitude to education.

In line with the above, VET beneficiaries are more likely to have completed their studies than the control group²³².

Mobility that is longer than one month is associated with a broader range of positive results than short-term mobility. eTwinning actions and other types of cooperation than mobility are also associated with a range of outcomes (more so than in other sectors).

²³² 96.9 % of VET beneficiaries who were outside education/training at the time of the survey completed their studies. This figure was 88.1 % in the VET control group, which however was very small for this segment (VET outside education and training), and 89.9 % in the overall control group.

Figure 6.15 VET sector: Areas with statistically significant difference between beneficiaries and control group of learners – breakdown by type of action

The values in the table show the difference between scores of Erasmus+ beneficiaries and the control group. Only those differences that are statistically significant are displayed

	Overall	Mobility for studies	Mobility for traineeships	eTwinning in VET	Other VET	Long mobility (>1 month)	Short mobility (<1 month)
Self-confidence in one's education results (if I put enough effort ...)	4.9	4.7	5.1	4.8		5.1	4.7
Self-confidence in one's education results (it is my choice whether ...)							7.3
Feeling as EU citizen				12.1			
Positive feelings towards the EU	8.6	9.6	8.5	11.5	9.6	10	6.4
Completion of studies			8			9.4	
Perception of importance of political participation				4.1			
Perception of importance of civic participation				5.8			
Attitude towards protest strategies					8		
Prior involvement in civic activities				11.8	14		
Sense of initiative - new suggestions	3.6	4.8	3.4	4.7		3.7	
Problem solving attitude	3.7	4.3	3.6		4.1	4.3	
Perception of immigration and minorities					6.7	5	
Learning to learn - learning strategies	4.4	6	4.2	5.4	4.2	4.8	3.8
Positive interaction with people from different cultures					8.2	5.6	
Digital competence - use of online resources	4.2	5.3			7.8	7.6	
Feeling towards their education organisation	6.7	7.2	6.7	5.8	5.9	7.2	6
Perceived value of education	4.8	4.6	5.3			5.4	4

Legend: the colour coding refers to the scale of difference between beneficiaries and control group

Source: ICF beneficiary surveys

6.4.3.5 Higher education sector

In the higher education sector, the analysis of survey data for beneficiaries found a strong association between participation in the programme and:

- feelings towards the EU as well as feeling of EU citizenship;
- completion of studies;
- willingness to work or study abroad;
- use of a range of digital resources;
- short transition to employment.

The study also found medium association with the two indicators on openness to other cultures and the indicators on learning to learn and problem solving.

Interestingly, the study found a negative association with past participation in civic activities, showing that beneficiaries were less engaged in civic and community activities in the past compared to the control group. They also attach less importance to such participation. There is however an earlier study which looked specifically at voting of

Erasmus graduates in European Parliament elections and found a positive relationship between being an Erasmus student and voting²³³.

There are minimum differences between participants in traineeships and those in studies. Short-term mobility is associated with fewer positive results but it is also in general significantly less common than long-term mobility.

Note that the indicator on transition to employment is not statistically significant for respondents from international higher education actions, as the number of respondents in this category who already completed their education and training was too small. Most were still studying at the time of the survey.

Figure 6.16 HE sector: Areas with statistically significant difference between beneficiaries and control group for learners – breakdown by type of action

The values in the table show the difference between scores of Erasmus+ beneficiaries and the control group. Only those differences that are statistically significant are displayed

	Overall	Studies	Traineeships	International	long term (>3 months)	short term (<3 months)
Feeling as EU citizen	12.3	14.4	9.5	14.1	14.1	
Positive feelings towards the EU	7.2	8.1	6.4	8.1	8.1	2.6
Completion of studies	6.7	9.5		9.3	9.3	-8.7
Willingness to work or study abroad (permanent basis)	7.8	7.5	11.4	7.7	7.7	8.4
Perception of importance of political participation			1.2			2.1
Perception of importance of civic participation	-4.5	-5.2	-2.5	-5.3	-5.3	
Attitude towards protest strategies			-2.1			-2.2
Prior involvement in civic activities	-5.5	-4.2	-6.5	-4.5	-4.5	-10.8
Sense of initiative - new suggestions		1.4	2.1	1.5	1.5	
Problem solving attitude	2.3	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.8	
Perception of immigration and minorities	3.8	4.9	1.8	4.8	4.8	
Learning to learn - learning strategies			2.1			1.9
Positive interaction with people from different cultures		1.9		1.9	1.9	-3
Digital competence - use of online resources	5	6.3	3.1	6.4	6.4	-2.7
Short transition to employment	19.6	20.7	17.7	20	20	17.4

Legend: the colour coding refers to the scale of difference between beneficiaries and control group

Source: ICF beneficiary surveys

The DEVCO evaluation of international cooperation actions in higher education²³⁴ confirmed the positive effects of the programme on employability of graduates also for those coming from partner countries. This confirms the analysis shown above based on ICF beneficiary surveys.

6.4.3.6 Youth sector

Like for other sectors, in the youth sector participation in Erasmus+ is associated with stronger willingness to work or study abroad than within the control group (see Figure

²³³ Generation Europe Foundation (2014), *Erasmus Voting Assessment Project*, Brussels.

²³⁴ Particip (2017) *Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014)*

6.17). However, interestingly the participation for this target group is not associated with stronger attachment to the EU. This needs to be put into perspective though, as the target group of young people engaged in youth organisations in general expresses highly positive attitude towards the EU – i.e. the scores of the control group are also strongly positive.

Unsurprisingly, beneficiaries in this strand score much higher on the indicators related to civic and political engagement than the other groups of beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries. Beneficiaries in the youth strand have even higher scores than the control group of those engaged in youth activities but who did not take part in Erasmus+.

This group of young people also generally score higher than the other groups with regard to indicators on openness to other cultures, but the differences between beneficiaries and the target group are relatively minor.

However, participation in activities under the youth strand is not associated with shorter transition to employment. In fact, a relatively large share of the beneficiaries experience a significantly longer transition period than their non-mobile counterparts²³⁵. The transition periods for this group of young people are in general substantially longer than for VET or higher education graduates²³⁶, but the differences between beneficiaries and the control group are not in favour of the beneficiaries.

Figure 6.17 Youth sector: Areas with statistically significant difference between beneficiaries and control group for learners – breakdown by type of action

The values in the table show the difference between scores of Erasmus+ beneficiaries and the control group. Only those differences that are statistically significant are

²³⁵ 14 % of beneficiaries took more than a year to transition to employment while this figure was 6 % in the control group.

²³⁶ While over 70 % of respondents in the VET and HE sector took fewer than three months to find a job, this figure was only 64.7 % in the control group for youth and even smaller, 53 %, among the beneficiaries.

displayed

	All	youth exchanges	EVS	Long term (>1 month)	Short term (<1 month)
Self-confidence in one's education results (it is my choice whether ...)					5.8
Willingness to work or study abroad (permanent basis)			11.1	10.2	
Lack of willingness to work or study abroad				-6.4	
Perception of importance of political participation	3	3.4			4
Perception of importance of civic participation	5.3	5.8	4.5	3	7.1
Attitude towards protest strategies	3.6	3.6	3.5	2.9	4.4
Sense of initiative - new suggestions	2.6	3.4			4.1
Perception of immigration and minorities			3.1	2.8	
Learning to learn - learning strategies	2.3	2.6			2.7
Short transition to employment	-11.7		-14		-13.5

Legend: the colour coding refers to the scale of difference between beneficiaries and control group

Source: ICF beneficiary surveys

6.4.4 Findings of the literature review confirm the trends identified above

The evaluation analysed a high volume of literature on the effects of predecessor programmes or parts of the programme (see section on methodology).

The evidence from other studies confirms the breadth and depth of results for individual learners. Overall evidence points to the conclusion that EU actions in different sectors of education, youth and sport have produced positive impact, especially in relation to improving competences and skills in education and enhancing the European outlook of participants. There is less evidence of positive impact in the adult learning sector. Very strong evidence suggests that benefits for individual learners are especially visible in actions in school education, VET, higher education and youth.

Note that in this context little evidence means that a given level of influence is not sufficiently documented. It does not mean that the absence of results is documented. It could be that a given effect is simply not researched.

Table 6.16 Overview of results and impacts for learners as identified by the literature review

(Sub)field	Results for which there is strong evidence	Results for which there is some evidence
School education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils who benefited from partnerships have higher degree of independence, motivation and self-confidence, better communication skills, increased enthusiasm for learning European languages Pupils' participation in a Comenius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils after mobility programmes have higher expectations towards teachers, positive beliefs about school, and increased enthusiasm for learning Pupils after mobility

	<p>school partnership helped to increase interest in other European countries and their cultures, fewer prejudices against other cultures</p>	<p>programmes have higher degree of independence, volunteering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in cross-cutting key skills, including Information Communication and Technology (ICT) skills • Improvement in cooperation with others, responsibility, creativity
VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A great majority of participants of a Leonardo mobility programme have enhanced their key competences • Improvement in foreign language skills and enhancement of cultural skills are most commonly reported as outcomes of mobility schemes • Mobility increases team competences and interaction skills, improves autonomy and adaptability of students • Mobility improves ICT skills • Mobility improves sense of belonging to the EU • Employability of participants is increased • More than half of participants report improved professional skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and study abroad triggers the willingness to further improve foreign language skills • Work and study abroad impacts future mobility in professional life • Improved flexibility, adaptability improved adaptation to a multicultural environment • The strengthening of occupational skills usually comes after a longer experience of studying and working abroad (six months or more)
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vast majority of students report improvement in their soft skills, e.g. ability to interact and work with individuals from different cultures, adaptability, foreign language proficiency and communication skills • Mobility increases self-confidence, autonomy and adaptability • Mobility improves sense of belonging to the EU • Students taking part in mobility demonstrate stronger willingness to work or study abroad than other peers, and are more likely to work abroad • Unemployment rate among Erasmus alumni is 23 % lower than among their fellow graduates • Erasmus alumni get employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More improvement was reported in foreign language skills in languages closer to the students' mother tongue • The programme was perceived as of higher value for students from Central and Eastern European countries • At the same level of diploma, with the same social background and gender, the impact of Erasmus experience abroad on the speed of placement in the labour market and on initial salary disappears

	<p>placements faster than their peers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work placements had a specifically direct effect on employment 	
Adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little evidence on impact of adult learning mobility programmes for learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impact on communication skills, confidence in using a foreign language and intercultural skills was noted in one study
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ According to a number of impact studies, youth mobility programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved personal development and social capital • boosted development of key competences and skills (especially foreign languages) • enhanced employability and career prospects • increased participation in civic and political life • improved sense of belonging to the EU • increased intercultural awareness and understanding • improved sense of social responsibility and solidarity <p>Young people taking part in mobility demonstrate stronger willingness to work or study abroad than other peers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers and ex-EVS volunteers tend to believe that volunteering with EVS improves job prospects

Table 6.17 Strengths of evidence about the results at learner level of different types of actions

(Sub-)field	Results of mobility actions	Results of projects of cooperation	Other types of actions (eTwinning, etc.)
School education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough evidence on the impact of mobility on learners in school education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong evidence that partnership actions where learners are direct participants have positive impact on independence, motivation and self-confidence, better communication skills, increased enthusiasm for learning European languages, interest in other European countries and their cultures 	

VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence that mobility programmes have enhanced learners' key competences, sense of belonging to the EU, have positive impact on employability and professional skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence of impact of transnational partnerships on learners 	
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence of the effect of student mobility on the learners (skills, employability, labour mobility). This concerns both mobility for studies and mobility for work placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence of impact of transnational partnerships on learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence of impact of Erasmus Mundus on employability and labour mobility
Adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence of the effect of mobility actions on adult learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence of impact of transnational partnerships on learners 	
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence of positive effect of mobility on personal development, social capital, key competences and employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As all Youth in Action mobility projects are also transnational partnerships, see evidence on mobility in left column 	

6.4.5 Individual results for practitioners based on Erasmus+ monitoring surveys

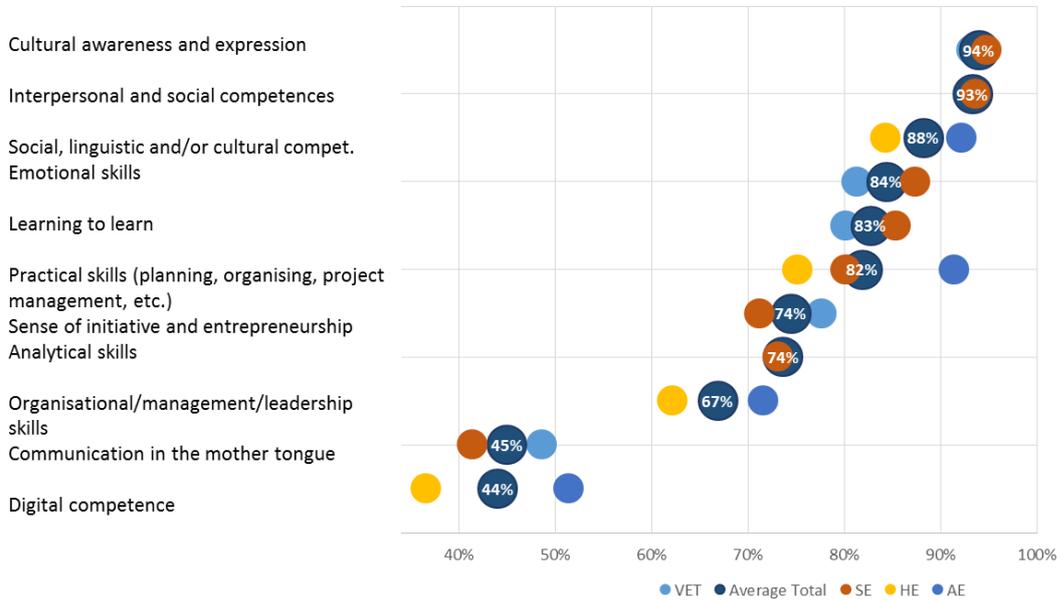
Erasmus+ monitoring surveys ask about the contribution of the mobility experience to competence development of practitioners. As a reminder, this survey is only administered for beneficiaries of KA1. The surveys across the different sectors are not standardised and do not contain the same questions about competences for all practitioners. That is why the chart below does not display systematically all sectors.

Analysis of the monitoring survey of practitioners shows that:

- for most of the competences the differences across sectors are minor;
- teachers mostly value the softer competences (intercultural awareness, interpersonal and social competences); however, a substantial number also believe participation in the programme improved their practical skills such as project management or organisation.

Only a small share believe that their communication skills in their mother tongue improved, but equally this is not expected to be the contribution of the programme. Interestingly, a minority also believe the programme improved their digital competence while according to the survey findings presented below, practitioner beneficiaries more often use a variety of digital resources than other groups.

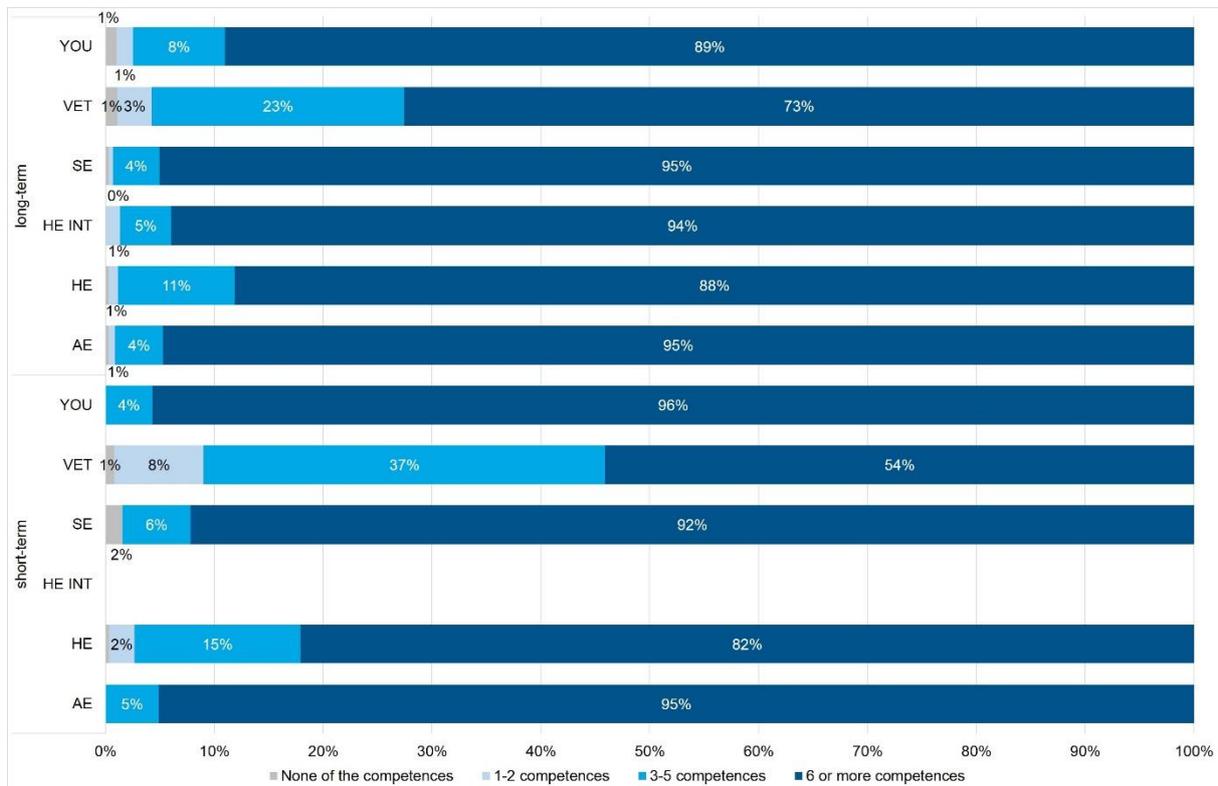
Figure 6.18 The share of practitioners who strongly agree or agree that they developed a given key competence or skill



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys. This is a multiple answer question therefore the data does not add up to 100 %. Please note that in the case of HE and AE the practical skills are worded as follows: Sector-specific or practical skills relevant for my current job and professional development (n= 227,319)

As shown in the chart below, 87 % of practitioners in all sectors state that the programme helped them improve in six or more competences. Respondents from the VET sector are least enthusiastic about the contribution of the programme to competence development.

Figure 6.19 Share of practitioners who declare having improved six or more competences



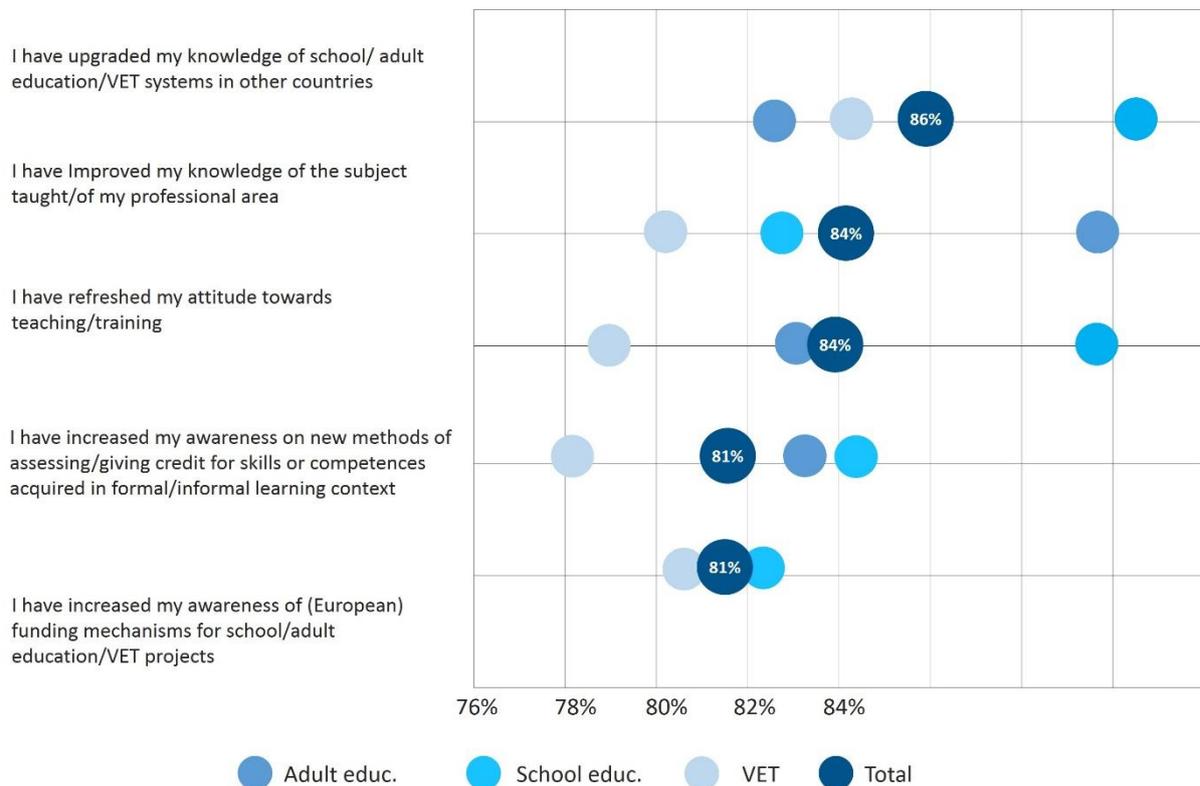
Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys (n= 165,566)
 Long-term: n (VET)= 19,488; n (SE)= 25,215; n (HE INT)= 149; n (HE)= 68,247; n (AE)= 6,667; n (Y)=42,668
 Short-term: n (VET)= 122; n (SE)= 64; n (HE)= 905; n (AE)= 41

In addition to competence development, a very high share of practitioners believe that they improved their professional skills in all surveyed areas. Figure 6.20 shows that more than 80 % of practitioners believe that their professional skills were improved. Aspects reaching very high satisfaction levels (above 90 %) are:

- development of the subject taught for adult learning practitioners;
- refreshing practitioners' attitude towards teaching for school practitioners;
- upgrading knowledge of school systems in other countries for school practitioners.

On these indicators VET practitioners are the least enthusiastic.

Figure 6.20 Practitioner professional development



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

6.4.6 Individual results for practitioners based on primary data collection

The intervention logic of Erasmus+ anticipates that the programme will strengthen the quality of education, training and youth work by providing opportunities for competence development of practitioners as well as by supporting exchanges and sharing and learning about what works. It anticipates that practitioners will acquire new skills and competences but also understanding of new ways of working and that these will be transferred into practice, thus changing their educational approaches.

Participation in Erasmus+ is associated with a range of results for practitioners; in particular, at programme level one can see clear positive association, with continued exchanges with colleagues/peers from other countries. Other areas where clear statistically significant results have been measured are the feeling of being EU citizens and being active in civil and volunteering activities, as well as use of online resources (digital competence).

While there are clear benefits identified for practitioners taking part in terms of their own development, there appears to be little evidence of clear shifts in pedagogical approaches and daily practices.

The summary of the main areas with significant differences between the control group and beneficiaries are presented in the figure below.

For some of the overall result areas, the overall indexes used did not show statistical difference but there were interesting patterns nevertheless in the detailed questions, which are discussed below.

Before presenting the sector-specific findings, this section summarises the programme-level findings.

Figure 6.21 Overview of main results for practitioners

Large positive difference	Medium positive difference	Statistically significant yet small positive difference	Medium negative difference
Networking - frequent contact with foreign counterparts	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

6.4.6.1 Programme -level findings

The recognition of participation for practitioners is less explicit than for learners. While practitioners do develop through participation in the programme, as discussed below, this is not systematically valued in their home institutions

The Commission beneficiary monitoring surveys collect data on the degree of recognition received by learners after their participation in mobility actions. There is no such data on practitioners.

The surveys implemented through this evaluation therefore asked questions about recognition for practitioners taking part in the programme. The survey asked Erasmus+ participants the extent to which they agree or disagree with six different statements on how their experience had been recognised and whether it had any influence on their careers.

Overall, the findings suggest the following.

- Practitioner participation had been acknowledged by institutions and/or peers in most cases (58 % of respondents agreed with this statement), and around one in four respondents (26 %) reported receiving a financial reward or compensation (in addition to the project grant).
- In the large majority of cases (85 %), respondents agreed that their involvement in Erasmus+ had been accepted by their institution as training and part of their professional development.
- Almost half of respondents (49 %) agreed that their participation in Erasmus+ had made no difference to their careers, while a small number of respondents (12 %) agreed that the experience had had a negative influence on their careers. However, almost half of respondents (45 %) agreed that their experience had helped them to attain a new function or new level of seniority within their institution.

Specific findings for the school sector

Participation in Erasmus+ was more likely to be recognised by schools and peers (63 % agreed with this statement), compared to the overall average.

- School practitioners were also more likely to agree that their experience had been accepted as training and part of their professional development by their institution (89 %), compared to the overall average, particularly for those undertaking teaching or training activities abroad.
- The responses also suggested that school practitioners were less likely than average to have received a financial reward (21 % agreed with this statement) or for the experience to have helped them attain a new function or new level of seniority within their school (36 %).

Results specific to vocational education and training

- More than half of VET practitioners (52 %) agreed that their participation had had no influence on their careers. This was the highest of all sectors and was particularly high for those participating in short-term assignments and placements with companies abroad.
- VET practitioners were the least likely across all sectors to agree that their participation in Erasmus+ had helped them to attain a new function or new level of seniority within their institution (only 41 % agreed with this statement). They were also the least likely to state that they had received a financial reward (only 21 % agreed with this statement). This was particularly the case for VET practitioners participating in short-term activities.
- In contrast, however, VET practitioners were relatively likely to agree that their participation had been acknowledged by their institutions and peers (62 %) and had been accepted as training or professional development (86 %).

Specific results for the higher education sector

- The responses suggest that HE practitioners were more likely to have received a financial reward (28 % agreed with this statement), compared to the overall average, particularly for those participating in long-term activities.
- However, the responses suggest that HE institutions were the least likely of all sectors to have acknowledged the participation of their practitioners (only 53 % of HE practitioners agreed with this statement) and the least likely to have accepted the experience as training or professional development (83 % of HE practitioners agreed with this statement). Agreement was particularly low for HE practitioners who went abroad to teach.
- HE practitioners were also less likely, compared to the overall average, to state that the experience had influenced their careers, or helped them to attain a new function or new level of seniority within their institution.

Specific findings for the youth sector

- The responses suggest that participation in Erasmus+ had delivered the greatest influence for practitioners in the youth sector. Youth practitioners were the least likely to agree that their participation had made no difference to their careers (only 35 %).
- More than two thirds of youth practitioners (68 %) agreed that their participation had helped them to attain a new function or new level of seniority within their institution. This is higher than any other sector and was particularly high for youth practitioners working abroad, or undertaking traineeships/job shadowing with another youth organisation.
- Youth practitioners were also the most likely of all sectors to agree that: they had received a financial reward for participating in the programme (31 %); and that their

participation had been acknowledged by their institutions (70 %) and been accepted as training or professional development (89 %). Agreement was again particularly high among youth practitioners working abroad, or undertaking traineeships/job shadowing with another youth organisation.

Specific findings for the adult education sector

- The responses suggest that participation in Erasmus+ had delivered relatively positive influences for practitioners in the adult education sector. Adult education practitioners were the least likely of all sectors to agree that their participation had a negative influence on their careers (only 9 %).
- Adult education practitioners were also relatively likely to agree that their participation had: been acknowledged by their institutions and peers (65 %); been accepted as training or professional development (87 %); and had helped them to attain a new function or new level of seniority within their institution (48 %).
- In contrast, adult education practitioners were relatively less likely to agree that they had received a financial reward as a result of their participation (only 23 %). There was also significant variation in terms of the financial rewards received by practitioners participating in different types of mobility, ranging from only 22 % of those attending training abroad to 44 % of those participating in long-term SP assignments.

Specific findings for the sport sector

- Practitioners in the sport sector were relatively likely to agree that: their institution had acknowledged their participation (69 %); they had received a financial reward (31 %); and their participation had helped them to attain a new function or new level of seniority within their institution (66 %).

Development of skills, competences and attitudes

As for learners, participation in Erasmus+ is expected to contribute to the development of competences of practitioners in education, training and sport organisations. As discussed above, many practitioners say that they see a contribution of programme participation to their development in a range of skills and competence areas. The results of the beneficiaries surveys show more lukewarm findings compared to the reported self-perception of beneficiaries during Commission monitoring surveys.

In many of the areas related to skills, competences and attitudes covered by the survey, the difference in results between beneficiaries and the control group were small. At programme level, the main difference concerns attitude to civic participation and volunteering and feeling towards the EU, followed by digital competence and use of a range of online resources.

The survey also found a major difference between the number of languages spoken and the degree of fluency between beneficiaries, practitioners and the control group. However, it is not possible to conclude from this data that the difference is due to the programme. An important share of practitioner beneficiaries are foreign language teachers. Even among those practitioners who are not foreign language teachers, a sufficient degree of proficiency is highly likely to be a needed to take part in the programme. The proportion of beneficiary practitioners who spoke at least two languages was significantly higher than in the overall EU population and in the highly educated segment of the EU population²³⁷. Note that the proportion of respondents who spoke at

²³⁷ 57.5 % of all practitioners surveyed spoke at least two languages while this figure is 25 % in the EU overall and 42 % among highly educated people, according to the 2012 Eurobarometer study. European Commission (2012), *Europeans and their language. Special Eurobarometer 386*.

least two languages in the control group was comparable to the highly educated segment of the EU population²³⁸.

The analysis of OLS data for students showed that improvements in foreign language skills are greatest at lower levels of proficiency. However, according to the ICF survey of practitioners, there are relatively few practitioners who take part in Erasmus+ actions with low levels of foreign language skills (8.3 % of practitioners are at levels A1 and A2, while this is true of 13.2 % of the control group). Given that the programme largely serves the audience of practitioners who are already proficient, it is likely that its contribution to foreign language skills for practitioners is modest and is rather about maintaining the same level and practising rather than moving one level up on the CEFR scale.

There were several areas where the survey found little or no difference between beneficiaries and the control group. In a few cases the difference was in fact negative (i.e. in favour of the control group). These findings however have to be interpreted carefully because:

- (i) they were found in areas where the scores of both treatment group and control group were high; and
- (ii) they are possibly due to the mode of recruitment of the control group for practitioners (self-selection into the survey), which means that respondents are likely to be from the more motivated and engaged group.

Areas where little or no difference was found are as follows.

- Planned future civic engagement (active citizenship) (no difference).
- Attitudes related to immigration and minorities – in a few types of actions the difference was negative, meaning that the control group actually had higher scores than the beneficiaries. However, overall the scores were high for both beneficiaries and the control group.
- Attitudes towards people from different cultures/confident interaction with people from different cultures – as above the differences were low or even negative but overall scores were high across both groups.

The evaluation team ran a series of regressions where the dependent variable was the final score on a given result area and the independent variables were various background characteristics as well as participation in the programme. Participation in the programme was identified as a variable that is associated with a higher score for the following.

- Higher score of digital competence (use of a variety of online resources).
- Higher index that measured past participation and volunteering (suggesting that it is the practitioners who are engaged and active who are more likely to take part in the programme).
- Stronger feeling of belonging to the EU.
- More advanced foreign language skills – the fact that Erasmus+ beneficiaries more frequently have higher levels of foreign language skills suggests that speaking a foreign language at a good level is likely to be a criterion to take part in the programme. It is unlikely to be a clear result of the programme when looking at this specific indicator.

There are notable differences between sectors (ranging from 45 % in VET to 66 % in youth), but in all sectors the share is above 45 %.

²³⁸ 46 % of the control group spoke at least two languages compared to 45 % of highly educated Europeans.

- Stronger perceived importance of active citizenship (attitude to political engagement, community engagement and protest actions).

6.4.6.2 Quasi-experimental approach to analyse the data

In a similar manner as for learners, the evaluation team used a quasi-experimental approach to analyse the survey data to make an estimate of a counterfactual.

The analysis was done on several indicators for which descriptive statistics showed significant difference with the control group.

The results confirm that, even when controlling for background variables and when assessing the expected results according to the profile of respondents, the participation in the programme is indeed associated with positive results on several indicators. These are indeed the same as those reported above. More specifically:

- Participation in the programme increases practitioners' continued exchanges with peers from abroad by 56 %.
- The intensity and size of transnational partnerships appear positively impacted by taking part in the programme. There is a 15.7 % increase in the index indicator associated.

One main caveat to bear in mind is that the sample size of the control group was small (928) compared to the treatment group (20,155). Hence, some of the treatment effect estimation might be affected by this issue, depending on the sample, which may slightly vary by outcome variable.

Table 6.18 Results of counterfactual analysis

Result area (indicator)	Potential outcome mean in control group	Average treatment effect on the treated	Is the difference statistically significant?	Conclusions
Feeling European	0.61	0.05	Yes**	The treatment effect on people taking part of the Erasmus+ programme shows a positive and significant effect on the sense of belonging to the EU, with an increase of around 8.2 %
Positive feelings towards the EU	0.83	0.01	Yes*	The positive feeling indicator has a 1.2 % positive impact on the feeling towards the EU within those taking part in the programme
Racism and xenophobia	0.82	-0.01	No	<i>This indicator is not statistically significant</i>
Cultural awareness	0.86	0.01	Yes**	The programme seems to have impacted positively this indicator by 1.2 %. Interestingly, this is at odds with the lack of significance and sign of the previous indicator. However, it is important to note that sample composition might slightly vary with the outcome indicator
Digital competence	0.56	0.04	Yes***	The experience has a positive impact on digital competence by 7.14 %
Motivation for one's job, job satisfaction and retention	0.77	0.01	Yes*	Programme participation had a positive impact on the motivation for one's job and retention by 1.30 %
Teaching practice	0.47	0.20	No	<i>This indicator is not statistically significant</i>
Quality of youth work	0.09	-0.01	No	<i>This indicator is not statistically significant</i>
Transnational partnership	0.70	0.11	Yes***	The intensity and size of transnational partnership seems positively impacted by taking part in the programme, by 15.7 %
Continued exchange with international network	0.39	0.22	Yes***	The frequency of exchange and contact with international network within the participating group appears to be impacted by a considerable magnitude, with a 56 % increase

Note: numbers are rounded up to two decimals. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

- The differences between beneficiaries and the control group on this indicator are only significant for the school sector and VET.
- While the scores are rather similar for practitioners in the school sector, VET and higher education, they are significantly lower for practitioners from the youth sector (lowest), sport or adult education.

Perceived importance of political and community engagement as well as of protest actions:

- The scores on this indicator are highest in the youth sector.
- They are higher for longer-term exchanges than other types of actions even though in some cases short-term exchanges also see a high score (adult education and youth).
- eTwinning is associated with high scores in VET but less clearly in the school sector.

6.4.6.5 Other results

Strong international networking associated with programme participation

The survey asked respondents how often they cooperate with international colleagues and what methods they use to maintain contact and share information with people and organisations from abroad. Overall, the findings suggest that:

- Practitioners that participated in Erasmus+ are significantly more likely to have frequent contact with international colleagues (61 %), compared to non-participants (39 %). In all sectors the differences between participants and non-participants are large.
- Erasmus+ participants are also significantly more likely than non-participants to: work in collaboration with international colleagues on other projects (75 % of participants compared to 61 % of non-participants); exchange information relating to their profession (71 % of participants compared to 53 % of non-participants); and keep international colleagues up to date about relevant developments (58 % for participants compared to 42 % for non-participants).

Notable sector-specific findings are:

- VET and school practitioners are in general least likely to maintain frequent international contacts. The difference with the share of respondents with active international networks in higher education, youth and sport is around 30 p.p.
- The degree of international cooperation among beneficiaries is high in higher education, youth and sport across all the indicators.

Job satisfaction

The survey also asked a set of questions about respondents' job satisfaction. The rationale of this question was to understand whether the programme contributes to enhancing practitioners' retention by improving job satisfaction. Unfortunately, the data for this response is not clear-cut as respondents' job satisfaction was high in both groups (beneficiaries and non-respondents), which is likely due, at least partially, to the sampling approach (self-selection into the survey and administration via email).

Overall, the findings suggest that:

- The majority of respondents agreed that they are motivated and satisfied with their jobs and their performance. This was true of both Erasmus+ participants in the target group and non-participants in the control group.
- Participants in Erasmus+ activities are statistically significantly more likely to have higher motivation and job satisfaction than non-participants. However, the difference in index values is small.

- The difference is greatest for practitioners from the higher education sector.

Overall, 93 % of beneficiary practitioners stated that:

- if they could decide again they would still choose to work as <their current role>;
- they are satisfied with their performance as <current role>;
- all in all they are satisfied with their job.

However, the values are also high for the control group.

The values are high (above 90 %) across all the sectors. It cannot be inferred from this data that the programme contributes to job satisfaction. It is likely that at least some of this difference is a result of the selection – i.e. more motivated practitioners are more likely to participate. This is however not necessarily a bad thing as:

- high levels of motivation (which is linked to job satisfaction) are more likely to result in deeper changes as a result of programme participation; and
- they are also more likely to result in better results for learners who are indirect beneficiaries (i.e. not those taking part in mobility but those exposed to practitioners having participated in the programme).

Teaching practices to improve attainment of learners and attention paid to disadvantaged groups

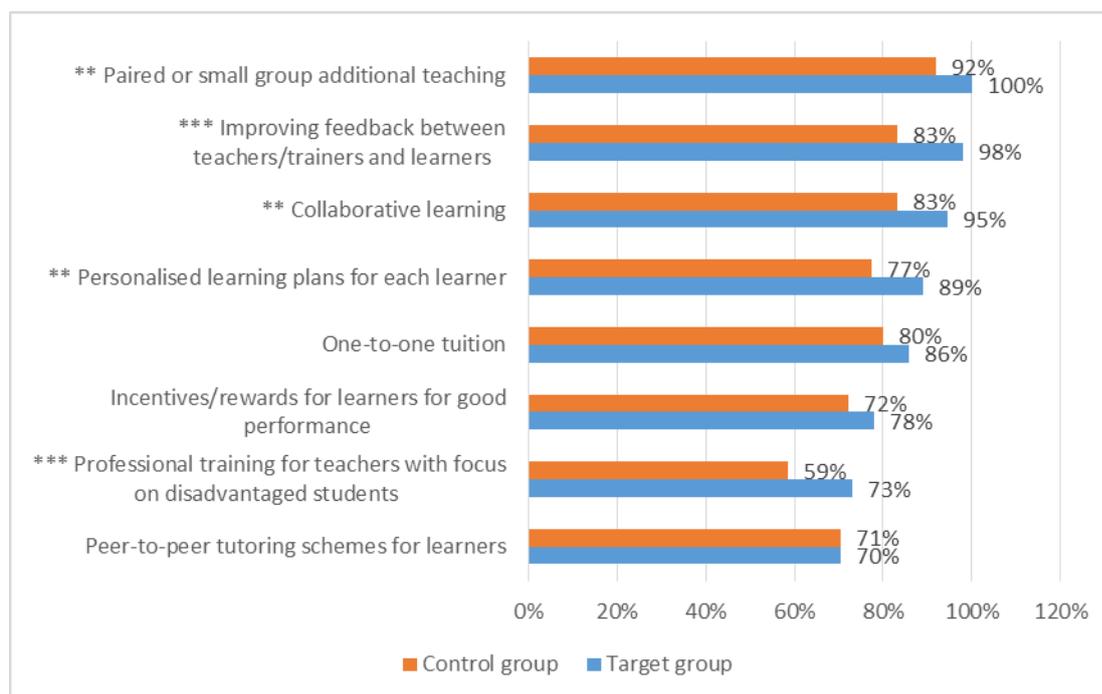
Respondents in the education and training sector were asked about the extent to which they used a set of teaching practices that are proved to improve education outcomes of learners. Overall:

- The respondents typically used around half of the eight teaching methods covered by the survey. This was true of both Erasmus+ participants and non-participants.
- The findings suggest that there is a small difference and that Erasmus+ participants are slightly more likely to use a wider range of teaching methods compared to non-participants.
- The difference between control group and beneficiaries is highest in the school sector. This is also the sector where the use of these methods is most common.

The survey also found that few beneficiaries pay specific attention to disadvantaged groups during their experiences. Approximately one in five practitioner participants (19 %) stated that their mobility activity had a specific focus on disadvantaged groups. Their number was highest in the sport and youth sectors and lowest in the higher education sector.

This indicator is based on an index of several practices which are considered as beneficial to support integration of disadvantaged groups and more generally learner focused (based on TALIS). While the overall results for the index are not always statistically significant, there are interesting trends when looking at the individual subquestions in the school sector, as shown below. In particular there is a statically significant difference in the share of practitioners who state having improved feedback between teachers and learners and implemented professional training with a focus on disadvantaged groups.

Figure 6.23 Use of practices supporting integration of disadvantaged groups in the school sector



Intercultural competence and openness to other cultures

As stated above, the Erasmus+ monitoring surveys show that most practitioners believe participation in the programme contributed to their intercultural competence. The surveys did not find a statistically significant difference in this area with the control group. However, this could be linked to the recruitment mode for the control group.

Though there is no statistically significant difference with the control group, it is worthwhile noting that the survey results for the beneficiaries on the overall index as well as the subquestions are particularly high. More than 90 % of beneficiary practitioners agree or strongly agree with the following statements (this is the case overall but also across the sectors):

- I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures (99 % overall).
- If I cannot use words, I often show my understanding through signs and gestures when interacting with people from different cultures (90 % overall).
- All ethnic and racial groups should have an equal chance to get a good education in my country (97 % overall).
- Schools should teach students to respect members of all ethnic and racial groups (98 % overall).
- It is a good thing for any society to be made up of people from different races, religions and cultures (94 % overall).
- Young people benefit from being in contact with their peers of other origins or beliefs (96 % overall).

However, around one third of practitioner respondents also agree or strongly agree with negative statements on openness to other cultures:

- Immigrant people and people from minority groups abuse the system of social benefits (31 % overall).
- My country has reached its limits; if there were to be more migrant people or people belonging to minority groups there would be problems (31 % overall).

With regard to the latter two statements there are significant differences between the responses provided by beneficiaries in the youth sector and adult education sector, who show lower levels of agreement (around 26 %).

6.4.7 Findings from the literature review

Similarly to learners, there is also clear existing evidence that practitioners have benefited in the sectors of school education, VET, higher education and youth.

Across several sectors of education, findings from a number of studies point to improved teaching methods and practices, as well as improved social competences and positive impact on motivation for cooperation and developing a professional network. Also, here, evidence of the impact in the adult learning sector is somewhat scarce.

Table 6.19 Overview of results and impacts for practitioners as identified by the literature review

(Sub)field	Results for which there is strong evidence	Results for which there is some evidence
School education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of teaching assistants after mobility programmes showed more individual approach to learners Participation in school partnerships has led to improved social competences (e.g. leadership) and language skills of practitioners Vast majority of practitioners believe partnership schemes improved their teaching methods and practices Vast majority of eTwinning participants have improved their competences and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in assistantship programmes improved communication and collaboration skills Mobility of practitioners led to increase in cultural awareness, understanding, and acceptance
VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive impact on didactic techniques and methods of practitioners Mobile practitioners develop their social and professional networks more than others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VET professionals who participated in mobility actions have a strong motivation to develop mobility projects Enhanced career prospects, a higher income, or more responsibility at work for mobility participants
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vast majority of mobile practitioners report an increase in their knowledge of good practices and skills to the benefit of their home HEI Beneficial effects on the quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students report that mobility of practitioners improves teaching practice and knowledge of subject areas, as well as foreign languages

(Sub)field	Results for which there is strong evidence	Results for which there is some evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> of teaching and on multi-disciplinary and cross-organisational cooperation in teaching Evidence of positive impact on language skills of practitioners Substantially stronger relationship of mobile practitioners towards Europe 	
Adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some evidence of positive impact of mobility on adult learning practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of mobile practitioners reported positive impact on knowledge of other countries, majority of assistantship beneficiaries reported improved language skills Effect on practitioners in relation to learning and competence development was generally higher for the beneficiaries of assistantships in comparison to those in visits and exchanges
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vast majority of youth workers who took part in transnational projects involving mobility gained competences, skills and knowledge Majority of youth workers stated their participation in training, cooperation and networking activities under the youth programmes led to their involvement in European network of trainers/youth workers 	
Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No strong evidence of impact at individual level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some evidence of positive impact on social inclusion of disabled
Jean Monnet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No strong evidence of impact at individual level 	

Table 6.20 Strengths of evidence about the results at practitioners level of different types of actions

(Sub)field	Results of mobility actions	Results of cooperation projects	Other types of actions (eTwinning, etc.)
School education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited evidence of impact of mobility (assistantships) on teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence of impact of partnerships on teaching methods and practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of positive impact of eTwinning on participants' competences and skills
VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence of impact of mobility on teaching methods and practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not sufficient evidence of impact of transnational partnerships on practitioners 	
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence of impact on quality of teaching, language skills and relationship to Europe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient evidence of impact of transnational projects 	
Adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some evidence of positive impact on practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficiently strong evidence of impact 	
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence of positive impact on youth workers' skills and competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth transnational projects and mobility projects are the same, see column on the left 	
Sport	No strong evidence of impact at individual level		
Jean Monnet	No strong evidence of impact at individual level		

6.4.8 Specific remarks about collaborative platforms (example of eTwinning)

The above findings for learners and practitioners summarise data for all types of actions. However, given the specificity of collaborative platforms as a type of action funded under Erasmus+ (and predecessor programmes), it was decided to provide a specific section summarising key messages for platforms.

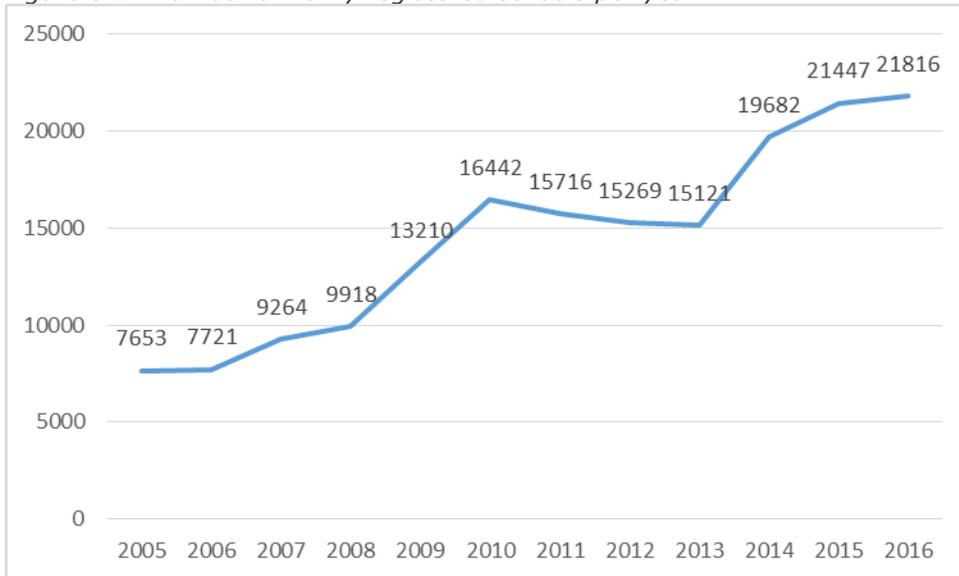
The data to inform this section concerns primarily eTwinning, which has the greatest reach in terms of participants and the longest tradition. Some more general considerations are presented at the end.

6.4.8.1 Reach of eTwinning

The eTwinning programme reaches out to a large number of teachers and pupils; in fact, the number of schools, teachers and other schools practitioners is increasing every year. eTwinning therefore has strong capacity to attract even more users in the future. Figure

6.24 shows how many new schools registered per year to eTwinning. We can see that the number of newly registered schools increases every year with the exception of the years 2011–2013. On the other hand, since the new programme period in 2014 we can see a significant increase in the number of registered schools per year. In total, by 2016 there were 173,259 registered schools.

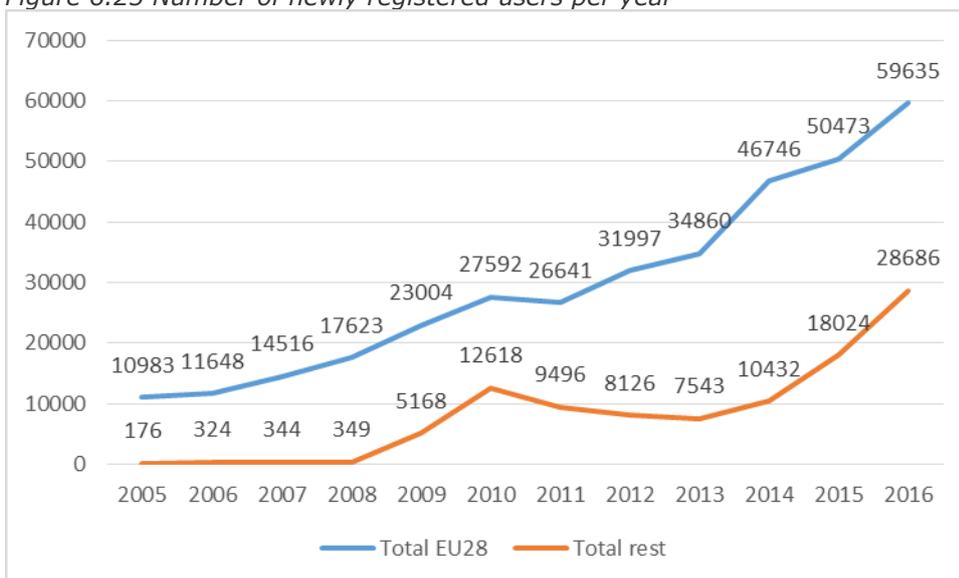
Figure 6.24 Number of newly registered schools per year



Source: ICF analysis based on CSS monitoring data

The following figure shows the number of newly registered users per year. We can see that the number of registered teachers and other schools practitioners is increasing every year, in the EU countries and also beyond. As is the case with newly registered schools, there is a stagnation between 2011 and 2013 but under the Erasmus+ programme the number of registered users is sharply increasing.

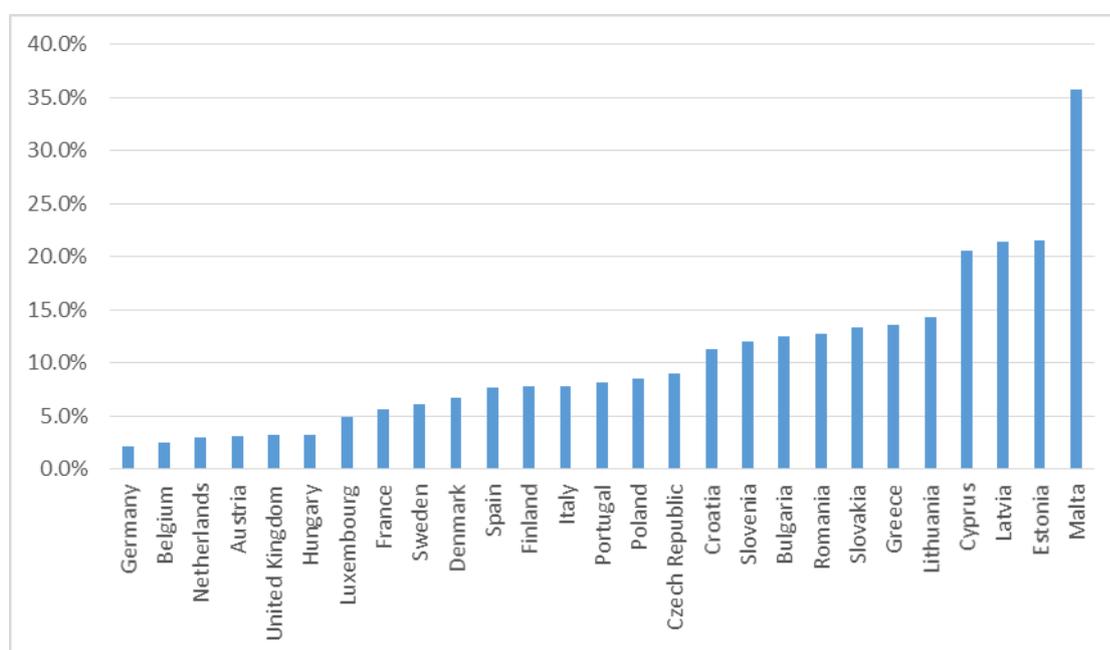
Figure 6.25 Number of newly registered users per year



Source: ICF analysis based on CSS monitoring data

Thanks to this steep growth in registered users, eTwinning in fact managed to reach a large share of teachers per country. In some countries (see Figure 6.26), eTwinning seems to be reaching more than 20 % of all teachers in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels. This calculation is made based on CSS data on registered users (teachers) per country and Eurostat data on the overall population. The graph shows that the share ranges from 2.2 % in Germany to more than 35 % in Malta. It does not mean that the registered users actually actively take part in a project every year. The number of teachers that took part in at least one European project in 2016 is 29,752, which is a lot less than the number of registered users. However, there are an additional 12,394 users in the same year who took part in national projects.

Figure 6.26 Indicator number of teachers in primary, lower and upper secondary based on Eurostat data



Source: Eurostat 2015 [educ_uae_perp01]

Note: Data for 2015; in case of DK and GR the data is for 2014; IE missing data

The survey of beneficiaries carried out for this evaluation covered also eTwinning participants. The majority of respondents who stated they took part in eTwinning were in the school sector (as expected) but there were also learners and practitioners in the VET sector.

Table 6.21 Share of respondents that took part in eTwinning

Sector	Share of respondents that took part in eTwinning
School pupils	15 %
Schools practitioners	32 %
VET learners	5 %

Sector	Share of respondents that took part in eTwinning
VET practitioners	11 %

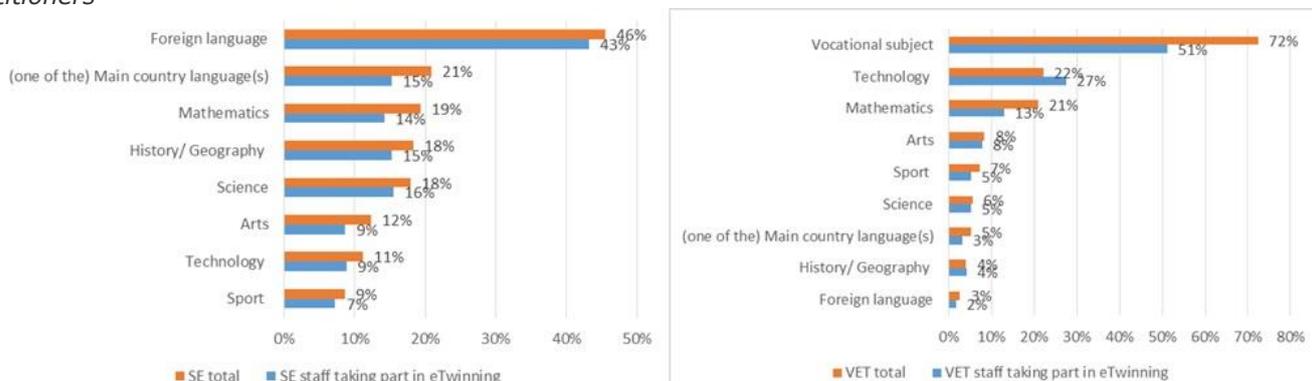
Source: ICF beneficiary surveys

6.4.8.2 Profile of eTwinning participants

Based on the beneficiary surveys the following can be said about the profile of participants.

- In most cases they are not more disadvantaged than the rest of pupils and VET learners. The exception is the outreach to learners with learning difficulties and those from a minority in terms of religion or sexual orientation. It therefore seems that eTwinning is slightly more able to reach disadvantaged groups than the rest of the programme.
- Concerning the eTwinning practitioners, there are minor differences between the subjects taught by eTwinning teachers and subjects taught by teachers taking part in the programme in general. In the case of schools, foreign language teachers predominate in both eTwinning and other actions in the programme. The most notable difference is in the VET sector, where eTwinning reached out to a substantially smaller share of vocational subjects than the programme overall.

Figure 6.27 Share of practitioners participating in eTwinning per their specialisation, SE practitioners



Source: ICF beneficiary surveys, Note: Multiple choice answer

6.4.8.3 Participation in other activities

The majority of survey respondents (practitioners and learners) who took part in eTwinning also took part in other activities funded by the programme. However, there was a non-negligible share of respondents who took part only in eTwinning (10 % of practitioners and 24 % of learners). Note that it is likely that the share of practitioners who take part only in eTwinning is highly likely to be underestimated in these findings given the approach used to attract respondents, which was not via the eTwinning platform but via the database of beneficiaries and unsuccessful project applicants.

The following can therefore be concluded from this data:

- eTwinning does reach a broader audience than other actions of the programme.
- It is also associated with participation in other activities, which could suggest that eTwinning is a stepping stone into the programme, as noted by some interviewees. This hypothesis was however not verified during the data collection.

6.4.8.4 Results

The beneficiary surveys show that eTwinning participants do have positive significant differences with the control group in several result areas. A higher number of statistically significant differences is found for teachers than in the case of learners, which is what one could expect given the design of the action. Note however that the sample of respondents used for the below calculation combines all respondents who took part in eTwinning (not only those who took part in eTwinning alone). This means that the effect of the programme is likely to be mutually reinforcing and it is not possible to judge whether the difference is due to participation in eTwinning or other activities.

The main message from this analysis is that there appear to be indicators where eTwinning is associated with more positive results than those for the control group. However, one should not overinterpret the reported percentages and the exact result areas as it is not clear what the exact contribution of eTwinning compared to other influences is.

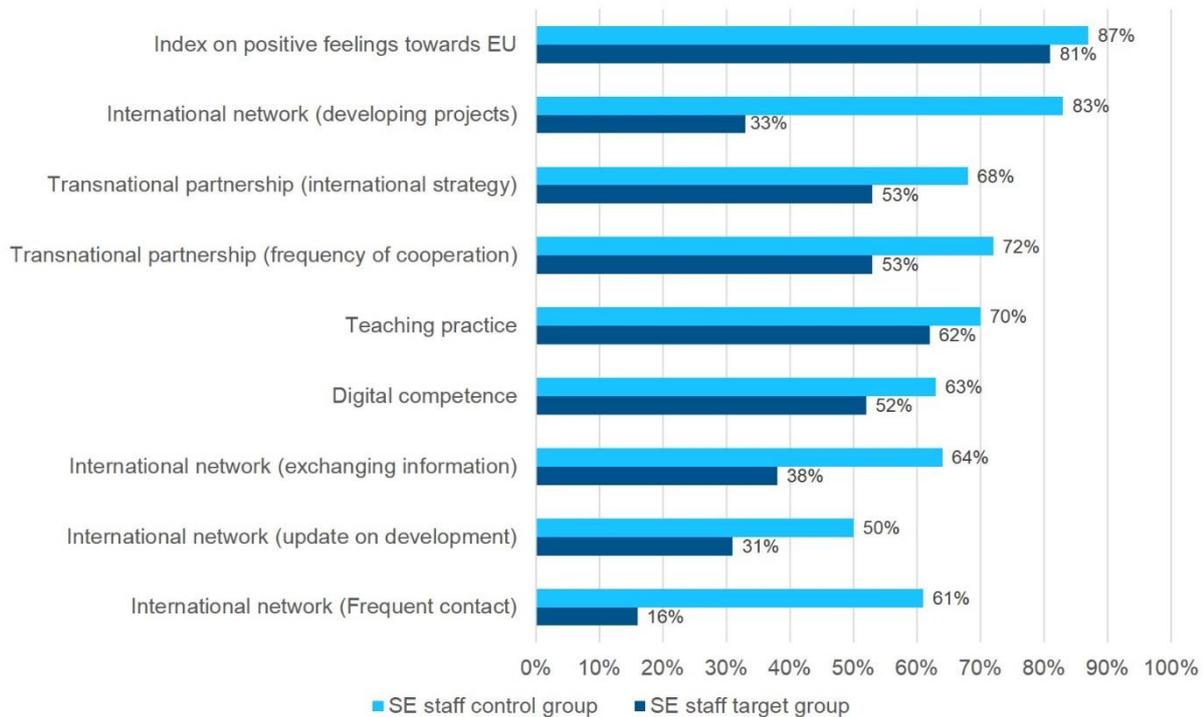
As 0 shows, one area with a clear difference is digital skills and use of online resources, which is expected given the nature of this action. eTwinning participants score the highest (63) among all respondents from the school sector on this indicator. Given that the basis for eTwinning participation is technology, eTwinning might on the one hand attract practitioners that are already skilled, but on the other can also enhance such skills. The positive impact of eTwinning on the digital skills was also voiced in the interviews with eTwinningPlus participants, who frequently reported improving digital skills thanks to projects run under eTwinning²³⁹.

Findings of other sources support the positive results of eTwinning on practitioners. For example, the survey conducted as part of the eTwinning platform evaluation showed that the majority of teachers believe that eTwinning is particularly helpful in making new friends and networking across Europe (64 %); in upgrading or acquiring ICT skills (60 %); in making a positive impact on their pupils' skills or motivation to learn (55 %); and generally in promoting better relationships between teachers and learners (62 %) (Education for Change, 2013²⁴⁰). Organisational results such as internationalisation of schools were also observed (Education for Change, 2013).

²³⁹ Though the interviews focused specifically on the eTwinningPlus pilot there is no reason why the finding about improvement in digital competence would not apply to teachers from programme countries taking part in mainstream eTwinning activities.

²⁴⁰ Education for Change (2013), *Study of the impact of eTwinning on participating pupils, teachers and schools*. Prepared for the European Commission. Available at: <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/study-of-the-impact-of-etwinning-on-participating-pupils-teachers-and-schools-pbNC3112371/>

Figure 6.28 Areas with significant differences between eTwinning participants and control group, SE practitioners



Source: ICF beneficiary surveys

6.4.8.5 Concluding note

The main findings of this analysis are that eTwinning reaches out to persons (both learners and practitioners) who do not otherwise participate in the programme. Though there is an important overlap in participation between eTwinning and other actions there are also many respondents who only took part in eTwinning.

Participation in eTwinning is associated with positive results for practitioners even though it is difficult to differentiate the contribution of eTwinning from other actions.

From these findings it is likely that other platforms than eTwinning (School Education Gateway or EPALE) also expand participation in the programme and reach out to groups that would not have been otherwise involved. Beneficiary practitioners do observe positive results from these types of actions. Given the relatively low costs of these actions for the EU (most of the costs are borne by the beneficiaries themselves in terms of their time invested in participation), these types of actions appear as highly cost effective (low cost/high added value in terms of participation and a range of positive results, though admittedly at a smaller scale than other actions such as practitioner mobility or KA2 projects). These comments are based solely on extrapolation as primary data collection for these other actions has not been part of this evaluation.

6.5 Impacts (organisational level and system level)

Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes are not only targeted at the individuals taking part in different types of actions (learners and practitioners) but they are also aiming to contribute to organisations and systems. As per the intervention logic, the programme aims to improve quality of education and training at the following levels.

- Organisational level:

- Direct beneficiaries – practitioners who take part in mobility or cooperation – have spill-over effects on other practitioners and thus on organisations.
- Mobility actions are conditional on organisations having in place certain practices that are necessary for them to organise good-quality mobility.
- Good practices being streamlined within the organisations taking part.
- System level:
 - Reaching out to a critical mass of beneficiaries (in particular practitioners) who will stimulate broader change.
 - Policy learning from projects and actions funded.
 - Take-up of priorities and key messages from the Open Method of Coordination.

These effects are assessed in this section.

In this evaluation impacts are defined as direct and indirect effects of the programme at the level of organisations and systems.

The evaluation found a combination of effects at the level of participating organisations. There is a clear effect in terms of internationalisation but the programme also contributes to the creation of national partnerships. This international networking effect is a key element of added value for this programme, as discussed in the section on EU added value. Given the scale of the programme and the number of organisations reached, the programme strongly contributed to strengthening the internationalisation of the education, training and youth sectors. This statement is less clear for the sport sector, which by essence is a very international sector (when it comes to the competition arrangements). The international dimension of this programme is stronger at the level of grassroots organisations, which have fewer opportunities for international cooperation otherwise.

The programme also results in other organisational developments, in particular when it comes to professional development opportunities for practitioners but also use of new teaching materials or new approaches to teaching/assessment. However, the evidence gathered regarding the latter is not sufficiently strong to assess whether the programme is actually transforming the routines and practices of professionals and organisations.

The qualitative findings suggest that a key contribution that was not measured quantitatively is the self-reflection and soft benchmarking that happens thanks to the opportunities for practitioners to see how other organisations tackle a given issue.

While the evaluation findings can conclude with confidence about the internationalisation effect of the programme, the findings about other organisational changes are less robust as they do not rely on 'hard' indicators of concrete change (such as improvement in student outcomes, etc.).

At system level, the influence of the programme can materialise through several channels:

- via EU-level activities of the Open Method of Coordination;
- via specific projects; and
- by reaching out to a critical mass of organisations.

All these three types of influences are occurring, though there are differences within sectors. However, the influence of the programme at system level is hard to separate from other international and EU-level initiatives. The contribution of specific projects is present but it is in many cases ad hoc and does not particularly depend on the type of action but rather on specific ingredients of a given project.

Table 6.22 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
At organisational level: the degree to which participation in the programme is associated with differences in organisational practices	Beneficiaries and control group surveys	 <p>Surveys found strong association with internationalisation and networks of organisations Practitioners also cited with a high number of statements about types of organisational results In the youth sector in particular three quarters of practitioners agree with most statements about organisational results Existence of youth strategies in the youth sector was also measured In sport sector the organisation-level results are partially aligned with the EU strategy in the field of sport when it comes to measures to tackle threats to sport or promote dual careers or good governance. Otherwise similar results as those reported for other sectors were identified</p>
At organisational level: share of case study respondents who were able to identify concrete organisational changes and examples	Case studies	 <p>In all case studies concrete changes at organisational level were cited. In many cases these are light touch changes rather than major structural evolutions; however, an accumulation of light changes over time can result in a step change Important frequently noted ones are: internationalisation, self-reflection and soft benchmarking, implementation of new tool, materials, increased positive image and with that associated empowerment of practitioners and learners</p>
At organisational level: share of socioeconomic actors who agreed their objectives as well as those of the programme have been met	Survey of socioeconomic actors	 <p>Vast majority strongly agree or agree that their objectives have been met</p>
At system level: the share of key informant interviews who were able to cite system-level effects of the programme	Key informant interviews	 <p>Two in five respondents were able to cite concrete examples of influence of the programme on national-level policies and developments. This varied across sectors</p>
At system level: examples of system-level effects	Case studies/ key informant interviews	 <p>Examples of system-level influences were collected; however, these were not always related to projects funded by the programme. In a number of cases rather than specific projects the influence of the programme is related to the critical mass reached or to the influence via OMC</p>

6.5.1 Organisational effects

To what extent did programme participation lead to spill-over effects at the level of the organisations?

Results at organisational level were assessed through three main data collection channels:

- in a quantitative manner through beneficiaries' surveys in which practitioners were asked not only about their own personal and professional development but also about changes at organisational level;
- in a quantitative manner through Erasmus+ monitoring surveys; and
- in a qualitative manner through case studies.

Several of the results discussed in the section above about practitioners are in a grey zone between individual-level and organisational-level results.

Considering that the previous section found that beneficiaries have developed strong and active networks, this suggests a linkage with the internationalisation of education, training, youth and sport organisations.

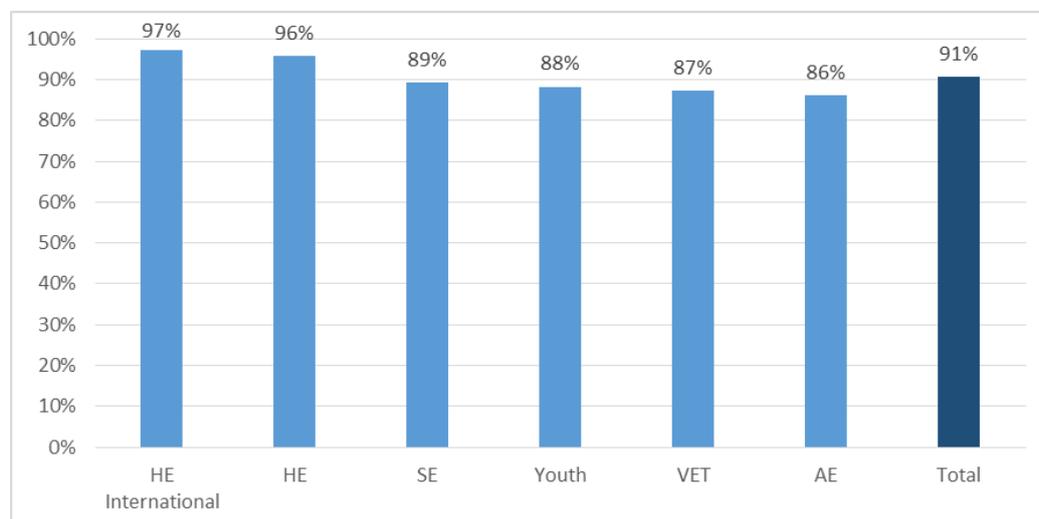
Overall, participation in the programme is clearly associated with internationalisation of participating organisations. The data collected also identified other organisational effects but in most cases these seem to be adjustments and small evolutions rather than large changes.

6.5.1.1 Findings from Erasmus+ monitoring surveys

Erasmus+ monitoring surveys asked about what mobile practitioners did or intend to do with the results on returning to their organisations. The findings are very positive but it needs to be said that (i) the questions were asked shortly after practitioners returned to their institutions and (ii) they sometimes capture the intention rather than the realised effect.

A very positive finding is that on average, 91 % of practitioners (Figure 6.29) state that they have shared their own knowledge and skills with students and/or other persons. The highest share is in the case of international HE practitioners – 97 % – and the lowest in the case of adult education; however, even in this case the share is very high – 86 %.

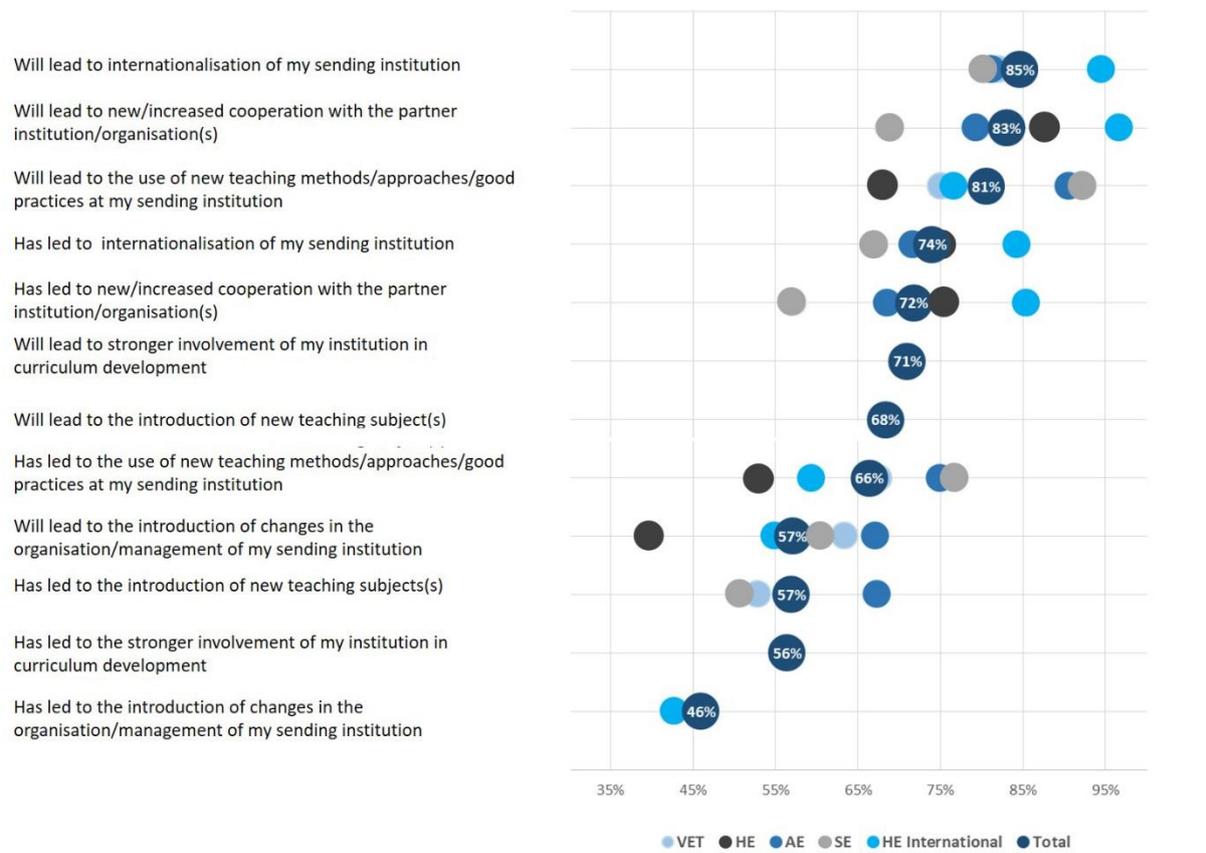
Figure 6.29 Shared skills and knowledge



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

Figure 6.30 shows the share of practitioners who believe that their mobility has led or will lead to changes in their sending institution. Practitioners in general most strongly believe that their mobility will lead to internationalisation of their sending institution (85 %) as well as to the new or increased cooperation with the partner institution (83 %). Concerning the changes which have already taken place according to practitioners, 74 % believe that their mobility has already led to internationalisation of their institution. On the other hand, changes in the organisation or management of the sending institution that have already taken place are the least mentioned (46 %). However, there are also significant differences between different mobility types; the most sceptical are HE practitioners, especially in the use of new teaching methods and changes in organisation; SE practitioners are the least optimistic about internationalisation of their institution.

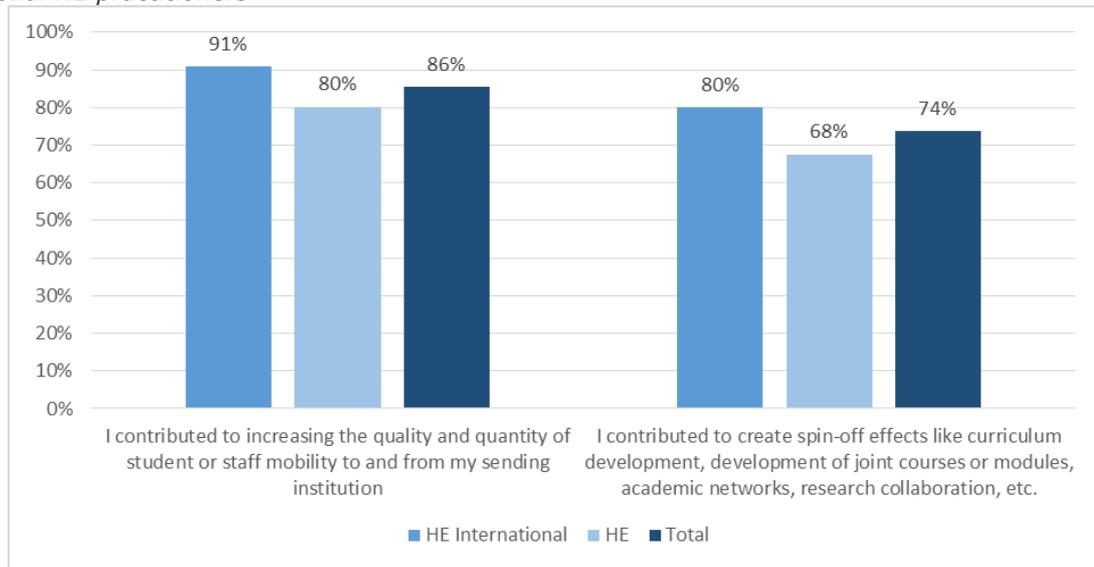
Figure 6.30 Whether mobility led or will lead to changes in the sending institution



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

The survey also asked some specific questions to practitioners in higher education. HE and international HE practitioners believe that their mobility experience contributed to spin-off effects like curriculum development, development of joint courses, academic networks etc. (74 %). Even more – 86 % – believe that as a consequence of the mobility they contributed to increasing the quality and quantity of student and practitioner mobility Figure 6.31). International HE practitioners are significantly more optimistic in their belief of the experience contributing to spin-off effects and increasing the mobility.

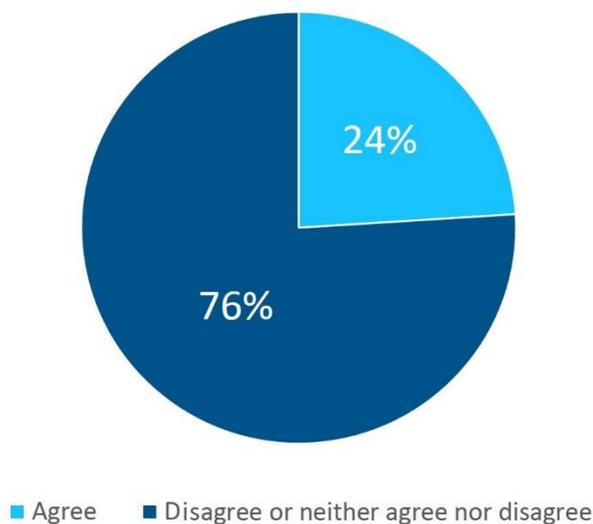
Figure 6.31 Contribution to spin-off effects and quality and quantity of mobility – HE and international HE practitioners



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

Youth practitioners were asked about the contribution of the programme to the quality of the project they develop in their organisations. Three quarters (76 %) of youth practitioners believe that quality has improved thanks to the programme.

Figure 6.32 Share of youth practitioners believing that they increased the quality of projects they develop



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

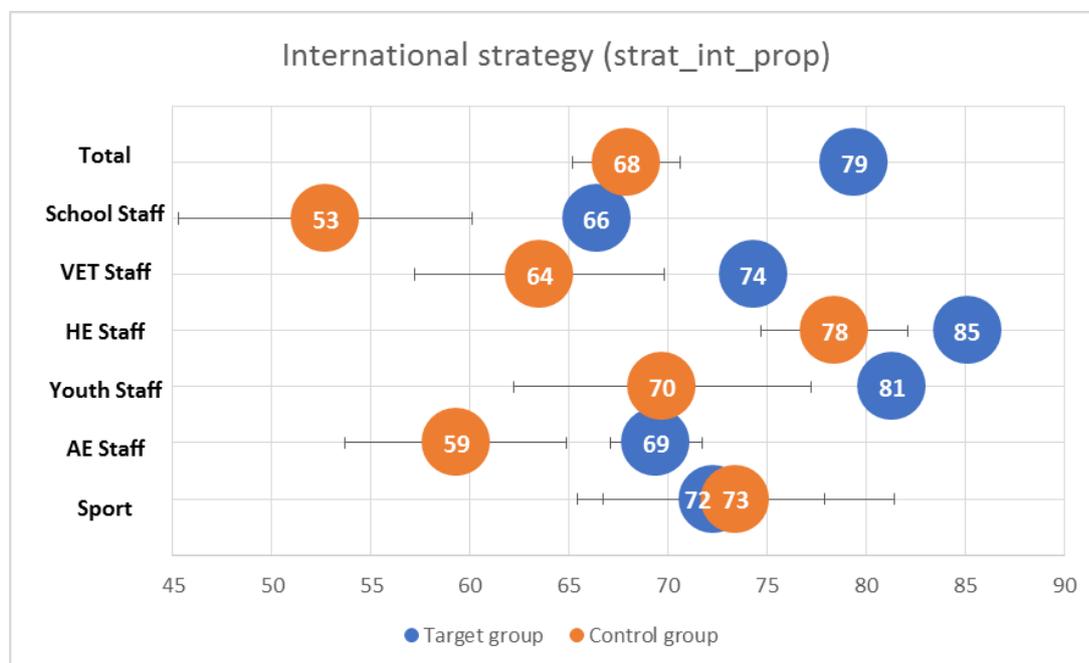
6.5.1.2 Beneficiary survey findings – primary data collection

Transnational partnerships

The respondents were asked whether their institutions have a strategy for developing transnational partnerships, the size of any such partnerships, and the frequency of interactions with partners. Overall, the findings suggest the following.

- Most respondents worked for institutions that had strategies for developing transnational partnerships and associated activities. Most of these institutions were also engaged in transnational partnerships and were cooperating with partners on a regular basis. This was true of both Erasmus+ participants and non-participants.
- The survey results suggest that Erasmus+ participants were significantly more likely than non-participants to have strategies for developing transnational partnerships (see Figure 6.32), and also significantly more likely to be cooperating with partners from their own network of partner organisations.

Figure 6.33 Share of organisations with an internationalisation strategy



Source: ICF beneficiary survey

Sector-specific findings:

- The index scores were the lowest for the school sector, suggesting that transnational partnerships and activities are less common in the school sector, relative to the other sectors.
- HE institutions were most likely to have strategies for developing transnational partnerships and the most likely to be part of transnational networks and to cooperate with partners, compared to all of the other sectors.
- Most VET practitioners reported that their institutions also had strategies for developing transnational partnerships and were engaged in transnational partnerships – the difference between beneficiaries and control group was significant. However, the index scores were slightly lower than the overall average, suggesting that transnational partnerships and activities are slightly less common in the VET sector relative to the others.

- Practitioners in the youth sector were also relatively likely to report that their institutions had strategies for developing transnational partnerships and cooperating with partners within transnational networks, compared to the overall average. Only HE institutions were more likely to be engaged in transnational partnerships. This was true of both Erasmus+ participants and non-participants.
- The index values for transnational partnerships in the adult education sector were lower than the overall average, suggesting that transnational partnerships and activities are slightly less common in this sector. However, it was still the case that most adult education practitioners in both the target and control groups were working for institutions that were engaged in transnational partnerships.
- Most of the practitioners in the sport sector also reported that their institution had strategies for developing transnational partnerships and was cooperating with transnational partners.

Quality of youth work

One of the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy is to enhance quality of youth work. The practitioner survey asked respondents from the youth sector two questions to measure the extent to which organisations had in place quality assurance measures. The first question asked whether their organisation had processes in place to ensure the quality of its youth work, while the second question asked about the extent to which organisations have strategies, indicators and tools, and undertake analysis to ensure the quality of youth work.

The results show that:

- Overall, most respondents reported that their organisations have processes and strategies in place to ensure the quality of their youth work. This was true of both Erasmus+ participants and non-participants.
- The difference of three points in the index between overall target and control groups is not statistically significant meaning that when looking at responses of all youth practitioners (KA1, KA2 or KA3 or equivalent), the difference is not statistically significant. However, youth practitioners who had gone abroad to work in another youth organisation (as part of the Erasmus+ or predecessor programme – i.e. KA1 equivalent only) were found to be significantly more likely to work for organisations that have processes and strategies to ensure the quality of their youth work, compared to non-participants.

National partnerships

The benefits of Erasmus+ are not only transnational partnerships but also partnerships with other types of organisations or the same types of organisations within the country. New national partnerships have been set up according to 74 % of practitioner respondents. Overall the youth sector was the most likely to indicate that new national partnerships have been created – across all types of action. The setting up of new national partnerships was less frequent in the school sector compared to other sectors.

Unsurprisingly, participation in Strategic Partnerships and other cooperation projects (predecessor programmes) were the action types most fruitful in terms of creation of new national partnerships in schools, VET, higher education and adult learning.

Most of the practitioners in the sport sector also reported that their institution had strategies for developing transnational partnerships and was cooperating with transnational partners. In contrast to all other sectors, there were no significant differences in the likelihood of engaging in transnational partnerships between Erasmus+ participants and non-participants but this needs to be taken cautiously as the control group for sport was reconstructed from a combination of control group for VET and the small number of sport practitioners who responded to the survey as non-participants.

Other organisational outcomes

In addition to the above types of outcomes, which were measured through objective statements about the extent to which certain characteristics/measures were in place which enabled a comparison with the control group, the surveys also collected respondents' views on other types of organisational outcomes. These indicators couldn't be compared with the control group as they clearly asked about the extent to which participation in a given activity was linked to a certain result.

Four organisational outcomes were measured across all the sectors and others were sector specific.

Figure 6.34 shows that the most commonly reported outcome is the creation of new professional development opportunities for practitioners, which is reported by four out of five respondents. This type of result concerns both the individual practitioners as well as the organisations since professional development of practitioners benefits both – the individual but also his/her workplace so s/he can make a better contribution.

Another notable result is the effect of the programme on creation of governance and quality assurance approaches, which is reported by 58 % of practitioners.

The programme also inspires new ways of working with disadvantaged learners and young people. This was reported by two out of five respondents. However, the incidence of this result was diminished by the fact that this is a less commonly observed result in higher education but higher education respondents form a large share of the sample (50 %). For sectoral breakdowns see below. This finding may seem contradictory with the finding that only 19 % of practitioner respondents stated that the activity they took part in had a focus on integration of disadvantaged groups. A more detailed analysis shows that 80 % of those who said their activity focused on integration of the disadvantaged also state that this led to development of new ways of working with the disadvantaged in their organisations. Of those whose projects/activities did not focus specifically on these groups, 34 % state that they introduced new ways of working with disadvantaged. This implies that (i) the chances of changing organisational approaches in this area are higher when projects specifically focus on these groups and (ii) there are spill-over effects or unexpected effects where it is not the main purpose to target these groups but the findings are nevertheless used for this purpose.

Figure 6.34 Share of beneficiaries (% of practitioners) who report that participation in the programme led to organisational outcomes



Source: ICF beneficiaries survey (practitioners; n= 15,995)

Other results: Education and training

Practitioners in education and training sectors reported a broad range of other outcomes at organisational level, which are presented in Figure 6.35.

The following organisational results have particular policy relevant importance and will be also referred to in the section on system-level effects:

- introduction or improvement of quality assurance and governance approaches;
- strengthening the use of learning outcomes for design of programmes and for assessment;
- cooperation with businesses and civil society; and
- new ways of working with disadvantaged groups. This result is least commonly reported but nevertheless reported by more than half of school practitioners

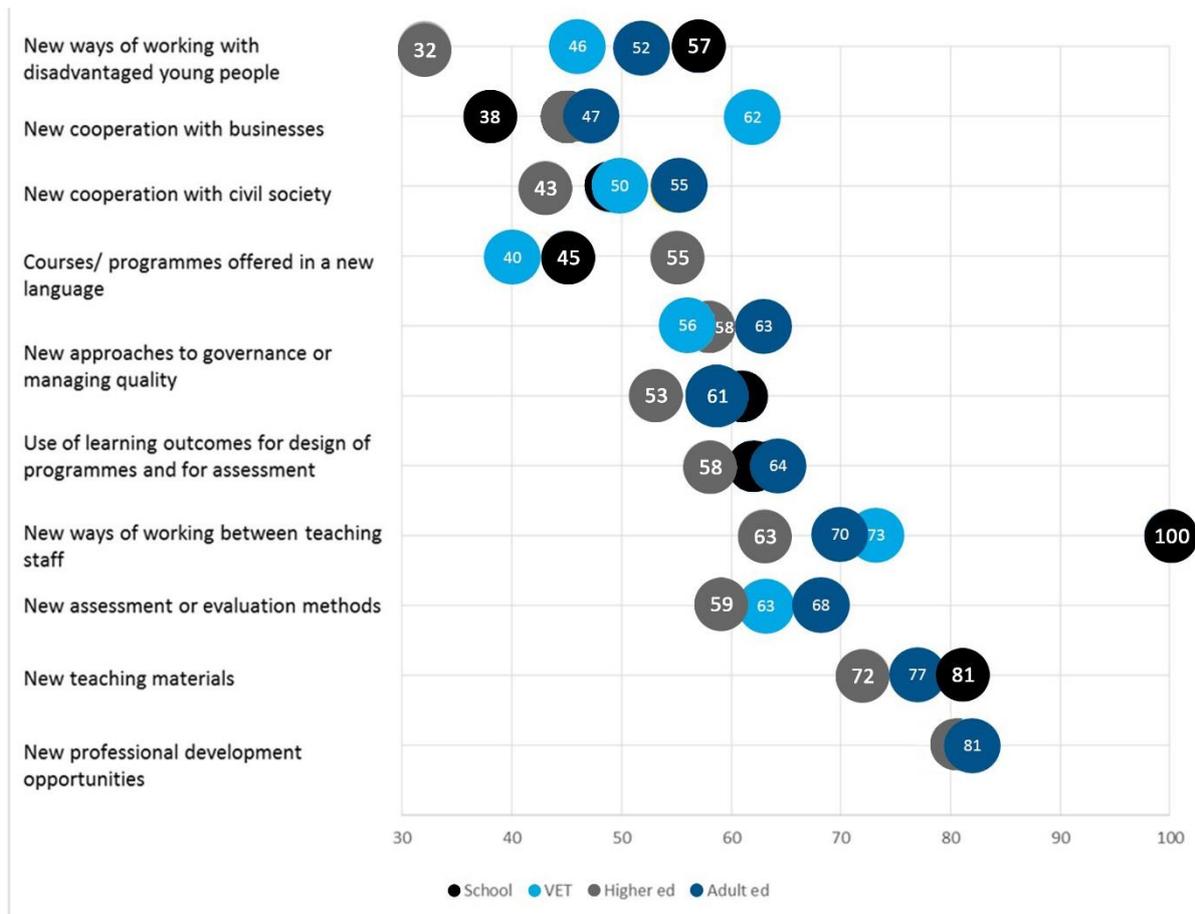
Given the high sample of education and training practitioners who responded to the survey (13,700), these findings show a positive influence of participation in Erasmus+. At the same time however the findings need to be put into perspective – they collect evidence of agreement about influence of the programme on a range of very general statements. They do not mean that very deep changes have been made at organisational level. In most cases these changes are likely to be ‘light touch’ changes. At the same time the volume of such ‘light touch’ changes (many organisations make small changes) and their repetition over time due to subsequent participation can have a deep impact (see above).

It is also interesting to note that in many of the result areas the differences between sectors are relatively small but overall higher education practitioners tend to be least optimistic about the contribution of the programme. This could be linked to the fact that the programme has been in place for a long time in higher education or the fact that the majority of higher education funding is focused on student mobility. A noteworthy exception is the offer of programmes in a foreign language, which is an area where higher education practitioners see a stronger influence than others.

Particularly interesting outliers are:

- 62 % of VET practitioners reporting influence on cooperation with companies;
- only 32 % of higher education practitioners reporting influence on ways of working with disadvantaged students;
- all school practitioners reporting influence on collaboration between practitioners.

Figure 6.35 Share of respondents (% of practitioners) reporting other organisational changes



Source: ICF surveys (practitioners)

In addition to the above, the following types of results were only assessed in some sectors:

- creation of outreach strategies to new target groups (100 % of practitioners from schools report this effect as well as 63 % of adult education practitioners);
- the intention to create new research projects is reported by 74 % of higher education practitioners;
- the intention to create new spin-offs is reported by 37 % of HE practitioners;
- new use of credit systems (or approaches to credit) is reported by 45 % of HE practitioners and 27 % of VET practitioners (most likely because the others see the use of credit systems in their organisation as a relatively old and well-established practice).

The above may seem contradictory with the finding that the outputs of projects funded under KA2 tend to lack innovative character. However the above data is not related to KA2 projects but to beneficiaries of KA1 mobility. Furthermore, the finding about limited level of innovation concerns changes in educational approaches (use of new state of the art pedagogies or methods) and the innovative character of the outputs which are often toolkits, guidelines, manuals or eLearning materials.

Other results: Youth

Figure 6.36 shows the perceived influence of the programme on organisational-level findings as reported by youth practitioners. Where relevant, i.e. where the same question was asked in other sectors, this is also shown on the chart.

The data shows that youth sector practitioners are significantly more optimistic about the contribution of the programme to their organisations than other categories of practitioners. This concerns even areas which one would not expect to be strong in the youth sector, in particular cooperation with businesses.

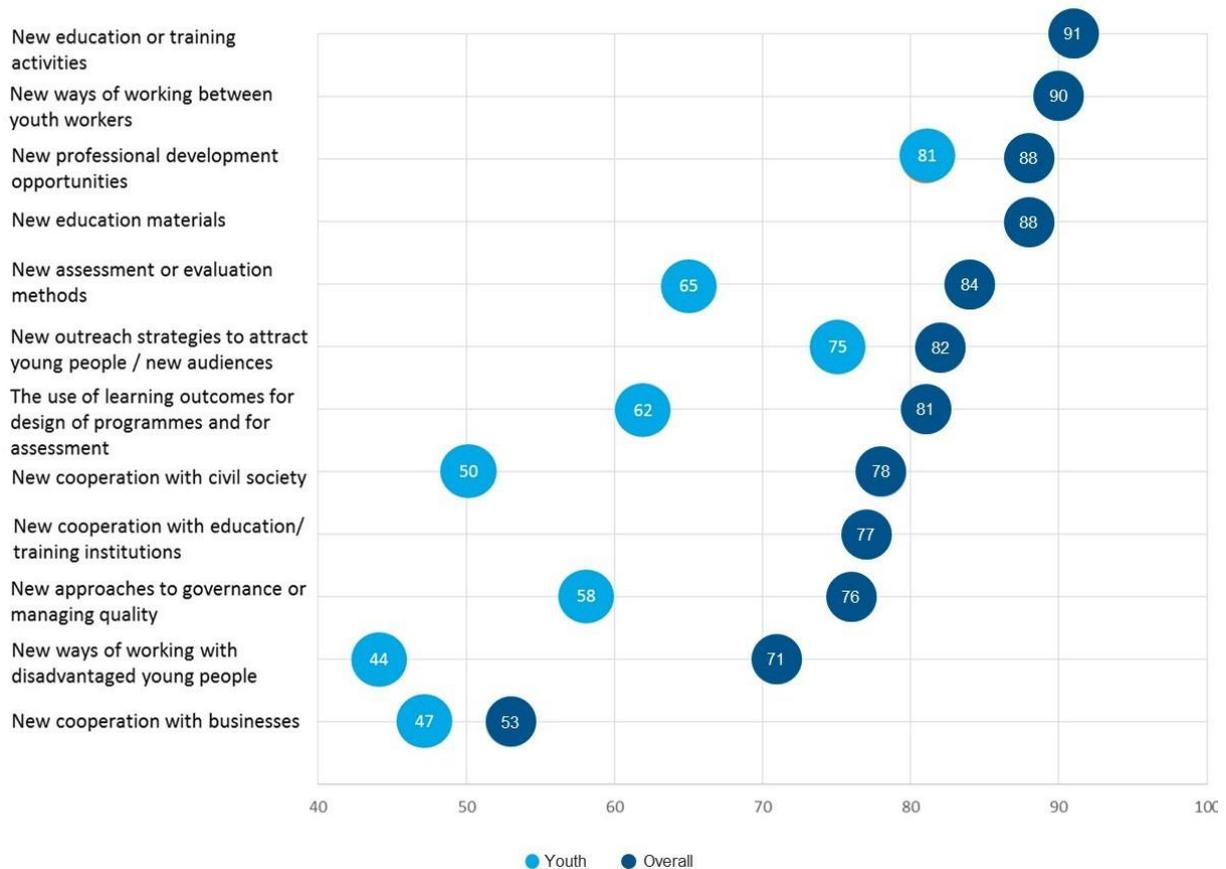
For nearly all of the results more than three quarters of respondents indicate their agreement with the programme’s influential nature.

This suggests that the programme is particularly highly valued by the youth practitioners and it is seen as transformational for youth organisations.

Interesting outliers with high political relevance are:

- 76 % of respondents noting influence on governance and quality assurance;
- 71 % of respondents stating the programme contributed to their approaches to working with disadvantaged groups and 82 % stating that it helped them to reach new target groups.

Figure 6.36 Share of beneficiaries (% of youth practitioners) reporting organisational results in the youth sector



Source: ICF beneficiary surveys (practitioners)

Other results: Sport

In the sport sector respondents were asked about a number of results common to several sectors as well as a sport-specific result about new ways to combat threats to sport. The results show that the programme is particularly highly valued in the sport sector when compared to other sectors in the following areas:

- 71 % of respondents state that the programme contributed to new cooperation with civil society;
- 68 % of respondents believe that the programme enabled them to find new ways of working with disadvantaged young people, which is in line with the focus on social inclusion of projects funded through this strand.

Figure 6.37 Share of beneficiaries (% of sport practitioners) reporting organisational results in the sport sector



Source: ICF beneficiaries survey (practitioners)

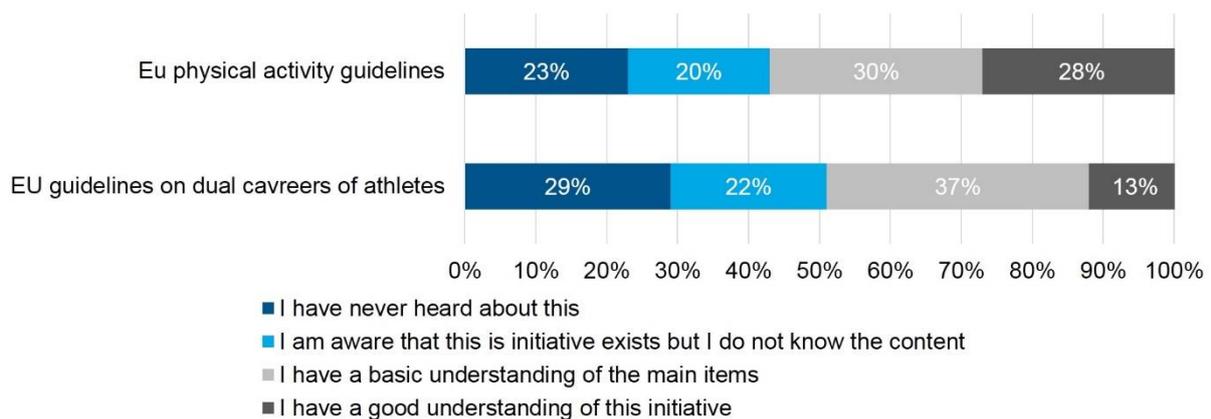
Adherence to EU initiatives in the field of sport

In the field of sport the scoping interviews suggested that there is an expectation for the programme to be closely aligned with main EU policies in this area. That is why the surveys tested participants’ adherence to the guidelines and principles promoted at EU level.

Two important policy documents in the field of sport are the EU guidelines on dual careers²⁴¹, and EU physical activity guidelines²⁴². The general knowledge about these initiatives and their usage can suggest the alignment of the sport organisations taking part in the programme with EU policies. As Figure 6.38 shows, the documents are relatively well known among the sport organisations and it seems that the EU physical activity guidelines are more known than the EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes. However, 23 % of practitioners working in the sport organisations have never heard about the EU physical activity guidelines and 29 % have never heard about the EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes. On the other hand, a relatively high number (28 %) of practitioners state that they have a good understanding of the EU physical activity guidelines.

This finding is further supported by the actual usage of the EU documents as an inspiration for the organisation activity, as shown in Figure 6.39. When filtering out the respondents who have never heard about the documents, EU physical activity guidelines are used on a larger scale than the guidelines on the dual career of athletes; in fact, 68 % of practitioners considered the EU physical activity guidelines compared to only 54 % of practitioners who considered the EU guidelines on dual careers.

Figure 6.38 Awareness of the EU initiatives in the field of sport

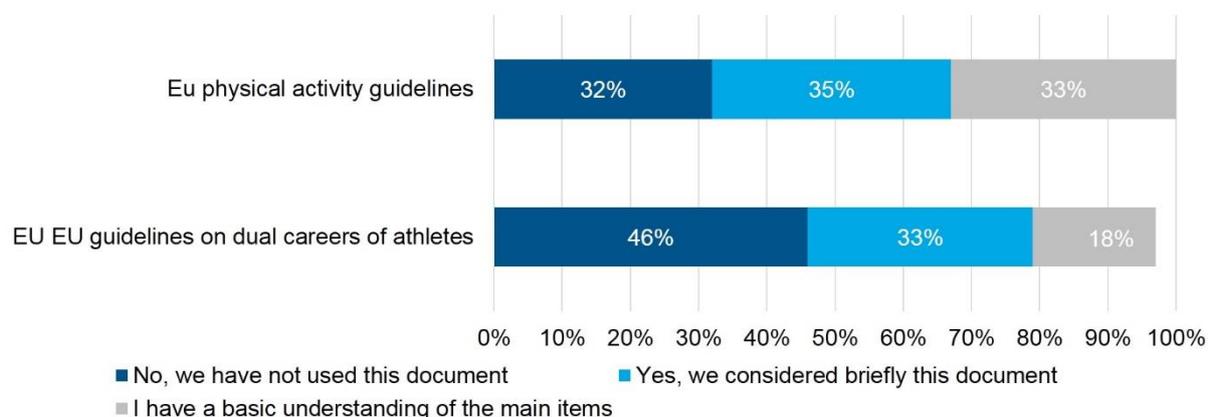


Source: ICF beneficiary surveys (practitioners)

²⁴¹ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/documents/dual-career-guidelines-final_en.pdf

²⁴² http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/policy_documents/eu-physical-activity-guidelines-2008_en.pdf

Figure 6.39 Usage of the EU guidelines in the field of sport (among those respondents aware of these guidelines)



Source: ICF beneficiary surveys (practitioners)

Beneficiaries in sport organisations were also asked about the organisations’ compliance with the EU document on good governance principles²⁴³. They were also asked about the existence of measures combating threats in sport such as doping, violence or discrimination, as identified by the EC policies.

Two indicators are analysed in relation to organisational effects:

- principles of good governance in sport;
- indicators addressing combating threats to sport (doping, violence, discrimination).

Good governance in sport is focused on several topics and draws on the EU documents on good governance principles. As Table 6.23 shows, 45 % of organisations strongly comply with the good governance in sport principles, 34 % have medium compliance, and 21 % of beneficiary organisations have low compliance. This suggests a rather high degree of adherence to this EU policy.

Table 6.23 Share of respondents who comply with the good governance in sport principles

Principle	Strong compliance (% of organisations)	Medium compliance (% of organisations)	Low compliance (% of organisations)
Governance	45 %	34 %	21 %

Note: Index (1 (strongly agree)–4 (strongly disagree), 1–1.5=high compliance, 1.51–2=medium compliance, less is low compliance

Table 6.24 shows which of the principles organisations comply with the most. As shown in that table for most principles there is medium level of compliance, meaning that the share of respondents who agree that a given principle applies to them is between 81–90 %. The principles of good governance for which the organisations are highly compliant are:

- the function and the role of my sport organisation are clearly defined;
- the membership rules for my sport organisation are clearly defined.

²⁴³ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/policy_documents/xg-gg-201307-dlvrb12-sept2013.pdf

On the other hand, the one principle with which the organisations are less compliant is:

- there is an appeal procedure in place.

Table 6.24 The principles for which organisations are compliant in good governance

Highly compliant	Medium compliant	Low compliant
The function and the role of my sport organisation are clearly defined	The vision and strategic plan of my sport organisation is publicly available	There is an appeal procedure in place
The membership rules for my sport organisation are clearly defined	My sport organisation has measures in place to monitor achievement of objectives	
	My sport organisation has a code of ethics in place	
	My sport organisation ensures participation of stakeholders in decision-making and governance	
	The responsibilities of different organs of the organisation are clear and so is the remit of their decision-making powers	
	My sport organisation has a disciplinary framework	
	My sport organisation is committed to professional development of its practitioners and volunteers	

Note: Highly compliant are principles with which 100–91 % of organisations agree, medium compliant 90 %–81 % agree, and low compliant when 80 % and less agree

Combating the three threats in the sport sector (doping, violence and discrimination) is promoted by various policies on the EU level. Table 6.25 shows that in general, sport organisations have measures in place which support the fight with doping, violence, and discrimination; however, there are important differences between these areas. It seems that organisations are least good at putting in place measures combating doping, with only 40 % of organisations having a strong measure put in place and 33 % of organisations having low shares of measures to combat doping. Furthermore, the share of organisations having strong measures to combat violence is not very high either (41 %); however, only 21 % have weak measures. On the other hand, almost half of the organisations have measures to combat the discrimination problem (48 %), showing that preventing and combating discrimination is a priority among the sport organisations taking part in the programme.

Table 6.25 Share of respondents who comply with the anti-doping, violence and discrimination in sport principles

Principle	Strong measures (% of organisations)	Medium measures (% of organisations)	Low measures (% of organisations)
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 a low measure

The tables below show the specific measures and the share of organisations that have already put those in place. In general the measures are used by the organisation in large scales – all of the measures are used at least by 75 % of organisations. However, as in the case of the previous table, there are differences in terms of the threat. In the case of doping there is unfortunately no measure put in place by a large share of organisations (more than 90 %), and only one measure is used by a medium share of organisations – the principle that doping is subject to disciplinary action in a respondent’s organisation. These results suggest that the fight against doping might have lower priority among organisations than the battle against violence or discrimination.

Regarding the battle with violence, the picture is much better – most of the measures are used by a medium share of organisation, with the exception of one measure not widely used: regular reviews of the efforts puts in place to combat violence. Unfortunately, as in the case of anti-doping, none of the measures are used by a high share of organisations (more than 90 % of organisations).

Finally the anti-discrimination measures are found to be present in high share of organisations; in fact, there is no measure categorised as used by a low share of organisations. Moreover, the measure of taking concrete steps in preventing discrimination is highly used among the analysed organisations.

Table 6.26 The measures put in place to combat doping

Widely used measures	Medium used measures	Low used measures
	Doping is subject to disciplinary action in my organisation	My sport organisation has a clear publicly available strategy to combat doping
		My sport organisation takes concrete steps to prevent doping
		My sport organisation takes concrete steps to identify cases of doping
		My sport organisation regularly reviews the efforts it puts in place to

Widely used measures	Medium used measures	Low used measures
		combat doping

Note: Widely used are measures used by 100–91 % of organisations, medium 90 %–81 %, and low when 80 % and less agree

Table 6.27 The measures put in place to combat violence

Widely used measures	Medium used measures	Low used measures
	My sport organisation has a clear publicly available strategy to combat violence	My sport organisation regularly reviews the efforts it puts in place to combat violence
	My sport organisation takes concrete steps to prevent violence	
	My sport organisation takes concrete steps to identify cases of violence	
	Violence is subject to disciplinary action in my organisation	

Note: Widely used are measures used by 100–91 % of organisations, medium 90 %–81 %, and low when 80 % and less agree

Table 6.28 The measures put in place to combat discrimination

Widely used measures	Medium used measures	Low used measures
My sport organisation takes concrete steps to prevent discrimination	My sport organisation has a clear publicly available strategy to combat discrimination	
	My sport organisation takes concrete steps to identify cases of discrimination	
	Discrimination is subject to disciplinary action in my organisation	
	My sport organisation regularly reviews the efforts it puts in place to combat discrimination	

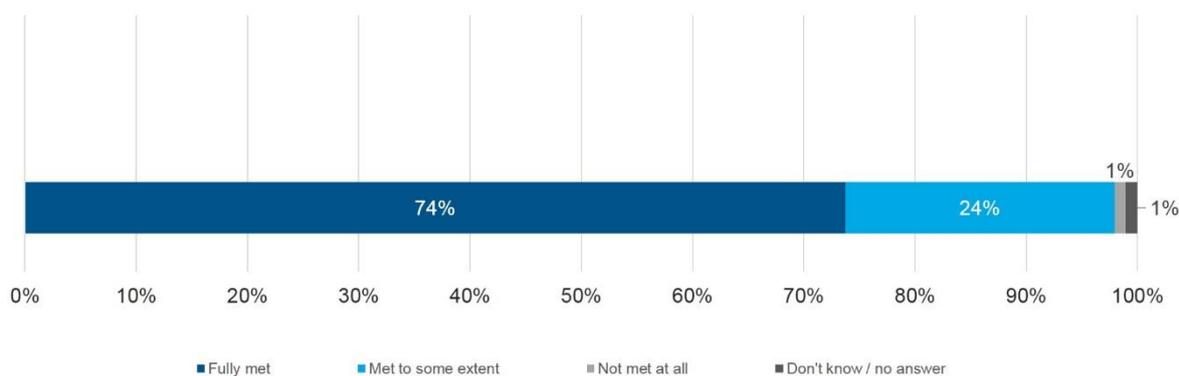
Note: Widely used are measures used by 100–91 % of organisations, medium 90 %–81 %, and low when 80 % and less agree

6.5.1.3 Results for other socioeconomic actors

The survey of other socioeconomic actors (other than education and training, youth and sport organisations) asked about the extent to which organisations considered that their objectives were met through participation in the programme.

The results of this consultation were strongly positive showing a high satisfaction rate among this type of beneficiaries. Only 3 out of 940 respondents stated that their objectives were not at all met.

Figure 6.40 To what extent do you think the activities that your organisation participated in met their objectives?



Source: ICF survey of socioeconomic organisations (n= 940)

The survey did not aspect specifically about a set of results for these types of respondents as they are a very heterogeneous group. It did ask about the extent to which the respondents thought the programme-level objectives were met. As shown in Annex 6 the vast majority of respondents also view positively the contribution of the project to the programme objectives.

6.5.1.4 Results from case studies

Case studies complement qualitatively the results of the surveys. During case studies country researchers were able to identify a broad range of organisational effects through the testimonials of practitioners (beneficiaries but also non-beneficiaries within beneficiary organisations). A summary of effects identified through case studies as well as the case study summaries are provided in Annex 9.

The most commonly identified organisational results are presented in 0.

The most commonly cited result is the **internationalisation** of organisations. Internationalisation is a broad concept that has a variety of layers. It can mean simply the fact of having contacts with another foreign organisation but also integration of an international dimension into lessons (for example through eTwinning), teaching in a foreign language, hosting practitioners/learners from other countries. Internationalisation is inherent in Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes. It gives young people as well as practitioners a broader perspective beyond their own region and country.

In the higher education sector existence of Erasmus exchanges and later other types of actions has transformed the higher education landscape over the years²⁴⁴. According to the case studies this transformation still continues, though it is certainly more advanced than in other sectors.

²⁴⁴ This is documented by a range of other research summarised in Annex 11 on literature review.

It is also particularly important for organisations which work on target issues for which they have few counterparts in their countries. This is the case for some organisations in the youth sector (e.g. those working on rights-based approaches and activism with specific groups) or certain organisations in the sport sector.

Internationalisation – Evidence from case studies

CZ – higher education: Increased internationalisation is perhaps the most evident effect of the programmes on the university, although the extent of the participation varies by faculty. At the organisation level, participation in the programmes has been increasing over the years, both quantitatively (numbers of students involved and numbers of projects) and qualitatively (more strategic projects). The interviewees consulted as part of this case study believed that the university has become more integrated into the European Higher Education Area as a result of the programmes. The university has created wide international networks of partners resulting in the creation of joint and double degree programmes and other types of interaction between institutions.

UK – school: The Comenius and Erasmus+ projects have played a key role in the school being well connected internationally. The programmes allow children to appreciate that there is a wide world beyond the borders of their own country and that they can learn a lot about themselves through others when they venture into the projects. The school hosts once a year teachers and pupils from the German school for a whole week – this gives teachers the opportunity to exchange on methods and practices, but also allows the schoolchildren to exchange schooling experiences. It undoubtedly gives an international dimension to the school. The programmes have led to the creation of a group a few years ago that meets every week and encourages a broad international outlook. Participating pupils have always had a very positive experience which has progressively strengthened the standing of the programme within the school.

AT – sport organisation: The organisation found that the programme offered European-scale discussions which were paramount to their organisation. The topics tackled by the organisation are not country specific and therefore the organisation sees it as important to get inspiration from abroad: *'discrimination, homophobia, racism and human rights violations are topics that are difficult to tackle on national level; the European dimension is the most sensible level to approach these topics.'*

SE – sport: The national sport organisation focusing on parasports (the oldest in Europe) invited around 100 representatives from 10 European parasport organisations for workshops and other activities. The result this has had for FIFH as an organisation is to have contributed to the communication and sharing of their concept. As a strong parasport organisation in Sweden, they feel it is important to help organisations around Europe, since many countries still have a very outdated and uninformed policy towards the target group.

Another frequently cited effect is a combination of visibility and empowerment or as stated by one of the interviewees **increased kudos**. Participation in an international programme is seen as signal of achievement by others. It sends the message that the organisation is active, dynamic and engaged, which is associated with a positive image. This is very encouraging and exciting for practitioners as well as learners. In the fields where the programme serves grassroots organisations the element of international exchange, the different perspectives that people get exposed to and the fact that this is

perceived as an accomplishment in the eyes of others is seen as important. This positive effect is cascaded down to organisations' target groups and beneficiaries.

Kudos – evidence from case studies

IE – sport: Through the participation in the programme the organisation gained visibility and recognition locally. This attracted new audiences. The main purpose of the organisation is inclusion of people with disabilities who are otherwise marginalised. Their broader outreach and recruitment, which was a side effect of the project, led to the fact that more people had become aware of their organisation and subsequently they and their families started feeling less marginalised.

ES – school: The main impact at the level of the organisation mentioned by interviewees is the increased attractiveness and visibility of the school. The school principal explained that there are three public secondary schools and one private that offer the two last years of secondary education. Among the public schools, theirs is the newest and furthest away from the city centre and for this reason it was traditionally less often demanded by families. However, families have shown an increased interest in the school in recent years and one of the main reasons for this is the fact that it offers students the opportunity to participate in European projects and other international programmes involving students' exchanges.

Participation in Erasmus+ (and predecessor programmes) actions has an important effect of **self-reflection or soft benchmarking**. Through mobility or cooperation projects participants get exposed to how other organisations do certain things, which makes them question their own practices (or absence thereof). These can be small things which they would not have thought of questioning in the absence of this international exposure and they can be aspects that are not even core to the project itself. At the same time the projects can make them realise that their practices are actually strong and innovative and that they should be proud of them. This side effect is not necessarily linked with the international dimension of the programme as similar effects could occur via networking within the country. However, quite often there are no or very few opportunities in many countries for this type of longer duration cooperation nationally.

Self-reflection

IT – sport: The Italian organisation realised the importance of dual careers and developing new models and learning environments: *'It has opened my eyes on the importance of supporting student-athletes' dual career and education and promoting their rights as European citizens.'*

ES – VET: The head teacher explained that schools tend to be self-centred which keeps them from improving. When teachers go abroad they increase their motivation, they learn and 'they bring back ideas, they fertilise the profession'. As a result, the school improves in terms of methodology and contents delivered. As an example, the Puerta Bonita VET school changed its communication management inspired by the model followed by a school in France with which they cooperated under a Leonardo da Vinci partnership project.

The vast majority of case studies identified some form of innovation or change in the organisations studied that can be directly related to the participation in the programme (note that the case studies were selected at random using a rather broad set of criteria). Typically these changes refer to continued **use of materials or methods** shared during the projects. Often these innovations remain small scale or light touch and often limited

to a specific part of the organisation rather than the full body. However, a couple of examples of more important changes were also identified.

Continued use of methods or tools – evidence from case studies

ES – school: Participation in projects changed practitioners' views of how to deliver lessons. One practitioner member reported that she has conducted several small experimentations as a result of her experiences abroad. For example, under a KA2 project 'Innovative learning' she learned about the STEM methodology. This methodology involves project-based learning and brings together content from three disciplines: science, mathematics and technology. She has already used project-based learning in her classroom, but not in a systematic way of integrating content from different disciplines; she is now planning to explore this further. She is going to participate in job shadowing (KA1) to learn more about how the STEM methodology works in practice.

FR – adult education: An organisation analysed showed that insights gained in the predecessor programme workshops and training programmes are offered until today (focusing on intercultural competence). Another example of continued use of approaches consists in the development of new pedagogical approaches based on storytelling techniques (method used for example in children's reading skills and language development). These techniques were adapted to develop language, communication and entrepreneurship skills by adults in a migration situation (voluntary seniors were involved as trainers). This approach is currently being reused as part of the nationally set up workshops and training programme proposed by the association to train practitioners working with migrants ('primo-arrivants') – project financed by the Ministry of Interior.

Participation in the programme also resulted in **strengthening of organisations' capacities** as well as diversification of their supply of activities. The first effect is mostly linked to the professionalisation of the role of project coordinators or grant managers in many organisations. Over time a number of organisations have organised their internal structures so as to better receive foreign learners or accompany the outgoing ones or to manage projects. This effect is well documented in the higher education sector but it also being observed in other sectors.

The diversification effect means that a given organisation changed its supply of activities or education/training or that it focuses on new target groups.

Enhanced capacity of organisations – evidence from case studies

DK higher education: Institutional changes had to take place to optimise the process of applying and working within the framework of Erasmus+ partnership agreement. The practitioners of the international office stepped up immensely, applying the first Erasmus+ opportunities to optimise (and reorganise) the entire international office, including use of indicators and updated descriptors to facilitate communication and evaluation.

BE adult education: The *Enable* project helped raise awareness as to the importance of including adult learners with learning disabilities in the development of services targeted at them. As a result, De Lork intends to create a Learning Academy as part of their activity centre. The Learning Academy will offer enhanced learning opportunities to adult learners with learning disabilities.

Table 6.29 Overview of organisational results identified through case studies

	Key words	Main case studies	School	VET	Higher education	Adult education	Youth	Sport
Internationalisation	New perspectives, broader horizon, active connections	HU VET; HU adult; CZ sport;	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Kudos (from learners and other organisations)	Raised interest of parents and learners, peer recognition, visibility at regional or even national level, feeling less marginalised thanks to international dimension, attract new partners	PL VET; FR adult; AT sport;	✓	✓✓	✓			✓✓
Self-reflection and soft 'benchmarking'	How do we compare to others, how do others address a given issue	UK school; NL VET;	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Implement new approaches	New materials used, new methods used, new tools	HU VET; IT school; PL youth;	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Practitioner motivation and development	Social recognition, doing something different, cross-fertilisation	ES VET; NL VET; ES school; LT HE; FR adult	✓	✓		✓✓		✓
New organisational capacity	Created a new position, used to be a partner now a leader, growth and scale of actions	UK youth; IE sport; SE sport;	✓		✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Serve new audiences/diversification	Reach to new target groups, put in place new types of programmes	IE sport; FR adult;			✓	✓✓		✓✓
Awareness of new theoretical perspectives	Learn from new evidence, awareness of a variety of possible approaches	NL VET; FR adult;	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓	

Legend: ✓✓ several case studies explicitly document a given type of outcome, ✓ one case study documents this outcome of several mention it but more superficially

6.5.1.5 Findings from literature review

The literature review largely confirms the findings already reported above. At the level of organisations, evidence from all sectors of education and youth points to strong positive impact, particularly on teaching capacity, internationalisation and practitioners' development. As in the other tables, evidence on sport and the Jean Monnet programme benefits for organisations is somewhat scarce.

Table 6.30 Summary of literature review – organisation-level effects

(Sub-)field	Results for which there are strong evidence	results for which there is some evidence
School education – results for schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of schools reported a substantial improvement of the content of subject(s) taught by mobile practitioners Vast majority of respondents believe that Comenius transnational partnerships strengthened the European dimension of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational project experience has some impact on curriculum of participating schools
VET – results for VET providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobility programmes lead to stronger focus on international cooperation in organisations and have some impact on curricula, introduction of new VET programmes and courses Mobility improves quality through enhanced personal development of teachers Majority of participating IVET organisations report that mobility brings high to intermediate benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobility programmes affect teaching methods in VET organisations Practitioner mobility leads to organisations pursuing quality improvement and internationalisation strategies
Higher education – results for higher education institutions (HEI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational mobility (as well as international cooperation between practitioners in higher education) has contributed to the internationalisation and openness of HEIs Practitioner mobility and transnational partnerships have impact on internationalisation of teaching in HEIs (e.g. exchange of expertise on pedagogical methods) Mobility impacted the recognition of ECTS by HEIs Transnational partnerships have impacted internationalisation strategies of HEIs and quality of teaching, and increased mutual learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational mobility helps to enrich teaching offer and services at HEIs Transnational partnerships have had positive effect on cooperation between HEIs and business

	processes	
Adult learning – results for adult learning organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some beneficiaries of mobility programmes report that their participation had a very strong impact on colleagues’ interest in European programmes and on teaching methods • Increased and sustained cooperation between institutions/organisations, increased capacity for mobility and increased European outlook for institutions 	Training partnership projects enabled to develop new methods of training and also fostered the attractiveness and visibility of participant organisations
Youth – results for youth organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in projects significantly improves project management skills, capacity of organisations and quality of youth work • Increased international contacts, partnerships and projects, improved international/European dimension of activities 	
Sport – results for sport organisations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased mutual learning and knowledge between sport stakeholders as a result of Preparatory Actions
Jean Monnet – results for higher education organisations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jean Monnet programme had positive impact on curriculum design and teaching of EU-related subjects, increased scope of research and number of publications, contributed to scholarly networking

Table 6.31 Strengths of evidence about the results at organisational level of different types of actions

(Sub)field	Results of mobility actions	Results of cooperation projects	Other types of actions (eTwinning, etc.)
School education – results for schools	• Strong evidence of positive impact of mobility on schools	• Strong evidence of positive impact of cooperation projects on schools	Strong evidence of positive impact of eTwinning
VET – results for VET providers	• Strong evidence of benefits of mobility for VET organisations	• Lack of strong evidence of impact of transnational partnerships	
Higher education – results for	• Strong evidence of benefit for	• Strong evidence of benefits for	

higher education institutions	organisations: internationalisation, quality of teaching	organisations: internationalisation, quality of teaching	
Adult learning – results for adult learning organisations	• Some evidence of benefits for organisations from mobility of practitioners	• Insufficiently strong evidence of impact	
Youth – results for youth organisations	• Strong evidence of positive impact on organisational capacity and quality of youth work	• Youth transnational projects and mobility projects are the same, see column on the left	
Sport – results for sport organisations	Insufficiently strong evidence of impact		
Jean Monnet – results for higher education organisations	Some evidence of positive impact on organisations		

6.5.1.6 Specific findings about higher education international based on DEVCO evaluation of actions funded

A separate evaluation of international higher education actions covering all programmes with an international dimension in higher education has been carried out by an external contractor to DEVCO in the period 2016-2017²⁴⁵. This section summarises the main results for organisations from partner countries reported in that evaluation:

Networking in the field of research and connections with renowned universities and research centres between programme and partner countries;

The actions contributed to the application of the key features of Bologna process in higher education institutions;

Strengthening of management approaches in particular when it comes to international offices or management of international projects. This also includes introduction of performance monitoring systems;

Development of strategies or action plans to enhance to teaching & learning and research.

Teaching programmes developed as part of actions funded were designed so as to respond to labour market needs. This was ensured through the programme design methods.

6.5.2 System-level effects

To what extent did the programme participation lead to spill-over effects at the level of systems?

System-level changes through Erasmus+ could happen through the following channels.

²⁴⁵ Particip (2017) *Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014)*

- The programme funds activities of the Open Method of Coordination at EU level in fields of education, training, youth and sport²⁴⁶. While the OMC as such is not part of Erasmus+, the programme largely contributes financially to its activities.
- The programme funds projects that are specifically aimed at supporting system-level change – KA3 of the current programme and comparable actions in predecessor programmes.
- The other activities of the programme (mobility and cooperation projects) reach a critical mass of organisations and persons. If these are well aligned with the system-level priorities the programme could spur bottom-up evolutions.
- Individual cooperation projects feed results into national/regional policies or practices.

All these channels and their effectiveness are discussed below.

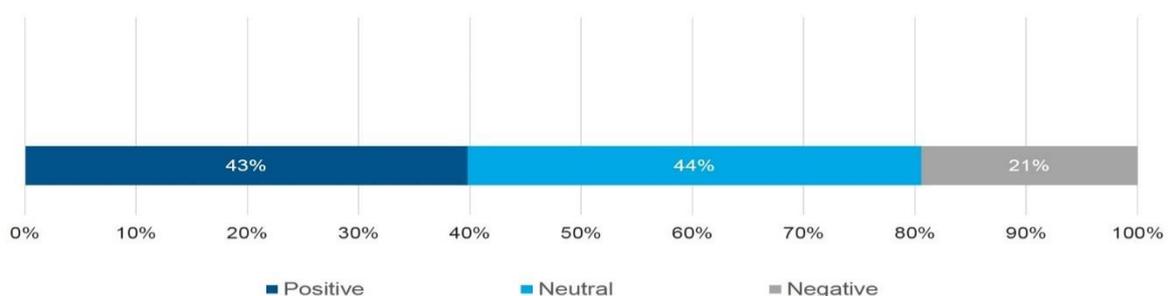
6.5.2.1 Overall sentiment of the influence on system level based from key informant interviews

The evaluation team carried out 131 interviews with key informants at national level in 15 countries. Among other things the interviewees were asked to give concrete examples of influence of the programme on policies or systems. This was a very open question without any prompts. The aim was to identify (i) whether the interviewees would recollect such influences and (ii) what type of influences they would cite.

Around 40 % of the interviewees gave concrete and specific examples while another 40 % were positive about the programme influence or of its potential for influence but were not able to cite concrete examples (see Figure 6.41).

The fact that 43 respondents from the total of 108 who reacted on this point were able to give concrete examples should be seen as rather good performance. The interviews were carried out with people who in the vast majority of cases were not directly involved in projects. They were people in policymaking (ministry officials) functions or among influential stakeholder organisations. When people are asked an open question about concrete examples of rather high-level developments (i.e. things that do not directly influence them or their everyday work), they are rarely able to be very specific. This is also linked to the issue of recall – the further away in time a certain influence happens the less likely people are to remember it. Finally the sample of key informant interviewees was drawn up so as to cover all sectors but as will be explained below, in particular in the sport sector, the examples were rare. This negatively affects the overall trend in responses while sport remains a new and rather small part of the programme.

Figure 6.41 Share of key informants interviewed who were able to cite concrete policy/system changes linked to Erasmus+ or predecessor programmes



²⁴⁶ There is no formal OMC in the field of sport but activities of this type are in place under the umbrella of the EU Work Plan for Sport.

*Legend: **Positive** – named a concrete project or initiative supported via one of the programmes and which was influential; also, responses which clearly stated in which areas there was influence without naming a project. **Neutral** – interviews that thought there was some influence but did not give a concrete example or which hinted at influence at institutional or local levels. **Negative** – interviews which said they are not aware of any such influence.*

Sectoral considerations

The number of key informant interviews per sector was too small to quantify the findings in the same manner as above; however, the following clear sectoral trends were noted.

- Hardly any of the interviewees in sport was able to provide concrete examples of influence at system level from the sport strand. Several interviewees noted that it was too early to see system-level influence in this sector. At the same time others commented that the actions in this sector were very much local and rather disconnected from the policy layer. This should be read in line with the findings that the majority of sport projects focus on enhancing social inclusion through sport or raising awareness about physical activity and sport. There are relatively few projects which focus on systemic issues such as those stated in the programme objectives (combating threats to sport, governance and dual careers of athletes). Furthermore, an important share of sport organisations taking part are rather small local bodies.
- In the higher education sector many interviewees expressed neutral views. Yet this is the sector where the system-level influence is rather well documented (for example integration of ECTS). This lukewarm position of the interviewees can be explained by the fact that in higher education many of the systemic changes linked to mobility are not new – in fact they are now fully mainstreamed and people do not think about them as being influenced via the programme.
- A relatively high number of concrete examples were noted in relation to the EU tools and instruments in the area of qualifications (see also below). Though these instruments are not sector specific they were most frequently mentioned by interviewees from the VET sector and adult learning.

Types of influence

The interviewees mainly cited four types of changes at system level.

- One concrete project was used strategically at national level to provide inputs into a strategy, policy or even legislation. This is about cases where one concrete project was used to inspire national developments.
- Several (or many) projects funded from the programme accompany a systemic development inspired by European priorities or tools. In some countries examples were found where an effort has been made to pool together the evidence of several or even many projects working on a given theme and mainstream the findings of this group of projects.
- The scale of mobility actions required a change in national policy to remove barriers.
- The programme funded activities that raised awareness of an issue at policy level.

Examples of these changes as cited in key informant interviews are presented in the boxes below.

One concrete project feeding into policy

LV: The project National Authorities for Apprenticeships has created preconditions for proper implementation of work-based learning in Latvia. Without it there would be no resources for such thorough work on the legal framework for work-based learning.

BG: There was a project focusing on quality assurance 'Bequal' during which

the National Agency for VET made a guide for self-evaluation of institutions. This guide is now being implemented into practice. It has been embedded in a large-scale project funded through the ESF and it is also part of national ordinance on quality assurance.

CZ: A structural dialogue in a youth project ('Have Your Say') enabled young people to express their opinion on public issues connected to young people's lives. It communicated the outcomes of discussions to the public sphere e.g. politicians, civil servants, civil society and media. The project was an official platform also for gathering ideas and opinions of young people and youth organisations for the EU structured dialogue with young people.

DK: The project 'Play the Game' on sports governance (Preparatory Actions). It evaluated the level of good governance in international organisations. This opened the eyes of many policymakers. For us this meant that we had to work on an agenda, and to some extent we had to upscale our international efforts. There have been other projects as well that at least have enforced agendas. The project made us act even though it is not the only reason why we have got a strategy in that area.

Several projects accompany a systemic development

PL: Erasmus+ forces the applicants to immerse themselves in European policy instruments (e.g. ECVET). As beneficiaries they then present the ideas for reforms based on the solutions they know thanks to participation in the programme (e.g. external/extramural examinations, NQF). They are often engaged in expert groups (e.g. schools) and it is easier for them to propose changes.

CY: The national policy to change teaching and assessment in schools from knowledge to key competences is being helped by the fact that schools and teachers participate in Erasmus+.

Systemic changes to remove barriers to mobility

LV: The national rules about languages in which examinations at university had to be passed have been softened to accommodate mobile students.

TR: Costs of visa are not charged if people travel for an Erasmus+ project or mobility.

Raised awareness

CY: Cyprus did not use to do a lot in adult learning but this has become a much bigger priority thanks to EU actions. Also in the field of VET, we did not use ECVET and now there is a working group on this, likewise for validation of non-formal and informal learning. In these cases the Erasmus+ programme really influenced the policies on the national level; we are now more aware of the issues and we included the priorities in our policies.

ES: Directly or indirectly, Erasmus+ projects contribute to awareness raising. When they started working on the Platform for Lifelong Learning, Autonomous Communities (regional governments) started updating theirs. One of the Autonomous Communities released their own platform before the national one was released.

UK: Promotion of the OECD survey of adult skills (PIAAC) through Erasmus+ did influence UK policy around basic skills. It at least raised awareness of the issues.

Source: Key informant interviews

Differences between countries

It is difficult to generalise based on the relatively small number of interviews per country. Nevertheless, generally the interviewees tend to be more positive about the systemic influence of the programme in countries that are smaller and less wealthy. In these countries EU funding (mainly ESF but partly also Erasmus+) is a major source of funding for any systemic evolution. In general the networks in these countries are smaller and possibly the chains for information transmission from grassroots innovations to the ministry are shorter.

They are more sceptical about the influence of the programme in those countries which have complex and large education and training systems, or policies which are seen as being ahead of others.

6.5.2.2 System-level influence of the programme via OMC activities

Erasmus+, LLP and YiA activities related to the Open Method of Coordination in the respective sectors. The programme funds the EU-level activities such as working groups and research but also national-level activities linked to the implementation of EU tools and instruments (for example National Contact Points for the European Qualifications Framework receive co-funding).

The programme therefore provides a substantial contribution to these OMCs and its effectiveness in these areas should be assessed as a contribution to the effectiveness of the OMCs.

This evaluation did not collect primary data on the effectiveness of each of the three OMCs as that was outside of the scope of the assignment. The below offers a rapid summary of the existing OMC evaluations and if explicitly addressed how the programme contribution was assessed.

Education and training OMC

The evaluation of the OMC in education and training²⁴⁷ noted that the outputs of OMC activities have been welcome by national stakeholders and used as inputs to influence and guide national policies and practices. National drivers are the most important factors for change in education and training policies but the evaluation found that the OMC does input into the process of reflection and analysis at system level.

The evaluation found the following results for those elements of the OMC that are specifically funded by Erasmus+ and LLP:

- mutual learning activities led to stimulate discussion and debate helped stimulate action beyond the discussion, and helped disseminate good practice;
- analytical activities helped MS better understand key issues and problems and the differences between countries and to identify priority groups;
- tools for reform (such as the EQF, EQAVET, Europass) were found to be used in national contexts to set the agenda but also to influence developments.

It can therefore be concluded that through the OMC in education and training the programme is influential on national education and training policies. Through the OMC the programme is influential also on those priorities of ET 2020 which are not easy to tackle through mobility and cooperation actions among practitioners. For example through the OMC the programme influences policies on qualifications design (via the European Qualifications Framework) and permeability between education and training

²⁴⁷ Ecorys (2014), *Interim Evaluation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)*.

systems, including non-formal and informal learning (validation of non-formal and informal learning) or early school leaving policies.

Youth OMC

The most recent evaluation of the European Youth Strategy²⁴⁸ concluded that the OMC had influence on national policies and structures in the youth field even though:

- the influence varied greatly from one country to another depending on their starting situation; and
- the attribution of national changes in the field of youth policy to the EU activities was hard to make given the multiplicity of factors which inform changes.

As a result, the evaluation was rather positive but without affirming clearly hard and measurable results to the existence of the EU Youth Strategy and its activities.

At the same time the activities funded by the YiA and Erasmus+ were identified as strong pillars of the OMC. In particular the evaluation underlined:

- that funding from YiA and Erasmus+ was instrumental for the EU Youth Strategy;
- the importance of Erasmus+ (and YiA) funding for structural dialogue in the field of youth, which was seen as a structural innovation in a number of countries;
- the use of Youthpass as a means to promote identification and recognition of learning outcomes of volunteers. Developed through YiA programme, it became a broadly used instrument for international as well as national activities;

Subsequently it can be concluded that through the OMC in the youth field, the programmes co-funded had some influence on national systemic and policy developments in the field of youth.

OMC-like activities in the field of sport

The Commission adopted a report on the achievements of the first EU Work Plan on sport in January 2017. The report was informed among other things by a response to questionnaires completed by 105 policymakers and key stakeholders. The responses suggest that the Work Plan is positively perceived by the respondents who state it was influential; however, the report does not give concrete examples of effects on sport organisations or sport policies. It is therefore not known to what extent the co-funding of activities under the headings of 'dialogue with stakeholders' and 'evidence-based policymaking' are influential in the field of sport policy and structures.

6.5.2.3 System-level influence of projects aimed at this level of action

Erasmus+ KA3 focuses on funding actions that are expected to have system-level effects. Comparable actions existed under the predecessor programmes LLP and YiA even though some new features were introduced under Erasmus+. In this chapter the programme funds:

- structured dialogue between young people and policymakers;
- several types of 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 policymaking (studies, cooperation with the OECD);
- activities related to EU-level OMCs (see above);
- Forward-Looking Cooperation projects ;

²⁴⁸ ICF (2016), *Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU*.

- projects on specific EU-level priorities (apprenticeships, social inclusion, etc.).

The table below summarises the evidence of effectiveness of these different instruments where available.

Table 6.32 Summary of evidence on effectiveness of different activities under KA3

Type of activity	Evidence	Sources
Structured dialogue between young people and policymakers	Positive influence on the process of policymaking at national level – related to structural dialogue at national level	Evaluation of EU Youth Strategy
Contact points	<p>Their effectiveness depends on the actual instrument promoted. Some examples that have proved influential are: EQF NCP, EQAVET NRPs, Bologna experts.</p> <p>The evidence shows that the usefulness of these structures varies – some countries use them much more strategically than others – but overall they are a useful instrument to support national implementation of EU initiatives</p>	<p>Evaluation of EQF²⁴⁹</p> <p>Evaluation of EQAVET²⁵⁰</p> <p>Evaluation of national teams of Bologna experts²⁵¹</p>
Support to EU-level civil society bodies	<p>The evaluation of the partnership between the EC and the European Youth Forum found that this mechanism was a useful channel to ensure dialogue between EU policies and youth organisations</p> <p>Other grants have not been evaluated in the same manner but overall it is likely that the extent to which co-funded organisations are influential on their members and the EU policies varies greatly from one organisation to another. Nevertheless, the existence of EU-level stakeholder bodies allows the Commission to have a dialogue with a variety of stakeholders through their participation in working groups, annual forums, or other consultations</p>	Evaluation of EC-European Youth Forum Partnership ²⁵²
Evidence-based policy making	<p>Studies funded were seen as having provided Member States with stronger evidence</p> <p>This line of Erasmus+ and LLP co-funds, also cooperation with OECD resulting for example in PISA and PIAAC surveys and their subsequent</p>	Evaluation of ET 2020 ²⁵³

²⁴⁹ ICF (2012), *Evaluation of the Implementation of the European Qualifications Framework Recommendation*.

²⁵⁰ ICF (2013), *Evaluation of implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)*.

²⁵¹ ICF (2013), *Study to examine the impact of the national teams of Bologna experts on the implementation of the Bologna process*.

²⁵² Ecorys (2013), *Evaluation of the European Commission-European Youth Forum Operating Grant Agreements 2007–2011/12*.

²⁵³ Ecorys (2014), *Interim evaluation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)*.

Type of activity	Evidence	Sources
	analysis These are highly influential sources of evidence	
EU-level OMCs	See section above	
KA3 projects	Unclear – see below	

The section on key informant interviews (above) showed that there are examples of projects which lead to system-level influence. However, these projects are not necessarily KA3 projects and vice versa not all KA3 projects do have system-level influence. In other words projects that are not funded under KA3 can have system-level influence and not all KA3 projects (or equivalent actions under LLP) do have system-level influence.

For the key informant interviews researchers were provided with a list of KA3 projects in the countries and sectors in which they were carrying out interviews. They were asked to question interviewees about their awareness of a given project. In the vast majority of cases the interviewees were not able to provide any comments on these projects and were not aware of them.

Similarly the case studies on KA3 projects did not in all cases identify system-level effects.

On the positive side having this budget line enables the Commission to relatively rapidly address a newly identified need by issuing a call for proposals. This is for example the case of targeted calls in relation to the Paris Declaration of ministers.

On the other hand, many stakeholders were unclear about the difference between KA2 and KA3 projects when interviewed. See also section below on effectiveness per sector and type of action.

6.5.2.4 System-level influence via the critical mass of organisations and practitioners

Another way for this programme to achieve system-level influence is by reaching out to a critical mass of practitioners and organisations.

This has been the case in higher education where the mainstreaming of mobility resulted in (i) changes at institutional level which, by their volume, led to system-level changes and (ii) changes in policies to ensure that higher education students and institutions in their countries were able to take part in mobility and benefit from it fully (e.g. implementation of credit systems at national level).

In several of the other sectors, the programme is also close to reaching a critical mass. As shown in Table 6.33 in the VET sector the programme supports mobility of close to 1 % of VET students. In the school sector 0.36 % of practitioners are supported since 2014. If repeated participation of schoolteachers in the programme was limited, then practitioner mobility actions would have supported around 2.5 % of practitioners in the school sector by the end of the programme period (assuming same levels of participation as currently). Given that quite a high share of practitioners take part in more than one activity (repeated participation), this number is likely to be substantially lower but certainly above 1 %.

The below does not include the number of education and training practitioners and learners who get involved through Strategic Partnerships or other types of actions. As discussed above, eTwinning for example is instrumental in reaching out to a critical mass of teachers.

As shown above practitioners in education and training state that the activities in which they were involved were influential on aspects close to EU policies (areas where system-level changes are expected). In the school sector for example, this concerns findings such as:

- 62 % of practitioners state that participation led to use of learning outcomes for programme design and assessment;
- 61 % state that they improved governance and quality assurance approaches;
- 57 % of practitioners say that they introduced new ways of working with disadvantaged learners.

Even though these changes are likely to be relatively light touch in most organisations, their accumulation and scale (number of organisations reached) should with time result in deeper changes.

However, not all sectors are comparable when it comes to the extent to which a critical mass of organisations or practitioners would have been reached.

The adult education sector within the programme is too small and fragmented to make a substantial difference to the challenges faced within this sector.

For the moment the sport sector is too small to see system-level results through this channel. On the other hand, the analysis of organisational outcomes in the sport sector shows that there is a reasonably good alignment between major EU policies in the field of sport (good governance or combating threats to sport).

For the youth sector it is difficult to judge to what extent the programme succeeds in reaching a critical mass as there is no clear comparator (total number of practitioners, organisations).

Table 6.33 Penetration of the programme-funded mobility actions in a given sector (2014 or closest year available)

Comment: this calculation compared the overall population enrolled in a given type education (or profession for schools) in the year 2014 (or closest date where data is available) with the number of beneficiaries in KA1 in 2014.

	Total population in programme countries	Total population programme countries except Turkey	Number of persons supported through KA1 in the given year - 2014	Penetration (without Turkey)
Higher education students	24,112,156	18,706,792	301,262	1.60 %
VET students	13,460,081	10,946,194	101866	0.93 %
Schools teachers	6,731,217	5,883,328	21,308	0.36 %

Source: ICF calculations based on Eurostat data and Mobility Tool

6.5.2.5 System- level influence via individual cooperation projects

As noted above projects other than those funded under KA2 can have systemic effect by directly influencing policies or national-level practices. However, in the vast majority of cases this is likely to be an exception rather than the rule. As discussed in the section on factors below, those projects which succeed in creating linkages with policies have a clear vertical network with all key organisations engaged, from the beginning. This is not the

case for the majority of projects. Even when small-scale projects develop an innovative approach, if they did not have a high-level influential stakeholder involved from the beginning they typically do not have the capacity to reach out in a convincing manner to the decision-makers.

6.5.2.6 Results from literature review

The literature reviewed had overall little evidence of system-level effects. Where such evidence exists it is positive but in all sectors except youth, VET and HE it is very fragmented.

Table 6.34 Overview of results and impacts at system level as identified by the literature review

(Sub)field	Results for which there is strong evidence	Results for which there is some evidence
Education and training policies and systems overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility programmes have contributed to the introduction of new or modification of existing national curricula in VET, contributed to the modernisation of vocational education • Strong evidence of recognition of mobility outcomes in HE and in VET (using EU tools), contribution of Erasmus programme to the development of EQF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comenius projects influenced national policy and practice on school education in a few cases
Youth policies and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth in Action contributed to enhancing volunteering across borders and inspiring a sense of active European citizenship among youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth in Action had positive contribution to evidence-based youth policy and dialogue between youth and policymakers (Germany)
Sport policies and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear evidence of the contribution of the Preparatory Actions in the field of sport to the systemic level was found 	

6.5.2.7 System level effects from international cooperation in higher education based on DEVCO evaluation

As presented in the section on organisational effects, the DEVCO evaluation²⁵⁴ also identified system level effects of higher education actions targeting partner countries. These are:

- Alignment with the Bologna process in partner countries. High number of reforms and strategies in the partner countries have been identified by the evaluation and these were influenced by participation in EU programmes;
- The area where system level effects were most noticeable is internationalisation and specifically credit and qualification transfer and recognition.
- There were notable differences between countries and regions with EU actions being more influential in some (e.g. Ukraine) and less in others (Central Asia and Asia).

²⁵⁴ Particip (2017) *Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014)*

6.5.2.8 System-level effects as per legal basis indicators

The legal basis defines that the programme is expected to contribute to the two EU 2020 benchmarks in the field of education and training, more specifically higher education attainment and early school leaving.

Though these two targets are evolving positively it is difficult to assess the contribution of this programme and its predecessor to their evolution. As discussed in the section on the programme intervention logic (Section 2), these objectives are set at a level which poses challenges with regard to testability, feasibility and plausibility.

The contribution of the programme to these targets is at best likely to be indirect. The contribution could materialise through the following channels:

- by reaching out to a substantial mass of learners and resulting in better retention;
- by reaching out to a substantial mass of practitioners, resulting in changes of pedagogical approaches of practitioners;
- by improving the attractiveness of education and training;
- by focusing specific actions on a given priority; and
- by resulting in system-level changes to tackle these two issues.

Each of these potential channels of influence are discussed for each of the targets in the table below.

Table 6.35 Contribution of the programme to decreasing early school leaving rates

Channel of influence	Relevant findings	Judgement
Via learners and the effect on learners	<p>Early school leavers are most likely to be found among disadvantaged young people (parents with low level of education, migrant or minority origin, health and mental health issues, etc.)</p> <p>Early school leavers drop out from school education or VET</p> <p>Evaluation results going in favour of statements about potential positive contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The surveys found that, in particular in VET, the programme does improve learners’ attitude towards education/training and the positive relationship to their education/training organisation. These are preconditions for retention in education and training as negative attitudes towards school/training are risk factors for early school leaving • The programme does reach a reasonably high number of learners in VET via KA1. It also reaches out to many more via KA2 (in VET and in schools) though the exact numbers are not clear <p>Results suggesting that though there is potential, that this is likely to be lead to a small-scale contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of disadvantaged schools (which are likely to be those with high levels of early school leaving) taking part in the programme is low • The number of disadvantaged learners with those characteristics which make learners particularly at risk of early school leaving is rather low. Absenteeism and 	Small contribution

	<p>disengagement are typical signs of risk of early school leaving. However, the analysis (in particular the pre-post survey in schools) suggests that schools tend to select students into the programme and they tend to involve those who are 'good students' (if not when it comes to grades than when it comes to behaviours). If the grant does not enable the participation of the full class then it is unlikely that those at the margin would participate (blended learning or mobility)</p>	
Via practitioners	<p>The programme could influence the rate of early school leaving via practitioners by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing their everyday practices to improve prevention of ESL • Strengthening pedagogical and outreach approaches for already existing remedial measures and structures (as the programme does not lead to creation of new remedial pathway structures) <p>Prevention – positive findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively high share of practitioners (44 %) stated that the programme led to introducing new ways of working with disadvantaged learners even though only 19 % said that this was actually the focus of their participation <p>Findings attenuating the above positive trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unclear how deep the changes were and whether the changes are more about awareness rather than concrete evolutions of practices <p>Remedial measures – positive findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the above, which holds also for remedial structures, it was found that a rather high share of schools from the European second chance education network participated in the programme <p>Findings attenuating the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The abovementioned network of second chance institutions remains relatively small in size • The adult education strand, which is the strand that would be more suited for non-traditional remedial pathways organisations (as the school strand is more likely to attract schools rather than providers of alternative pathways), is the smallest strand of the programme 	Small to medium contribution
Via organisations – attractiveness	<p>If the organisations with many learners at risk of ESL become more attractive, this would enhance the positive feeling of young people to these organisations as well as their future prospects and thus lead to better retention</p> <p>The evaluation found in a qualitative manner that participation in the programme leads to improved image of organisations. It is however not clear whether these are the organisations which would need such improvement the most</p>	Small contribution
Via programme	There could be specific focus under the programme on actions	Small

objectives and types of actions	targeting the issue of ESL. Though the programme objectives cover early school leaving as one of the priorities, this is one of many priorities. The review of selected projects shows a weak alignment between the projects actually funded and this priority There is insufficient focus on making sure that projects funded actually have the potential to make a sufficiently substantial difference to this challenge	contribution
Via system-level changes	The programme funds OMC activities in education and training and ESL has been one of the key issues tackled for more than a decade. It is likely that via the OMC at least some countries have made changes to their policies to tackle ESL	Medium contribution

Table 6.36 Contribution of the programme to increasing higher education attainment

Channel of influence	Relevant findings	Judgement
Via learners and the effect on learners	The programme could influence attainment rates by reaching out to a high number of learners and improving their retention in higher education Positive findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programmes does reach out to a high number of higher education students • The programme is associated with better employability • The programme is associated with positive appreciation by the students and thus likely to be motivating • The survey findings show a statistically significant difference in the completion rates between beneficiaries and control group Negative findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with ESL, the profile of those reached does not overlap with those at highest risk of dropping out from higher education. In particular a high number of dropouts in higher education occurs in the early years of the studies while the programme reaches out more to students in later years of studies • The survey results could be linked to the selection into the programme 	Small to medium contribution
Via practitioners	The programme could affect teaching practitioners by making them more aware of strategies to retain students Positive findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme does reach a high number of practitioners in higher education Negative findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practitioners reached in higher education sector stated that their activities had very little focus on the disadvantaged (i.e. those most at risk of dropping out in 	Small contribution

	<p>higher education)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The results also show that in higher education the programme rarely leads to changes in working with the disadvantaged 	
Via organisations – attractiveness	<p>The programme could contribute to improving higher education attainment by attracting new audiences to higher education – students who would not have otherwise decided to study at this level</p> <p>Positive findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme does improve attractiveness of individual higher education institutions and learners are likely to take into account the degree of international connections when choosing an institution. This however does not mean that the programme reaches out to students who would not have otherwise taken part in the programme <p>Negative findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is hardly any focus in the programme on actions focusing on raising aspirations and changing the mindsets of those who are not considering higher education as an option The programme cannot influence the actual capacity of higher education institutions to take on board more students and provide support of sufficient quality 	Small contribution
Via programme objectives and types of actions	As for ESL there is very little focus on projects that would actually aim to tackle this issue in higher education	Small contribution
Via system-level changes	As for ESL, the programme does fund OMC in education and training which works on the issue of retention in higher education. At least some countries/institutions are likely to have changed their practices in order to improve retention as an effect of the OMC	Medium contribution

6.6 Effectiveness per field and type of action

Which fields and actions of the Programme are the most effective considering the needs?

Are there positive /negative effects that existed in the previous programmes, but that no longer exist with the new programme?

When looking at the types of actions there are only two types of actions that can be clearly identified as being less effective considering the needs than the others. These are:

- Student loan guarantee due to the fact that the action is still too small to effectively address a need in the higher education sector (beyond the need of the fairly modest number of beneficiaries). There is however potential for this action to reach comparable effectiveness as mobility grants, once it reaches a critical scale;
- Jean Monnet modules and chairs due to the fact that the need for EU funding in this area (teaching and research about the EU) has declined strongly since the action was created. Teaching and research about the EU have become common practice in the EU outside the activities funded by Jean Monnet.

For the other types of actions they appear to have clear effects at one or multiple levels (the levels of learners, staff, organisations or systems).

When it comes to the effectiveness per field, the summary of the evidence shows that:

- The evidence of the effectiveness in the field of education and training is overall strong. There is evidence of spill-over effects from learner mobility to organisations also from cooperation projects to learners. However:
 - The effects on learners are clearer in those fields and types of actions where there is direct involvement of learners;
 - It is sometimes difficult to clearly differentiate the effects on staff between cooperation actions and staff mobility. The main difference is that the cooperation actions enable the programme to reach to profiles of staff who would not have taken part in mobility;
 - The adult education sector is very small in scale and highly diverse which means that the funding is spread across too big diversity of activities in order to make a broader, system level, contribution;
- The evidence of effectiveness in the sector of youth is clearly identified at all levels.
- The evidence of effectiveness in the sector of sport is yet somewhat patchy as the actions are new, the funding is small and spread across a high diversity of types of activities.

The judgement on effectiveness versus needs is difficult to be made as each of the sectors has somewhat different needs. If looking at the legal basis result and impact indicators that are common to several sectors, the following summary can be made:

- Key competence development:
 - The need is stronger in the sectors of schools and VET but also a subset of the sector of adult learning (the subset targeting low skilled).
 - The youth sector caters for a great variety of target groups which may or may not be facing this need.
 - There is evidence that the programme contributes to competence development in VET, youth and school education.
- Foreign language competence:
 - The need is stronger in school education and VET but it is also present in higher education. As above the youth sector serves a vary varied audience. In adult education this need also exists but it is less pressing compared to other issues being tackled in the sector. Furthermore, there are other bodies which can bear the costs of catering for this need;
 - There is evidence of effect in all four sectors
- Employability:
 - The need it stronger in VET and higher education. In the youth sector there is also a high number of young people who struggle with transiting to employment;
 - In VET and higher education sectors there is evidence of effectiveness but this is not clear in the youth sector in general (it is clearer for EVS);
- Retention in education and training (early school leaving and higher education attainment):
 - This need is strong across all the sectors;
 - Evidence of effectiveness is clearer in schools, VET and higher education.

The evidence in this section on one hand summarises the evidence presented elsewhere. On the other hand it presents the views of certain stakeholders on types of actions that they perceive as most effective. This however needs to be taken with caution as the respondents tend to prefer actions in their sector over other types of actions.

With regard to effects that no longer exist under the current programme, the main effect identified was the absence of an intervention targeting directly school pupils (KA1 type of mobility). This is however partially covered under KA2 mobility activities.

Table 6.37 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Summary evidence of	Various	Strong evidence of effectiveness for all main three types of actions. Less positive findings about SLG and Jean Monnet. When looking at sectors, the evidence of effectiveness compared to needs is strong in school education, VET, higher education and youth. It is less clear in the sectors of adult education and sport also due to the small scale of these strands and hence lack of critical mass of beneficiaries.
Actions cited as most effective by programme agencies	Survey of programme agencies	Mobility actions for results at the level of learners and staff – even in sectors where there is no direct learner mobility under KA1 (schools, adult learning) but only blended mobility as part of KA2 Strategic partnerships for organisational results and system level results
Actions associated with more positive results in beneficiary surveys	Survey of staff and of learners	Mobility actions – in particular those of longer duration For staff there is no clear-cut commonality
Views of key informants about actions that have been discontinued	Key informant interviews	Anecdotal evidence that some respondents regret the absence of: Individual mobility for pupils Small scale projects for specific types of organisations (entry into the programme)

6.6.1 Summary of evidence from other sections

Table 6.38 gives a high level summary of the level of effects (individual, organisational, system level) per sector and per type of action. It shows that there is not a simple overlap between the type of action and the level at which it is influential. For example, learner mobility can have organisational influence and cooperation actions between organisations also affect learners. It shows that in each of the sectors, at each of the levels concerned there is some influence from all of the types of actions.

A clear hierarchy in the level of effectiveness of types of actions or fields of the programme is hard to make as the needs in each of the sectors vary and so do the activities funded. Nevertheless the following simplified overview picture can be drawn:

- Learner mobility actions are, understandably, most effective at the level of learners. However there are also spill-over effects:
 - From learners to organisations in particular in higher education and VET sectors, where mobility is a vehicle to introduce some organisational practices, such as recognition of learning outcomes, that benefit also other target groups. Furthermore the use of charters for organisations receiving or sending students also has organisational effects;

- From learner to staff and organisation – this is identified in the impact study of EVS specifically where volunteers also have a capacity building role in the host organisations.
- Staff mobility actions have clear effects on staff (as expected). Furthermore:
 - Via staff they also have effects on organisations;
 - While these actions could have effect on learners it was not possible to measure this in the context of this assignment.
- Cooperation actions have clear effects on staff. The effects are somewhat similar to the participation in staff mobility. The main difference is that the cooperation actions reach out to staff who would not have been mobile through KA1.
 - Cooperation actions also have clear effects on learners who directly take part in these projects.

Table 6.38 The extent to which different types of actions have effect at different levels as per the intervention logic

Green shading indicates that the evidence of effectiveness collected is strong, N/A = not applicable

Sector	Positive effect on	KA1 – mobility of learners (or equivalent)	KA1 – mobility of staff (or equivalent)	KA2 – cooperation projects or equivalent	KA3 – system level actions
School education	Learners	N/A	Possible indirect relationship but evidence was not collected	✓ evidence concerns those learners who directly take part in projects (including eTwinning)	N/A
	Staff	N/A	✓ direct relationship	✓ direct relationship	N/A
	Organisations	N/A	✓ the effect is from staff to organisations	✓ the effect is from staff to organisations	N/A
VET	Learners	✓ direct relationship	Possible indirect relationship but evidence was not collected	✓ evidence concerns those learners who directly take part in projects (including eTwinning)	N/A
	Staff	Possible indirect relationship but evidence was not collected	✓ direct relationship	✓ direct relationship	N/A
	Organisations	✓ Direct effect via the mobility charter at institutional level	✓ the effect is from staff to organisations	✓ the effect is mostly from staff to organisations	N/A
Higher education	Learners	✓ direct relationship	Possible indirect relationship but evidence was not collected	✓ evidence concerns those learners who directly take part in blended mobility	N/A
	Staff	Possible indirect relationship but evidence was not collected	✓ direct relationship	✓ direct relationship	N/A
	Organisations	✓ Direct effect via the mobility charter at institutional level and via institutional arrangements to support mobility	✓ the effect is from staff to organisations	✓ the effect is from staff to organisations	N/A
Adult	Learners	N/A	Possible indirect relationship but	There are learners taking part in	N/A

Sector	Positive effect on	KA1 – mobility of learners (or equivalent)	KA1 – mobility of staff (or equivalent)	KA2 – cooperation projects or equivalent	KA3 – system level actions
education			evidence was not collected	partnership but their numbers are very low hence the effect was not measured	
	Staff	N/A	✓ direct relationship	✓ direct relationship	N/A
	Organisations	N/A	✓ the effect is from staff to organisations	✓ the effect is from staff to organisations	N/A
Education and training policy	System level	✓ indirect bottom up effect: large number of organisations which organise mobility are reached. They are working with tools for recognition of learning outcomes, credit systems which has system level effects	Possible indirect relationship but evidence was not collected	✓ Examples of projects that are influential at system level have been identified	✓ direct effect from open method of coordination funded by the programme but also from specific projects
Youth	Learners	✓ direct relationship		Potential effect for those who directly take part but this has not been measured	N/A
	Staff	✓ indirect effect more specifically linked to EVS (capacity building of organisations via volunteers)	✓ direct relationship	✓ direct relationship	N/A
	Organisations	✓ indirect effect more specifically linked to EVS (capacity building of organisations via volunteers)	✓ direct relationship given the small size of many youth organisations any changes in staff practices are closely linked to changes at organisational level	✓ direct relationship given the small size of many youth organisations any changes in staff practices are closely linked to changes at organisational level	N/A
Youth policy	System level	✓ use of tools and practices for recognition of learning outcomes	✓ for example quality frameworks for youth work	✓ for example quality frameworks for youth work	✓ direct effect from open method of coordination funded by the programme but

Sector	Positive effect on	KA1 – mobility of learners (or equivalent)	KA1 – mobility of staff (or equivalent)	KA2 – cooperation projects or equivalent	KA3 – system level actions
					also from specific projects – e.g. structural dialogue
Sport	Staff	N/A	N/A	✓ direct relationship	N/A
	Organisations	N/A	N/A	✓ direct relationship	N/A
Sport policy	System level	N/A	N/A	Too early as the strand is too new and too small in scale	Too early as the strand is too new and too small in scale

Source: synthesis of various types of evidence summarised in the effectiveness section

The judgement on effectiveness versus needs is difficult to be made as each of the sectors has somewhat different needs. The choice has been made below (see Table 6.39) to look at the contribution of each of the fields within education, training and youth to the main result and impact indicators available in the legal basis. Since they have been agreed in the legal basis, these indicators can be seen as the main common denominator for all the programme actions targeting directly young people. Comparison across other indicators is not straight forward as they are more relevant to some sectors rather than others.

The below table does not reflect on Jean Monnet or sport which have very different objectives. For these two strands the following assessment can be made:

- Jean Monnet: while the programme does result in students having better understanding and knowledge of the EU (see separate volume) it targets primarily those who are already studying about the EU. Furthermore, the need for EU funding targeting teaching about the EU at higher education level is much less apparent than when the programme was founded and there was lack of interest in the topic; and
- Sport: the strand is too new and its scale is for the moment too small to make clear conclusions about its effectiveness. The analysis of effectiveness presented in earlier section does suggest however that the resources are being spread too thinly over a great diversity of activities thus causing certain dilution of possible results.

Table 6.39 Needs and effectiveness compared to legal basis indicators

Explanation	Foreign language skills		Key competences		Employability		Retention in education and training	
	need	effect	need	effect	need	effect	need	effect
Explanation	Share of people who speak no foreign language		Low achievers in basic skills and other key competences		Difficulties in transiting to employment/ share of unemployed		Early school leaving or dropping out	
Schools	Strong	Likely to be strong on those who take part directly (as in VET) but clear evidence missing	Strong	Positive direct effect on learners though not necessarily on basic skills as such rather other key competences Positive indirect effect through staff who improve teaching methods and pedagogies	Medium – not an immediate need but rather a medium term need	Not measured here but likely to be weak or only indirect as there is a big time gap between intervention and the moment when most pupils will start searching for employment	Strong	Medium – there is association between programme participation and completion of studies but this could result from selection into the programme. There is also association with positive attitudes to education and training
VET	Strong	Strong as measured by OLS	Strong	Idem	Strong	Strong evidence through the quasi-experimental approach	Strong	Idem
Higher education	Strong (though there are more learners who master a foreign language than in VET or schools this is also crucial for their future employability)	Medium to strong depending on entry level competence as measured by OLS	Medium – it is unlikely that people with low basic skills would be participating in higher education but there is a need for	Idem	Strong	Strong evidence through various studies	Medium – ESL is not a problem in higher education but there is nevertheless a need to retain students	Idem

Foreign language skills		Key competences		Employability		Retention in education and training		
need	effect	need	effect	need	effect	need	effect	
			development of other key competences					
Adult education	Low or medium – the need exists but there is strong foreign language training provision for adults	Weak as the programme does not target learners as such or only very few	Strong – in particular basic skills among certain target groups	The effect is positive but indirect via staff adopting new pedagogies and approaches	Strong among certain target groups	Weak as this is not the main aim of the interventions. The weak positive indirect effect could be from improved key competences but it has not been measured	Strong among certain target groups such as those who dropped out of education and training	The effect could be positive via staff improving their approaches and methods
Youth	Strong – same as VET and HE	Strong as per OLS data	Medium to strong depending on target group (many young people participating are HE students)	As VET	Strong	Weak – the positive effect found in VET and higher education is not observed in youth strand overall (other studies show positive effect of EVS when assessed separately)	Medium to strong – same as for VET and HE (may beneficiaries in youth strand are higher education students)	Same as for VET and HE

Source: ICF analysis of various sources of evidence

6.6.2 Evidence from ICF surveys of beneficiaries

During the surveys, beneficiaries were asked to give information about the type of action in which they took part. In order to see whether some actions have stronger results than others, the evaluation team compared the results (in the result areas discussed above) between different types of actions. Table 6.40 gives an overview of actions which are more frequently associated with positive results for learners and staff. Overall longer term mobility actions are associated with stronger results for learners.

For staff there is no common thread across the sectors. In general the differences between types of actions for staff are small suggesting that the main difference is between participation and non-participation rather than the types of actions. It seems to make little difference in what type of action staff participate provided that they participate. Two issues further affect the breakdowns per type of action for staff:

- Staff frequently participate in multiple types of actions (for example eTwinning and something else); and
- The sample sizes differ per type of action. For some types of actions the sample sizes are rather small which certainly negatively affects the identification of statistically significant difference.

Table 6.40 Actions more frequently associated with positive results

Sector	Learners	Staff (to be treaded with caution given considerations above)	Staff – types of actions with small sample sizes
School	Exchange/ mobility (>1 month)	Twinning Short term exchange as part of strategic partnerships	Long term assignments as part of strategic partnerships Long term mobility assignments (more than one month)
VET	Exchange/ mobility (>1 month) Other	Twinning cooperation projects (strategic partnerships)	Idem
Higher education	Mobility for studies in general Mobility (> 3 months)	Teaching abroad	N/A
Adult education	N/A	cooperation projects (strategic partnerships) & shot term exchanges as part of Erasmus +	Placement in a company Long term mobility action (more than one month)
Youth	No clear difference	Other	N/A

Source: ICF beneficiaries surveys

6.6.3 Evidence from programme agencies

The programme agencies were asked in the survey to cite the three types of actions that were most effective in their sector as well as those that were least effective. The result of this ranking is provided in Table 6.41 for learners and Table 6.42 for staff. It shows that overall agencies consider the strategic partnership actions as highly effective in all sectors followed by mobility projects for learners. With the exception of the Erasmus + Student Loan Guarantee Facility, the results are less clear when reporting about actions that are least effective. Given that few respondents actually opted to name least effective actions, the ranking of SLGF is a particularly clear sign of the low appreciation of this action.

Table 6.41 Actions frequently cited as being most and least effective by programme agencies at the level of learners

Most effective		Least effective	
Type of action	Number of mentions	Type of action	Number of mentions
KA1: Mobility project for higher education students (student mobility for studies)	27	KA1: Erasmus+ Master Loans	19
KA1: Mobility project for VET learners	27	KA2: Strategic Partnerships for youth	7
KA1: Mobility project for young people (Youth Exchange)	25	KA2: Strategic Partnerships for VET	6
KA2: Strategic Partnerships for schools	24	KA2: Strategic Partnerships for schools	5
KA1: Mobility project for young people (European Voluntary Service)	22		
KA1: Mobility project for higher education students (student mobility for traineeships)	19		
KA2: Strategic Partnerships for adult education	16		

Source: ICF survey of programme agencies. The survey was answered by 130 respondents. For the above question the respondents were free to choose one or up to three types of actions that they judge as most and least effective

The agencies were also asked to justify their choices. A summary of main trends is presented in tables below:

- There is a clear preference to underline actions that comprise mobility;
- The key reason why KA2 strategic partnerships are appreciated in the school and adult learning sector is that they offer mobility options. In fact most respondents believe that to ensure the effectiveness of this programme mobility is a crucial element;
- When judging the effectiveness at the level of staff and organisations, the agencies again emphasised mobility actions mostly;

- Only two of the responses actually stated that the outputs (rather than the process of sharing) from KA2 are useful inputs for improvement;
- When asked about system level effects, only ¼ of respondents cited actions under KA3. The majority cited KA2 types of actions.

Table 6.42 Main reasons why a given action is seen as effective (or not) for learners

Sector	Action	Explanation
Schools	Strategic Partnerships for schools	<p>These actions allow learners to go on mobility – they enable opening up to Europe and foreign countries and cultures as well as the development of other skills, they have a motivational effect</p> <p>The partnerships benefit all levels: learners, staff, organisation</p> <p>The partnerships can continue being used once they have been set up – beyond the project</p> <p>Learners can take responsibility together with teacher in preparation of a project</p>
VET	Mobility projects	<p>Strong results at the level of individual learners</p> <p>Allow students go abroad for traineeships in companies</p> <p>Positive feedback from learners having taken part in mobility as evidenced by research</p>
Higher education	Mobility projects	<p>High reach – many persons are affected at individual level</p> <p>Strong individual level results as evidenced by research</p> <p>Strong recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad</p>
Adult learning	Strategic partnerships for adult education	<p>The only action where adults can take part directly</p> <p>Offers possibility for blended learning</p>
Youth	EVS	Strong personal development
	Youth exchanges	<p>Reach a big number of people of which many disadvantaged</p> <p>It is an action easy to understand for applicants</p> <p>Impacts at multiple levels: young person, organisation, community</p> <p>Co-development by young people who design many actions</p>
Not effective	Erasmus Master Loan +	<p>Too small, too few countries concerned, not sufficiently known</p> <p>Students are interested in grants mainly and not familiar with loans</p>

Source: ICF survey of programme agencies.

Table 6.43 Actions frequently cited as being most and least effective by programme agencies at the level of staff and organisations

Most effective	Least effective
----------------	-----------------

Type of action	Number of mentions	Type of action	Number of mentions
KA2: Strategic Partnerships for schools	38	KA1: Erasmus+ Master Loans	14
KA2: Strategic Partnerships for youth	30	KA2: Knowledge Alliances	9
KA2: Strategic Partnerships for VET	26	KA2: Strategic Partnerships for higher education	7
KA2: Strategic Partnerships for higher education	22	KA2: Strategic Partnerships for VET	6
KA2: Strategic Partnerships for adult education	20	KA3: Structured Dialogue: meetings between young people and decision-makers in the field of youth..	6
KA1: Mobility project for higher education students (student mobility for studies)	15	KA2: Strategic Partnerships for adult education	5
KA2: Strategic Partnerships in more than one sector	15	KA2: Sector skills Alliances	5
KA1: Mobility project for VET learners	12		
KA1: Mobility project for young people (European Voluntary Service)	12		
KA2: Capacity Building in the field of higher education	11		
KA3: Structured Dialogue: meetings between young people and decision-makers in the field of youth..	10		

Source: ICF survey of programme agencies. The survey was answered by 130 respondents. For the above question the respondents were free to choose one or up to three types of actions that they judge as most and least effective

Table 6.44 Main reasons why a given action is seen as effective for staff and organisations

Sector	Action	Explanation
All sectors	Mobility actions for staff	Enables observation and exchange of good practice Reaches out to many individuals Professional development of staff
All sectors	Strategic partnerships	Attractiveness of education providers

Sector	Action	Explanation
		Opening up to the EU dimension Sharing and exchange of experience Improve quality of supply Intellectual outputs with added value

Source: ICF survey of programme agencies

6.7 Factors influencing effectiveness

What negative and positive factors seem to be influencing outputs and outcomes?

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 and the support received.

The following enabling factors for learners have been identified by this assignment:

- Signing a learning agreements is a strong predictor for recognition (see section on recognition). It's signature is very frequent in VET and Higher education and is strongly encouraged in the programme design (VET and University mobility charters);
- Another enabler is the support received by learners in the host organisation and their integration among other students and local communities. Overall the students are satisfied with these elements though differences across sectors exist;
- Having received foreign language learning support is associated with stronger perception of improvement in foreign language. This again is encouraged via the programme design (OLS and the charters).

At the level of staff, a key enabler is the reasons and motivations to participate, most staff are motivated by the willingness to develop professionally their own skills and by the attractive networking and social capital enhancing potential of the programme. Motivations reflecting the expectations about changes at the level of organisations are less common. As staff are less interested in improving their organisations than improving themselves it is not surprising to find that the effectiveness analysis shows clearer contribution to development of staff than hard evidence of evolution of institutional practices.

For projects under KA2 and KA3 (and equivalent) important enablers are:

- A selection process that does manage to identify those projects with most promising approaches that turn result in key changes. There are several issues with the selection process though: there is not a strong relationship between quality scores at project selection and the final report/ product quality scores. In fact frequently applications are scored higher than the final outputs. The assessors consider that the quality of applications selected is in general average. When this is the case it is difficult to assess what is likely to be outstanding and what not.
- Projects producing outputs that are likely to lead to sustainable results. The analysis of selected project outputs shows that in many cases the enabling factors for sustainable change at the level of institutions and beyond them are not clearly present in the projects funded. Many projects would benefit from a critical quality board and external support (mentoring or capacity building) which is currently not provided to selected projects
- Needs analysis – most projects do not build on a solid needs analysis.

The data used for this section is a combination of large scale monitoring surveys, case studies and expert panel assessment of KA2 and KA3 outputs. The quality of the data is considered good to answer this evaluation question. The only limitation is that for most of the enablers it was not possible to systematically assess and link the presence of a given enabler with an improved result indicator as it was done for recognition and self-perceived improvement of foreign language skills.

Table 6.45 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Learners' satisfaction with mentoring and support in the host organisation	Erasmus + monitoring surveys of learners	 Students are generally satisfied with the mentoring received and the degree of integration in host organisations. There are however notable differences between sectors.
Motivations of staff to participate	Erasmus + monitoring surveys of staff	 Staff motivations to participate emphasise staff personal development and the social/networking dimension of the programme. Organisational motivations are much less common. This reflects the main types of results identified.
Identification of obstacles and enablers	Beneficiary surveys and case studies	A range of obstacles and enablers have been identified
Relationship between the quality scores of projects at selection and at finalisation	Programme data analysis	 The quality scores at project selection are not a robust predictor of quality at completion. In a high share of projects they decline
The quality of project outputs produced is in line with the success factors for transfer and use by non-participants	Expert panel assessment	 The expert panel assessment shows that overall the quality of the outputs is average

6.7.1 Motivations to participate (staff – KA1)

Motivations to participate can provide useful background and explanations to understand results. Understanding what beneficiaries expect from the programme can explain why certain outcomes are more prevalent than others.

The annex 14 shows the analysis of Erasmus+ monitoring surveys when it comes to staff motivation to participate.

It shows that for the vast majority of staff the main motivations concerned their own individual competence and professional development. The following motivations were very frequently mentioned (more than 60% of respondents):

- Acquire competences for personal and professional development;
- Acquire knowledge and know-how of good practice abroad;
- Develop one's own competences in ones' own field;

Another important motivation is related to the social dimension of the programme. Many staff mentioned the following:

- Expand professional network.
- Increase knowledge of social, linguistic or cultural matters
- Meet new people and contacts

Motivations related to organisational results are much less often cited by staff. They rarely agreed with below statements about their sources of motivation:

- Increase quality and quantity of mobility for learners offered by their organisation;

- Create spin-off effects like curriculum development, development of joint courses, etc.
- Build cooperation with enterprises.

It seems from the above that staff is mostly motivated by their own growth and the networking/ social potential of the programme. These are indeed areas where clear results are documented. The areas where staff motivations are less clear (organisational benefits) are indeed the result areas where the evidence of results is more ambiguous.

6.7.2 Barriers to participation

One level of obstacles to the effectiveness of the programme concerns barriers to participation.

The surveys asked staff about their views on the main barriers to participation in mobility actions and cooperation projects. This was asked in two different sections to identify differences between these two main types of actions. The results of the surveys show that the main obstacles to participation in mobility (Figure 6.42) are:

- personal circumstances and family obligations: i.e. not every member of staff can afford to go on mobility for several weeks;
- Workload of staff which makes it really difficult to commit to a project;
- Lack of or low levels of funding associated with high burden in terms of project management;
- Lack of professional recognition of achievements made.

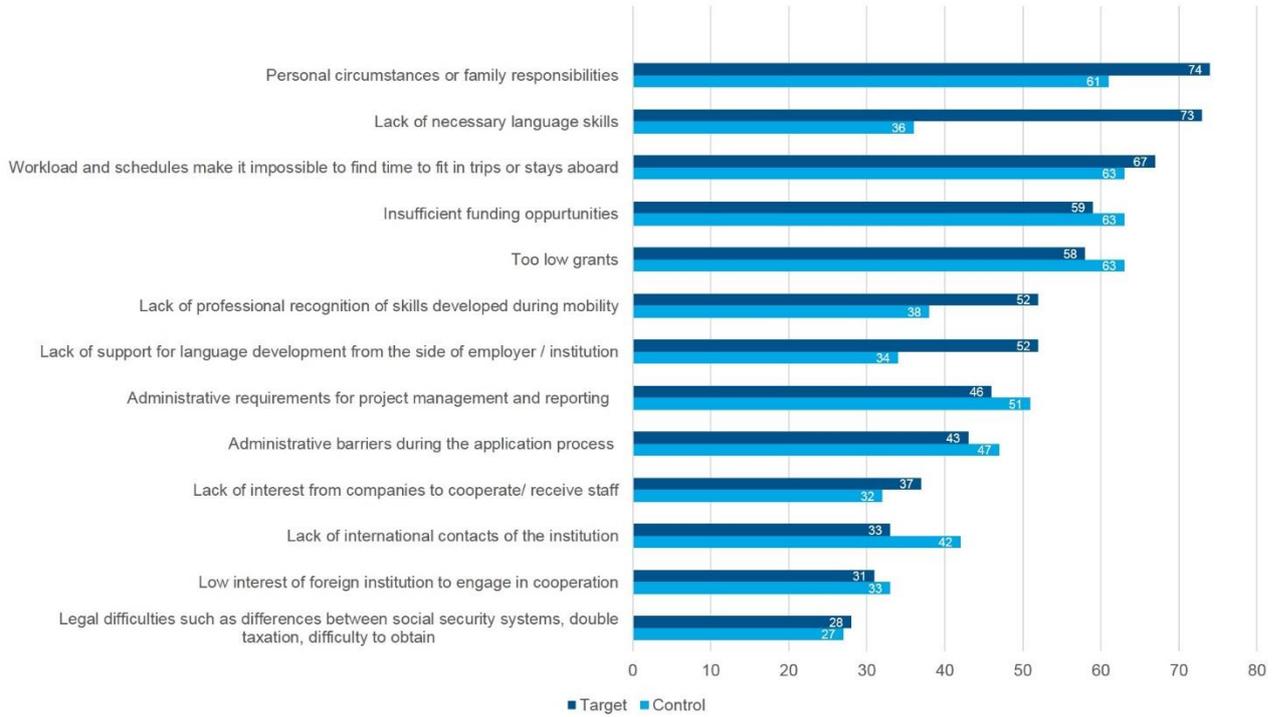
The main perceived obstacles to participation in cooperation actions (Figure 6.42) are the same as above except for personal circumstances (this question was not asked for cooperation projects as they do not typically include long absences even though this possibility exists in strategic partnerships).

It is interesting to underline that there are notable differences between the barriers as perceived by the beneficiaries and the control group:

- Beneficiaries think that lack of foreign language skills is a major obstacle for non-participation of their peers while the control group respondents see this as a much smaller issue. This is partially due to the fact that the control group respondents are also not fully representative of all teaching staff due to the recruitment mode of the survey. They are likely to be those more engaged and active as well as more multilingual (the staff survey was only done in 6 EU languages²⁵⁵) and in that sense more similar to the beneficiaries. This is a good sign in a way as they are actually truly potential beneficiaries (while staff who only speak an EU language that is not broadly spoken is unlikely to be able to take part in the programme);
- The group of beneficiaries tend to underestimate slightly the importance of the size of funding envelopes and the administrative burden;
- One obstacle is largely underestimated by the beneficiaries and that is the lack of international contacts of an organisation.

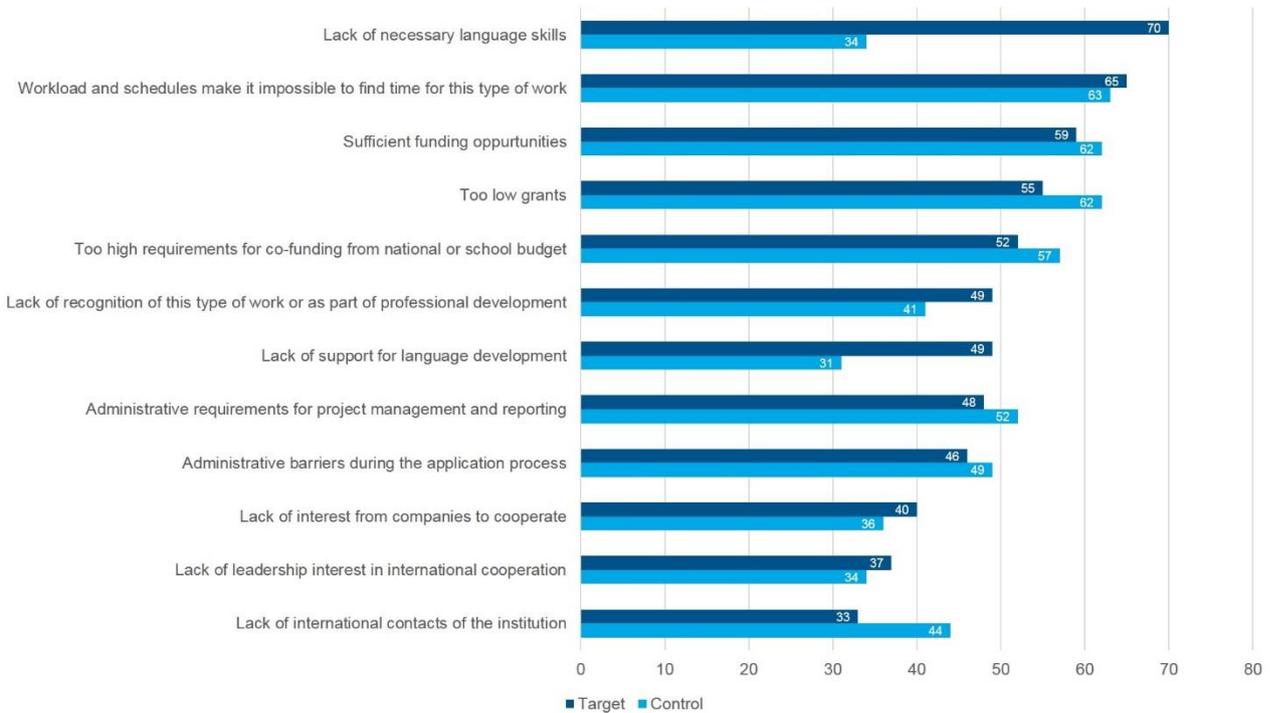
²⁵⁵ French, German, Spanish, Italian, Polish

Figure 6.42 Perceived barriers to mobility



Source; ICF survey of staff

Figure 6.43 Perceived barriers to cooperation actions

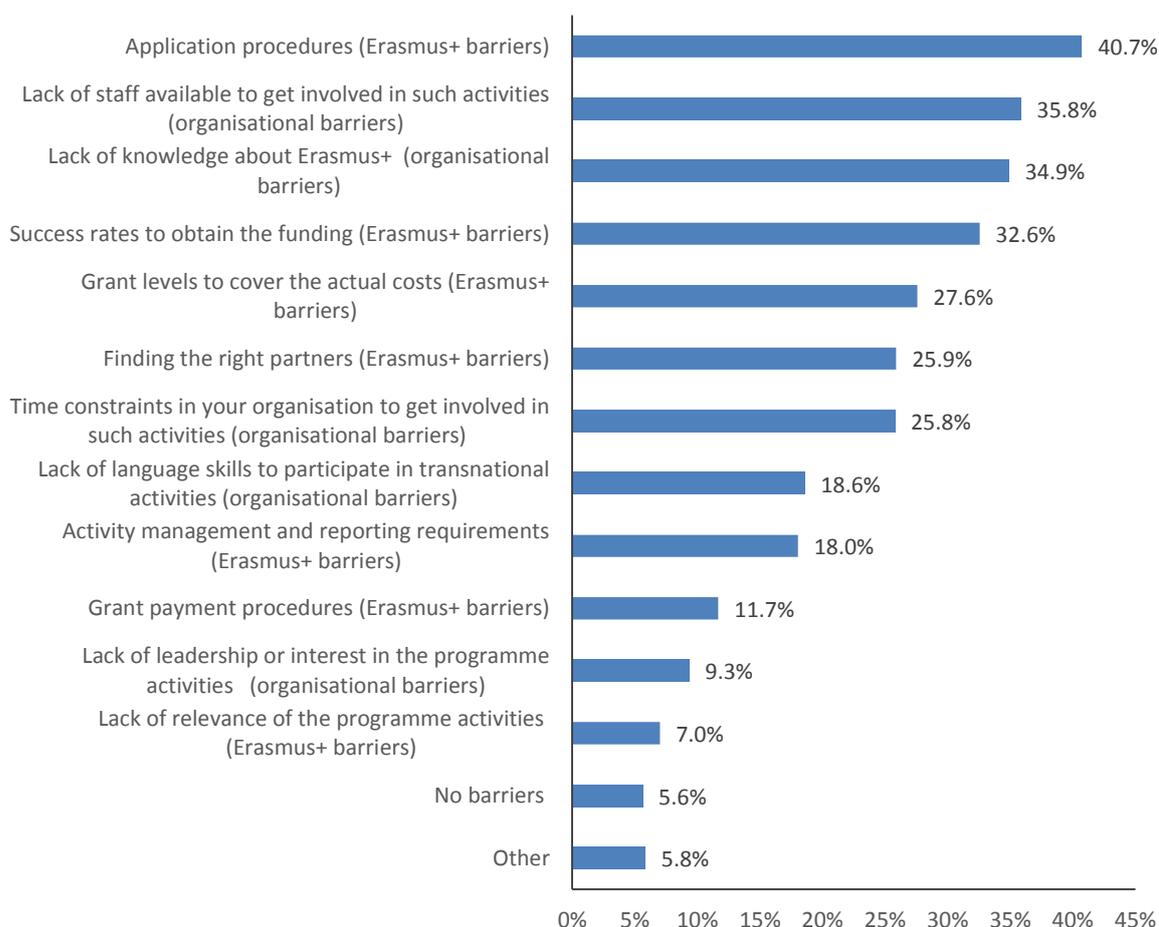


Source; ICF survey of staff

Participation in the programme is not only a personal decision of practitioners. It is also an organisational decision. The survey of socio-economic actors had questions about barriers to participation for these types of organisations (companies, public authorities, civil society bodies).

The most commonly cited barrier concerns the administrative burden of the application procedure. The low success rates in applications are also mentioned as an off-putting element. Availability of staff who would have the capacity to take part in a programme of this type (a barrier that is specific to the organisations rather than the programme as such) is another frequently mentioned barrier. Interestingly when looking at the responses according to the profile of respondent, the response patterns differ. Companies cite as most important barrier the lack of knowledge about the programme and application procedure is in a second place. Public authorities first cite lack of staff available to take part in the programme and only in the second instance the application process.

Figure 6.44 What are, in your view, the most important barriers for other organisations like yours to participate in the Erasmus+ projects?



Source: survey of socio-economic actors. Responses (n = 2822); Total Respondents (n = 943)

6.7.3 Barriers or enablers to achieving positive results

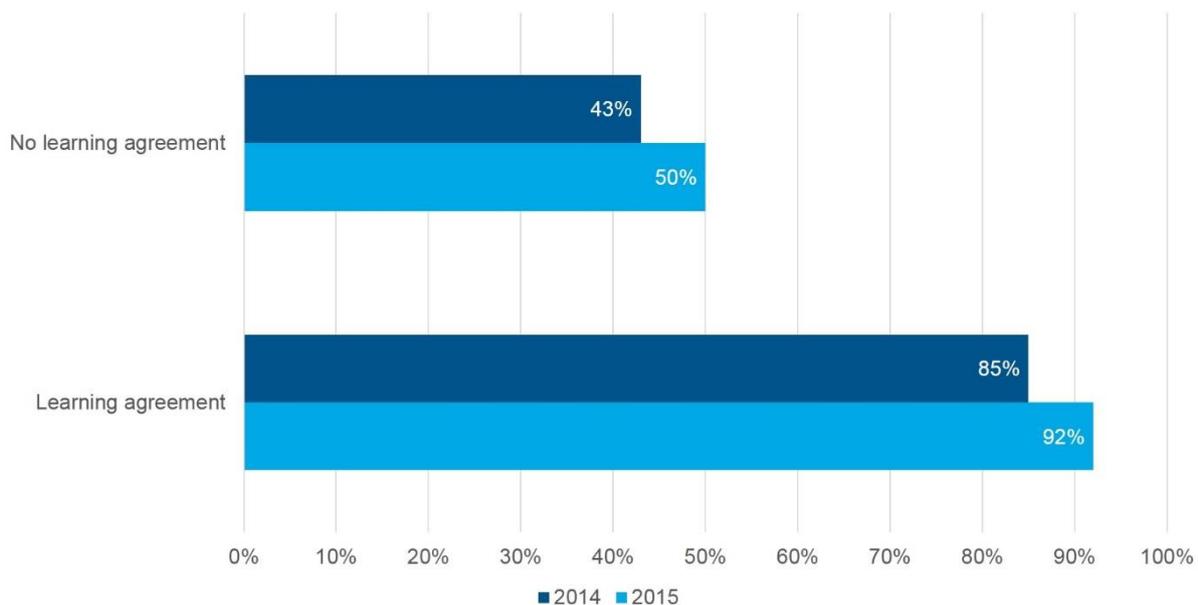
6.7.3.1 Level of learners

The extent to which learners can maximise their learning experience and achieve even more positive results depends largely on the quality of the experience abroad. Appropriate planning, clarity on purpose of mobility, accompanying support during mobility in particular for the target groups of VET learners (who are younger and less mature) are necessary conditions for a good experience.

The analysis of the relationship between the existence of a learning agreement and recognition of learning outcomes shows the importance of having in place learning agreements in order to facilitate recognition.

As illustrated by Figure 6.45, the presence of a learning agreement proves to be a reliable predictor for recognition in the VET sector. The absence of a learning agreement is associated with a high rate of non-recognition). More than 50% of learners without a learning agreement stated that they did not receive recognition. In contrast, 92% of those VET learners with a learning agreement received recognition of their mobility.

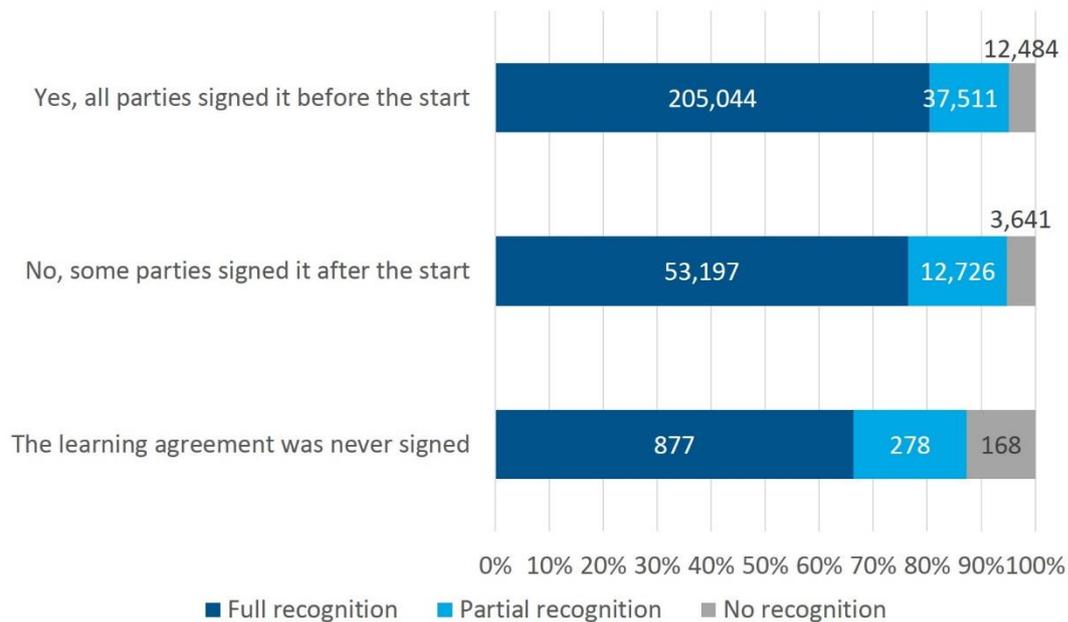
Figure 6.45 Recognition according to signature of a learning agreement



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys, n=94,414 (2014); n=30,572 (2015)

In higher education there is also a negative effect on recognition if a learning agreement is not signed however the cases of absence of learning agreement are very few. As shown in Figure 6.45, delays of some parties in signing the learning agreement have no significant effect on the recognition level of learning outcomes. In both cases (learning agreements signed before mobility or during mobility), full recognition was achieved nearly for 80% of the cases. Only in instances in which the learning agreement was never signed, the evaluation found substantially lower levels of full recognition (66%). In absence of a learning agreement, partial recognition (21%) remains more common than complete non-recognition (13%) but the numbers are overall small.

Figure 6.46 Relationship between delayed signature of learning agreement and recognition of learning outcomes – credit mobility between programme countries



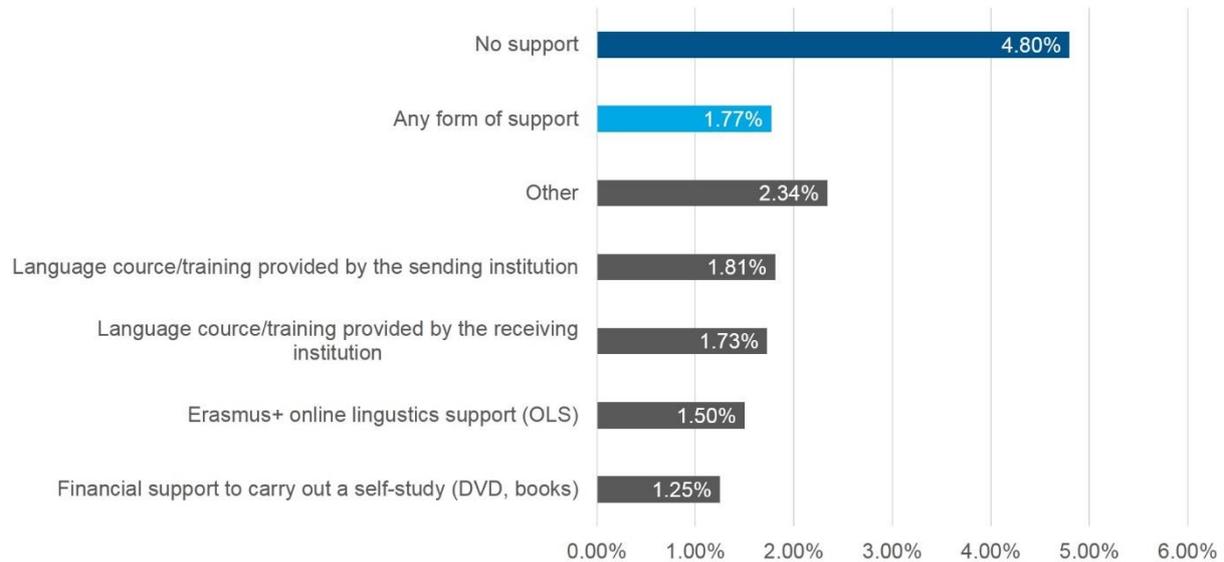
Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys. N = 325,926.

Another set of facilitating factors are:

- The mentoring support received: As discussed in the section on results a large share of learners are satisfied with the mentoring support they received even though the level of satisfaction varies between 90% in VET and 66% higher education studies between programme countries.
- The ways in which organisations deal with questions, complaints or problems: this indicator is also high as already discussed in the section on results;
- Integration within the institution and integration with local students (also already discussed in section on results);

Specifically looking at improvement in foreign language skills, the analysis of Erasmus + monitoring surveys administered by the European Commission shows a positive relationship between the perceived improvement of foreign language skills and participation in a preparatory support action (OLS or other). Young people who report that their language skills have not improved are a minority but still they represent an important absolute number (nearly 14,000 individuals in the years 2014-2015). When looking at this target group according to whether or not they have received language support prior to departure, we see that 71% of non-improvers had no such support (they are 47% among improvers). When looking at the relationship between lack of foreign language improvement and type of language support received we see that non-improvers are more common among the group that received no support. They are least common among the group that received funding for self-study followed by OLS (Figure 6.47). Non-improvers as a share of all beneficiaries who received a given type of support

Figure 6.47 Young people who report no improvement in their foreign language skills according to the type of support received



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ monitoring surveys

The case study interviews identified other examples of barriers which can negatively affect what learners take away from their mobility or how positively they feel about it:

- Being allowed the time to settle in and depart – several learners from higher education sector noted that, the fact that they were not allowed to take possession of housing before start of the courses and the same on departure, was a source of stress;
- While taking part in preparatory language courses was found to be positively associated with learners’ perceived

“I took last exam on that day when I had to move out. The exam was at 10 am and had to move out by 12 pm. Very stressful situation.”
Student HE

“Students should have the linguistic support before they leave but if the school asks for a license a long time in advance and then the student changes his/her mind and decides not to go, the school loses a license. To avoid this, the school asks for the license shortly before students leave but they have realised that students do not have much time to study languages when they are doing their in-company training abroad. VET staff

results, in cases of mobility (for example for pupils or other mobility in strategic partnerships) this was difficult to arrange practically. In many cases the institutions do not know well in advance who will be taking part in mobility to allow for a longer language preparation.

“One exchange was a disaster from an organisational point of view. The organisation that was in charge put nothing in place for a blind participant despite knowing he was attending”. Learner – youth strand

- Making sure that arrangements for mobility or

exchange are well organised by the host organisation as lack of organisation can result in a very negative perception that overshadows the positive potential.

- Insufficient incentives for disadvantaged learners. While such incentives exist for mobility actions in higher education sector these are judged as insufficient (too low) by case study interviewees as well as key informant interviewees.

6.7.3.2 Level of staff

The main barriers for staff are:

- Lack of dedicated time in which they could work on projects. Participation in Erasmus + activities adds on to regular activities and there is little compensation;
- Lack of recognition as already mentioned.

“The lack of recognition of the EU projects’ coordinator role. This could involve for instance allowing the coordinator to dedicate part of the working hours to these activities or by offering an economic complement to

6.7.3.3 Level of organisations

The main factor for success at organisational level appears to be the quality of the partnership when it comes to:

- Project management;
- Trust; and
- Reliability and compliance of all partners

This creates a certain tension within the programme:

- On one hand there is a clear political willingness to involve newcomers and make sure that the programme serves new audiences; and
- On the other hand the programme delivers best results among partners who have a longer term trusted relationship and who have worked together in the past.

Other organisational factors cited were:

- Existence of coordinators who are the main contact point for mobility actions and possibly also for other cooperation projects. This is relatively common practice in higher education but there is great variation when it comes to the existence of these roles in school and VET sectors. In the youth and adult learning sector there is possibly less need for this role as the organisations participating are a lot smaller;
- The use of unit costs as a model was a welcome simplification of the project management but still a lot of time is dedicated to administration which means that this time cannot be devoted to more productive aspects of project work.
- Barriers at entry in particular for organisations working with disadvantaged learners (specifically cited in VET and school sectors). The fact that there are no bonus points at project proposal stage or no specific support for these institutions was reported a clear barrier to get involved.

“In fact half of our coordination meetings focus on the management of funds. Overall management of activities and the economic parts in particular is

6.7.3.4 System level

The influence of the programme at system level can be direct or indirect as discussed earlier. The instances where the influence is direct – i.e. from a project to a system level change (rather than through the OMC or a critical mass of beneficiaries) – the following appear to be as preconditions for success:

- There is an opportunity window meaning that there is interest from policy makers/ system level bodies in initiating change in a given area. Unfortunately in many cases this is not the case and hence lack of political willingness is a major barrier to any mainstreaming of results;
- Vertical networks within a country – Erasmus + actions enhance creation of horizontal networks across countries (among similar types of organisations). However a crucial precondition for policy learning from Erasmus + funded projects are vertical networks involving those in charge of decision making. This precondition is not necessarily well reflected in the way the actions are designed and calls for proposals drafted and assessed.
- Endorsement of the project by an organisation with decision making capacity – those examples of projects that have shown to be influential at policy level have systematically involved a decision making body as a key stakeholder. The project had a clear mandate and there was a political vision for the expected use of its results.
- In relation with the above, there is also a clear obstacle which is the volatile nature of political priorities. Even if a project is launched with a clear ambition, if there are major changes in the administration, two years can be a too long duration and by the time the results are achieved they are no longer expected as priorities have moved on.

6.7.4 Cooperation projects: presence of success factors

The application process should be designed so as to favour the selection of those projects that would have highest chances to succeed and provide strongest results. Therefore the score a project received during its application should be a good predictor of the positive results of the project. The analysis of success scores – as presented in section on efficiency (7.1.4 on analysis of success scores) shows that this is currently not always the case. The analysis shows that there is 45% of projects which receive a lower score at project completion than at the application stage and in fact 35% of them receive a score that is more than 10 percentage points below the initial score. This is combined with the fact that in the current programme, some actions are highly selective. The analysis shows clearly that the more selective the actions, the higher the quality score required for a project to be selected. For example in higher education KA2 the average score of selected projects is around 84 while the success rate is at 17%.

This suggests that there is a certain mismatch between the fact that the application process is highly competitive and hence requires applications that meet very high quality score (but which are at the same time complex) and the fact that many of the projects in the end do not result in particularly innovative actions as noted in other parts of the report.

This was also analysed as part of the expert panel assessment of selected project outputs. The expert panel put together as part of the methodology for this assignment reviewed a selection of outputs from 100 completed projects funded under Erasmus + or predecessor programmes. These were in all cases cooperation projects (equivalent to KA2 or KA3 in the current programme).

The rationale for this review was to identify to what extent the outputs from cooperation projects have characteristics that would facilitate their usefulness for those persons and organisations that were not directly involved in the project.

Direct programme beneficiaries learn a lot from their engagement in the project process. However, there is also an expectation in the programme that indirect beneficiaries would learn from the outputs or would use the outputs produced. It would be extremely complex to analyse what extent this transmission is actually happening that is why the evaluation team assessed on a selection of projects the preconditions for continued use

of an output. As a reminder: the experts were asked to score each output against a set of criteria.

Overall the quality of projects' outputs was considered rather average or average high. Very good projects represent between ¼ and 1/3 of the sample depending on which scores are analysed.

Figure 6.48 Overall scoring of projects in the expert assessment

	Low	Medium low	Medium High	High
Overall score	10%	30%	36%	24%
Aggregate score	9%	25%	32%	36%

Legend: Overall score – experts were asked to give a rating on a scale of 1-5. Low scores =1&2; Medium low =3; Medium high = 4; High = 5

Aggregate score – the sum of all scores against the individual criteria.

Low= <36; Medium low = 36<48; Medium high = 48<60; High = > 60

Source: ICF expert assessment

The below shows the main results for each of the criteria. The full analysis is presented in Annex 7

6.7.4.1 Overarching issues identified by the expert panel

After the completion of assessment grids by individual experts (see analysis below) a meeting of the experts was held. A number of transversal conclusions about enablers were made:

- Quality framework

The experts agreed that a creation of a quality framework (applicable across all sectors) would benefit the programme and ensure that the project outputs are of higher, and more balanced, quality.

- Critical quality board

The experts noted that those projects which establish a quality board produced products of higher quality.

- Dissemination plan

The general sentiment among the experts was that intensified effort is needed from the project partnership to disseminate and mainstream the products. It was found that the dissemination plan is most often the weakest part of the application and project implementation.

The reason found for this is two-fold: Firstly, the application form does not allow applicants to develop and describe measurable and comparable dissemination activities in an interrelated and intelligible manner. The form focuses very much on accumulation of outputs but not the logical link between project objectives and the dissemination plan. Besides, the dissemination strategy is most frequently not present from the application period but being developed and approved during the beginning of the project implementation phase.

- Application form

Whilst the experts agreed that the application form is comprehensive and well designed, it also includes some repetitions, requiring applicants to provide rather similar type of information more than once.

An application form that would enable projects to concentrate their efforts on other aspects such as developing a thorough dissemination strategy would be a plus.

- Needs analysis

Besides a number of positive examples, the majority of the projects was not built on a solid needs analysis. As a result, the projects develop outputs that do not closely, or at all, correspond to the needs of their target group(s).

Introduction of a mandatory needs analysis to better calibrate the target group, their needs and the products in line with this would be beneficial.

- Extra support to/mentoring of the projects

Currently, there is no mentoring/support system in place for the project partnerships under Erasmus+ which could help them to translate the project proposal with more success into actual implementation. This is particularly pressing concerning the first-time project coordinators who lack experience in running and administering Erasmus+ projects. Different EU programmes (such as Horizon 2020) already implemented supporting structures and the results appear to reinforce the positive effects.

6.7.4.2 Relevance for the target group

This criterion looked at the extent to which the projects and their outputs made sufficient efforts to identify the needs of their target groups and to articulate their actions based on a proper needs assessment. Given the scale of these projects it is important that they are sufficiently targeted and respond to clear needs if their results are to be any useful. The assessment of these criteria showed that in most cases the target groups were defined and their needs were discussed but a proper needs assessment is not always present.

Figure 6.49 Rating of project outputs by the expert panel

B. Relevance for the target group		ALL	SE	VET	HE	AL	JM	Sport	Youth
Min. score received: 5 Max. score received: 15									
Averages	G average score is equal to 12 or more								
	A average score is more than 7 and less than 12	A	A	G	A	A	A	A	G
	R average score is equal to 7 or less								
Distribution top scoring projects	G more than 50% of projects scored 12 or more								
	A between 25% and 50% of projects scored 12 or more	A	A	G	G	A	A	R	G
	R less than 25% of projects scored 12 or more								
Distribution low scoring projects	G less than 10% of projects had a score of 7 or less								
	A between 10% and 20% of projects had a score of 7 or less	G	G	G	G	G	G	A	G
	R more than 20% of projects had a score of 7 or less								

Source: ICF expert panel assessment

The assessment revealed that the vast majority of the projects clearly identified a target group for their actions though this was defined with more or less precision. By doing so, the projects were able to define the main needs of these groups and develop the appropriate outputs in order to address these. However in cases where the target group

is defined very broadly, identification of a clear need and a targeted approach within the project is difficult which means the overall quality suffers.

Some of the projects not only identified but also successfully articulated the needs of their target groups. The main factors enhancing this include: needs assessment carried out in the beginning of the project implementation period, identifying the needs based on available European professional literature and key EU-policy agendas. However this is not sufficiently systematic.

As shown by the assessment, in a number of cases there was no needs analysis carried out within the project. The lack of systematic needs analysis as well as reliance on past experiences instead of clear in-depth analysis were noted. The most commonly listed factor that affected low scoring is the lack of clear evidence as regards the in-depth analysis as a solid base for the design and development of the project products.

6.7.4.3 Focus on disadvantaged or hard to reach groups

A rather critical assessment was provided by the experts regarding the project outputs' ability to address disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. A minority of projects (less than ¼) reviewed had a clear focus on these groups while another ¼ made some considerations for these groups. The chart below shows that there were rather high numbers of projects which were scored low.

Figure 6.50 Rating of project outputs by the expert panel

E. Disadvantaged/hard-to-reach groups		ALL	SE	VET	HE	AL	JM	Sport	Youth
Min. score received: 2 Max. score received: 6									
Averages	average score is equal to 6								
	average score is more than 3 and less than 6								
	average score is equal to 3 or less								
Distribution top scoring projects	more than 50% of projects scored 6								
	between 25% and 50% of projects scored 6								
	less than 25% of projects scored 6								
Distribution low scoring projects	less than 10% of projects had a score of 3 or less								
	between 10% and 20% of projects had a score of 3 or less								
	more than 20% of projects had a score of 3 or less								

Source: ICF expert panel assessment

Reviewing the qualitative feedback of the experts reveals that, while a good share of projects considered different disadvantaged groups, this was often not substantiated with concrete actions. On the contrary, it remained an ambitious but unaddressed objective from the proposal without developing suitable outputs specifically to the disadvantaged. Additionally, the expert assessment found that some projects lacked a narrow focus on a clearly identified group (i.e. young people with disadvantages), making it unlikely to identify and meet their probable needs.

More than half of the projects reviewed had no relevance for disadvantaged groups.

6.7.4.4 Quality of outputs, innovation and evidence of broader use

Under this criterion the experts looked at the overall quality of the output, including the extent to which it offered innovative solutions or was in line with latest state of the art thinking on a given issue. The criterion also looked at the extent to which mentions of the project could be found elsewhere than the project website. The overall rating of the

outputs is rather positive even though it needs to be noted that the actual pedagogical and methodological innovation was not strongly noted and only a small share of projects have managed to reach beyond the project circles as evidenced by mentions in other media.

Figure 6.51 Rating of project outputs by the expert panel

F. Effectiveness, dissemination, and visibility									
Min. score received: 5 Max. score received: 15		ALL	SE	VET	HE	AL	JM	Sport	Youth
Averages	G average score is equal to 12 or more	A	A	A	G	A	A	A	G
	A average score is more than 7 and less than 12								
	R average score is equal to 7 or less								
Distribution top scoring projects	G more than 50% of projects scored 12 or more	G	A	A	G	A	G	A	G
	A between 25% and 50% of projects scored 12 or more								
	R less than 25% of projects scored 12 or more								
Distribution low scoring projects	G less than 10% of projects had a score of 7 or less	A	A	G	G	G	A	G	G
	A between 10% and 20% of projects had a score of 7 or less								
	R more than 20% of projects had a score of 7 or less								

Source: ICF expert panel assessment

Regarding the quality of the projects, it can be concluded that the content was mainly relevant, coherent and well-structured, nevertheless bringing only rather limited innovative ideas. Weaknesses in this regard relate to the presentation and layout of the materials. Also, for some projects the origin of the content was doubtful, showing signs of plagiarism.

The general sentiment of the assessment was that the projects follow the latest technological developments and state of the art thinking, nevertheless actual innovative capacities were limited mostly to the intensive use of the latest ICT technologies (i.e. eLearning platform, videos, and other interactive content) rather than developing pioneer pedagogical and methodological approaches.

When it comes to the evidence about broader use of project outputs (beyond the project leader and those directly involved), the evidence gathered is limited. Only 21 projects reached higher visibility as per being cited in non-project related website(s)/publications. These mostly include the websites of project partners, academic studies, in a few cases local newspapers. According to the assessments reviewed, the extent to which the outputs were cited in non-project related websites and publications depended much on the clarity and effectiveness of the dissemination strategy of each project.

6.7.4.5 Added value and sustainability

The projects were also assessed against criteria related to added value and sustainability. Their rating on these criteria was overall rather average.

Added value was often deemed as being generated by the availability of online content, making the dissemination and accessibility of outputs more effective. Through the development of professional looking websites with useful information the projects can have wider outreach and, therefore, a wider pedagogical impact. However as said earlier the evidence of broader use of these project outputs is limited. The development of e-learning and other interactive content forms (e.g. eBooks) has been identified as another key source of added value when this is done. Again overall very few projects have actually led to their development and deployment.

Weaknesses in terms of added value relate to the quality of accessible content. For some projects, the content was deemed as being too general to be of any use or to allow other post-project practitioners to build on innovative approaches. In some cases, the project websites were deemed as too much focused on showcasing results, what had already been achieved, rather than showing the potential of outputs in other teaching or pedagogical contexts. Issues were also raised about the fact that more specialised content may not be freely accessible.

Highly transferable projects are in general terms highly accessible. One of the major positive aspects of such outputs is their cross-sectoral dimension; this is particularly the case for outputs focusing on the development of transversal skills. Outputs based on a coherent framework with clear links between issues and solutions also have high potential for transferability. As regards contextual aspects, outputs that deal with EU-wide social issues or educational policy priorities also have high cross-border transferability – as well as outputs translated into several European languages.

Outputs with limited transferability are often those that have a restricted scope of action (“niche projects”), or indeed are too tailored to location-specific or country-specific themes and issues. Transferability can also be affected by the technicality or complexity of the outputs developed – this again can be the case for so-called niche areas.

6.7.4.6 Products availability and dissemination

Availability of the outputs to a broader audience is a rather obvious precondition for the success of a product. Overall the availability and dissemination of outputs under the projects is considered average. While projects are available online and dissemination actions have been put in place, in most cases the numbers of people reached remain modest.

Figure 6.52 Rating of project outputs by the expert panel

A. Availability and dissemination		ALL	SE	VET	HE	AL	JM	Sport	Youth
Min. score received: 3 Max. score received: 9									
Averages	average score is equal to 8 or more								
	average score is more than 4 and less than 8								
	average score is equal to 4 or less								
Distribution top scoring projects	more than 50% of projects scored 8 or more								
	between 25% and 50% of projects scored 8 or more								
	less than 25% of projects scored 8 or more								
Distribution low scoring projects	less than 10% of projects had a score of 4 or less								
	between 10% and 20% of projects had a score of 4 or less								
	more than 20% of projects had a score of 4 or less								

Source: ICF expert panel assessment

The availability of project outputs online is in general good in particular for most recent projects. According to the review of all the 100 project webpages it can be concluded that the vast majority of these are still available and, to a full or high extent, functional. In most of the cases they offer free and open access to the project outputs. Less positively, they require some form of authentication (i.e. password protection). Another features deemed as hindering the availability of projects include: the outputs can be accessed only upon purchase, the outputs are spread over more than one website making it

difficult to identify the full list of project materials, weblinks to online repositories are inactive.

The projects reviewed included a variety of dissemination activities and events. These most commonly refer to using printed, digital and social media, events (workshops, conferences, seminars), as well as international networks. However reaching a number of people through dissemination activities appeared to be the most challenging sub-criteria under this section among projects reviewed. The most common issue emerging while assessing the projects was the lack of clear evidence as regards the audience reached beyond the participants involved in the project. The success of dissemination actions depends principally on the network and connections of the coordinator. Those being well-embedded and recognised in their respective sectors at European level were more effective with their dissemination efforts than the relatively new players.

6.7.4.7 User-friendliness and availability of messages and recommendations

This set of criteria looked at the extent to which the outputs are presented in a manner that is user-friendly and attractive thus optimising the potential that its audience will actually engage with it. It also assessed whether the output has clear messages and recommendations. Is it clear what a user is expected to do with a given product and how it would help him/her.

Figure 6.53 Rating of project outputs by the expert panel

D. Attractiveness and user-friendliness									
Min. score received: 3 Max. score received: 9		ALL	SE	VET	HE	AL	JM	Sport	Youth
Averages	 average score is equal to 8 or more								
	 average score is more than 4 and less than 8								
	 average score is equal to 4 or less								
Distribution top scoring projects	 more than 50% of projects scored 8 or more								
	 between 25% and 50% of projects scored 8 or more								
	 less than 25% of projects scored 8 or more								
Distribution low scoring projects	 less than 10% of projects had a score of 4 or less								
	 between 10% and 20% of projects had a score of 4 or less								
	 more than 20% of projects had a score of 4 or less								

Source: ICF expert panel assessment

The most frequent observation regarding the attractiveness of output design relates to modern and professional-looking layouts. This was the case in a bit less than half of the projects. This is particularly the case regarding website interfaces and other interactive tools. Well-structured content and consistency in graphic presentation are also deemed important, particularly as regards printed outputs (brochures, handbooks, reports etc.). The use of different formats (online newsletters, video clips etc.) for disseminating and promoting outputs also adds to their attractiveness generally. Lastly, branding is also an element which enhances the attractiveness of outputs.

Elements frequently indicated as negatively affecting attractiveness of design include text-heavy outputs, lack of a standard or consistent design, and websites deemed old fashioned.

Around half of the projects resulted in straightforward and accessible outputs. The extent to which outputs were deemed straightforward and accessible depended much on the clarity of the language used. Coherence in the methodological framework and directly

exploitable products are the other main aspects that determine the degree of accessibility of the outputs reviewed. Content based on practical examples was also identified as making outputs not only straightforward and easily accessible, but also easily transposable to other contexts.

Frequently identified aspects relating to lack of accessibility relate to outputs not being available free of charge, being only available in a single language, or being too focused on how they came about rather than on how to use or implement them.

Half of the projects reviewed resulted in very clear recommendations and messages for the targeted groups the rest had some messages or recommendations and only a small share (11) had none. Less positively, a number of projects appear to have generated messages or recommendations scattered across various outputs. Other negative aspects include the lack of explicit conclusions and outputs too focused on preparatory phase activities.

6.8 Results for disadvantaged groups

What are the differences in outcomes for disadvantaged groups?

There is patchy evidence about the assumption that disadvantaged learners would benefit more from the programme than other groups. The surveys carried out under this assignment show that being from a disadvantaged background is associated with statistically significantly different results than for other learners in some result areas. In other words, disadvantaged learners do show some more positive results than the others however this could also be linked to selection into the programme.

The other evidence collected is mostly from case studies and the case studies were only able to document vague mentions of whether the disadvantaged groups benefit more.

Most of the existing research and evidence from case studies is about participation of these groups. The case study findings suggest that the programme organisations do indeed mostly select those who, though disadvantaged, are not disengaged, demotivated or marginalised. In other words the programme reaches out to the less stigmatised group of disadvantaged learners, the high achievers among disadvantaged. This is not specific to this programme and other programmes struggle with the same challenge. The following issues could be done to enhance the positive effects on disadvantaged learners:

- Target specifically those organisations that work with the hardest to reach. The emphasis should be on organisations as multipliers who would then bring these groups into the programme;
- Use peer-examples as ambassadors to motivate these groups. Given that the programme succeeds in reaching the high achievers in these groups use them as ambassadors to attract other young people who could identify themselves with these examples.

The evidence on this issue is rather patchy and more research would be needed to understand differences in some specific outcomes such as motivation. A particularly under-researched area is the role of staff and the multiplier effect from staff to disadvantaged groups.

Note that this section refers to all forms of disadvantaged learners (those with special needs being one of the sub-groups).

Table 6.46 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Disadvantaged beneficiaries show positive results	Surveys of beneficiaries	 Disadvantaged learners show positive results on a few indicators. However some of these indicators are rather important for future success in completing education and training – in particular the indicator about self-confidence in one’s education and training capacities
Staff improve their approaches to working with disadvantaged groups	Surveys of beneficiaries	 The staff surveyed said that their projects led to implementation of approaches to tackle disadvantaged groups. This is even more the case for those staff from organisations that have high share of disadvantaged learners. However only a small share of staff overall stated that their projects focused on tackling disadvantaged groups.
Evidence from other studies about results for disadvantaged groups	Literature review	 There is very scarce evidence about results of disadvantaged groups. Most studies focus on their participation rather than results. In the rare cases where results were compared for this group with other beneficiaries the results are positive.
Testimonials of how participation improves results of disadvantaged groups are collected	Case studies	 The evidence gathered through case studies is rather patchy. A lot of the evidence is about participation of these groups rather than results for them.

6.8.1 Survey findings

The surveys used two main approaches to measure disadvantage:

- Learners were asked a range of questions about possible disadvantage (such as having a disability, but also the extent to which their parents were unemployed or families receiving social support). If the learners responded yes to any of the questions they were considered as disadvantaged for the purpose of the analysis;
- Learners were also asked whether they repeated a class in the past. This measure was also used during the survey analysis as a proxy for education achievement.

These two indicators were used for both treatment and control groups. As a result two treatment groups of disadvantaged learners and two control groups were used for calculations.

Table 6.47 Sample sizes for treatment and control groups of disadvantaged learners

	Treatment group (sample size)	Control group (sample size)
One of the forms of disadvantage	3162	432
Repeated a class	2508	258

Source: ICF beneficiary surveys

The group of disadvantaged beneficiaries surveyed showed statistically significantly more positive results when it comes to:

- Completion of studies (only asked to respondents who were no longer in education and training) – the difference is rather large – 10pp
- Willingness to work or study abroad – again the difference is large 9.2pp
- Positive feelings towards the EU; and
- Digital competence – use of a range of online resources.

Given that young people from disadvantaged background are particularly at risk of dropping out from both upper-secondary but also higher education, the positive findings regarding completion of studies are encouraging. However it is not clear to what extent the above is an effect of the programme or a feature of selection in to the programme, meaning that the programme selects most motivated and engaged learners, meaning those who are more likely to complete their education and training in any case.

The group of beneficiaries who repeated a grade have more positive results than the control group that repeated a grade when it comes to:

- Self-confidence in one's education and training possibilities and outlooks;
- Completion of studies (and also completion of studies within the normal period);
- Sense of initiative – making new proposals;
- Problem solving attitude; and
- Learning to learn.

The fact that beneficiaries show more positive attitude towards education and training and feel more capable of success than the control group is also a positive finding.

Unfortunately while for other target groups participation in the programme was associated with shorter transition periods to employment, this is not the case for young people in the above groups. No significant difference was found on this indicator.

The practitioners survey identified other findings that suggest that disadvantaged group benefit from participation in the programme:

- The treatment group shows greater use of strategies to enhance education attainment of students;
- Staff from organisations with high share of learners with disadvantaged background more frequently took part in activities focusing on disadvantaged learners: 24.6% of staff from organisations with high share of disadvantaged took part in activities with this focus while they were 13.2% in the group of those who did not have many students from disadvantaged background.

However the share of staff who worked on assignments focusing on this target group were relatively low – 19%.

6.8.2 Literature review findings

There is limited evidence in the literature about the association between programme participation of disadvantaged groups and the results for disadvantaged young people. Most of the studies reviewed discussed participation of disadvantaged rather than results of disadvantaged beneficiaries. There is in general a gap in robust evidence on this issue.

A small number of studies were nevertheless found which suggests that disadvantaged beneficiaries do see a clear contribution of the programme, and that this is potentially greater than for other groups of participants.

- In the case of VET (predecessor programmes) – one study²⁵⁶ (in Germany) found a positive association between participation and employment outcomes specifically for disadvantaged young people
- In the sector of youth a recent study conducted by RAY in 2015 (RAY, 2015a²⁵⁷) found that international youth projects have significantly higher effects on young

²⁵⁶ Bildung für Europa & BIBB (2012). Cross-border mobility in the case of socially disadvantaged young people during vocational education and training – competence acquisition and the particular benefits of gaining experience abroad.

²⁵⁷ RAY (2015a). International youth projects benefit most those with fewer opportunities. Available at: <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3230/ImpactOfMobilityOnYPFO.pdf>

people with fewer opportunities. In comparison to average participants, those with fewer opportunities benefit from higher gain in competences, especially in learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression competences. They also show a higher increase in self-confidence (+3.6%), higher improvement in their image of the EU (+4%) and are more likely to give support for disadvantaged people and to fight against discrimination, intolerance and racism, than compared to average participants in YiA projects. The relatively higher impact on disadvantaged youth is most likely due to the different starting points (RAY, 2015a)

- Also in the youth sector, those international mobility projects that actively recruit participants from disadvantaged backgrounds were found to be more impactful (RAY, 2015; Schroer, 2003; Sherraden et al., 2008). This suggests that the accessibility of the programme by diverse youth and in particular reaching out to young people with fewer opportunities is a critical factor for ensuring the success of the programme in achieving its objectives.

The results for disadvantaged could also materialise through spill over effects. However there is no evidence in the studies analysed which would demonstrate that beneficiary staff use more effective strategies to work with disadvantaged learners or even that they would be better informed about what such strategies are. In general this area is under-researched.

In the youth sector, some studies found that beneficiaries (learners) of youth actions feel more aware and more committed to work against discrimination and for the inclusion of disadvantaged people after the completion youth grants (ECORYS, 2011; European Commission, 2010). A particular example is that of EVS, many studies showing that volunteer alumni generally feel more aware and more committed to support the inclusion of disadvantaged people in society after the completion of their EVS (RAY, 2012; ECORYS, 2007; SOS for EVS, 1999).

6.8.3 Case study findings

The case study findings complement the above. They show that:

- Most focus is on participation rather than on strengthening the results of these groups;
- When the results on these groups were mentioned they were commented on in general manner. However most respondents believe in the potential of the programme to provide powerful results for these groups. In particular when it comes to the softer results such as international outlook and experience or motivation and feeling of being valued. In particular in higher education, several respondents were clear about the fact that more than other groups, disadvantaged learners would not have gone abroad to study in absence of the programme;
- The case studies also made suggestions such as:
 - Working with outreach partners who target these groups;
 - Reintroducing specific top-up points for organisations with high share of disadvantaged;
 - Need for grants to cover preparatory activities to accompany disadvantaged learner (in particular in EVS)

Note however that there are clear differences in the kind and degree of disadvantage that the beneficiaries spoke about. In the higher education sector those involved are young people either with health issues or those from low income families but they are themselves high-achievers. In many cases higher education interviewees referred to learner with special needs specifically. In schools and VET many organisations noted that yes they reach to those from low income families, migrant background but they mostly reach to those who are 'good students' in these groups. Motivation and good results are

often an implicit condition for selection. In the youth sector as well participants in EVS are usually strongly driven.

This suggests that yes the programme does reach out to disadvantaged but it struggles to reach to those most disadvantaged. There is also a difference in the achievement when it comes to:

- Direct participation in mobility actions which has clear benefits for these groups
- Spill over effects from staff of disadvantaged learners – hard to document through the case studies carried out

Several interviewees noted that they observe a clearer focus and emphasis on disadvantaged groups from the programme level under Erasmus + compared to predecessors.

Table 6.48 Evidence from case studies

Case study Participation (sector)	Results	Comments
School sector case study – Respondents consider it low but did involve disadvantaged learners in mobility	Positive observation but remains at general level	Emphasised the need to have targeted funding for participation of these groups
School sector case study – Strong participation of disadvantaged in this school – school with many such students	Yes positive results – statements remain general	Need a specific accompanying person during mobility exchanges – extra support There is also a specific person in the school who focuses on working with disadvantaged young people – enabling factor for success
School sector case study – Positive feedback about participation of this group in their school but noted that the participants need to be motivated	Did not comment on results for this group	It was noted that in some cases disadvantaged students did not feel comfortable receiving students from an exchange school at home thus diminishing their participation
School sector case study – Participation of this group is not a priority as the school is rather an elite school and does not have many falling into this category Students are selected based on merit into the programme	Not applicable	Not applicable
VET – case study	The VET school does host a high share of learners from low income families	No comments on whether results are strong for this group

Case study Participation (sector)	Results	Comments	
	and rural areas. Participation is seen to be good but motivation, good education results and foreign language skills are informal requirements to take part		
VET – case study	The VET school has a high share of disadvantaged learners and aims to enhance their participation	No comments on whether results are strong for this group	Regretted the fact that under LLP schools with more disadvantaged learners received additional points at selection
VET – case study	The organisation targets specifically disadvantaged They focus on reaching out to hard to reach group Some don't even have a passport – the funding can cover buying of a passport	Positive results noted but in general terms – one example given of stronger feeling of integration/valorisation	They work with specific organisations that target hard to reach groups (NGOs)
VET – case study	Organisation does have participants from this group taking part in the programme. At upper-secondary level the funding is sufficient. They have higher VET students in this category who would like to participate but cannot afford it		
VET – case study	The organisation does not specifically target disadvantage students. They aim to attract excellent learners in their field However some students from disadvantaged background do take part		Extra support is needed for these groups and needs to be covered financially
HE – case study	Little data on level of participation of disadvantaged learners in general General feeling that it is not sufficient		Funding is not sufficient
HE – case study	Few cases of learners with special needs per year	Unique opportunity – these students would not have gone abroad	Funding is sufficient (top-up grant) and the support is appropriate

Case study Participation (sector)	Results	Comments
	to study otherwise	
HE – case study	No specific focus of the organisation – no views	
HE – case study	Few cases of young people with special needs per year but active effort to encourage them to apply	Funding has grown under E+ - it is sufficient. Before E+ the organisation used to give from the organisational management funds to this group
HE – case study	Few cases of young people with special needs every year	The students would not have gone abroad to study otherwise
HE – case study	No specific effort at the level of the organisation – no views	
Adult education – case study	Specific focus Deems the efforts to attract them are sufficient	
Adult education – case study	The projects focused on needs of vulnerable groups/ those with learning difficulties but they themselves did not take part in the exchange under LLP	
Adult education – case study	As above the focus in on methods to work with these groups rather than on their participation	
Youth – case study	These groups are better targeted under Erasmus +	clearer objectives for mobility lead to better results for these groups
Youth – case study	Though there is the willingness it is hard to reach these groups – specifically for EVS	To involve learners from disadvantaged backgrounds a lot of preparatory work with them is needed – this is not funded for EVS
Youth – case study	Do involve disadvantaged in EVS but a lot of preparation/ outreach is needed	If there are accompanying measures – particularly good results. for example training for staff on how to work

Case study Participation (sector)	Results	Comments
	with specific groups	
Youth - case study	Compared to other national volunteering schemes the participation is lower. There is not enough funding for the accompanying and preparatory measures	More funding is needed to cover for accompanying and preparation of these groups
Sport - all 6 case studies	All case studies mention that their projects focus on reaching out to these groups to engage them in sport activities	

Source: ICF case studies

6.9 Dissemination and efforts for mainstreaming

To what extent are the Programme results adequately disseminated and exploited?

Have appropriate efforts been invested at EU and national level to enable practices to be transferred and mainstreamed

Compared to predecessor programmes dissemination at programme level has become much more systematised. The degree of dissemination across the different strands is more comparable compared to the predecessor programmes where there was great variety of practice and availability of information about each programme and its achievements.

The existence of dissemination and exploitation strategy clearly improved the efforts made at EU as well as national level. The existence of online platforms within the programme also supports dissemination efforts.

At project level dissemination is a required component for KA2 and KA3 (and equivalent). While there is a lot of activities for dissemination being funded, it is not always effective in reaching out to a broader audience and effective dissemination strategies remain scarce. While this is understandable for the smaller and medium sized projects, large projects would benefit from more systematic engagement with key target groups.

The evaluation of these questions has been informed by four main sources: desk research, KIIs (and case studies to a lesser extent), expert panel assessment and the programme agencies survey as the following table further outlines.

Table 6.49 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Change in approaches to disseminated and exploit programme's results	Desk research – DG EAC Strategy for the Dissemination and Exploitation (D&E) of Programme Results,	 The Dissemination and Exploitation (D&E) strategy adopted by DG EAC in March 2015 underpins related approaches for Erasmus+. Drawing upon systematic approaches spread across the whole programme and a single dissemination platform (VALOR) among other things, the changes offered under the programme constitute an improvement in comparison to past.
Share of project beneficiaries who effectively disseminate and exploit project result	Expert panel assessment, KIIs and case studies	 Dissemination is an important component of projects' lifecycle across the different sectors and/or types of actions. Projects' beneficiaries are aware of the D&E strategy requirements they have to comply with. Effective exploitation is more complicated. While for most projects outputs are available online and most also have clear dissemination activities, only around a third reach high numbers of persons. When looking at the user-friendly character of products and their appealing presentation less than half of the projects were scored well by the expert panel
Views of respondents on the use of project results at policy level	Key informant interviews, case studies, programme agencies survey	 Respondents' views (national level primarily) are often critical on the extent to which project results are used at project level. Insufficient engagement of policy makers is reported too.
Share of respondents at national level who have positive views on programme's dissemination and exploitation approaches	Programme agencies survey, KIIs	 A very high share of national respondents is positive on the D&E strategy as applied to the programme
Share of respondents at national level who have positive views on programme's dissemination and exploitation tools	Programme agencies survey, KIIs	 A high share of national respondents is positive on programme's dissemination and exploitation tools. Perceptions on the project results platform are more mixed though
Examples of concrete improvement in comparison to predecessor programmes at programme level	Programme agencies survey, KIIs, case studies, desk research	 Several concrete examples suggest concrete improvement in comparison to predecessor programmes

6.9.1 Brief overview of dissemination and exploitation approaches under Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

In a programme such as Erasmus+ (or its predecessors) dissemination and exploitation of results can be done at different levels:

- Project level: this consists of disseminating and exploiting results of specific project's activities (or outputs as referred to thereafter). Those outputs can take various forms from one project to another but often include one or several of the following:
 - Research/evidence/indicators; practitioners guidelines/toolkit; didactic material (teaching/assessment methods); good practices examples; qualifications standards/references for qualifications; online learning platform; policy recommendations
- Throughout the project's lifetime (and expectedly beyond) those may be disseminated via various means among which project's and project partner organisations' websites, written publications (leaflets, newsletters, articles, studies, etc.), an ad programme dissemination platform (EPRP in the case of Erasmus+), dissemination events (conferences, seminars, meetings), etc.
- Action level: this consists of disseminating good practice examples from a certain type of action funded by the programme at different levels (project, local, national or EU) and exploiting those to inform the work of different stakeholders (e.g. practitioners, researchers, social partners, organisations, policy makers). Dissemination channels include for instance: EPRP, DG EAC, EACEA (for centralised actions) and NAs (for decentralised actions) websites, social media, dissemination events, written publications, etc.

- National level: this consists of selecting, disseminating and exploiting good practice examples from projects or actions that are particularly relevant to a certain country context. Good practice examples are for instance used to: raise awareness of the general public (countrywide primarily) on what the programme funds and the type of successful results it can help achieve; inform and guide potential applicants; inform the work of key stakeholders (practitioners, researchers, social partners, organisations but more importantly policy makers). Under Erasmus+, dissemination channels notably include: NAs websites, EPRP, dissemination events and written publications issued by the NAs, etc.
- Programme level: this consists of selecting, disseminating and exploiting best practice (in form of good practice examples and success stories) at project and action level for the following main purposes: to inform policy making at EU and national level (i.e. programme and partner countries) and the work of other interested stakeholders; for transparency and accountability²⁵⁸ purposes about what the programme funds. Under Erasmus+, dissemination channels notably include: EPRP, DG EAC or EACEA websites, social media, DG EAC collaborative platforms and online platforms (eTwinning, School Education Gateway, EPAL, Youth Portal), videos, newsletters, electronic and paper-based publications, etc.

The following table offers a brief illustrative overview of the dissemination approaches supported under Erasmus+ and its predecessors.

²⁵⁸ Over the past years, increased attention had been paid at EU/EC level to supplying evidence that the funds allocated to EU programmes have the desired impact and are more efficiently spent at EU level than at national level.

Table 6.50 Dissemination approaches under Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes per level of intervention

	Erasmus+	LLP	YiA	Other predecessors
Project level	<p>All projects are required to have a dissemination component</p> <p>More systematic approach: stronger emphasis on D&E of project results; quality checked twice by external experts, EACEA or NA staff and screened during the monitoring process, quality conditional for grant payment</p> <p>Beneficiaries' roles and related obligations set in D&E strategy</p>	<p>All projects were required to have a dissemination component</p>	<p>All projects were required to have a dissemination component</p>	<p>All projects were required to have a dissemination component</p>
Action level	<p>All projects are required to have a dissemination component</p> <p>Systematic and standardised approach for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KA1 (EMJMD, KA2 and KA3 (centralised/decentralised actions)) disseminated via EPRP, plus selection of good practices and success stories - KA1 (individual mobility) via regular impact studies <p>Statistical publications, annual reports, social media activities</p> <p>Clearly defined roles for beneficiaries, NAs, EACEA, DG EAC/EMPL</p> <p>Approaches, distribution of roles clearly set in D&E strategy</p>	<p>All projects are required to have a dissemination component</p> <p>KA4, a transversal activity, aimed to support large-scale D&E projects (specifically development of communities of practice and of theme-based D&E)</p> <p>Other examples of actions that had a clear dissemination component:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unilateral and national projects - Multilateral projects - Networking projects in VET - Grundtvig networks of experts, etc. 	<p>All projects are required to have a dissemination component</p> <p>Dissemination and cooperation between agencies was ensured through e.g:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YiA action 4 (Youth support systems): 'Information activities for young people and those active in youth work and youth organisations' - Youth in Action network 	<p>Ad-hoc activities</p>
National level	<p>Systematic identification of good practices and success stories by national agencies as part of Dissemination strategy</p>		<p>No systematic/standardised approaches</p> <p>Most NAs disseminate the results</p>	<p>Ad-hoc activities</p>

	Erasmus+	LLP	YiA	Other predecessors
	NAs' role clearly set in D&E strategy		among other NAs, youth, youth organisations and youth workers. Less often the information was disseminated to the general public and even less to policy makers	
Programme level	<p>Systematic approach to identification of success stories</p> <p>Single database with projects and their results (EPRP) complemented with other dissemination channels</p> <p>Newsletters, social media, annual report, participation to study fairs, sectoral fairs</p>	<p>Several databases with project results (ADAM, EVE, etc.)</p> <p>Compendia of project results on EACEA website</p>	<p>Several databases with project results (EVE, www.salto-youth.net/toolbox), networks (e.g. MIJARC or Rural Youth Europe)</p> <p>Compendia of project results on EACEA website</p>	Ad-hoc activities

ICF (based on desk research)

Though not offering a comprehensive picture, this table suggests that more systematic and rationalised dissemination approaches (at all levels) are being operated under Erasmus+, in comparison with its predecessors.

As noted earlier one of the key purposes of the dissemination and exploitation of results at EU level is to address transparency- and accountability-related objectives set at this level. In this remit, DG EAC is committed, whilst giving better visibility to project results, to provide more transparency and accountability of the funds entrusted to its management – hence regarding Erasmus+ (so as Creative Europe). In order to address this and also drawing on lessons learnt from predecessor programmes (interim evaluations all outlined weaknesses in this area and overall that project results had not been necessarily fully exploited), DG EAC set a strategy for dissemination and exploitation of programme results (D&E strategy thereafter). Adopted in March 2015, this constitutes a completely new approach²⁵⁹, applied for the first time through Erasmus+.

In a nutshell, the D&E strategy puts greater emphasis on activities for the dissemination and exploitation of project results than under predecessor programmes. Driven by systematic approaches that apply at the different levels of intervention mentioned above, the strategy is aimed to contribute more directly to the impact of the programme, to public awareness of its functioning and results, as well as to its future improvement and usefulness for policy-making.

Its general objectives²⁶⁰ are to:

- Support the development of the policy fields of education, training, youth, sport and culture by sharing programme and project results which can improve the work of organisations and policy-makers in these fields;
- Maximise the impact of the programmes through an appropriate dissemination of programme and project results to a wide set of target groups;
- Provide evidence for building a strong political case for our programmes vis-à-vis Member States, EU Institutions and public opinion.

More specifically the strategy is aimed to:

- Provide transparency of the EU funding in the fields mentioned above
- Identify good practice examples
- Select a sample of "success stories" out of the pool of good practices
- Use all available means to give further visibility to these projects
- Exploit the results for policy making at EU level and policy recommendations for Member States.

To achieve this, it builds on three main components:

- Transparency of programme's implementation: this is to be primarily ensured by a single project result dissemination platform, EPRP which has two main purposes:
 - to give a comprehensive overview of projects financed under Erasmus+ as well as the following predecessor programmes: LLP and YiA.
 - to highlight – through a flagging system – good practice examples and success stories
- The descriptions of all selected projects are automatically uploaded on EPRP after the signature of grant agreements between EACEA or NAs and project beneficiaries

²⁵⁹ Being the first system of this nature at DG EAC, the D&E strategy is currently making the object of an external evaluation.

²⁶⁰ DG EAC Strategy for the Dissemination and Exploitation of Programme Results, March 2015

- Selection of good practice examples and then success stories from finalised projects, as the basis for dissemination and exploitation activities by different actors (DG EAC and DG EMPL operational units, EACEA, NAs). Good practice examples and ultimate success stories are first identified by NAs (decentralised actions) and the EACEA (centralised actions) and then discussed with project selection committees comprising DG EAC (and DG EMPL where appropriate) representatives. Mobility actions (KA1) do not follow the same process. Related dissemination and exploitation of results are based on regular impact studies.
- Dissemination and exploitation of the success stories through activities to support policy developments and to maximise the impact of the programme. This is ensured by DG EAC and DG EMPL, EACEA and NAs through different means (e.g. conferences, large-scale events, OMC groups, briefings for high-level meetings, websites, social media, press releases, publications, videos, etc.).

Furthermore, at programme level, a major campaign has been implemented in 2016-2017 to mark the 30 years anniversary of the programme.

Among other key features, the strategy defines the roles of the main players (beneficiaries, NAs, EACEA and DG EAC/DG EMPL) involved in the process and how those are meant to feed into each other. It is also underpinned by an annual plan for dissemination and exploitation of activities.

6.9.2 Overview of key findings at different levels

This section outlines key findings on the effectiveness of the dissemination of the programme at project, national and EU level. Findings at actions level do not make part of a specific sub-section but some references are made across the other sub-sections. The latter have been informed by four main sources: desk research, KIIs (and case studies to a lesser extent), expert panel assessment and the programme agencies survey.

Dissemination at project level

Insights on the dissemination of results at project level were gained through two main sources (expert panel assessment and KIIs).

Findings from the expert panel assessment confirm that dissemination is an important component of projects' lifecycle in general. For the purpose of the task, 100 selected projects (and related outputs) spread across Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes (LLP and YiA were considered) were reviewed. The information gathered and related analysis has drawn upon the following criteria:

- Extent to which projects' outputs are disseminated online
- Share of dissemination activities per projects and level of visibility
- Number of persons reached through dissemination activities
- Quality of content of projects' outputs
- Level of accessibility of projects' outputs to target groups and the wider public
- Dissemination of projects' outputs through non-project related website(s)/publication(s)

Key findings reveal that:

- The vast majority (90) of projects reviewed had all or some projects' products disseminated online, distributing as follows:
 - 65 had (all or most) products available online,
 - 25 had some products available online
 - 10 did not allow accessing their products online at all.

- **Key features**
- Projects (65) with high number of products available online:
 - 16 were funded under Erasmus+ programme, covering all sectors. The remaining 49 projects pertained predominantly to school education, adult learning, VET and Jean Monnet while higher education and youth-related project materials proved to be available online to a lesser extent.
- Other: none of the projects without online available project outputs were funded under Erasmus+.

- The vast majority of projects (93) had several or at least a few dissemination activities. 55 of them supported several dissemination activities for which they ensured visible promotion. Approaches were more sporadic in the case of the remainder (38). Lastly, 7 projects did not include dissemination activities or did not clearly promote the product(s).

- **Key features of the projects (55) with strong and effective dissemination efforts**
 - 16 funded under Erasmus+ and 39 under predecessor programmes
 - All sectors well represented with performance (as per assessment criterion – see Annex 18 for details) above average for school education, adult learning and higher education projects
 - The projects reviewed included a variety of dissemination activities and events, most commonly referring to: printed materials, digital and social media, events (workshops, conferences, seminars), as well as international networks.

Outputs were made available (fully or partially) to the target group(s) and the wider public in most cases. Over half of the projects (57) made their outputs fully available to the target groups. Further details are outlined below:

	Number of projects with:		
	outputs fully available	outputs partially available	no output available
Target group(s)	57	34	9
Wider public	46	41	13

- Full set of projects’ outputs unfrequently disseminated in non-project related website(s)/publication(s). Out of the 100 projects reviewed:
 - The outputs of 21 projects were visible and cited in non-project related websites(s)/publications;
 - Some of the outputs of 43 projects were visible and cited in non-project related websites(s)/publications;
 - The outputs of 36 projects did not reach further than the project.
- Reaching high number of persons through dissemination activities is more challenging. Out of the 100 projects reviewed:
 - 36 reached high numbers of persons by dissemination activities for this type of project

- 25 managed to reach average numbers of persons by dissemination activities
- 39 do not allow specifying how many persons were reached or the numbers are very low.
- The most common issue emerging while assessing the projects was the lack of clear evidence as regards the audience reached beyond the participants involved in the project.
- Full set of projects’ outputs unfrequently disseminated in non-project related website(s)/publication(s). Out of the 100 projects reviewed:
 - The outputs of 21 projects were visible and cited in non-project related websites(s)/publications;
 - Some of the outputs of 43 projects were visible and cited in non-project related websites(s)/publications;
 - The outputs of 36 projects did not reach further than the project.

Overall the above outlines many positive insights on how project results are disseminated. Among other positive findings, a number projects reviewed (among those ranking high on several criteria) were appreciated for not only developing project websites and online learning repositories but also for maintaining them well beyond the funding period. Besides the dedicated project websites, the role of the project platforms managed by the European Commission was underlined (European Shared Treasure, ADAM, Erasmus+ Project platform). These were found to provide a space that is available to the target groups (and beyond) consequently, ensure that all project materials are well stored and disseminated for further use.

On a less positive note, findings also suggest room for improvement notably to effectively reach high(er) number of persons and get better evidence on the audience reached beyond the project consortia. This was reflected in the main conclusions of the expert panel assessment workshop that further discussed the above. The experts were also critical on the application form considering that this does not allow applicants to develop and describe measurable and comparable dissemination activities. They added that the dissemination strategy is most frequently not present from the application period but being developed and approved during the beginning of the project implementation phase. As a result, one of their recommendations in addition to the above was to quantify/make the dissemination more measurable (i.e. number of events, people reached, etc.).

The table outlines experts’ main conclusions in terms of the key strengths and pitfalls of the project outputs assessed per sectors.

Table 6.51 Overview of selected project outputs’ key strengths and pitfalls per sectors

Sector	Strength	Pitfall
School education	- Sustainability	- Sustainability: after project life span, the websites often don’t function anymore and/or the material is not available - Innovation - Limited outreach to disadvantaged groups
VET	- Focused on the target group - Potential accessibility and transferability of products	- Low quality products - Lack of innovation - Lack of transferability

Sector	Strength	Pitfall
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong partnerships - Sustainability - High quality of outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainability: another group of projects was not at all sustainable, project websites were no longer accessible - Disadvantaged groups: stronger emphasis is needed
Adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on target groups: projects targeted specific groups - Attractive and user-friendly outputs - High quality outputs, most of the products were applicable and transferable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility: password-protection, outdated websites - Sometimes lack of overall view of project - In all cases users should have been trained in order to use the products.
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation - Good project management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those projects organise seminars have very limited innovative capacities - Lack of dissemination - Not sustainable projects - Lack of visibility
Jean Monnet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outputs that respond to identified needs - Quality of outputs for those projects where these were made available - Dissemination and wider reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainability- absence of outputs availability to the wider public beyond project period - Quality of outputs - Limited transferability due to lack of availability to the broader public
Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of the context in which the project is delivered - Projects with a clear focus and/or defined target group - Recognition of the need to promote usability and sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outputs have limited transferability - Project does not appear to respond to a clear need / does not have clear added value - Project does not target disadvantaged groups - Project scope too broad for its size, leading to limited success - Lack of innovation, e.g. little usage of social media - Sustainability

ICF (based on the assessment of 100 projects spread across Erasmus+, LLP and YiA)

Complementary insights on the effectiveness of the dissemination of project results (under Erasmus+) were gained through KIIs (national level) and case studies. In line with the findings above, most of the project beneficiaries (project leaders or project team

members) confirmed that they have disseminated project results (online and via other channels – e.g. newsletters, participation in conferences, events, etc.). The result-oriented nature of the programme and related requirements at project level in terms of dissemination, monitoring and exploitation of results are clearly perceived by interviewees. A vast number however stressed that these new obligations make project management heavier and much time consuming whilst the distinction between results and impacts are not always evident to them. Several added that it was not clear to them whether and how project results are ultimately used at national (by NAs or other national authorities) or EU level (by EACEA or EC).

Interviewees' perceptions on the support offered via Erasmus+ to disseminate project results were also collated. Sentiments are positive in most cases. The existence of clear(er) dissemination rules or of a common dissemination project results platform (EPRP) at programme level were thought to have some positive influence on the visibility (or support to) of the projects. The platform was not considered user friendly in many cases though. A few other areas for improvement were highlighted. Those primarily referred to the need to:

- better involve national public authorities and policy makers in the process
- ensure more coordination to disseminate results to relevant audience
- increased synergetic approaches (e.g. in form of networking) between similar projects

This is further reflected across some illustrative quotations from KIIs outlined below.

Sentiments on Erasmus+ support to disseminate the project results (quotations from KIIs)

- *'There are strict dissemination requirements thus this works well'* (KII in school education- key stakeholder)
- *'Support received has been useful and easy. [We]] have been in contact with the Commission; in working groups they disseminate the projects. This acknowledgement is motivating. Other countries ask them about the projects. Dissemination was also ensured through EPALE. There was an interest in the way information was presented'.* (KII from adult learning-policy maker)
- *'Support offered under Erasmus+ has an influence but there is need for: a greater involvement of public authorities and more coordination to disseminate results to relevant audience. When evaluating a project, there needs to be a focus on the interest and capacity of those applying but also on the utility of the project's results. The latter element is incomplete'.* (KII from sport – policy maker)
- *'KA3 has the highest chances to produce impact at system level but it need to further involve decision-makers'.* (KII from youth – key stakeholder)
- *'Dissemination is still an issue. There should be room for more synergies between similar projects. It is important to identify projects working in the same field and promote networking, e.g. the Commission could promote meetings (e.g. online) between the persons responsible for similar projects. It is important that the project is not closed. Monitoring impact is not easy too. A pity there is an important investment and there is often no continuity in projects'.* (KII from HE – key stakeholder).

With regard to the perceived lack of involvement of policy makers, findings suggest that projects are most often unlikely to reach to policy level unless the policy level is directly included in the project. Overall, the need for improvement in this area is also suggested by the results of the programme agencies. Whilst the sentiment on whether the programme results are adequately exploited for policy purposes is generally positive, only 6% of respondents actually strongly agree with this statement.

Dissemination at national level

In addition to the points above about the need to further involve national policy makers in the overall dissemination and exploitation process (i.e. so as to maximise the visibility of funded projects and, for most system level-oriented ones to help them effectively inform policy making where appropriate) insights were gained through the programme agencies survey on:

- the effectiveness of the dissemination and exploitation (D&E) strategy that underpins Erasmus+;
- the value and effectiveness of the Erasmus+ project results platform (EPRP);
- the type of dissemination activities most commonly deployed by NAs, and;
- whether and how examples collected through the D&E strategy are used at the national level

Key findings reveal that respondents are **very positive** in general about the **D&E strategy** as the following data (which also includes EACEA respondents) suggests:

- 81% strongly or rather agree that the objectives of the D&E strategy corresponds to the needs of their organisation (i.e. NA or EACEA)
- 78% strongly or rather agree that the strategy and its implementation are complementary to the activities carried out at national level by grant beneficiaries and intermediate bodies (in particular NAs)
- 77% strongly or rather agree that the strategy has contributed to better communication of the results of supported projects
- 76% strongly or rather agree that the strategy is comprehensive and address all programme strands

Slightly less positive results regard:

- The fact that the strategy would have met its objective of transparency and accountability vis-à-vis EU citizens: 58% strongly or rather agree with the statement (including 13% who strongly agree)

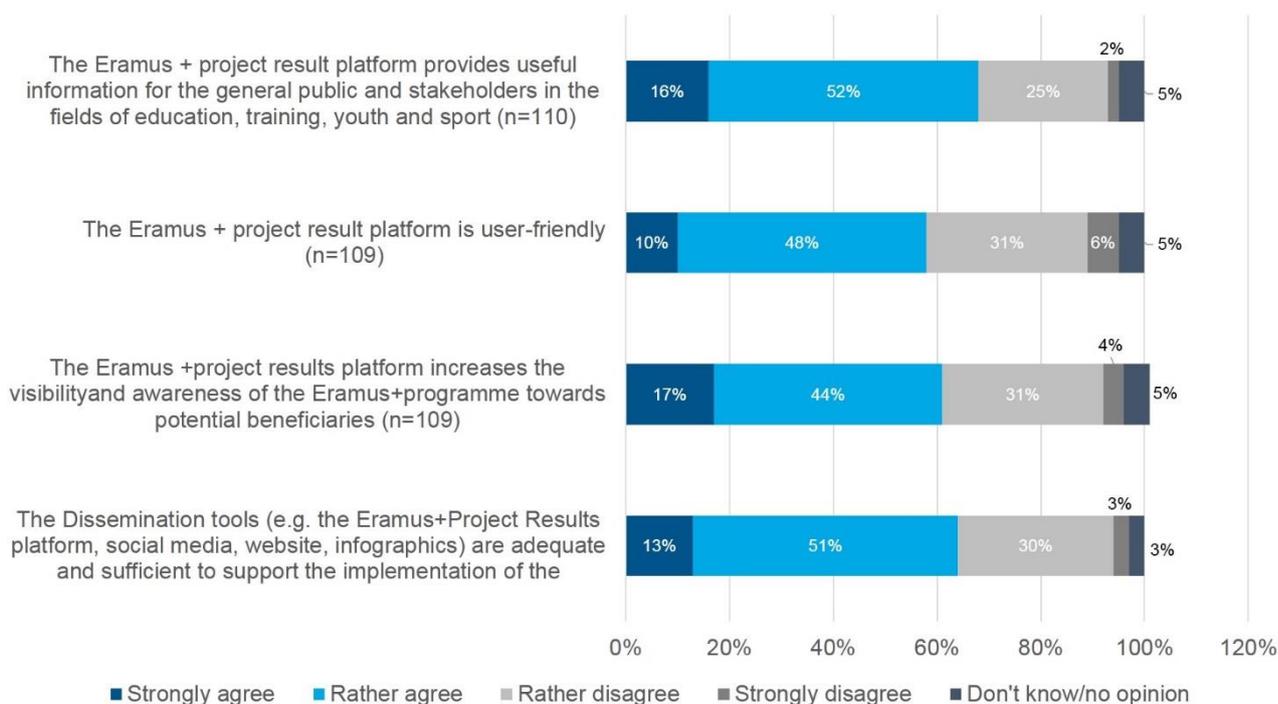
Respondents' perceptions are also quite positive on the communication channels offered by the programme for dissemination (valued by 69% among which 16 % who strongly agree) and the Erasmus+ project results platform. Over half of respondents feel that the platform:

- provides useful information for the general public and stakeholders in the fields of education and training, youth and sport: 68% strongly agree or rather agree
- increases the visibility and awareness of the E+ programme towards potential beneficiaries: 61% strongly agree or rather agree
- is user friendly: 58% strongly agree or rather agree

The dissemination tools (e.g. social media, websites, infographics in addition to the project results platform) are also valued by 64% (who strongly agree or rather agree) of respondents considering those as adequate and sufficient to support the implementation of the D&E strategy.

Against this positive picture it is however to be noted that between 27% and 37% of respondents rather disagree or strongly disagree with the statements above. In this category, the area where respondents are most critical regards the user friendliness of the project results platform as the Figure below shows. This finding concurs with rather negative opinions gathered from KIIs (national level) on this aspect.

Figure 6.54 Respondents' sentiments on Erasmus+ dissemination tools



- ICF based on programme agencies survey

Respondents were also asked at which level (between national and EU) dissemination and communication should mainly take place. Most of them (65%) strongly or rather agree that this should take place at national level.

Insights were gained on the **type of actions** NAs take to support valorisation of good practices arising from funded project. Most commonly reported ones are:

- Running seminars, conferences, workshops where selected project beneficiaries are invited to present their projects. Such events are meant to raise awareness on the projects, foster mutual learning and attract potential applicants
- Disseminating projects results, good practice or case studies on NAs websites, via (monthly) newsletters, daily newspapers and magazines, social media
- Networking/cooperation with sectoral organisations to support the valorisation of good practices

About the use of the examples collected through the D&E strategy at the national level, the vast majority (86%) replied that those are used by either the NA or both the NA and other authorities. The remainder (14%) indicated that they were not aware that the examples are used at national level. Respondents reported this is usually used as follows (in decreasing order)

- Presented during national events (conferences, seminars, etc.)
- Printed on dissemination materials (e.g. brochures, newsletters)
- Showcased on NAs' websites

- Presented on ad hoc basis (e.g. bilateral meetings) to policy makers: to raise their awareness on promising examples that could help enhance policy impact

Lastly, some respondents made the following suggestions for improvement in D&E area:

- To limit excessive platforms and tools, more interlinking with IT tool and result platforms.
(‘It is necessary to have a better overview and avoid financing of very similar projects of the same organisations or very similar project outputs of different organisations’).
- The Programme should stimulate more National Authorities and, in general, policy makers to be actually and effectively engaged in the design of EU policy priorities and in the mainstreaming and exploitation of projects' results at national level.
- To further investigate into the use and impact of short term mobility

Dissemination at EU (programme) level

At EU level, the implementation of the D&E strategy for Erasmus+ is overseen by DG EAC²⁶¹ and run by operational units in DG EAC and EACEA as noted earlier.

The dissemination of results is ensured²⁶², in addition to EPRP, via DG EAC or EACEA websites, social media, DG EAC collaborative platforms and online platforms (eTwinning, School Education Gateway, EPALE, Youth Portal), videos, and newsletters, electronic and paper-based publications. Presentation of project results during thematic events (conferences, seminars, OMC working groups, Erasmus+ Infodays, etc.) are also made. The effective implementation of the dissemination strategy is monitored against a set of indicators and targets which is reviewed once a years by DG EAC Steering Group on Dissemination and Exploitation of Results.

More than in the past, specific approaches have been put in place at both DG EAC and EACEA level to ensure that the exploitation of projects' results effectively serves to inform policy making. These approaches notably include:

- The selection of good practice examples and success stories by the EACEA (centralised actions). Success stories apply to projects with high policy relevance (e.g. Support to Policy Reform projects (KA3), Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances (KA2), Large Scale Volunteering Events in the Field of Youth, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (KA1)).
- Selected success stories are further discussed with project selection committees comprising DG EAC (and DG EMPL where relevant) and EACEA representatives. Policy units at DG EAC or DG EMPL can then refer to those for their work and communicate on those as they wish (e.g. conferences, publications, etc.). According to an interviewee, this makes a difference in comparison with the predecessor programmes where projects presented in events were rather selected randomly.
- For KA1 (except Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees), DG EAC (and DG EMPL for VET and adult learning) carry, out every 2 or 3 years, impact studies to assess the impact of individual mobility (learners/youth and teaching staff/ youth workers). Key findings of the impact studies are then disseminated through various channels (as it was the case of the Erasmus impact study in 2015). As for the above, this is meant to ultimately serve to inform policy making. Under KA1, Erasmus+ ambassadors are also selected for all mobility actions. Those can for instance take part in dissemination events.

²⁶¹ i.e. DG EAC unit responsible for the Dissemination and Exploitation of Programmes.

²⁶² Information based on desk research (DG EAC Strategy for the Dissemination and Exploitation of Programme Results, March 2015) and KIIs.

Based on the above it can be concluded that the assessment of this evaluation question is positive. The existence of an overarching D&E strategy that sets clear requirements and rules at different levels (project and actions, national and EU levels); of a single dissemination project results platform; of regularly reviewed indicators and target for monitoring programme's dissemination or of specific measures to ensure both effective and common approaches to for exploiting results represent an improvement in comparison to the past.

With regard to EPRP, a general conclusion is that, though there are mixed views on its user-friendliness, the fact that the platform offers a common and accessible space for disseminating most project results whilst also showcasing good practices and success stories (including from predecessor programmes) can be seen as a clear improvement in comparison to the past.

The numerous IT developments that have supported its establishment have enabled a number of data stored in programme databases to be automatically transferred into it. This allows the platform to be a valuable tool for policy makers. Insights gained from key informants at EU level suggests that the platform is used to support decision making at EC level notably. The example of a request, in the early stages of development of the platform, to identify funded projects that supported integration of asylum seekers was for instance given. EPRP enabled to retrieve 160 projects. Those were ultimately used for political communication.

The tool is also of use for a larger range of individuals (e.g. people looking for partners so potential applicants, researchers, etc.). A potential limitation (content-wise) in its current configuration regards the lack of complementary thematic insights (publications or other) that could be inspirational for users who would be looking for solutions to address given issues such as for example ESL.

Other general conclusions on the effectiveness of the dissemination and exploitation approaches supported by the programme are outlined below.

At **EU level**, the main issue reported through KIIs regarded the difficulty in some sectors (e.g. youth (EVS) or adult learning) to select success stories. The lack of good quality reports clearly identifying results was said to be the main constraint.

At **national level** (NAs), the assessment is similarly positive in particular about the D&E strategy, with the exception of the dissemination at system level. As several key informant interviews (national level) also stressed, furthering national authorities/policy makers' involvement is a gap to be addressed.

Other positive findings include the following:

- The vast majority of NAs use the examples identified through the process of identification of good practices
- They mainly use them for dissemination purposes to potential applicants or beneficiaries. They use them more rarely to inform policy making bodies.

Perceptions on the project results platform are more mixed: though valued by over half of respondents 37% of survey respondents don't agree that the platform is user-friendly. This negative sentiment concurs with insights gained from KIIs (national level).

Another aspect that could not be explored (and should hence be further considered) is the extent to which differences exist in how/how well the NAs use the good practice and success stories identified at national level.

At **project level** findings are generally positive showing that dissemination is an important component of projects' lifecycle across the different sectors and/or types of

actions. Findings suggest that project participants (leaders or project members interviewed) are aware of the D&E strategy requirements they have to comply with.

Meanwhile, related requirements at their level are often considered heavier and much more time consuming. The distinction between results and impacts are not always clear to several of them – hence suggesting room for improvement in the way to communicate on this at NA and EACEA level. Overall, whilst interesting outputs may emerge from individual projects and despite the standardised processes they have to comply with, their effective dissemination and exploitation cannot be solely ensured at this level as individual project leaders/consortia don't have the capacity (e.g. human resources, time, knowledge-wise, financial) to effectively make 'big changes' themselves.

Similarly to findings emerging at national level, evidence suggests, at project level, that the policy level is still not sufficiently engaged.

6.10 Integrated programme

How and to what extent is the existence of one integrated Programme a help or a hindrance in promoting greater effectiveness for the EU's activities in the field of education and training, youth and sport?

How and to what extent is the existence of one integrated Programme a help or a hindrance in promoting greater visibility for the EU's activities?

Integration of the programme has largely enhanced the visibility of the programme and improved the programme 'brand'. The programme benefits from the visibility and popularity of the 'Erasmus' brand. Despite initial resistance in some sectors, respondents' attitude shows that the name is now well accepted across the sectors (key informants, programme agencies, case study respondents). The activity in social media shows that the brand is associated with all the sectors of the programme.

The integration of the programme has helped to improve not only the visibility of the programme but also coherence of its actions and understanding of the programme by different target groups. It has also helped to enhance efficiency by streamlining certain procedures. This contributes to improve the effectiveness of the programme.

However potential effectiveness gains in the current programme are certainly not due to the integration alone. Mainstreaming of tools such as mobility charters adapted to each of the sectors helps enhance the quality of mobility. There is evidence that recognition is being strengthened also in sectors outside higher education. The fact that the programme has a bigger budget and thus reaches to a great number of learners, staff and organisations also strengthens its effectiveness.

The main limitation identified is that the integration, simplification and streamlining of the programme has possibly gone too far in particular in the KA2. The diversity of activities covered in particular under strategic partnerships does complicate a clear-cut assessment of effectiveness. Too many different things are being brought under one intervention which means that the results they have in common (as per intervention logic) are at a rather high and general level.

Table 6.52 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Share of respondents who agree that the integrated programme is more effective	KIIs, desk research	 The vast majority of respondents (EU/national) see the value of the integrated programme agree that it is more effective programme, pointing that increased effectiveness is not be solely attributed to the integrated architecture of the programme but also to complementary approaches that reinforce it.
Number of respondents who supplied concrete examples on the effectiveness of the integrated programme	KIIs, case studies, desk research (incl. NAUs reports review)	 The vast majority of respondents (EU/national) were able to provide such examples
Level of discussion about the programme on social media in the context of education, training, youth and sport	Social media analysis, KIIs	 Evidence suggests that the programme is both highly visible and discussed on social media. Different posts cover all the different (sub-) fields of the programme and a wide range of topics. Posts about Erasmus+ emanate from a range of authors (e.g. journalists, learners, organisations, policy makers, etc.) located in Europe and beyond
Views of stakeholders on the extent to which the integrated programme (and related branding) gives visibility to the programme and to different fields and sub-fields	Key informant interviews, case studies, programme agencies survey	 Respondents' views are positive on the branding of the programme to a large extent suggesting that initial fears that this would affect the visibility of the different programme components or would generate confusion (with former Erasmus) at users level have been (or if not are being progressively) overcome
The extent to which are mobility actions more effective under current programme compared to predecessors	Evidence from various sources – surveys, case studies, KII	 Mobility actions were already highly effective under predecessor programmes but in the current programme further tools are available to enhance quality of mobility
The extent to which are cooperation actions more effective under current programme compared to predecessors	Evidence from various sources – surveys, case studies, KII	 The streamlining and simplification of actions into KA2 and specifically strategic partnerships may have gone a step too far. There is great diversity of activities covered within this strand which makes clear cut assessment of effectiveness challenging

How and to what extent is the existence of one integrated Programme a help or a hindrance in promoting greater effectiveness for the EU's activities in the field of education and training, youth and sport

Overall the integrated nature of the programme is positively perceived by a vast number of respondents and can be considered as a help in promoting greater effectiveness for the EU activities in the fields of education and training, youth and sport.

In general, as reflected earlier in the report (see section 5 for instance) findings suggest that the integrated programme is generally perceived as effectively supporting and generating:

- Increased capacities for better and more consistent programme's alignment with ongoing and emerging policy priorities applicable to education and training, youth and sport.
- More transparent, rationalised and systematic approaches
- Opportunities for cross-sectoral cooperation
- A much larger scope of action

With regard to programme's increased capacities for **better and more consistent alignment with ongoing and emerging policy priorities** across the different sectors, several examples were given by interviewees. The definition of transversal priorities applicable to both education and training and youth fields or the recent example of Paris Declaration's objectives that are to be addressed by all three sectors were for instance

often reported (mostly by key informants at EU level). The integrated approach is also valued (EU level KIIs) as it helps, among other things, address the fragmented approaches and lack of communication or synergies that were previously observed between LLP and YiA programmes²⁶³.

Erasmus+ is also driven by more result-oriented approaches than its predecessors. Those apply to all three sectors (including Jean Monnet action), related actions and levels of intervention (individual, organisational and system). To achieve this, more **transparent, rationalised and systematic approaches** (that programme management bodies and grant beneficiaries have to adhere to) add to and make part of the integrated architecture of the programme. Amongst related developments, the merging of predecessor programmes into the single programme has resulted in rationalising and drastically reducing the number of actions in comparison to the past²⁶⁴.

The integrated architecture (i.e. drawing upon three main KAs, two separate chapters (sport and Jean Monnet and a smaller number of actions)) is generally perceived as effective by most respondents (KIIs and respondents to programme agencies survey). There is some room for improvement though in certain areas (e.g. need to better communicate on the respective actions supported by the programme as those are not necessarily well comprehended by all potential beneficiaries as outlined in section 4) though. Furthermore there is a concern that the simplification may have gone a step too far.

Related findings include:

- The clarity of the new structure is seen as a main advantage of the integrated programme for over half of respondents (KIIs)
- Mixed views on the new pillar (KA3) offered to support system level-oriented actions:
 - Most respondents welcome this development seeing it a clear(er) space for action at this level in the programme. The extent to which this effectively helps generate more system level impact than similar actions under predecessor programmes is unclear to many
 - Several respondents (EU level stakeholder organisations mostly) were complimentary about KA3 Forward looking cooperation actions considering those as a clear opportunity and means for them to be heard and/or to inform policy making on thematic areas of interest to them or their membership
 - 65% of respondents to the programme agencies survey strongly agree or rather agree that the pillar increases the added value of the programme. However, 23% had no opinion whilst the remainder (12%) rather or strongly disagreed
- Mixed views on effectiveness of the integrated programme in terms of:
 - making it easier for potential applicants to understand the funding opportunities: whilst 68% of programme agencies respondents strongly or rather agree 31% rather or strongly disagree. This negative sentiment is corroborated by several KIIs.
 - enabling potential applicants to identify more easily appropriate opportunities more easily: 66% of programme agencies respondents strongly or rather

²⁶³ i.e. as reflected in Erasmus for all impact assessment . In short, the relationship between LLP & Youth in Action has not been synergic and this has in times undermined the relevance of Youth actions. The main problem was that the added value of Youth in Action was not always captured because youth organisations do not provide formal education.

²⁶⁴ i.e. addressing Erasmus for all Impact assessment's conclusions that there were too many actions in both LLP and YiA, what made both programmes too complex and not focussed enough.

agree. 32% conversely rather or strongly disagree. This negative sentiment is again corroborated by several KIIs.

- helping applicants to design applications that are more relevant: survey results offer an even more contrasted picture with 59% of survey respondents who strongly or rather agree, 30% who rather or strongly disagree and 10% who don't know.
- A majority of key informant interviewees (national) claimed that the standardised approaches (applications and project reporting in particular) and related requirements are too heavy and make their work much time consuming than in the past. Benefits were however pointed by several interviewees.
- Mixed evidence about the benefits of simplification within KA2:
 - While the very big diversity of cooperation actions under predecessor programmes was a clear obstacle for coherence and understanding of the programme among potential applicants, the current structure where all decentralised actions are expected to be of the same type – strategic partnerships – is somewhat simplistic. Small scale actions and much larger ones cannot be expected to lead to the same types of results.
 - Several programme agencies commented that the KA2 pillar and in particular strategic partnerships cover a great variety of actions and that it is not always very clear what kind of activities are being sought – what is the intervention logic of this strand. This was also noted in scoping interviews and KIIs.
 - The analysis of programme intervention logic shows that the results expected at this level are of a rather genetic nature as they are defined so as to embrace a great diversity of actions.
 - The analysis of projects shows that there are two main types of actions – small scale 'sharing and learning' activities and bigger projects that aim to innovate. These are currently put together in the same strand while their ambitions and hence their expected outcomes are not at the same level.

Another dimension where the integration had clear positive effects regards the opportunities for **cross-sectoral cooperation** (e.g. under KA2 Strategic Partnerships). According to the Erasmus+ legal basis, this approach is expected to create synergies and foster effective cooperation across the various education, training and youth sectors.

Findings from different sources (desk research, KIIs, programme agencies survey and network analysis) offer a rather contrasted picture in this area. Key findings include:

- Most key informants (EU and national) welcome the opportunity offered but were meanwhile sceptical on whether and to what extent this actually materialises:
 - Most of the interviewees approached had not taken part in this type of cooperation action. It was not clear, in many cases, whether this could be an option they would consider in future project applications. In a few cases, it also appeared that interviewees did not have the same understanding of cross-sectoral cooperation. These findings concur with information collated through desk research (e.g. European Parliament report on the first years of implementation of Erasmus+²⁶⁵)
- The vast majority (90%) of respondents to programme agencies survey strongly or rather agree that the single programme better encourages cross-sectoral approaches

²⁶⁵<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A8-2016-0389&language=EN#title1>

- Findings of the network analysis suggest an increase in number of sectors participating per projects:
 - Data shows an increase of 23 percentage points in the cross-sectoral co-participation rate, with 47% of projects in the predecessor period involving multiple sectors, compared to 70% of projects so far under Erasmus+. A similar finding holds for organisation–organisation partnership pairs, with one third of pairs under the predecessor programme being cross-sectoral partnerships, whereas half of pairs under Erasmus+ are cross-sectoral.

Overall the above suggests that there is room for improvement in particular at the level of potential beneficiaries: need to better defining and communicating about cross-sectoral opportunities and what these entail. Data meanwhile reveals that such cooperation projects actually materialise and are steadily increasing.

The merging of predecessor programmes into the single programme has also offered it a much **larger scope of action** comprising notably a wider geographical scope (i.e. giving a clearer visibility to the international dimension of higher education (as opposed to former situation of standalone and specialised predecessor programmes whereby each programme focused on a specific type of intervention or a specific geographical region: Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa and Edulink) and youth) and increased budget.

The enhancements of the scope of the programme was not directly discussed through KIIs but a few interviewees referred to this spontaneously. Their sentiment was generally positive as the few illustrative quotations set out below suggest.

Illustrative quotations about enhanced scope of the programme (KIIs)

- *'I believe Erasmus+ has bigger influence than its predecessor (LLP). This stems from the fact that its budget is larger. It also includes a very broad spectrum of activities. It includes higher education, education system, and also other related systems. Stakeholders as entrepreneurs are involved. So certainly compared to the previous LLP it offers a broader matter of interest'.(KII national - HE)*
- *'If Sport was a standalone programme and not integrated under Erasmus + it would have had less funding if any. Even though under Erasmus+ it has only 2% of the programme budget, this is a large amount compared to the past. The sector furthermore benefits from the experience of the other programmes in terms of managing and procedure. Erasmus+ allows it to be showcased more and to have a more efficient management. It also alleviates a lot of administrative aspects for the units in charge' (KII EU - Sport)*
- *'The broadness has some deterrent effects. For instance some NAs in the youth field miss former small local actions (e.g. national youth initiatives' which were a stepping stone in YiA to bigger projects)'. (KII EU – Youth)*

Overall, despite room for improvement in certain areas (e.g. furthering communication on cross-sectoral cooperation or KA3 opportunities and related results), findings suggest that the integrated programme has helped promoting greater effectiveness of programme's (and wider EU's) activities education and training, youth and sport to a rather high extent. As outlined above, the merger of predecessor programmes has been accompanied and strengthened by additional approaches (i.e. changes in types of actions, enhanced scale of the programme, etc.). The gains in effectiveness cannot be hence interpreted in the sole light of the integrated programme but in this of these accompanying approaches.

Complementary information on the efficiency gains of the integrated programme can be found in section 7.

How and to what extent is the existence of one integrated Programme a help or a hindrance in promoting greater visibility for the EU's activities?

Regarding the assessment of how and to what extent the integrated programme has helped (or not) promoting greater visibility for the EUs' activities in education and training, youth and sport, the question of the branding ('Erasmus+') has been more specifically considered.

Indeed, the merger of the different predecessor programmes had initially (i.e. before Erasmus+ and within its early years of implementation) created concerns about the visibility of the different programme components, in particular by the education sectors (mostly outside higher education) as well as youth. A number of stakeholders felt that the 'brands' of Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig, etc. in particular would be sacrificed under the new programme structure and that the new name (very close to former 'Erasmus' traditionally associated with higher education) would generate confusion notably but, not exclusively, at target audiences level.

The assessment of this evaluation sub-question has been mostly informed by KIIs and social media analysis. Findings overall suggest that despite the initial fears outlined above the programme benefits from a very high level of visibility. Evidence suggests that posts about Erasmus+ on social media emanate from a wide range of individuals and organisations based in European countries and beyond. It also shows that the strong brand of Erasmus has helped communicating on and enhancing the visibility of the Erasmus+ programme.

To inform the present evaluation question, a review of the level of discussion about the programme on social media in the context of education, training, youth and sport has been undertaken via social media analysis. Note: the visibility of the programme is discussed earlier in the report (see section 4). The information set out below is hence to be read complementarily.

Amongst the key findings from section 4, this emerging from the benchmarking analysis (carried out as part of main social media analysis) that compared the volume of posts (about Erasmus+) against this of three similar EU programmes (EU Aid volunteers, EU for citizens and Horizon 2020) can be recalled. This shows that, at programme level, the branding is very well known. The volume of posts about Erasmus+ posts on social media was not only high (725,500 over the period considered for the analysis²⁶⁶) but more importantly this overtook the smaller EU programmes but also the significantly bigger programme of Horizon2020.

Complementary findings reveal that:

- Traditional media worldwide make regular reference to the programme on social media: top 10 most influential and prolific authors who have mentioned Erasmus+ on social media included (over the period covered by the analysis) seven national newspapers among which the Guardian, the Independent, the New York Times and Le Monde. The remainder comprised a press agency and policy makers
- Erasmus+ promoters-related account were amongst the most active contributors on social media
- Posts came from a wide range of individuals (e.g. students, youth, journalists, policy makers, etc.) and organisations

²⁶⁶ i.e. between 5 November 2015 and 4 November 2016.

- Sector-wise, posts dealt with the different programme's sectors. They were most commonly associated (in order) to the following sectors: youth, school education, sport and higher education – hence showing that the programme is not associated to a specific sector (higher education) but is on the contrary well known the high variety of sectors
- Erasmus+ social media discussions and posts cover a large variety of topics: ranging from various programme actions to topics about the social life on Erasmus+.
- The sentiment analysis²⁶⁷ (covering all programme's sectors) showed that most of the posts about the different topics were neutral, and positive posts outnumber the negative

Besides, evidence shows that the large variety of topics and audience interests is also reinforced by the distribution of Erasmus+ newsletter subscribers as mentioned earlier (see section 4). Though not specifically assessed as part of this evaluation, one may also fairly assume that the Erasmus+ 30 years anniversary campaign website, related events and active communication (via both social and traditional media) has contributed to furthering the visibility of the programme.

In addition to the above, insights were gained from different stakeholders (KIIs, programme agencies survey respondents, experts part of the expert panel assessment) on the branding. Some negative opinions (i.e. echoing the fears outlined above) emerged from a small number of key informant interviews (mostly in youth and adult learning) but the vast majority of respondents were positive.

Related findings include:

- 76% of programme agencies survey's respondents strongly or rather agree that single programme is more visible /better branded than the predecessor programmes.
- The review of Erasmus+ NAs reports (2014/2015) identified similar positive feelings. Several supported in substance that the streamlining of actions was possible thanks to the common brand name
- A conclusion emerging from the expert panel assessment workshop is that the branding is an element which enhances the attractiveness of outputs.

6.11 Sustainability

To what extent are the effects likely to last after the intervention ends?

What conclusions can be drawn on the likely impact of Erasmus+ programme given the fact that significant parts of their actions are a continuation of predecessor's programmes?

The findings for these two questions mostly summarise the results presented elsewhere in the report.

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 in particular in higher education sector. These changes are long term but are yet to fully materialise in other sectors.

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

²⁶⁷ The sentiment analysis is a process of computationally identifying and categorising opinions expressed in social media content, especially in order to determine whether the author's attitude towards a particular topic is positive, negative, or neutral. The sentiment analysis is one of the social media analytics of the Crimson Hexagon tool. Source: <https://www.crimsonhexagon.com/>

- 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).

Table 6.53 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Individual level – evidence of long term impacts	Various - section on effectiveness	 Positive results on individual learners but also more generational results
Staff level – evidence of long term impacts	Idem	 Soft results rather than transformation of pedagogical approaches
Organisational level – evidence of changes in organisations	Idem	 Soft results as above Need for stronger focus on sustainability for those projects with real potential
System level – evidence of changes at system level	idem	 Examples of system level changes have been identified These could be further enhanced through targeted actions for mainstreaming

6.11.1 Individual level – learners

For young people who take part in mobility actions the participation in the programme is associated with long term effects such as shorter transition to work or improved foreign language skills. These types of results have long term benefit for the individuals but don't particularly lend themselves to spill over effects.

At the same time participation in mobility actions, even in short ones, is usually a memorable positive experience that sticks with people for a long time and can deeply influence how they feel and what they believe about other countries and cultures. Being mobile in the context of education, training or a youth exchange (i.e. being exposed to a foreign culture, way of working, way of learning, during studies or volunteering) is a very strong and rather unique way to become open to 'other'.

While some of the skills that young people develop during mobility may fade away or could be developed through other means, this unique experience of 'other' is likely to stay with them, in particular if they do not repeat it later in their live.

Though not analysed in this report, there are examples of cultural goods (films, books) which show that the massification of mobility in higher education, to which predecessor programmes largely contributed, has led to a generational mindset where 'mobility' is something standard and well accepted. The mobility experiences for learners also represent a 'dream', something exciting which is related to the narrative about what the EU represents and this is a clearly sustainable positive contribution of the programme which came through by its long duration and the mass of people reached. The challenge is now to bring this effect into other sectors. Erasmus + is clearly reaching out to higher numbers of learners in VET and EVS scale is also growing.

6.11.2 Staff and organisations

In addition to the same observations as made for learners, the programme has the following soft long term effects for staff:

- Appreciation that things can be done differently than in one's own country and the curiosity to look for alternative approaches; and
- The culture of cooperation in national and international context.

The programme however does not appear to result in deep changes of pedagogical practices and organisational approaches. It can contribute to these but a lot of other context specific factors influence whether such deep changes take place or not, for example organisational leadership, organisational culture or national policy.

In this context the fact that Erasmus + insists on existence of organisational strategies before staff mobility is organised is a positive feature. It is however too early to assess whether it is bearing its fruits.

It seems that there is a gap in the sustainability of KA2 and KA3 types of projects. These projects are expected to have more long lasting effects than staff mobility but in many cases there is little evidence that taking part in these projects has a different effect than KA1.

KA2 projects – in particular strategic partnerships – manage to reach out to audiences that would not have been reached by KA1. They therefore result in broadening the audience in terms of both learners and staff. However the main benefits from these actions appear to be from participation in the process rather than from the outputs themselves.

However, as discussed earlier, the simplification of the types of actions as part of cooperation actions may have gone a step too far. There appear to be two types of projects within this category which are currently put into the same basket and considered in the same manner in the application process but also for monitoring and devaluation:

- Projects which are more about mutual learning and soft exchanges without a high level ambition; and
- Projects which have the ambition and the potential to develop high quality outputs that have the potential for longer lasting change.

More could be done to improve the sustainability and mainstreaming of the latter under KA2 and KA3 by capacity building of projects (incubators) and by for example offering a specific grant and support to those that demonstrate potential for mainstreaming.

6.11.3 System level

At system level, where individual projects succeed in influencing policy/ system, the change is long lasting. However the programme can also have longer term effects by reaching to a critical mass of organisations and staff and thus changing system from within. This is happening in some sectors more than others.

As said above the sustainability of KA2 and KA3 is a weak-spot of the programme and could be enhanced by incubators, follow-up funding for those with greater potential. This could be aligned with national priorities and needs and organised at national level so as to maximise chances of improvement.

6.11.4 Continuity of types of actions

The types of actions funded have not changed radically over the two programming periods, however the beneficiaries differ. In particular the impact on individual learner level is different each time as new cohorts of learners are supported. Mobility actions affect organisations through the continued exposure to exchanges. In fact for learner mobility actions to have effect on organisations there is a need for continued participation in the programme over time. For example one of the organisational effects is the greater focus on learning outcomes however this comes over time with longer term experience with mobility.

For the cooperation actions, an important part of the effect on staff and organisations involved comes from the cooperation process itself rather than the output produced (see also above). The fact that the same types of actions are continued as in predecessor programme does not have any detrimental effect. In fact it is likely that to achieve stronger changes at organisational level, it is necessary that an organisation takes part in several projects. One project alone is likely to lead to soft results only. The benefits of multiple participation would be greater if the staff involved were different each time around. There is little evidence on the extent to which this is happening.

6.11.5 National reports confirm the above findings

The findings of national reports confirm the analysis summarised above. National reports frequently emphasise the contribution of the programme to:

- Key competence development
- Language teaching and learning;
- Internationalisation of education and training

Much fewer mentions were identified of contributions to:

- Policy development in the youth field;
- International dimension.

Only very few reports mention concrete examples that fit under the heading of European area of lifelong learning. The reports also do not highlight strongly innovation and improvement in quality of education and training.

The above hierarchy can suggest probably reflects a combination of:

- Areas where the effect of the programme is clearest; and
- Areas that the countries value the most.

Given that countries received guidance to provide rather succinct reports, they had to prioritise topics referred about. Given the breadth of Erasmus + it is highly likely that they could not cover all effects but only focused on those deemed as most important.

7 Efficiency

7.1 Summary

The efficiency of Erasmus+ was assessed by analysing:

- the extent to which the budget distribution is appropriate;
- the cost effectiveness of the main types of actions;
- the efficiency of implementation and management structures;
- efficiency gains through changes in the consolidation of programmes;
- efficiency of monitoring arrangements and measures to identify and prevent fraud and irregularities.

Cost effectiveness

The analysis of cost effectiveness applies a different approach to the different main types of actions. A more complete analysis was carried out for learner and staff mobility actions and less analysis was feasible for the cooperation projects due to the diversity of activities actually funded, the difficulty of attributing costs to specific activities, and the multi-layer and soft nature of effects observed.

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 higher education international sector. The average cost is €1,500 per learner. When looking at the costs per day of mobility these vary between €10 in higher education sector (programme countries) and €60 in VET. On average the 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 staff mobility actions is also positive though the judgement is more nuanced. The average cost per mobile member of staff is between €700 and €900. The costs are lowest in higher education (programme countries) and highest in international higher education. The costs per day of a mobile member of staff are around €200 (ranging between €100 in youth and close to or more than €300 in adult education, schools and international higher education). The costs per mobility of a member of staff are higher than for learners. The effects on staff are less strong even though a number of clear effects have been identified. However, the effects on staff also create positive effects on organisations, learners and other staff. Therefore, though somewhat less favourable, the overall ratio of costs versus effects is nevertheless considered positive. There is also a rather clear EU added value of these types of actions and like for learners the comparison with comparators is favourable for Erasmus+.

This view is also supported by the results of the OPC as most respondents consider these types of actions as cost effective.

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. Furthermore, cooperation projects are of very different types and sizes. The activities embedded in these projects vary greatly across sectors but also within sectors. The budgets of projects are also very different. Nevertheless the average project size, under Erasmus+, is around €180,000 (depending on the year chosen, it varies from €160,000 to €200,000). The average size of a project varies per sector. The average youth project is around €100,000 while an average project in the higher education sector and VET is around €250,000. The effects achieved can be looked at from several angles.

- Effects on the staff participating: cooperation projects have similar effects on staff as staff mobility actions in terms of their own learning and professional development.
- Effects on organisations: these have been identified but they tend to be 'soft' and correspond to small adaptations rather than major transformations. The area where the effects on organisations is clearest is internationalisation and partnerships.
- The quality and usefulness of output: the outputs are considered useful for those who produce them directly but a large share of the large volume of project outputs is not particularly innovative and is of average quality without major potential for transfer. There are innovative and excellent projects funded but overall for a mass of projects funded the main benefits are in the process of cooperation rather than in the quality of outputs as such.

On the other hand, the cooperation projects enable to reach out to audiences that would not have taken part in learner or staff mobility actions.

The EU added value, in particular when it comes to the effects achieved and the extent to which these could be achieved through other means, is less clear than for the two other types of actions. On the one hand, for some of the effects achieved (e.g. pedagogical innovation, new materials being developed) alternative national measures could be possible, but the internationalisation effect is specific to this kind of international cooperation.

Subsequently, the cost effectiveness of these types of actions is more difficult to assess and it is less clearly positive. A more nuanced analysis at a smaller level of granularity would be needed to provide clearer statements.

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 are cooperation projects followed by staff 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 associate low success rates with 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. Only minor comments were raised about the coordination and communication within the programme management structures.

The costs of management are also reasonable in particular when compared to other, much smaller, comparator actions.

The two less positive points mentioned in relation to the questions above are as follows.

- The management tools are complex and several respondents noted that they don't use them because of lack of available skills.
- Coordination and cooperation between NAs and EACEA.

The main inefficiencies identified by the evaluation are linked to the application process.

- The one size fits all approach to project application forms under KA2 means that small projects have to supply the same type and volume of information as much larger ones. The applications forms are considered rather burdensome by beneficiaries interviewed and their review identifies a high number of cells to complete with sometimes comparable elements. This view is confirmed by the reports of National Authorities.
- The lack of proportionality in the efforts needed for application in particular for KA2 and the fact that success rates are low and projects selected and ultimately funded are in most cases not excellent projects, but rather projects that provide excellent applications. The majority of projects receive lower-quality scores on completion than at the application stage.
- Reporting: the reporting is used primarily for accountability. Very little use is made of the information supplied for programme monitoring and continuous improvement. The extent to which this is proportionate could also be questioned.

Efficiency gains

The ambition of a 40 % economy of scale²⁶⁸ due to consolidation of programmes into one has not yet been achieved. The management costs of national agencies compared to the programme value are overall stable. However, the comparison between the two programming periods is not a simple one:

- International programmes were managed centrally in the previous period while comparable actions are now managed in a decentralised manner, which results in higher management costs of NAs.
- Some items covered by NAs' core budget used to be separate grants in the previous period.
- Data on the evolution of management costs which EACEA allocates specifically to programmes covered under this assignment is not readily available.

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

²⁶⁸ Erasmus+ Impact Assessment, Commission Staff Working Paper, SEC(2011) 1402 of 23.11.2011.

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 clarity and relevance of some monitoring indicators as well as the quality of the data related to some indicators;
- the proportionality of efforts to collect data and the related burden on beneficiaries with the use of the data;
- the proportionality of monitoring arrangements according to type of action (disproportionately more information is collected for KA1 compared to others);
- user-friendliness of systems and their outputs;
- the promotion of a truly performance-based approach to programme management at the level of programme agencies. 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.

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.

Jean Monnet

The separate analysis of Jean Monnet actions did not have a separate focus on efficiency as the approach to disbursement of Jean Monnet funds is the same as for the rest of KA2 and KA3 grants within the programme.

Student Loan Guarantee

The 'revolving' character of financial instruments means that if default rates are below expected ceilings and the EU guarantee is not drawn upon, the funds can be reused for the instrument or flow back to the general budget. This automatically positively impacts the overall cost efficiency of the intervention. The fact that the guarantee scheme implies a leverage effect of 6.2 minimum is particularly cost efficient compared with the alternative of directly administering the loans.

7.2 Distribution of the budget

To what extent is/was the size of the 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?

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 staff 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. Several types of actions have low success rates and high application scores, meaning that more learners could be recruited into the programme if funding is sufficient.

Table 7.1 Key indicator

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement	Indicators
Views of key informants on the size and distribution of budgets	Key informant interviews		Several key informants commented spontaneously on insufficient levels of funding for certain types of actions or sectors. In particular key informants in the adult education sector frequently highlighted the low level of resources
Views of NAs on size and distribution of budgets	Survey of NAs, desk research		The size of budgets is considered too small, in particular in the case of projects applying for KA2
Views of stakeholders and general public	OPC, key informant interviews		In particular KA2 is considered as underfunded
Comparison between scores of successful applicants and success rates	Programme data analysis		The average scores for successful applicants are rather high, which is a barrier for entry of newcomers, in particular in those sectors which also have very low success rates

7.2.1 Overall distribution of the budget

The legal basis for Erasmus+ defines the following allocations for each of the sectors within the programme.

Table 7.2 Budget distribution across sectors according to the legal basis

	As part of total budget	As part of education and training
Education and training overall	77.5 %	
School education	Minimum 11.6 %	Minimum 15 %
VET	Minimum 17 %	Minimum 22 %
Higher education	Minimum 33.3 %	Minimum 43 %
Adult education	Minimum 3.9 %	Minimum 5 %
Jean Monnet	1.9 %	
Youth	10 %	
Sport	1.8 %	
Student Loan Guarantee	3.5 %	
International higher education	No threshold in the legal basis	
Other (national agencies and administrative expenditure)	5.3 % (3.4 % + 1.9 %)	

Source: Regulation 1288/2013 establishing Erasmus+

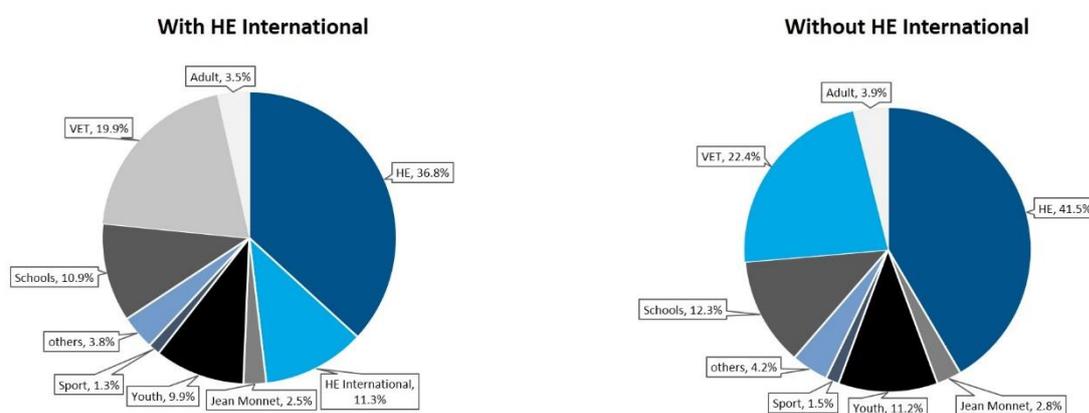
The distribution over the period 2014–2016 is shown in the figure below, showing the distribution with and without international higher education (which is funded through

transfer from separate budget lines). As shown below, when looking at the data one observes the following.

- Sport actually receives slightly less than the overall legal basis allocation so far. This is due to the fact that the strand’s implementation is progressive and in the first year of the programme only a small number of projects were funded.
- Adult education, schools and youth receive the equivalent (or a little less for adult education) of the minimum allocation (when looking at the data that included international HE). When looking at the data without higher education international, schools and youth sectors receive a little more than the minimum earmarked allocation and adult education is exactly on the minimum target.
- VET receives a little more than the minimal allocation.
- Higher education and Jean Monnet receive more than the minimum earmarked share of the budget.

The allocation of funds to international higher education in the period covered represents 11.3 % of the budget.

Figure 7.1 Distribution of E+ budget across sectors (2014–2016)



Source: ICF calculations based on EPlusLink

The legal basis also defines that:

- at least 63 % of the budget should be allocated to mobility (learners and staff);
- at least 28 % should be allocated to cooperation, innovation and exchange of good practice (KA2); and
- 4.2 % to support to policy reform.

Erasmus+ has been allocated a 40 % increase in budget compared to the previous programming period. This increase is however progressive and spread across the years. In the first year of the programme, the budget allocated was approximately²⁶⁹ 10 % above that of the last year of the predecessor programmes.

²⁶⁹ The value of predecessor programmes for years 2011–2013 is approximate because for LLP, YiA and Erasmus Mundus the budget figures are taken from annual work programmes and are thus accurate. For other international programmes in higher education the data is extrapolated from the data presented in the evaluation of DEVCO instruments in higher education.

Table 7.3 Total budget – yearly evolution 2011–2016

	Total budget						Annual increase
	LLP	YiA	Erasmus Mundus	Other HEI programmes*	sub-total all predecessors	Erasmus +	
2,016						2,229,266,699	7%
2,015						2,074,017,831	2%
2,014						2,033,366,330	10%
2,013	1,395,926,941	211,000,000	111,423,622	128,801,407	1,847,151,970		7%
2,012	1,362,137,516	170,000,000	107,308,604	86,855,371	1,726,301,491		15%
2,011	1,193,068,189	150,567,720	97,090,052	64,534,783	1,505,260,744		

* Extrapolation as follows: Inception report (see footnote) for evaluation of DEVCO instruments contains a yearly breakdown of DEVCO investment in higher education per financial instrument. It does not contain a yearly breakdown per programme covered in this evaluation. However, it shows that for the overall period covered, 34.5 % of the amounts allocated are for programmes other than Erasmus Mundus. The values shown in this table correspond to 34.5 % of the yearly values for all financial instruments combined.

Source: Work programmes for LLP, YiA, Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus+; Evaluation of DEVCO programmes – Inception report²⁷⁰

7.2.2 Views of stakeholders on the budget distribution

The following sources were used to collect views on the distribution of the budget across sectors and types of actions:

- annual reports of national agencies (complemented with views from open-ended questions in the survey of programme agencies);
- key informant interviews;
- survey of programme agencies;
- Open Public Consultation;
- reports of National Authorities.

The opinions expressed in the OPC about the level of funding for the programme overall are very divided, with roughly half of the respondents considering the funding as sufficient and the other half as insufficient. However, when looking at the more detailed trends there are some clear messages about areas that are perceived as being underfunded. Several sources (as shown in table below) indicate that:

- the adult education sector in particular is underfunded, but this concern was also identified for the school and sport sectors;
- KA2 is also consistently mentioned as receiving too little funding; and
- insufficient resources for inclusion of disadvantaged groups were also noted in several sources.

²⁷⁰ Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys (2016), *Evaluation of the EU Development Cooperation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries 2007–2014 – Inception report*.

Table 7.4 Main conclusions concerning budget distribution identified

Finding	National agencies' annual reports	NA survey	EP study	National Authorities' reports	OPC	Key informant interviews
KA2 is seen as receiving too little funding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
KA3 receiving too little funding				✓		✓
Adult education sector is frequently cited as being underfunded	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School sector is frequently cited as being underfunded		✓	✓			✓
Sport sector receiving too little funding				✓		✓
The funding for activities targeting disadvantaged groups is insufficient		✓			✓	✓

Source: Summary of various sources

Views of the general public and organisations (OPC)

Approximately half of the respondents who expressed an opinion strongly agreed or agreed that the budget of the Erasmus+ programme is sufficient to achieve the objectives set for the programme.

A majority of respondents (71 %) agree or strongly agree that the budget distribution between the three types of actions is proportionate. A considerable number of respondents who did not agree that the budget distribution between the three Key Actions of the programme is appropriate suggested that this could be improved by allocating more funding to Key Action 2 (cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices).

Papers submitted in the context of the OPC also commented on issues around budget size and distribution:

- Some actions were considered as being underfunded (e.g. Strategic Partnership Actions and KA3)²⁷¹ creating imbalances (i.e. too much funding is spent on innovation and not enough on sustaining and upscaling successful projects)²⁷².
- Some of the activities targeted at socially disadvantaged people required greater resources in terms of preparation, management and follow-up and do not receive adequate funding²⁷³.

²⁷¹ One national ministry; one national agency for EU HE cooperation; one EU-level organisation representing 39 European organisations active in the field of education and training.

²⁷² One EU-level organisation representing more than 150 million parents.

²⁷³ One national-level organisation representing eight youth organisations.

- The budget available per region is not always consistent with the demand for cooperation with partner countries²⁷⁴.

The OPC also contained questions specific to the different sectors. With regard to the distribution of funds, in most sectors the respondents were split in half among those who believed the funds were sufficient and those who disagreed. A notable exception is the sector of adult education, where 61 % of respondents saw the funding as insufficient.

Views of programme agencies (reports, survey and European Parliament study)

To assess the feedback on the first two years of Erasmus+ implementation, a total of 47 national authority reports were reviewed. The second most common problem (after IT tools) reported by National Authorities and national agencies relates to the insufficiency of budget in relation to various activities under E+. KA2 especially stands out as not being sufficiently funded in relation to the number of applications and project costs. In view of this imbalance between budget allocated to the KAs and the actual number of applications, two NAs suggested that a greater flexibility in budget transfers should be installed. In relation to the volume of grants per beneficiary, and taking into account the burden of using the IT tools, one NA noted that grants may not be high enough to outweigh the administrative burden.

The insufficiency of budget was also mentioned in 67 of the 2007–2013 NA reports. Insufficient budget for individual subprogrammes was mainly reported as having a negative effect on the success rates of applications and thereby on the motivation of applicants. The programme where financing was the most problematic in the previous programme period is Grundtvig.

The survey of programme agencies did not contain a question specifically about this issue but answers to open-ended questions referred to the following imbalances:

- underfunding in the adult education sector ;
- underfunding in the school sector;
- insufficient funding for actions specifically targeted at inclusion of disadvantaged groups (simpler smaller-scale projects, more funding for organisational expenditure for those working with these target groups in the context of mobility);
- insufficient scale of funding for KA2.

In addition, the European Parliament study found²⁷⁵ the views of the national agencies on the adequacy of Erasmus+ programme funding to be almost equally split. The adequacy of funding was considered to vary significantly by sector. The survey found that 11 of the 21 NAs responding find the programme adequately funded (52.4 %) and 10 NAs (47.6 %) viewed it as underfunded. None of the NAs found that the budget for the programme was too high.

The picture is also diverse with regard to sectors. VET is the one sector that only a minority of NAs viewed as underfunded (43.5 %). 81.8 % of NAs view adult education as underfunded, followed by youth (70 %) and SE (62.5 %). They view the situation as less critical in higher education, which only 52 % of NAs see as underfunded (and 16 % as even overfunded).

As for the levels of funding per Key Action (KA, see Section 4 of this interim report for further analysis of this issue), NA views diverged as follows.

²⁷⁴ One national-level organisation representing 12 organisations active in the field of education, research and innovation.

²⁷⁵ Directorate-General for Internal Policies Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies Culture and Education (2016), Research For CULT Committee – Erasmus+: Decentralised Implementation – First Experience.

- KA2 is particularly seen as severely underfunded (only 22.9 % of the NAs declare it is 'adequately funded' and 77.1 % of all NAs described it as underfunded). The NAs responding to the study argued that this causes very high selectivity of project applications, which could turn out to be counterproductive in the medium term if no action is taken to remedy the situation (see Section 4 of this interim report for further analysis of this issue).
- KA1 is judged as underfunded by nearly half of NAs (48.6 %).

While perceptions of this situation vary across the different types of NAs in different countries, the interviews undertaken in the European Parliament study confirmed the assessment that KA2 is the action with the biggest mismatch between demand and supply. NAs reported that they could often fund fewer than 10 % of applications, resulting in the rejection of very many high-quality proposals. They fear that this will frustrate applicants, that it 'risks making the whole action meaningless' and that 'the impact will be very limited'. At the same time, a fair number of NAs voice the hope that the budget will increase by 2017 and that this could also ease the situation in KA2, as well as in those sectors found to be underfunded.

Key informant interviews and reports of National Authorities

Country reports in particular underlined:

- low success rates in KA2 while the applications have high scores, reflecting lack of funding;
- underfunding in the youth field and adult education;
- insufficient human resources in national agencies in view of managing the increasing funds as the last years of the programme are expected to see a sharp increase in funding;
- more flexibility is needed to reallocate budgets between budget lines when there is insufficient demand on one side and unmet demand on the other.

For KA3 it was reported that in some countries the budget has not been fully used and applicants may need support to increase the quality of applications.

In the sports sector, an increase in budget would benefit from accompanying measures to support organisations' capacity to apply for grants and carry out projects.

The key informant interviews also commented on the distribution of budget. The following main messages were identified:

- While school education is the biggest sector in terms of population, the funding is rather low. In particular funding for inclusion of disadvantaged learners in this sector is insufficient.

In the youth sector the following two points were raised:

- lack of flexibility between KA1, KA2 and KA3. There could be possibility to more flexibly allocate funds between these three types of actions;
- lack of centralised funding making it difficult for EU-level umbrella organisations to benefit from the programme;
- small budget in the sport sector;
- compared to other sectors a high number of respondents complained about the very limited resources.

In higher education and more generally people also noted lack of funding for KA3.

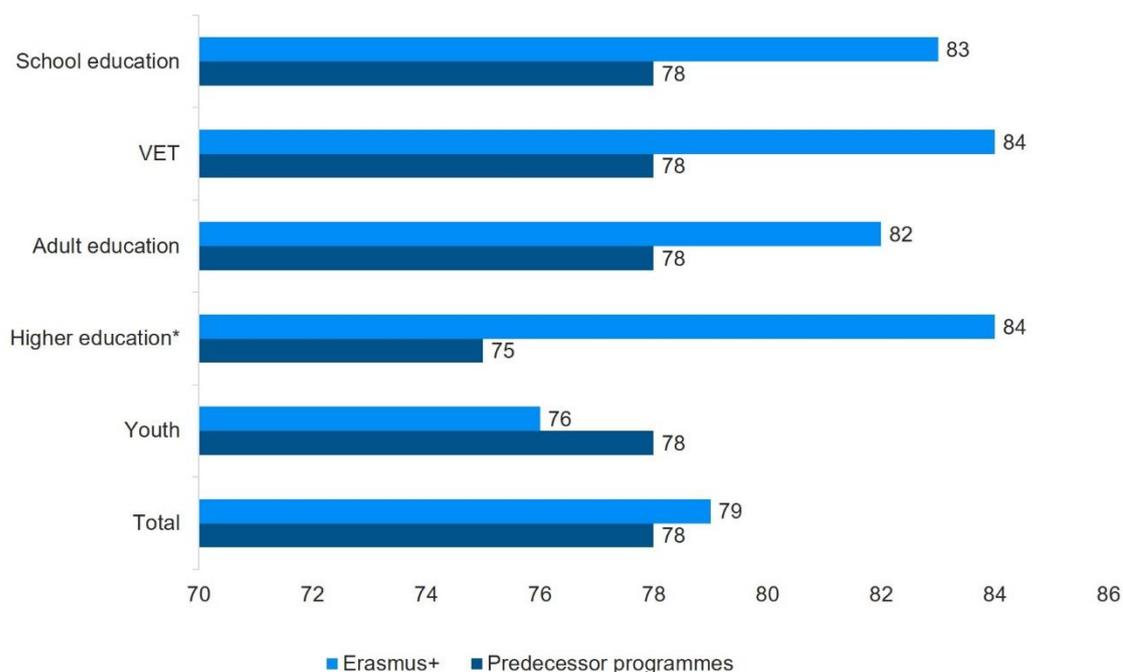
7.2.3 Analysis of success scores

Another way to assess the distribution of funds is to look at the success rates and the quality scores of projects at selection. The below analysis shows that the quality of applications as judged by the scores has increased compared to predecessor

programmes. It also shows, as one would expect, that the sectors and types of actions with lowest success rates have the highest average scores of successful applications. This is in particular the case in some sectors for KA2 (schools, adult education and higher education). Finally, however, the analysis which compares success scores at selection and completion shows that the score of an application is not a very reliable predictor of the score of a final project report, as the majority of projects have lower scores at completion than at application.

The average scores for successful participants seem to have increased substantially under Erasmus+ compared to the predecessor period. In most sectors (except youth) the average successful scores for Erasmus+ are above (or even well above) 80 %. For LLP decentralised actions the data on scores of applicants is unfortunately not available. Therefore a comparison can only be made with centralised actions (LLP, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus) and Youth in Action. For all the actions of the predecessor programmes (except Jean Monnet) where data is available, the average successful scores were below 80 %.

Figure 7.2 Application scores for contracted projects under Erasmus+ (2014–2016) and predecessor programmes

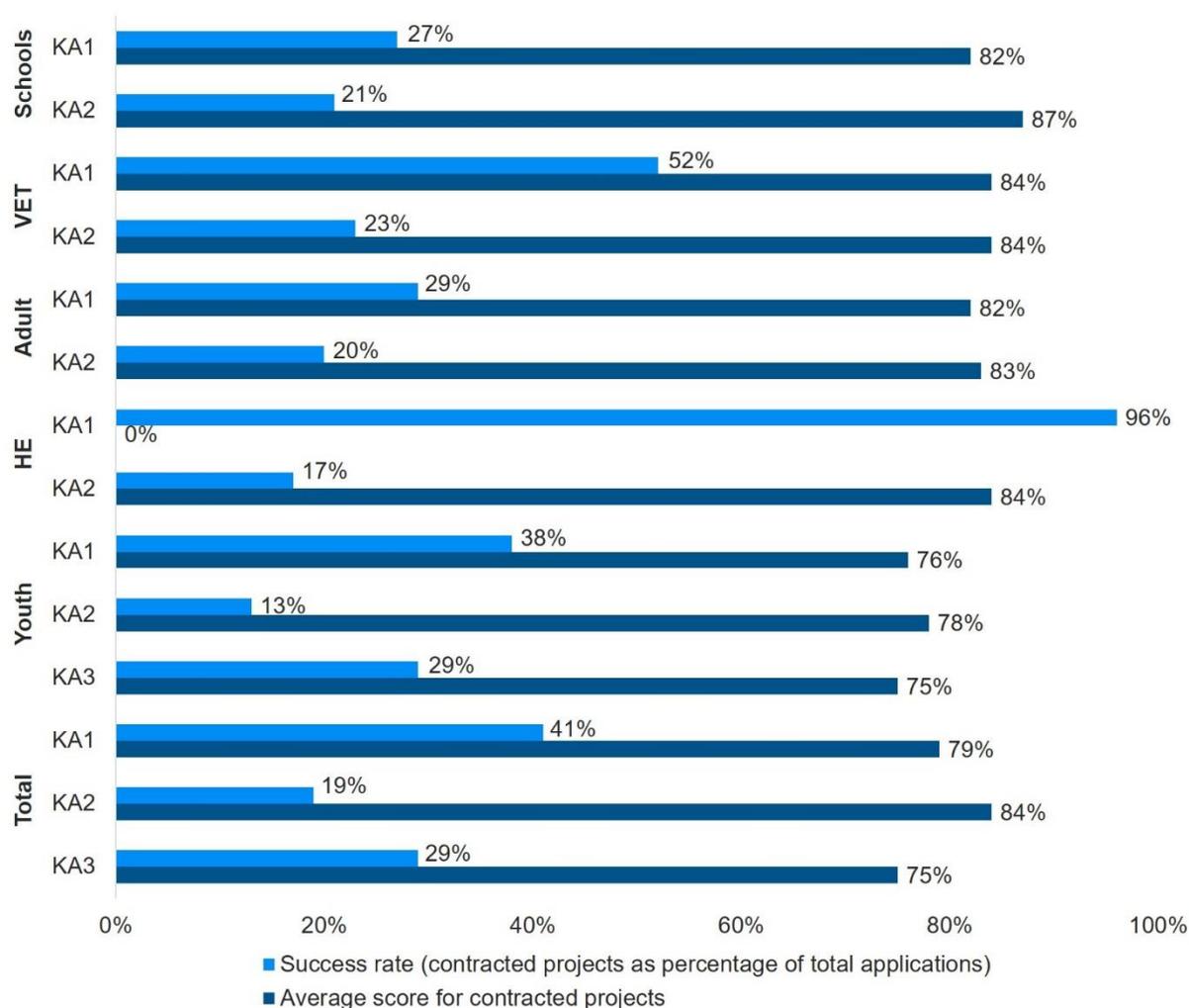


* including international

Source: ICF calculations based on the EPlusLink, Pegasus and Youth in Action databases

Given the very low success rates in some actions and the high average quality scores of successful application (see Figure 7.3), it is likely that the share of rejected projects with still rather high-quality scores was substantial.

Figure 7.3 Application scores by type of action for Erasmus+ (2014–2016)



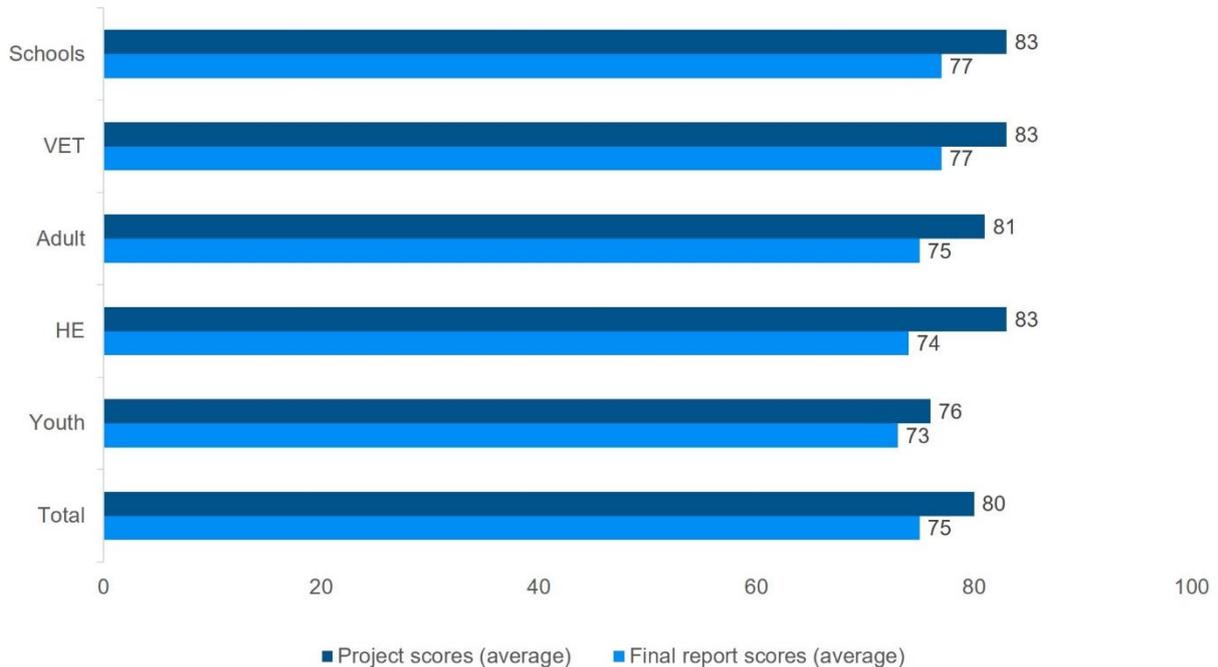
Source: ICF calculations based on the EPlusLink database and EPlusLink BO Reports EP013, EP014 and EP018 (accessed 21.07.2017)

For Erasmus+ actions it is also possible to make comparisons between the quality scores of successful applications and the quality scores of completed projects. As one would expect, the analysis of programme data suggests that there is weak to moderate positive correlation between the two sets of scores²⁷⁶. It is generally the case that the projects which receive a high score for at the application stage also receive high scores when the project is closed. However, the scores regress in most cases, as discussed below.

Figure 7.4 shows the average scores of both assessments across the different sectors (for contracted projects only). The data shows that average quality scores of completed projects are consistently lower than the scores for applications. The average project scored 75 % on completion compared to 80 % on application. This gap is closest in the youth sector and widest in the higher education sector.

²⁷⁶ The correlation was tested for all of the 22,954 projects, for which data was available for both the quality scores of successful applications and the quality scores of completed projects. The correlation coefficient was 0.38, suggesting a weak to moderate positive relationship between the two sets of scores.

Figure 7.4 Application scores for contracted projects under Erasmus+ (2014–2016)

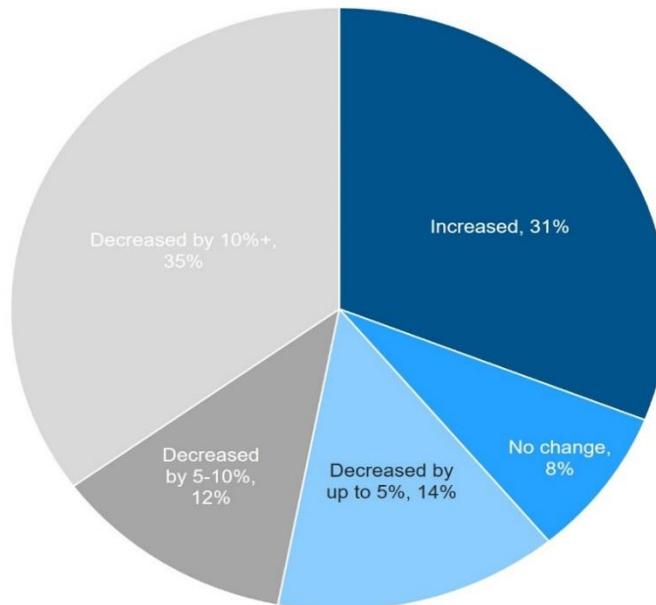


Source: ICF calculations based on the EPlusLink database

The above figure shows that the average project scored 5 percentage points lower on completion than it scored for its initial application. The scale of the changes between these scores is explored in Figure 7.5 below. It shows that of the projects that had already received a final project score:

- 31 % had achieved a final score of higher than their application score;
- 8 % had achieved exactly the same scores at the application and completion stages; and
- the remaining 61 % had achieved a lower final score (including 35 % that received a score that was over 10 % lower than their application score).

Figure 7.5 Differences between quality score of applications and completed projects



Source: ICF calculations based on the EPlusLink database

7.3 Cost effectiveness

What is the cost effectiveness of various actions (clusters of actions) of the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessor programmes? How do the relative costs and outcomes (effects) of various programme actions compare within and across the programme fields?

What is the prospect of other policy instruments or mechanisms providing a better cost-effectiveness ratio?

7.3.1 Summary

The cost effectiveness of learner mobility actions is clearly shown when comparing the low costs to the results identified. This is also applicable to the case of staff mobility though the judgement is more nuanced with some results being deemed feasible for other types of actions. The conclusion that mobility actions are highly cost effective is also supported by the results of the OPC.

The cost effectiveness of cooperation projects is very difficult to assess. While the analysis identified elements that suggest a positive cost-effectiveness ratio (widened participation, multiple layers of effects), it also identified elements that raise concerns about efficiency of certain aspects of programme implementation (application process and quality of project outputs). Overall, because of the diversity of what is funded under these projects, the multiplicity of results and their intangible nature in some cases, it is very difficult to compare the costs with the results of these actions.

Table 7.5 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement	
Cost effectiveness of learner mobility actions	Various – CEA analysis		The comparison between costs per mobile learner and the effects of mobility on the learners suggest a clearly positive relationship
Cost effectiveness of staff mobility actions	Various – CEA analysis		The comparison is rather positive, as for learners, even though the findings are more nuanced and some room for improvement has been identified
Cost effectiveness of cooperation actions	Various – CEA		The comparison of costs per project or per organisation with the results at organisational but also staff and learner level is less clear than for mobility actions. A more detailed analysis per type of activity would be needed to draw a clear conclusion
Review of other policy instruments	Delphi and expert judgement (logical analysis)		For learner mobility, other instruments than international mobility are highly unlikely to deliver comparable results For staff mobility other instruments are rather unlikely to deliver comparable results For cooperation actions the possibility that other actions would have similar results, such as national cooperation actions, exists However, it would most likely only deliver some of the results and not the full package

7.3.2 Methodological note

A cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) examines the relationship between the costs (inputs) and effects (results, outcomes and impacts) of an intervention. More specifically, a CEA addresses the following questions:

- How much did a particular intervention cost?
- What did that use of resources actually deliver in terms of outputs and achieve in terms of effects?
- Whether the same outputs and effects could have been achieved at lower costs ('cost minimisation') or whether the highest level of outputs and effects were achieved for a given level of resources ('yield maximisation')?
- Whether the changes or effects generated by a particular intervention are reasonable in relation to its costs (i.e. is cost effective)?
- Which of the several related interventions is the most cost effective?

A CEA is a technique for determining whether resources are being spent wisely and if the efficiency of an intervention could be improved. The depth and utility of a CEA, however, depends on several factors such as the nature of the intervention concerned, the nature of effects generated, the possibility to identify and measure the costs associated with specific effects, data availability.

Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes support a wide range of actions across several fields/subfields. The diversity and specific characteristics of actions supported under Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes means that a 'one size fits all' approach to CEA was not appropriate for this evaluation. Instead, there was a need to apply different approaches to different types of actions.

7.3.2.1 Limitations of carrying out a CEA for the programmes covered

A classical CEA based on unit costs (i.e. cost per result or outcome) was not be feasible for several reasons discussed below.

- All actions generate a multiplicity of effects and it is not possible to identify a single main effect of the actions listed above.

The 2013 DG EAC study on cost effectiveness of DG EAC actions suggests that the effects of mobility/capacity-building actions could be captured via a 'core intermediary effect' in the form of improvements in the capabilities of individuals or organisations. The study calculates the all-round impact of mobility actions by averaging the changes reported by beneficiaries across a range of specific capability outcomes (skills development, enhanced employability, personal development, more active citizenship, intercultural capabilities, European outlook and mobility). Each capability is assigned an equal weight as a simplifying assumption. Changes in specific capability outcomes as a result of the mobility action are self-assessed by beneficiaries using a five-point Likert scale (1- Not important at all/not relevant; 2 - Not very important; 3 - Moderately important; 4 - Very important; 5 - Crucial). This approach has two major drawbacks. Firstly, the approach calculates the average of Likert scale ratings to obtain a single measure of all-round impact on capabilities. As the Likert scale used in the study produces ordinal or rank data, it is technically wrong to compute averages and as such, the results are invalid. Moreover, all capabilities have been assigned equal weights in the calculation of the average, which is a debatable assumption.

- Measuring the costs of specific effects.

It is not possible to identify and isolate the costs of the specific effects generated by an action. For example, in the case of mobility actions, the costs of specific effects such as skills development or enhanced employability cannot be identified or measured. It is all the more complicated to identify the costs and effects of the more complex interventions, such as large cooperation projects. The level of expenditure on specific activities or outputs within each project may not be immediately apparent from the monitoring data (even though the value of grant funding is known). This is because these projects typically support multiple and diverse activities from the same overall budget. Though with the unit cost system applied to Erasmus+ grants (but not predecessor programmes) it would have been possible to assess costs per activity, it is not possible to identify with sufficient reliability outputs per activity and even less so effects.

It is not possible to disentangle the effects that result from specific elements of the project such as training courses or dissemination activities.

- Aggregating effects across a subprogramme.

The effects of certain actions such as mobility actions can be aggregated at a 'portfolio' level. For example, based on survey data, one can say that 'x' per cent (or 'x' number) of the HE students reported an improvement in their linguistic skills following participation in mobility actions (see effectiveness section). However, the effects of cooperation projects cannot be aggregated. These projects generate a diversity of effects that are often of a 'soft' or intangible nature and therefore neither measurable nor comparable across projects.

- Availability of comparator data.

Finally, the availability of comparator data influences how far the evaluation team could take the analysis. A classical CEA involves an element of internal benchmarking (comparing the costs and effects of similar actions within a programme) and external benchmarking (i.e. benchmarking against other comparable programmes). Internal benchmarking was carried out to a certain extent by comparing the different sectors. However, given the diversity of target groups and hence the diversity of what can be expected in terms of effects, only a rather soft benchmarking was feasible.

This is even more the case when looking at the external benchmarking as the data on costs per output is very patchy for comparator programmes. Given the much smaller scale of all the comparator programmes reviewed the comparison with overall costs

versus effects is not meaningful but none of the comparators provides a good-quality analysis of cost effectiveness.

Another key conceptual issue considered in designing the approach to the CEA was deciding which of the following costs should be included in the analysis:

- EU grant funding to beneficiaries;
- co-financing by beneficiaries;
- programme management and administration costs i.e. the time and resources expended by the Commission and Member States in programme management and administration;
- administrative costs incurred by all applicants in applying for EU funding and by successful applicants in fulfilling the reporting requirements of EU funding.

The 2013 study on cost effectiveness argues that the costs borne by applicants and beneficiaries (i.e. co-financing of the activities, as well as the time and resources expended in applying for funds and reporting activities) should not be included in an evaluation of efficiency. The arguments offered are as follows.

- The 'costs' are willingly incurred by applicants and are relatively insignificant in terms of scale.
- In case of co-financing, the providers of such funding are not obliged to do so and in many cases this does not entail an additional cost for them as they would have spent these resources on the same/ similar activities in any case.

The approach used in this assignment also excludes those costs but the main argument for doing so is that quantification/monetisation of the time spent by applicants/beneficiaries in applying for funding/reporting etc. would typically be very imprecise and controversial as it involves making assumptions about the opportunity cost of their time (especially when considering that the time given up by beneficiaries – students, youth, etc. – might be leisure time). Given the uncertainties involved in these calculations, a qualitative analysis of administrative burden (based on beneficiary and stakeholder feedback) was used to identify areas where efficiency could be improved.

Efficiency of management structures is assessed separately in the next section.

Consequently the analysis of cost effectiveness only takes into account the EU funding of beneficiaries.

7.3.2.2 Approach used

At a practical level, the evaluation used an approach whereby the depth and breadth of analysis undertaken for each type of actions was proportionate to the budget allocated to these actions. Given that the majority of funding went into mobility actions and also into the education and training sector (rather than youth or sport), the CEA for these types of actions is more advanced. For other types of actions and sectors only partial considerations were made.

Table 7.6 Approach to CEA

Type of action	Conceptual considerations		Proposed approach to CEA
	Identifying and measuring costs and effects	Undertaking internal/external benchmarking	
Mobility actions – learner	EU-level costs are relatively straightforward to calculate (EU grant funding)	Internal benchmarking was undertaken between mobility actions across different sectors	Fully-fledged CEA incorporating internal/external benchmarking

Type of action	Conceptual considerations		Proposed approach to CEA
	Identifying and measuring costs and effects	Undertaking internal/external benchmarking	
Mobility actions – practitioner	<p>A priori strong and direct causal links between EU funding and effects</p> <p>Costs and effects can be aggregated across actions at sector/subsector level</p> <p>Account for vast majority of the programme spend</p>	<p>Comparator programmes exist</p>	<p>Granularity – analysis at level of sectors</p>
Cooperation projects	<p>Precise costs and effects are difficult to identify and measure as these interventions support multiple and diverse activities</p> <p>While overall project costs can be established, the costs and effects of individual activities (within a project) are difficult to identify and isolate</p> <p>Given the diversity of projects/activities, it is not possible to aggregate data on effects across projects within the same sector</p> <p>Represent a significant minority of the budget allocation</p>	<p>Internal benchmarking is not plausible given the very strong differences between sectors which mean that the expected effects are different from one sector to another</p> <p>Possibilities for external benchmarking are very limited due to lack of comparable data on comparator programmes</p>	<p>Very partial CEA – high-level judgements on costs compared to effects</p> <p>Qualitative assessment</p>
System actions – level	<p>Very broad variety of inputs (types of activities) which are not comparable and hence cannot be aggregated in a meaningful manner</p> <p>Very broad range of soft and intangible outcomes that were measured in qualitative manner only</p> <p>Moreover, causal links between EU funding and effects are weak as there are many other contributing factors or barriers to changes at system level</p> <p>Represent a tiny share of overall budget</p>	<p>Given the tenuous links between funding and effects, meaningful comparisons cannot be drawn even if internal or external comparators could be found</p>	<p>Qualitative assessment – describe and provide an opinion on efficiency-related aspects</p>
Student Guarantee – Loan	<p>Not covered below. A separate chapter on the Student Loan Guarantee considers the efficiency (including in broad terms the cost efficiency).</p> <p>The instrument is still in too early stages of implementation to assess full cost effectiveness based on results and impacts</p>		

The generic steps involved in the first approach are listed below (the second approach entails some of these steps, while the third approach merely involves reasoned judgements on efficiency-related aspects).

1. Identification of key effect or set of effects (both tangible and intangible) – with reference to the intervention logic of the programme.

These are part of the effectiveness assessment as presented in Section 6.

2. Identification of inputs – EU funding only for the reasons explained above.

Overall aggregated EU grant funding allocated to mobility actions broken down by sector as well as costs per outputs.

Comparison with external comparators and across sectors (internal comparators).

3. Evidence of achievement against the key effect or set of effects and gather evidence of EU added value.

Given the types of effects as discussed in the effectiveness section the monetisation of effects was not considered feasible. The counterfactual assessment presented in the section on effectiveness was used to quantify the effects and the net effect (what would have happened in the absence of the programme) of the programme; however, given the sample sizes this was only possible at the level of the overall programme, not per sector. This evidence is complemented by qualitative insights about the applicability of given findings to each sector.

The assessment of EU added value is further complemented in a qualitative manner by judgements derived from a Delphi survey of experts.

4. Identification of any evident inefficiencies and potential to improve the efficiency.

Based on analysis of programme management (see Section 7.3)

5. Determine whether the volume of expenditure appears reasonable and cost effective in light of the effects and EU added value delivered by the programme.

Combination of Delphi survey and evaluators' judgement. The Delphi survey gathered views on hypothetical alternatives combining: the likelihood of existence of plausible alternatives leading to similar results, experts' judgement on hypothetical effects of absence of EU funding, likelihood of other alternatives producing similar results.

6. Benchmarking with comparator programmes.

7. Overall judgement.

7.3.3 Cost effectiveness of mobility actions – learners

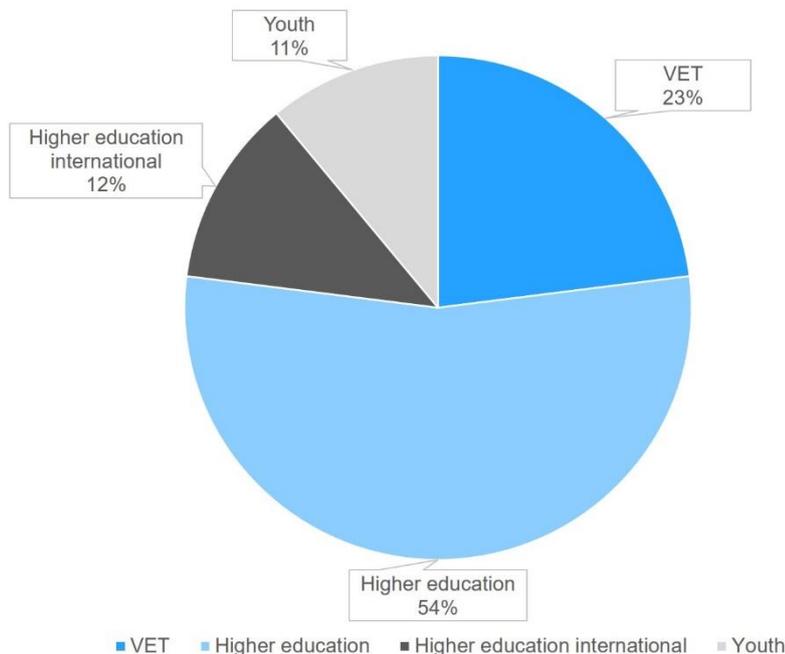
The costs of learner mobility actions (KA1 equivalent) appear reasonable considering the breadth and types of effects identified. The cost effectiveness of these actions can therefore be judged positively despite the limitations of the analysis as outlined above.

7.3.3.1 Budget share and costs per output in Erasmus+ (and predecessor programmes)

Overall, Erasmus+ allocated €2.55 billion to learner mobility in the period 2014–2016. This represents 51 % of the overall programme expenditure. Figure 7.6 shows that the majority of the funding is allocated to the sector of higher education. This is consistent with the predecessor programmes. Though predecessor programmes (namely LLP) also funded mobility of adult learners and school pupils, this represented only a minor share of the budget (less than 1 % for each category). The only notable difference between programming periods is that the share of funding for VET was slightly lower than under

Erasmus+ (20 % instead of 23 %) while the share of funding of international higher education (Erasmus Mundus and Tempus only) was slightly higher (15 % instead of 12 %).

Figure 7.6 Funding for learner mobility per sector – Erasmus+



Source: ICF calculations based on programme databases (dashboard data for Erasmus+)

Table 7.7 gives an overview of the costs per mobile learner in Erasmus+ and where possible also predecessor programmes. The average costs of mobile learner in the programme are around €1,500 per learner. The table shows that the costs are highest in the international higher education sector and lowest in the youth sector even though such simple comparison is not fully meaningful as the arrangements for mobility differ greatly between the sectors. For example:

- The average duration of mobility in the youth sector is shorter than in the other sectors.
- The grants for VET mobility frequently cover costs that are not covered in higher education – for example the costs of accompanying staff who go abroad with a group of VET learners.
- International higher education students go abroad for a much longer duration and for incoming students the grants are closer to the notion of scholarship than within programme countries, as noted below.

A key point to remember when looking at the costs per mobile learner – in particular in higher education among programme countries – is that the grant provided is not expected to cover the full costs of living. The grants are only expected to cover the difference in costs arising from the fact that a learner is living abroad. The grants are additional to the resources the students have for their studies either from parents, loans or other scholarships. The situation is different for grants in the field of international higher education where full costs are expected to be covered by the grant.

When looking at the costs per mobility day, these are particularly low in the higher education sector (programme countries).

Note on the data for 2016: for a reason that is unclear and certainly due to issues of data cleaning in the Erasmus+ dashboard, the 2016 data shows big differences when looking at cost per participant or cost by mobile learner (as explained in the effectiveness section, there are two indicators on outputs – participants and mobilities). The costs for mobility appear disproportionately higher than in earlier years, with no clear explanation; this is why costs per participant are provided in brackets, as these are aligned with earlier years.

Table 7.7 EU costs (granted amount) per contracted mobility of learners (€)

Explanation: the costs cover all EU costs for a grant. However, there are differences between sectors as to what items are covered by the grant. For example, in VET, institutions are expected to contract an insurance from the grant (in particular as learners can be underage) while this is not the case in higher education.

	2014	2015	2016 (contracted participant)	Average for predecessor programmes	Comparison with predecessor programme
VET	1,857	1,828	2,781 (1755)	2,080	+ 1 %
Higher education	1,519	1,496	1,768 (1654)	1,461	+ 9 %
International higher education		5,621 (4,861)	12,588 (4,709)	n/a	Comparison not possible*
Youth	752	931	1,284 (853)		Comparison not possible**
Total	1,441	1,575	1,588		
Discontinued actions					
Schools				1,648	
Adult learning				1,515	

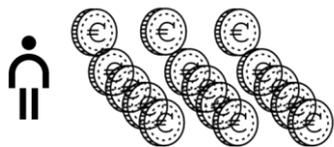
* The budget for predecessor programmes for international mobility do not enable to differentiate between funds for curriculum design and funds for mobility; ** data on Youth in Action does not differentiate between learners and staff

Source: ICF calculations based on programme databases (dashboard data for Erasmus+)

Table 7.8 Costs per mobility day – learner mobility (€)

Note: due to the abovementioned issues with 2016 figures, the averages per day should be taken with caution and are not reflected in the discussion above.

Average cost per day per mobile learner – 15€



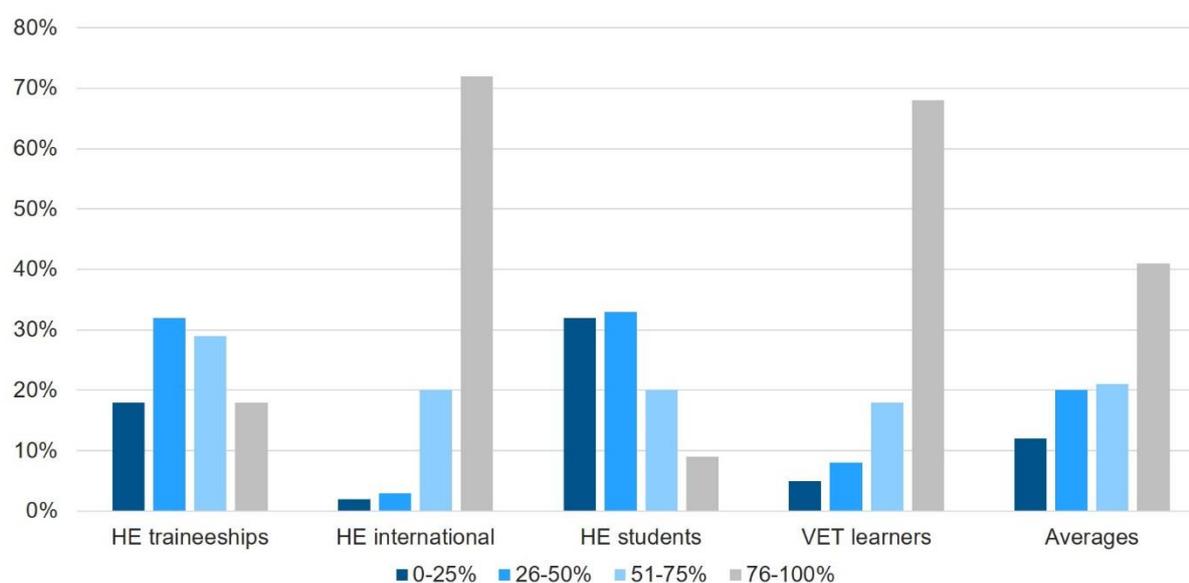
	2014	2015	2016
VET	59	60	[91]
Higher education	10	9	[11]
International higher education		37	[83]
Youth	36	41	[62]
Total	13	15	[18]
VET			
VET learners in companies abroad	65	European Voluntary Service – partner countries	30
VET learners in vocational institutes abroad	86	European Voluntary Service – programme countries	32
Higher education			
Student mobility for studies between programme countries	9	Youth Exchanges – partner countries	72
Student mobility for traineeships between programme countries	14	Youth Exchanges – programme countries	74
Student mobility for Studies to/from partner countries	52		

Source: ICF calculations based on programme databases (dashboard data for Erasmus+)

The grants (per day or per mobile learner) in the tables above may appear low and it is therefore interesting to look at the degree to which these grants cover expenses

incurred. On average for 42 % of HE and VET learners the Erasmus+ grant covered the majority (76–100 %) of expenses. However, the variations between the different learner groups are significant. The Erasmus+ grant covered the majority of expenses for HE international students and VET students (72 % and 68 % respectively), whereas this was the case for only 19 % of HE trainees (although trainees are paid/compensated so the full coverage is probably not expected or desirable) and 8 % of HE students within programme countries. As already noted though, the Erasmus+ grant for mobility among programme countries is not a scholarship and it is not expected to cover all costs of living.

Figure 7.7 Share of expenses covered by the grant – by type of learner



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys²⁷⁷

7.3.3.2 Summary of effectiveness and EU added value

The table below summarises the main results at the level of learners identified in the effectiveness section. These are not discussed in this section again.

During a Delphi online survey a group of experts were asked about:

- the likelihood that in the absence of Erasmus+ alternative approaches would have been used to finance mobility;
- the extent to which they think that alternative actions (i.e. not learner mobility) could lead to similar results as Erasmus+ at the level of learners; and
- consequences of the absence of Erasmus+ funding.

The first set of questions concerned alternative sources of funding for the same type of action. This combined questions about national funding, philanthropic funding, private funding (families or companies), etc. In general the Delphi survey shows that overall there is unlikely to be clear compensation for Erasmus+ if there was no comparable EU programme. While some alternatives are seen as likely by the experts, they would most probably not result in the same scale of mobility and definitely negatively affect the profile of participants in terms of diversity. The lack of plausible alternatives is clearer in the youth and VET sector while in the higher education sector there is a higher share of

²⁷⁷ The participants who did not receive grant (about 8.5 %) are also included into these results.

named alternatives considered as likely (in particular private funding by individuals and families, continued offer of exchanges from universities, and loans). In all three sectors it is seen as unlikely that the compensation would come from national or regional public funding. The more plausible alternatives are bottom-up institutional alternatives of providers/organisations and individual initiatives of learners and families. There is also the belief that some compensation could come from other EU funds (ESF, Marie Curie actions). In other words there would be other sources of funding for mobility in the absence of Erasmus+ but:

- there would be big differences between countries;
- there would be big differences in profiles of participating learners; and
- overall mobility would drop.

These findings point towards clear EU added value compared to alternative sources of funding for student mobility.

The other set of questions was about the extent to which comparable results could be achieved via other types of actions (i.e. not via physical mobility but via actions such as training – e.g. languages, virtual networking, etc.). Overall the results suggest that some alternatives could lead to some comparable effects but not the full package of effects. In other words, foreign language learning, for example, would lead to improved foreign language skills but not the other effects that Erasmus+ delivers. The full 'package' of effects on learners identified for Erasmus is considered unique to the action of international mobility.

This suggests that there are few alternatives that could deliver the same mix of results for learners as this programme, thus also supporting the evidence of strong EU added value.

The absence of Erasmus+ funding would in all sectors most likely result in a decline of mobility. It would have negatively affected the skills/competences/attitude towards the EU of those who lost the opportunity to take part in the programme. More generally, depending on the scale of mobility in the sector, the decline would also negatively affect the sector overall. Given that mobility concerns very high numbers of learners in higher education, this would be the sector negatively affected also at a more general level (beyond the individuals alone). In the other sectors the mass of learners reached is rather small and hence it is hard to assess the influence of decline in mobility on the overall sector.

According to the experts, the absence of Erasmus+ funding is anticipated to more negatively affect the learners than the other levels of effects (staff and organisations).

Table 7.9 Summary of main findings for effectiveness per sector

Summary of main effects measured		Experts judgement on EU added value					
		Compensation Through alternative funding (likelihood)		Other actions similar results (likelihood)		Effect of absence of E+ on learners	of the E+ on
Overall programme level	<p>Foreign language skills improvement by high share of beneficiaries</p> <p>Perceived improvement of more than six key competences by very high share of beneficiaries</p> <p>High share of recognition of learning experience</p> <p>Development of a feeling of belonging to the EU</p> <p>Stronger willingness to work or study abroad</p> <p>Shorter transition to employment and time to find a job</p> <p>Stronger positive perception of the value of education</p> <p>Range of soft personal development elements described by the learners themselves such as independence, confidence and overall maturity</p> <p>Overall: high level of satisfaction with mobility experience</p>						
VET	<p>Medium and strong effects mirroring the overall programme level findings identified also in VET</p> <p>Most notable effects are: foreign language development, shorter transition to employment, attitude and feeling of belonging to the EU and positive attitude towards education</p>	Unlikely to highly unlikely		Rather likely but not the full 'package'		Negative or very negative	
Higher education (including	Strong effects aligned with the programme-level effects. As higher education represents the largest share of learner mobility the programme-level effects are strongly related to	Likely to unlikely		Idem		Idem	

international)	the trends in higher education						
Youth	<p>Somewhat fewer effects were identified in the youth sector</p> <p>Most notable effects identified are perceived importance of civic and social engagement</p> <p>Foreign language development is strongest in the youth sector</p> <p>Very strong feedback on self-perceived improvement of competences</p>	Unlikely to highly unlikely		Idem		Idem	

7.3.3.3 Potential inefficiencies

In the field of student mobility the application process differs between higher education programme countries and VET organisations holding the mobility charter. These organisations receive grants for mobility automatically. The automatic eligibility of organisations that qualify against key criteria for funding is particularly efficient.

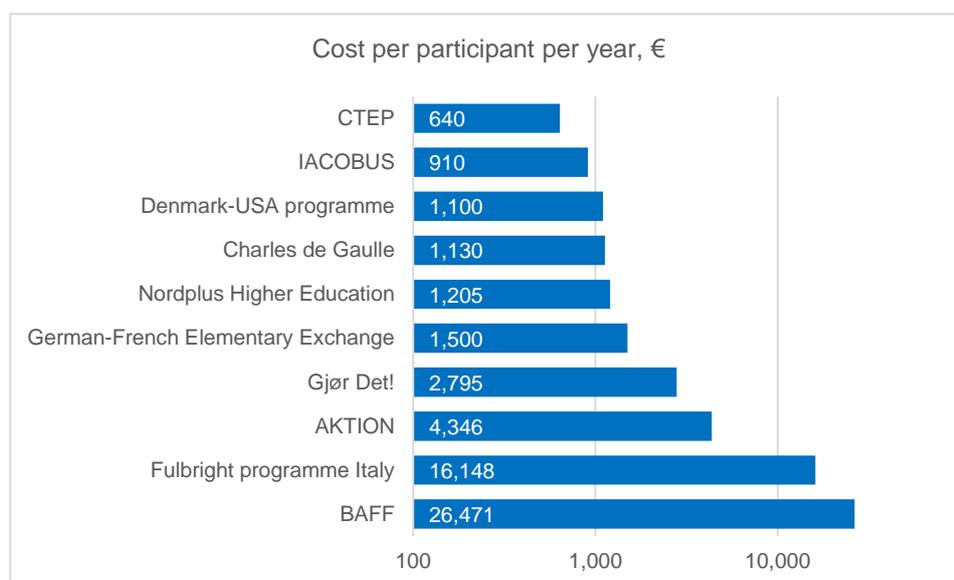
The other types of actions require project applications. The success rates vary between 30 % and 70 %. However, overall the success rates tend to be above 50 % (except youth exchanges), which is proportionate to the type of action and the scale of funding.

7.3.3.4 Comparator programmes

The benchmarking with comparator programmes (see Annex 13) shows that it is difficult to make a clear-cut comparison with Erasmus+ in most cases. Each of the programmes funds slightly different types of actions and covers different costs. An attempt to make a broad comparison of the costs per participant (this covers learners and staff) for programmes where data was at least partly comparable is shown in the figure below.

While the data does not allow a neat comparison with Erasmus+, it suggests that Erasmus+ is clearly not out of proportion compared to other programmes.

Figure 7.8 Costs per participant per year in the comparator schemes



Source: Technopolis based on programme benchmarking (various sources). For explanation see Annex 13

7.3.3.5 Overall judgement on cost effectiveness

Overall, the actions aimed at mobility of learners are clearly cost effective.

- The actions lead to clear results for the learners.
- There is clear evidence of EU added value (see also Section 8).
- No particular inefficiencies in the way in which the funds are disbursed have been identified and the coverage of grants (in terms of what is funded) does not allow any space for inefficiencies.
- The costs per output are in the same order of magnitude or lower than comparator programmes though any comparison has to be made very carefully.
- Overall the costs per output (mobile learner) remain reasonable when looking at internal benchmarking of other actions (see below).

7.3.4 Cost effectiveness of mobility actions – staff

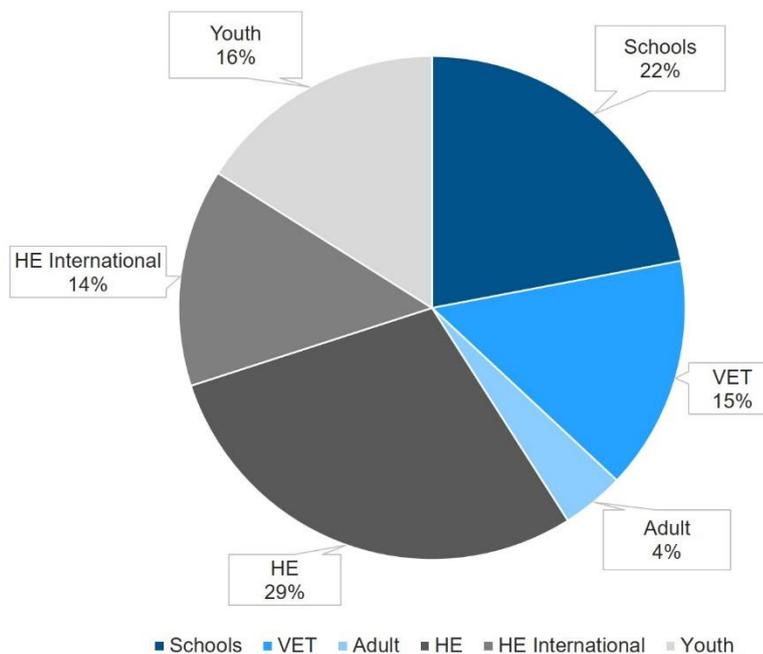
The cost effectiveness of mobility actions for staff is rather positive even though the picture is less clear than for learners. This is linked to the fact that the costs of staff mobility are higher than for learners while the effects are (i) less tangible, (ii) less strong and (iii) there are other alternative actions that could result in comparable effects without going through international mobility.

7.3.4.1 Budget share and costs per output in Erasmus+ (and predecessor programmes)

By 2016, Erasmus allocated nearly €500 million to mobility of staff. This represents 10 % of the overall programme expenditure. It is already substantially more than the funding allocated for comparable actions in the overall programme period for the predecessor programmes (€370 million).

Though higher education is still the main sector benefiting from this type of action, the budget distribution is more balanced (see Figure 7.9). The distribution of funding was very different for predecessor programmes as mobility of school staff represented 52 % of all staff mobility, and 28 % of staff mobility was in VET.

Figure 7.9 Funding for staff mobility per sector – Erasmus+



Source: ICF calculations based on programme databases (dashboard data for Erasmus+)

Table 7.10 gives an overview of the costs per mobile staff in Erasmus+ and where possible also predecessor programmes. The average cost of mobile staff is around €1,700. The costs are highest in the international higher education sector and lowest in the youth sector but as with learner mobility this is due mainly to differences in the coverage of types of actions and duration rather than any efficiency gains.

When looking at the costs per mobility day, these range between €130 in the youth sector and €320 in international higher education. The average cost is around €220 per day for mobile staff. There are notable differences within sectors. For example, going on structured training abroad is one third more expensive per day than going to deliver teaching abroad.

As for learners, for a reason that is unclear and certainly due to issues of data cleaning in the Erasmus+ dashboard, the 2016 data shows big differences when looking at cost per participant or cost by mobile staff (as explained in effectiveness section, there are two indicators on outputs – participants and mobilities). The costs for mobility appear disproportionately higher than in earlier years, with no clear explanation; this is why costs per participant are provided in brackets, as these are aligned with earlier years.

Table 7.10 EU costs (granted amount) per contracted mobility of staff (€)

Explanation: the costs cover all EU costs for a grant. However, there are differences between sectors as to what items are covered by the grant and what types and durations of actions are funded.

	2014	2015	2016 (contracted participant)	Average for predecessor programmes	Comparison with predecessor programme
Schools	1,819	1,780	2,663 (1,632)	2,160	- 6 %
VET	1,342	1,341	2,000 (1,168)	1,461	+ 2 %
Adult education	1,373	1,514	2,461 (1,428)	1,403	+ 19 %
Higher education	806	818	1,046 (844)	725**	+ 22 %
International higher education		2,134	5,480 (1,981)		Comparison not possible*
Youth	668	763	967 (732)		Comparison not possible**
Total	1,409	1,689	2,394		

* The budget for predecessor programmes for international mobility does not enable to differentiate between funds for curriculum design and funds for mobility; ** data on Youth in Action does not differentiate between learners and staff, *** data not extracted from database but from Erasmus facts and figures publication

Source: ICF calculations based on programme databases (dashboard data for Erasmus+)

Table 7.11 Costs per mobility day – staff mobility (€)

	2014	2015	2016
Schools	268	275	[409]
VET	176	226	[339]
Adult education	233	283	[442]
HE	187	197	[256]
International HE		324	[857]
Youth	113	132	[163]
Total	179	213	318

	2014	2015	2016
Schools		VET	
Job shadowing	311	Staff training abroad	223
Staff training abroad	271	Training/teaching assignments abroad	218
Structured courses/training events	335	Adult education	
Training/teaching assignments abroad	227	Job shadowing	299
Higher education		Staff training abroad	237
Staff mobility for teaching between programme countries	216	Structured courses/training events	359
Staff mobility for training between programme countries	204	Training/teaching assignments abroad	246
Staff mobility for teaching to/from partner countries	538		
Staff mobility for training to/from partner countries	467		
Youth			
Mobility of youth workers – partner countries	127	Mobility of youth workers – programme countries	138

The data in brackets is to be treated with caution as per caveat explained in the text

Source: ICF calculations based on programme databases (dashboard data for Erasmus+)

7.3.4.2 Summary of effectiveness and EU added value

The table below summarises the main results at the level of staff identified in the effectiveness section. These are not discussed in this section again.

Like for students, the Delphi online survey asked a group of experts about:

- the likelihood that in the absence of Erasmus+ alternative approaches would have been used to finance mobility of staff; and
- the extent to which they think that alternative actions (i.e. not staff mobility) could lead to similar results as Erasmus+ at the level of staff.

The trend is similar to that observed regarding mobility of learners. Overall the majority of alternatives appear unlikely. The only alternatives that are somewhat likely are based on the initiative of some institutions or staff. The positive alternatives are somewhat more likely to compensate for the absence of Erasmus+ in higher education and least likely in the school and adult education sector.

Like for learners, the absence of Erasmus+ is seen as likely to result in:

- decrease in staff mobility;
- unequal access across countries; and
- unequal access across organisations.

Overall the absence of Erasmus+ is anticipated to have negative consequences on staff. However, in several areas a higher share of experts consider that the absence of Erasmus+ funding would make little or no difference. The degree to which experts considered that the consequences of the absence of E+ funding would be negative or very negative is less than for learners.

Compared to learners, the experts see more likelihood that alternative actions to mobility would result in comparable effects. Given the types of measured effects on staff, experts consider that national exchanges or national training could in some regards result in comparable effects on teachers and staff.

Overall the results of the Delphi suggest that there is EU added value for staff mobility though some plausible alternatives could lead to comparable results even in the absence of international staff mobility. The latter would be very negatively affected in the absence of Erasmus+.

Table 7.12 Summary of main findings for effectiveness per sector and expert judgement on EU added value

Summary of main effects measured		Experts judgement on EU added value					
		Compensation Through alternative funding (likelihood)	Through alternative funding (likelihood)	Other actions similar results (likelihood)	Effect of the absence of E+ on staff	of the absence of E+ on staff	of the absence of E+ on staff
Overall programme level	<p>Staff in all sectors report improvements regarding a range of key competences. Very few differences between sectors are found regarding this indicator</p> <p>Strong perception that the programme contributed to personal development</p> <p>Strong effect on networking and cooperation</p> <p>Medium effect on feeling European, being involved in volunteering and community activities and use of digital resources and media</p> <p>There are very few sectoral differences (see below)</p>						
Schools	<p>In addition to the above, beneficiary staff in the school sector are most likely to be using practices supporting integration of disadvantaged groups</p> <p>They are also most likely to use a variety of digital resources</p>	Unlikely to highly unlikely		Alternatives are likely to lead to certain types of effects		Rather negative	
VET	Comparable to programme level	Unlikely		Idem		Negative but also a significant share of 'No difference' opinions	
Adult education	Comparable to programme level	Unlikely to highly unlikely		Idem		Rather negative	

Summary of main effects measured		Experts judgement on EU added value					
		Compensation Through alternative funding (likelihood)	Other actions similar results (likelihood)	Effect of the absence of E+ on staff			
Higher education (including international)	Comparable to programme level	Rather likely (not the same scale)	Yellow circle	Idem	Yellow circle	Negative but also significant share of 'No difference' opinions	Yellow circle
Youth	Very strong perception of the contribution of the programme to professional development	Unlikely to highly unlikely	Red circle	Idem	Yellow circle	Rather negative	Red circle

Source: See effectiveness section (various sources) and expert Delphi survey

7.3.4.3 Potential inefficiencies

The process through which organisations are eligible to participate in staff mobility differs for higher education (programme countries) and VET (those holding the VET mobility charter). In these cases the organisations apply for number of placements without having to go through a complex grant award procedure.

In the remaining sectors organisations have to complete a project application. There are major differences in success rates (from 22 % to 69 %). The application forms for KA1 (learner and staff mobility) are nearly the same as for cooperation actions KA2. Given the small scale of these types of actions (the average cost of a project is around €18,000), the application forms can be considered as too complex and detailed, leading to high costs of applying for grants as far as beneficiaries are concerned. This is in particular the case in those sectors/types of actions where the chances of getting the grant are below 50 % (schools, youth, adult learning).

7.3.4.4 Comparator programmes

Judgement on comparator programmes is the same as for learner mobility, as the benchmarking analysis combined both types of programmes. Broadly speaking the costs of Erasmus+ mobile staff appear in line with other programmes.

7.3.4.5 Overall judgement on cost effectiveness

Overall, the actions aimed at mobility of staff are rather cost effective. On the positive side:

- the actions lead to clear results for staff;
- there is clear evidence of EU added value (see also Section 8);
- the costs per output are in the same order of magnitude or lower than comparator programmes though any comparison has to be made very carefully.

This however needs to be nuanced by the following.

- The application procedure (outside automatic grants) requires a project application form that is of the same complexity as forms for more complex projects. This combined with the low success rates creates rather high application costs.
- Overall the costs per output (mobile staff) per day are higher than for learners. In the youth sector the costs of mobile staff are roughly three times higher than the costs of mobile learners; in VET it is four times higher, and in higher education the costs of mobile staff are twenty times higher. This is however not an ideal comparison as the costs cover different items. The subsistence costs are higher for staff than for learners. On the other hand, the effects on staff should have at least some multiplier effect (broader group or learners, other staff and organisations) and hence one could consider that though the costs for mobile staff are higher, there is a greater 'leverage' effect when investing in staff mobility.

7.3.5 Cost effectiveness of cooperation projects and system-level actions

As explained in the methodological section above, the cost effectiveness of cooperation actions is hard to judge as they entail a high number of different types of activities. Depending on the sector and on the project, cooperation actions can fund:

- mobility of learners and staff;
- curriculum development;
- design of teaching and learning materials;
- teacher training;
- non-formal learning for staff and learners;
- project activities where projects are a learning methodology;

- development of partnerships; exchange of practices on teaching and learning methods;
- etc.

Most projects combine more than one type of activity.

This is even more the case for system-level actions as not only the diversity of actions is great but the expected institutional and system-level effects could only be captured qualitatively in this assignment.

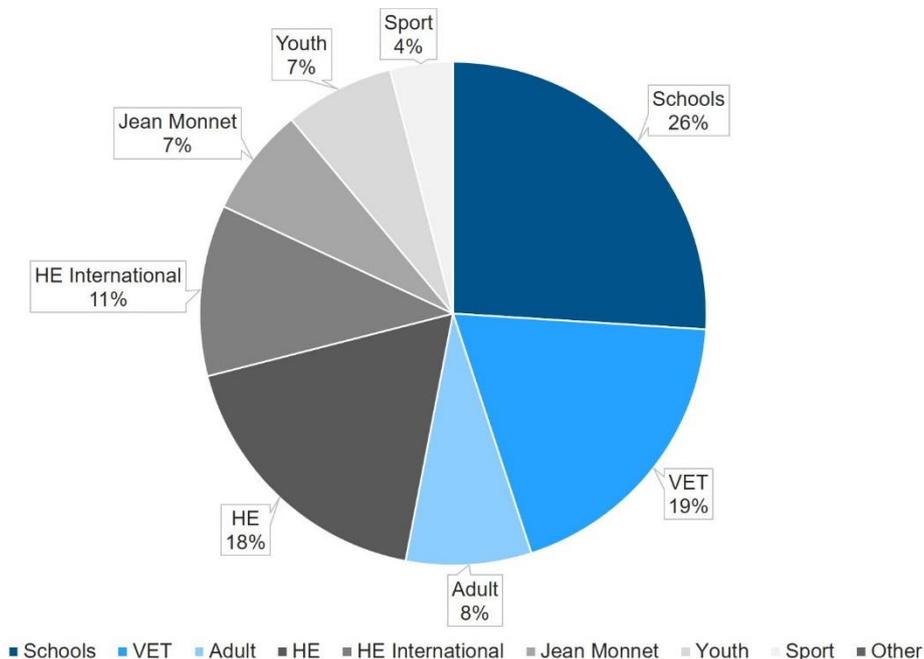
That is why this section only contains broad primarily qualitative considerations on cost effectiveness.

7.3.5.1 Budget share and costs per output

By the end of 2016, Erasmus+ had allocated €1.7 billion to cooperation projects. This represents 34 % of the total budget spent in the period. It corresponds to roughly half of the budget allocated for this type of actions in the previous programming period (all programming periods).

The budget is split across all the sectors, with higher education (including international) and school education having the greatest share. The main change compared to the previous programming period is that the share of the higher education budget increased and so did the share of sport (the Preparatory Actions in the previous programming period were only allocated a very small budget).

Figure 7.10 Distribution of the budget for cooperation actions (KA2 and equivalent)



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ dashboard

Though the use of unit costs means that the projects are de facto built using the principle of activity-based costing, the complexity of the database made that full analysis of costs per detailed activity in these types of actions was not possible.

The only calculation that was feasible was to provide the costs per project and per organisation funded. As shown below the average costs per project vary between sectors, from around €100,000 in the youth sector to over €200,000 in the VET sector.

This represents a major change compared to the previous programming period, during which in several sectors (schools, youth, adult education) the programme funded very high numbers of very small projects. In the current programming period the costs per project are more proportionate with the efforts needed for administration of each single project.

The average cost per organisation taking part in a cooperation project are between €22,000 and €43,000. They are lowest in the youth sector and highest in the higher education sector (including international).

Table 7.13 Average costs per project (€) and per organisation

	Per project			Per organisation		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Schools	189,371	158,754	132,751	35,589	28,316	24,653
VET	255,369	249,114	219,756	37,441	37,742	35,034
Adult	213,225	206,097	162,828	34,651	33,150	28,180
HE	275,081	273,120	277,834	39,589	43,557	43,840
Youth	116,541	116,184	107,883	25,309	24,534	22,321
Total	203,514	187,804	160,833	35,157	32,164	28,650

7.3.5.2 Summary of effects and added value

The main results at the level of organisations are networking and internationalisation. There are also other results related to transfer of learning from staff to new practices. However, in most cases the organisational learning effect and the transfer of what has been learnt from the project remains progressive and soft rather than transformational. The main effects at the organisational level are, in most cases, about small-scale evolutions rather than clear strong adaptations. The outputs produced by the cooperation projects have in many cases rather average quality.

At the same time the cooperation projects do not only affect the organisations but they also have effects at the level of staff and learners, who are in many cases direct beneficiaries. The effects on staff are comparable to the effects of mobility actions as the type of exposure is ultimately similar. The effects on learners who directly take part in the projects are comparable to the effects of mobility actions when mobility actions are part of the project. Otherwise the effects on learners are likely to be somewhat weaker due to the different nature of activities.

When it comes to the EU added value, this is also harder to capture for the cooperation projects than for mobility types of actions.

On the one hand, the cooperation actions enable to reach out to target groups which would not have been reached by mobility actions. In particular, not all staff are willing to go abroad on a training course, job shadowing, etc. and many organisations cannot afford to have staff absent for longer periods of time as it poses organisational problems. Many more members of staff would however be willing to do a project that only requires a couple of trips and where most of the work can be done remotely. School pupils (and adult learners, though far fewer of them participate) are not eligible under mobility actions. The effects on these targets groups are somewhat comparable to the effects of mobility.

On the other hand, the quality of the outputs is very variable. Furthermore, a lot of the activities and learning that take place through these international cooperation projects could have taken place via other forms of exchanges (nationally for example²⁷⁸). The latter is also confirmed by the Delphi survey of experts, who argue that compared to mobility actions, cooperation projects are most likely to lead to effects that can be achieved through other types of activities and also believe that the effects of the absence of this type of action would be less negative than when it comes to mobility actions.

Given the multi-layer nature of the effects of coordination projects and the fact that the effects are related to the specific type of activity, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the costs per project/organisation are reasonable.

²⁷⁸ Note that this does not apply to international capacity-building actions as those are based on the principle of transnational cooperation whereby organisations from one country benefit from expertise that is not present in the country or is rarely present in that country

Table 7.14 Summary of main findings for effectiveness per sector and expert judgement on EU added value

Summary of main effects measured at the level of organisations		Experts judgement on EU added value					
		Compensation Through alternative funding (likelihood)	Other actions similar results (likelihood)	Effect of the absence of E+ on organisations and beyond			
Schools	<p>The evaluation identified a range of organisational effects</p> <p>These effects are however not unique to cooperation projects and staff mobility may have comparable effects</p> <p>Overall the clearest area is the internationalisation of organisations</p> <p>The main organisational effects identified are professional development opportunities, new teaching materials, new assessment and evaluation methods, new cooperation approaches between staff, use of learning outcomes, new approaches to governance and quality assurance</p> <p>There are overall very few sectoral differences, hence these are not commented on here</p>	Rather unlikely but an important share of responses also considered some compensation measures as likely		Likely		Negative or very negative	
VET				Rather unlikely but an important share of responses also considered some alternatives as likely		Rather negative but important share of responses also considered the effect would be neutral on several types of results	
Adult education				Likely			
Higher education (including international)			Rather likely (not the same scale)		As VET		
Youth			Same as schools		Likely		
Sport			Idem		Likely		

Summary of main effects measured at the level of organisations		Experts judgement on EU added value					
		Compensation Through alternative funding (likelihood)	Other actions similar results (likelihood)	Effect of the absence of E+ on organisations and beyond			
Jean Monnet	Improvement in students' understanding of the EU	Idem	●	As VET			●

Source: See effectiveness section (various sources) and expert Delphi survey

7.3.5.3 Potential inefficiencies

There are several potential inefficiencies identified for this type of action.

- Inefficiencies linked to the selection process: The application process and the application form is the same for cooperation projects that receive €70,000 as well as for those that receive 500,000€ and more. The application form requires quite a lot of descriptions. There are some 20 open text fields that require descriptions of project activities. Onto this are added several open text fields that describe each participating organisation. The success rates vary but for several sectors they are low (below 25 %). Consequently, the resources put into submitting unsuccessful proposals are considerable. This needs to be put into perspective given the following.
- The programme is not an excellence programme in many regards (such as for example Horizon 2020). It aims to be an inclusive programme.
- The majority of experts assessing applications consider that the share of applications of good quality is average or low, and so is the share of innovative projects focusing on new issues. This means that many applicants are writing complex application forms to describe intended actions which are ultimately not particularly innovative or of very high quality.
- Based on the expert panel assessment of selected outputs it appears that the projects ultimately funded are in most cases of average quality (see section on effectiveness), which means that the process of application needs to differentiate between several 'average' applications, and it is likely that relatively often some choices are somewhat arbitrary.
 - It seems, based on the review of the forms and feedback of applicants, that there is a certain degree of overspecification in the application process.
- Inefficiencies linked to the fact that the programme guide puts focus on products and the expectation that these would be disseminated, while most of the benefits and learning do not stem from the products as such but rather from the cooperation process itself. Most of the effects on staff are linked to their engagement with peers from other countries and exposure to how things are done differently in other organisations. The products as such are not the key source of learning for most of the beneficiaries but they are the aspect that is scrutinised for accountability reasons.

7.3.5.4 Comparator programmes

It is not possible to compare the costs per output of these types of actions with the comparators analysed as the nature of the outputs is very different.

7.3.5.5 Overall judgement on cost effectiveness of cooperation actions

A more detailed analysis of the costs per activity and of different types of projects would be needed to make a definitive judgement on the cost effectiveness of these actions. The above analysis showed that there are some arguments which support a positive judgement:

- effects at multiple levels (organisations, staff, learners);
- broader outreach compared to other types of actions.

On the other hand, there are also findings which suggest that the cost effectiveness is not as clear-cut as for mobility types of actions:

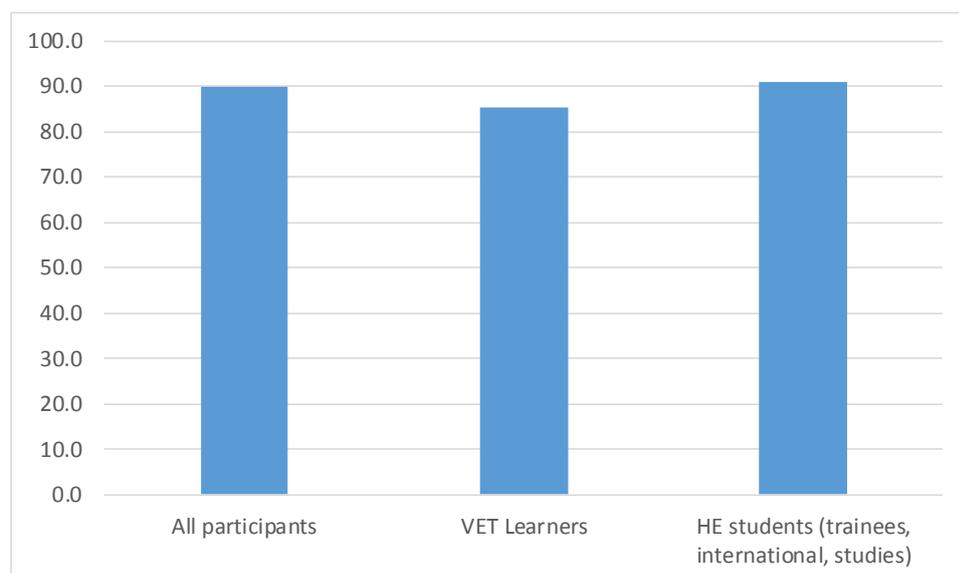
- the costs per organisation are non-negligible;
- the types of effects are not unique to international cooperation actions;
- the effects are of a rather soft nature and derive from the process of cooperation rather than from the outputs produced;
- the application process incurs costs on organisations that are not negligible.

7.3.6 Cost effectiveness: Complementarity with other funding

Another important aspect of the cost effectiveness is the complementarity of Erasmus+ with other funding sources. Findings to date based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys show that the complementarity is considerable.

As shown in Figure 7.11, on average, the absolute majority (90 %) of VET and HE learners received the Erasmus+ grant from EU funds. This was slightly less the case only for VET learners (85.5 %), and even slightly higher for HE students (91 %). Conversely, this means that between 9 % and 15 % of learners who take part in the programme do not receive a grant from the programme (i.e. they are so-called zero grant beneficiaries), which suggests a possible added value of the programme and a spill-over effect.

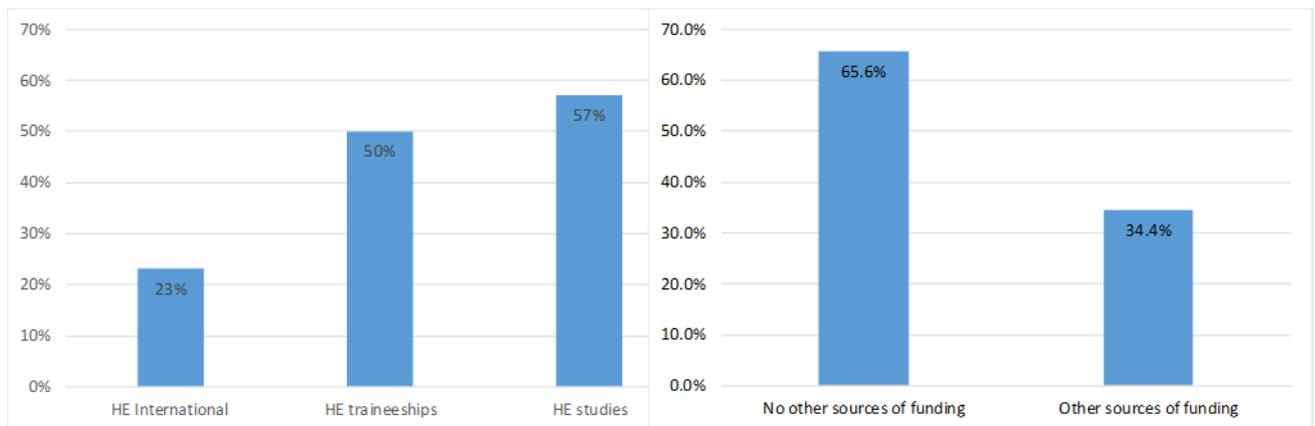
Figure 7.11 Share of all learners who received E+ grant from EU funds



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys. VET learner data is for 2014, 2015, HE traineeship for 2014, 2015, HE Study for 2014, 2015 and HE (international) for 2015

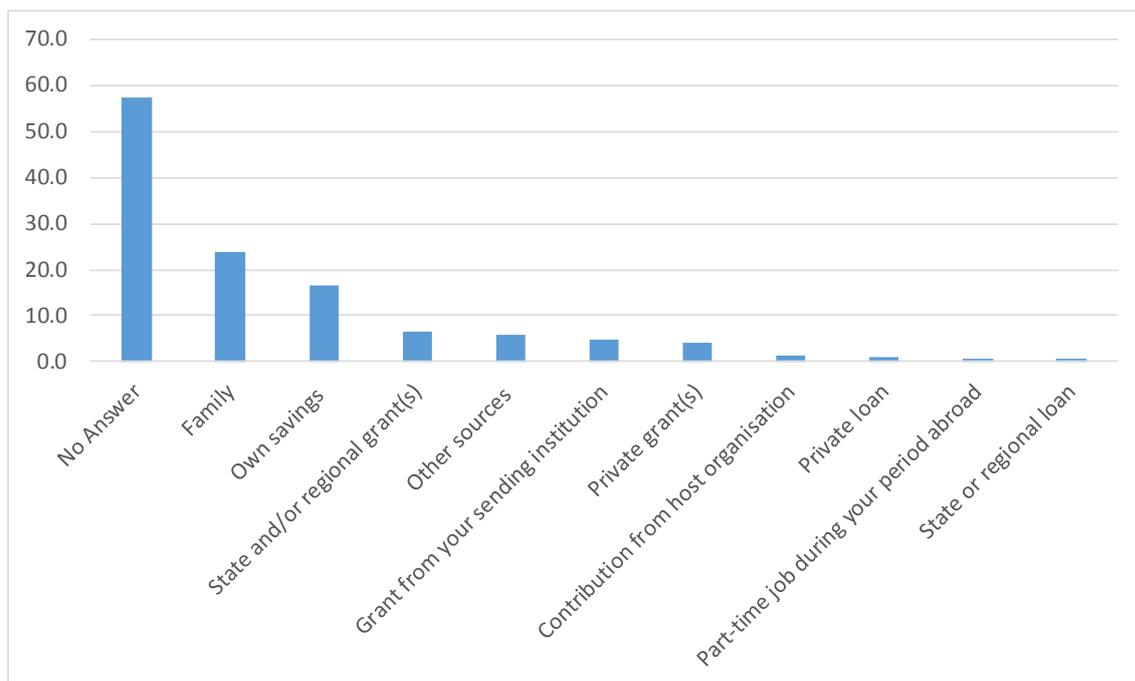
Indeed, more than a third of VET students received other sources of funding than Erasmus+ (see Figure 7.12). Where participants provided information on the nature of these other funding sources, private and immediate family support was dominant. This is expected since Erasmus+ does not provide a scholarship in the way some other funding schemes do. Instead it provides a grant which should compensate for the additional expenses arising from the fact of studying/staying abroad. Other public funding sources are obtained by a significant numbers of Erasmus+ participants (around 20,000 VET students and 150,000 HE students). Erasmus+ is therefore successful in leveraging complementary funding from national or regional budgets.

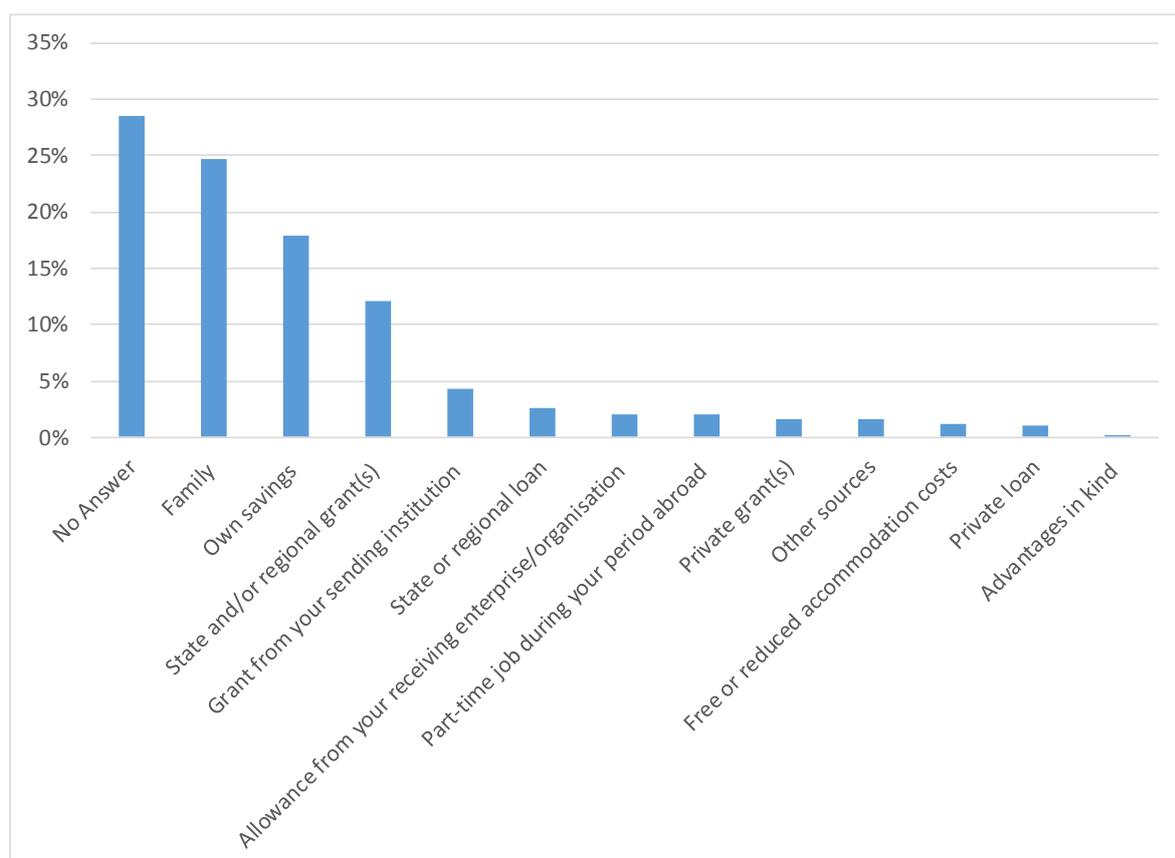
Figure 7.12 Share of VET students who received other sources of funding than E+ - , higher education (left) and VET students (right)



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

Figure 7.13 Breakdown of other sources of funding than E+ (VET – top; higher education – bottom)





Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

The different role of public funding sources other than Erasmus+ for VET and HE students is also seen in Table 7.15, where the proportion (around 10 %) of VET students with other public funding sources was significantly lower than the nearly 20 % of HE students with public funding sources other than Erasmus+.

Table 7.15 Numbers of HE and VET students using other public sources of funding than E+

Use of other public sources:	VET students		HE students	
	Number	%	Number	%
Grant from your sending institution	8,683	4.0 %	32,702	4 %
State and/or regional grant(s)	11,606	5.4 %	93,195	12 %
State or regional loan	866	0.4 %	19,664	3 %
Total students with other funding sources	214,797	100 %	769,032	100 %

As explained above, the majority of VET and HE mobile students live off money provided by families or their own savings and this is in fact the main source of subsistence in most cases. This raises the question as to whether they would not have been mobile even in the absence of E+ funding. Two in five HE learners (39.5 %) would have not gone abroad without receiving the Erasmus+ grant (see Table 7.16). However, one in five HE learners would have probably gone abroad without receiving the Erasmus+ grant, with the remaining one third being unclear about their prospect of going abroad without access to EU funding. This suggests that there is some level of deadweight in the higher education

mobility funding but this remains a minority of beneficiaries. Unfortunately comparable data is not available for VET.

Table 7.16 Relationship between access to the E+ grant and students' likelihood of going abroad

Would you have gone on the Erasmus+ stay abroad if you had not received an Erasmus+ grant?				
	Yes	Maybe	No	No answer
HE students	21.2 %	33.7 %	36.6 %	8.5 %
HE trainees	21.5 %	36.3 %	42.3 %	0.0 %
Both groups	21.3 %	35.0 %	39.5 %	4.3 %

Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys

7.4 Implementation and management structures

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 periods? 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 management support tools (e.g. EPlusLink, Mobility Tool) adequate and sufficient to support sound management of the programme?

7.4.1 Summary

Erasmus+ is implemented through a trialled and tested management structure combining the Commission, EACEA and national agencies. Overall the management of the programme has not changed dramatically compared to the predecessor period and compared to LLP and YiA. The main change is the integration of international actions, which brings into the programme new stakeholders from within the Commission.

Overall the management structures appear to be clear and well accepted. Only minor comments were raised about the coordination and communication within the programme management structures.

The costs of management are also reasonable in particular when compared to other, much smaller, comparator actions.

The two less positive points mentioned in relation to the questions above are:

- that the management tools are complex, with several respondents noting that they don't use them because of lack of available skills;
- coordination and cooperation between NAs and EACEA.

Table 7.17 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Erasmus+ management costs are comparable or lower than other programmes	Benchmarking and analysis of programme data	 Where data is available the costs of programme management for comparator programmes are higher than for Erasmus+
Agencies see the balance between centralised and decentralised actions as appropriate	Agencies survey	 Two thirds see it as appropriate but one fifth disagree While there is overall agreement about the rationale for both types of actions, some details could be improved
View on the coordination between the different actors	Agencies survey	 The coordination with EACEA appears minimal. This could be problematic considering the Commission manages projects that are expected to have system-level effects at national level
Share of agencies that positively assess the coordination of the Commission	Agencies survey	 There is rather clear agreement and satisfaction with the guiding role of the Commission. This is considered to have improved over time
Views of agencies about the usefulness of management tools	Agencies survey and review of agencies' reports	 The views on the management tools are mixed. While respondents welcome their existence they complain about accuracy and user-friendliness
Views of beneficiaries about the usefulness of support provided by the agencies	Survey of socioeconomic actors	 Vast majority of respondents were very positive about the support received

7.4.2 Differences in management costs

7.4.2.1 The administration and management costs of Erasmus+

The official Erasmus+ monitoring information shows that overall the management and administrative expenditure constituted around 6 % of the overall programme expenditure in 2014 and 2015 (see Table 7.18). This has remained stable across the first two years of programme operation.

Furthermore, management costs vary significantly between the costs of managing direct actions and indirect actions. While in absolute numbers the national agencies have been allocated the highest management costs for managing indirect actions of the programme, in relative terms their management costs constitute the smallest proportion of the overall expenditure (4–5 % in 2014–2015). In contrast, while the administrative expenditure incurred by the European Commission for managing direct actions is lowest in absolute numbers (though this does not reflect staff costs), it is highest compared to the overall expenditure on direct actions of the European Commission (17–19 %). The administrative expenditure incurred by EACEA in managing direct actions lies in the middle, at a stable 10 % of the overall expenditure on direct actions.

Table 7.18 Overview of administrative expenditure and management costs of the Erasmus+ programme, 2014 and 2015 (EU commitments, in €)

Cost heading	2014			2015		
	Direct		Indirect	Direct		Indirect
	European Commission	EACEA	National agencies	European Commission	EACEA	National agencies
Management fees of national agencies			64,565,236			68,739,632
Administrative expenditure	11,555,564 (this does not include Commission staff costs and is hence not fully comparable)	25,332,870		12,961,784	25,767,300	
Sub-total	11,555,564	25,332,870	64,565,236	12,961,784	25,767,300	68,739,632
Total programme expenditure (except the international cooperation heading 4)	66,393,099 Note: this includes budgets managed by the EC – for example activities to fund OMCs in E&T or youth or other KA3	260,506,438	1,461,114,586	67,617,646	267,449,042	1,473,162,908
% in the total programme heading expenditure	17 %	10 %	4 %	19 %	10 %	5 %
Total management and administrative costs by EC, EACEA and NAs	101,453,670			107,468,716		
Total programme expenditure managed by EC, EACEA and NAs	1,788,014,123			1,808,229,596		
% of management costs in the total expenditure (full revenue)	6 %			6 %		

Source: Annual Erasmus+ reports 2014, 2015, Annexes 2.1²⁷⁹

The differences between the management costs of different types of actions can be partly explained by the fact that the programme has funded fewer centralised projects (see Table 7.19), which however tend to be larger in terms of the grant amounts (see Table 7.20). Centralised actions, especially in KA3 (partly managed by the European Commission), also tend to be more complex in their nature, involving a range of institutional actors from a large variety of countries and thus require a much heavier

²⁷⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en#tab-1-5

commitment in terms of the action management compared to more standard Erasmus+ mobility actions for learners and practitioners. In contrast, the programme has funded more decentralised projects managed by the national agencies, which, however, tend to be on average smaller in size.

Table 7.19 Number of granted projects by mode of management

2014			2015		
Direct (centralised)		Indirect (decentralised)	Direct (centralised)		Indirect (decentralised)
European Commission	EACEA	National agencies	European Commission	EACEA	National agencies
	604	17,698		Jean Monnet: 260	16,113 in KA1
Sports: 45	Jean Monnet: 219		Sports: 53		Most of KA2: 1,910 projects
			153 centralised projects in KA1		
			Most of KA3: 724 projects		

Source: Annual Erasmus+ reports 2014, 2015²⁸⁰

Table 7.20 Average size of grant by mode of management in €, 2014

Type of action	Average size of grant	Source in the annual report
Direct (centralised):		
- KA 3	3,439,433	Annex 5
- Jean Monnet	792,606	Annex 6
- Sports	50,308	Annex 7 (calculated by dividing the total grant amount to sports actions by the number of granted projects)
Indirect (decentralised) in KA1, KA2 and KA3	78,848	Annex 2.10 (calculated by dividing the total grant amount to decentralised actions by the number of granted projects)

Source: Annual Erasmus+ report 2014

However, the monitoring figures on the management costs of the national agencies might not be telling the full story. The management costs of the national agencies have been assessed in a recent study²⁸¹. The study found the following order of management costs incurred by 40 NAs which responded to the study survey. Overall, across the 40 NAs the management costs amounted to €127.2 million, ranging across the NAs from €200,000 to over €20 million. Extrapolating the existing information from the 40 NAs to all 61 NAs, the annual management costs of the programme to the NAs appear to be in the region of €160 million.

²⁸⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en#tab-1-5

²⁸¹ DG EAC (2016), *A study on the management costs of the national agencies for the management of the Erasmus+ programme*, prepared by Ernst & Young.

As a number of assumptions were used in this extrapolation²⁸², the results need to be treated with caution. However, if used, the figure of €160 million in management costs by the national agencies significantly exceeds the NA management cost of around €64–68 million reported in the Erasmus+ annual reports. One reason explaining this difference is the fact that in their national reports, NAs only report about the use of EU funding and they don't discuss co-funding budgets.

To put the management costs as estimated by the above cited report in context, the overall EU budgetary commitments for indirect actions managed by the national agencies in 2014 was €1,567,289,451²⁸³ (excluding co-funding). Thus, the estimated management costs of around €160 million constituted around 10 % of the overall EU programme expenditure in 2014²⁸⁴. This would be a few percentage points lower if co-funding expenditure is taken into account.

7.4.2.2 Comparisons with the benchmark programmes

The management structures of the Erasmus+ programme have been compared to other national schemes (comparators). Quite often, the Erasmus+ programme is managed by the same agency which manages other similar programmes in the country, which is the case with Causeway, AKTION, CEEPUS, Charles de Gaulle Trust partnerships, Gjør Det! (Do It!) and the Denmark–USA programme. Such a set-up can ensure effective use of the financial resources by helping to avoid overlaps of the schemes or warrant timely financial aid in case of the emergence of unexpected demands.

Looking at the comparator selection, the majority of the schemes (13) are managed by one type of organisation. Similarly to Erasmus+, national agencies (of different types) are in charge of the highest number of schemes (8). Private organisations, NGOs and national government organisations are involved in the management of five schemes. The remaining five comparator programmes are under a mixed structure of management involving several organisations. The overview is presented in the figure below.

²⁸² In countries where at least one NA provided information about its management costs, the average headcount cost figure was calculated and applied to other NA headcount figures where the management cost information was missing. In the countries where no NAs provided information about their management costs, these were calculated by multiplying the NA headcount figures with the average earnings data in the country.

²⁸³ Annex 2.1, *Annual Erasmus+ 2014 Report*, see http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/ar-statistical-annex_en.pdf

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

Figure 7.14 Overview of the types of organisations involved in management of the comparator schemes

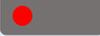
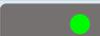
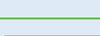
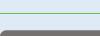


Source: ICF/Technopolis

The overview of the alignment of the Erasmus+ scheme management with the comparator schemes shows an average alignment level (see the table below). The schemes which are managed by national agencies (Nordplus Adult, Nordplus Higher Education) are probably the closest to Erasmus+ in terms of the management structures. The overarching managing organisation delegates to national agencies for the execution of the programme but does have an overview at the centralised level. AKTION, CEEPUS, Charles de Gaulle Trust partnerships and Fulbright also have some similarities with Erasmus+. The execution of those schemes is delegated by national ministries to national agencies. The schemes with a different background, i.e. which were established by private initiatives, are usually managed by non-governmental organisations or private funds, such as Baltic–American Freedom Foundation, the Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme and German–Turkish Youth Bridge.

Table 7.21 Traffic-light visualisation of the alignment of the Erasmus+ management institutions/organisations with the comparator schemes

Comparator scheme	Managing institutions	Alignment of the schemes' management institutions
AKTION	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports/ The Centre for International Cooperation (Czech Republic)	
Baltic–American Freedom Foundation Professional Internship Programme	Baltic–American Freedom Foundation	
Causeway – British–Irish Exchange Programme for Youth	Léargas (serving the Republic of Ireland)/Education Authority for Northern Ireland (serving the United Kingdom)	
CEEPUS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports/ The Centre for International Cooperation (Czech Republic)	
Charles de Gaulle Trust	British Council	

Comparator scheme	Managing institutions	Alignment of the schemes' management institutions
partnerships		
Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP)	The CYEC (a subsidiary charity of the Royal Commonwealth Society)	
Denmark–USA programme	Danish Agency for Higher Education	
German–French elementary school teacher exchange	German–French Youth Office (DFJW)	
Gjør Det! (Do It!)	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU)	
IACOBUS Programme	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Galicia – North Portugal (GNP-EGTC)	
International Inspiration Programme	British Council/UNICEF/UK Sport	
Nordplus Adult	Swedish Council for Higher Education	
Prämienprogramm	Pedagogical Exchange Service (PAD)	
Programme for Cooperation of Schools and Scholarships (EEA and Norwegian funds)	The Centre for International Cooperation in Education (Czech Republic)	
The Fulbright Programme Italy	US Department of State/Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
The German–Turkish Youth Bridge	Deutsch–Türkische Jugendbrücke GmbH	
The Nordplus Higher Education Programme	Education Exchanges Support Foundation (on the Lithuanian side)	
UK Sport's IDEALS programme (International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport)	UK Sport (Different sections of the programme are co-organised with the Wallace Group, International Inspiration and Zambian organisations: Sport in Action, EduSport, Olympic Youth Development Centre)	

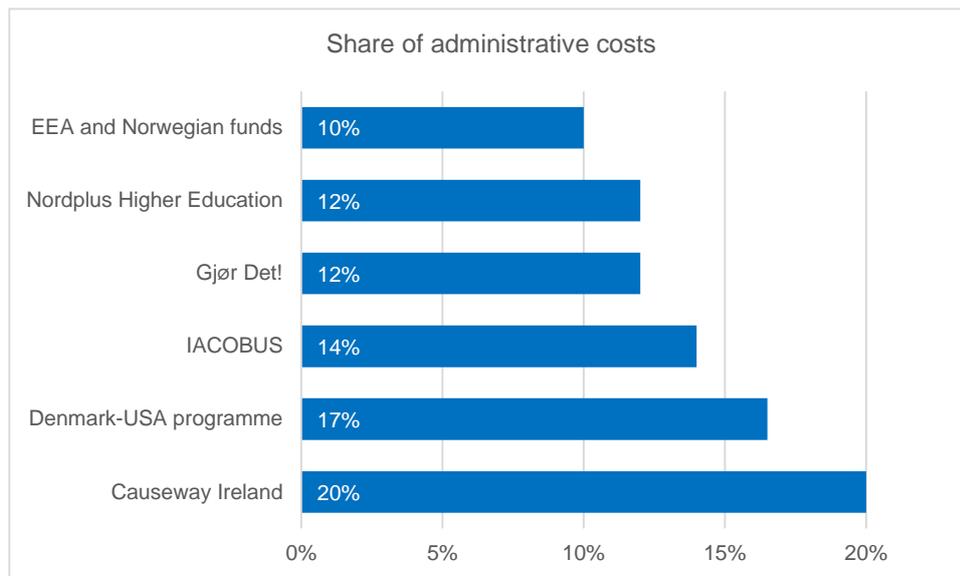
Note:  – full alignment,  – partial alignment,  – little or no alignment

The regulation establishing Erasmus+ stipulates that 1.9 % of the total annual available budget can go to cover administrative expenditure and that 3.4 % of the total budget goes to national agencies as operating grants.

It was rather challenging to get the information about the level of administrative costs in the comparator schemes; hence our assessment here does not cover all of the schemes. The figure overleaf shows the information for six programmes where it was possible to obtain such information. The share of administrative costs in these programmes is considerably higher than in Erasmus+ (i.e. an average of 14 % in comparator programmes against between 6 % and 10 %, depending on the methodology, for Erasmus+). One scheme which is perhaps somewhat similar in administrative costs is CEEPUS. Of the total annual available budget of CZK 10 million/year (or €370,370) for projects, the organisation spends CZK 120,000 (or €4,444), i.e. 1.2 %. However, these administrative costs do not include salaries of staff.

The Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP) is administratively expensive. The only income of the programme is the fee but lots of effort is spent on professional help offered to the teachers and school cohorts. Matching process (matching teachers and host schools) is also costly (referencing, research, communication, etc.).

Figure 7.15 Share of administrative costs in the total budget of selected comparator schemes



Source: Consortium

Note: Based on the document studies about the comparator schemes and one interview with a representative of an organisation running each scheme

Figure 7.16 'Traffic-light' visualisation of the alignment of the administrative costs of Erasmus+ with the comparator schemes

Comparator scheme	Comparator scheme	Alignment of the level of administrative costs
AKTION	2015: €10,086 in Austria (administrative costs for the programme are not monitored), on	Data point missing

Comparator scheme	Comparator scheme	Alignment of the level administrative costs of
	<p>top of that some overheads (energy, paper, etc.) are not monitored either</p> <p><i>Comment from the evaluation team:</i></p> <p>Not possible to calculate administrative cost in %</p>	
Baltic-American Freedom Foundation professional internship programme	Not public information – cannot be disclosed	Data point missing
Causeway – British-Irish Exchange Programme for Youth	20 %	
CEEPUS	<p>CZK 120 000 (€4,444) without salaries of staff</p> <p><i>Comment from the evaluation team:</i></p> <p>Not sufficient information to calculate administrative cost in %</p>	
Charles de Gaulle Trust partnerships (British Council)	n/a	Data point missing
Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP)	Admin expensive (professional help offered to the teachers, cohorts), the only income is the fee. Matching process (matching teachers and host schools) is costly (referencing, research, communication, etc.).	Data point missing
Denmark-USA programme	<p>Approx. 15–18 % used for administration of grant programme in the national agency</p> <p><i>Comment from the evaluation team:</i></p> <p>Average 16.5 %</p>	
German-French elementary school teacher exchange	<p>The administrative costs could be estimated at ca 0.5 FTE per year</p> <p><i>Comment from the evaluation team:</i></p> <p>Not sufficient information to calculate administrative cost in %</p>	Data point missing
Gjør Det! (Do It!)	NOK 270,000 per year of the total budget of NOK 2,270,000 per year	
IACOBUS Programme	Around 14 %. Please note that administrative costs are not included in the previous budgetary figures	

Comparator scheme	Comparator scheme	Alignment of the level of administrative costs
International Inspiration Programme	n/a	Data point missing
Nordplus Adult	There is not a maximum budget per project, so there is no defined answer	Data point missing
Prämienprogramm	n/a	Data point missing
Programme for Cooperation of Schools and Scholarships (EEA and Norwegian funds)	10 %	
The Fulbright Programme	Not publicly available	Data point missing
The German–Turkish Youth Bridge	n/a	Data point missing
The Nordplus Higher Education Programme	Approximately 12 % of the total annual Nordplus budget can be allocated to administration	
UK Sport's IDEALS programme (International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport)	n/a	Data point missing

Note:  – full alignment,  – partial alignment,  – little or no alignment

7.4.3 Centralised versus decentralised actions

Two thirds of the agencies surveyed consider that the balance between centralised and decentralised actions is appropriate while 21 % tend to disagree (the rest have no opinion).

The original rationale for decentralising a large share of the programme is as follows.

- To be closer to the beneficiaries to facilitate recruitment but also assessment of what is relevant and because of the potential for strong results in the national context.
- To be closer to national policymakers to enhance national relevance.

These assumptions are in general confirmed and continue to be seen as accurate by key informant interviews as well as the surveyed agencies²⁸⁵. In their open-ended responses they highlight the importance of:

- local networks for proximity with beneficiaries and the policy;
- dissemination efforts;
- more personalised feedback to applicants and grantees.

The only issues with decentralisation identified are:

²⁸⁵ See annex for the results of the agencies survey. For example 96 % of respondents state that decentralised actions ensure proximity with beneficiaries and make the programme accessible to smaller organisations

- weakened alignment with EU priorities (see also section on relevance); and
- for some types of actions where the funding is small – such as international cooperation in higher education – the requirement for management of small budget lines creates complexity for national agencies, which would be diminished with centralised management of larger envelopes.

The rationale for maintaining a set of centralised actions is as follows:

- for some types of actions the budgets are too small to justify decentralised management (Jean Monnet, sport);
- having system-level actions managed centrally should ensure alignment with EU priorities;
- centralised management for actions that are large scale and where only a limited number of grants can be funded should enable fair competition based on the excellence of a proposal solely (without potential national considerations about national context).

The first argument remains valid and is not contested by any of the evidence gathered. However, should the sport budget become larger the question of decentralisation should be considered as this action particularly attracts a high number of relatively small organisations.

However, this is less clear for the remaining arguments. The mapping of selected project outputs showed that the alignment with EU priorities is not particularly stronger for centralised actions. In fact, the assessors who select projects nationally are often the same ones as those who work also for EACEA. On the other hand, having a set of centralised actions allows the Commission to issue specific calls on topics of high priority, which is indeed appreciated.

Some actions under KA3 are highly specific and there is only one application per country (for example Eurydice desk or EQF NCPs). It is logical for these to be managed centrally and to ensure a cross-country review of these activities. The rationale for centralised management of actions such as policy experimentations of forward-looking actions is the focus on excellence and competitiveness. By having a single call for proposals all applicants compete in a single pool of applications, thus guaranteeing a more competitive selection process than decentralised management. However, with regard to these actions, many agencies surveyed believe that the differences are not clear-cut for the beneficiaries²⁸⁶. They suggest, and this was also voiced in interviews and identified via expert panel and mapping of projects, that the differences between the types of projects managed centrally and those managed in a decentralised manner are in practice not so clear as in theory when looking at the programme guide.

The main arguments put forward by the agencies for maintaining a set of centralised actions are:

- maintaining a small number of projects that have EU-wide focus and relevance;
- applications from international organisations (NGOs) would be better managed centrally (this was the initial rationale for centralised actions under the youth in action programme).

However, the respondents also noted the need to improve cooperation and communication between EACEA and NAs to ensure that results of centrally managed actions can be disseminated in the countries (see also below).

²⁸⁶ Only 57 % of respondents consider that applicants are aware of both types of actions (centralised and decentralised). 64 % consider that the applicants for these two types of actions are different.

7.4.4 Efficiency of the division of responsibilities

The division of responsibilities between the Commission, National Authorities, national agencies and the EACEA is overall clear and fit for purpose. It needs to be recognised that the division of responsibilities is now well established as it builds on predecessor programmes in education, training and youth. The only challenges stem from the fact that the programme also uses funds from other funding instruments (from third countries). This leads to a complication of rules, requires management of multiple small budget envelopes at decentralised level and a somewhat disproportionate management effort compared to the size of the budgets and the numbers of beneficiaries.

At the central level, interviewees in the scoping interviews considered that at DG EAC/EACEA level, the management works rather well in general but management is nevertheless hampered by rules or obligations that could be made lighter. The examples collected covered:

- the approach to the allocation of PIC to organisations (unique identifier), which obliges applicants to first get a PIC from another part of the Commission before submitting applications;
- the requirement for NAs to manage several small budget envelopes linked to the international dimension and to carry out reporting linked to each of these.

However, multiple respondents of different types emphasised the fact that the transition to the single programme could have been better prepared and communicated. Delays in the design of rules, procedures and systems meant that there were delays in programme launch and discontent among applicants as well as agencies.

In relation to the management at the national level, in the scoping interviews at the inception stage the evaluation team also found concerns about the efficiency of having several agencies, in particular in small countries (currently there are 60 national agencies for 33 countries). The main concern raised during the scoping interviews was the number of NAs compared to the overall value of grants managed, as there are some small countries that have more than one NA meaning that the volume the NA manages is really small. Concerning the management of the programme by the 60 NAs, this is considered to work well though it requires working with a lot of stakeholders and is hence time-consuming. One interviewee reckoned that having only one NA per programme country would certainly lead to a smoother management in many regards (as well as a few countries – Iceland was engaged in a process of consolidation at the time of drafting this report and other countries were considering such change, namely HU and LU). The Commission recommends that countries have one agency in place but there is strong resistance in some countries. The rationale for some countries to maintain several agencies is:

- the federal nature of the country and the willingness to make sure that the programme is close to all federated entities (which have separate governments). This is for example the case in Belgium, which has three agencies;
- sectoral proximity with other programmes. Several respondents noted that it was beneficial to maintain the management in an agency which was also managing comparable funds from a different source.

A study on the management costs incurred by the national agencies also found a significant variance between the national agencies on this aspect and room for efficiency gains²⁸⁷. The following causes for the variance were identified.

²⁸⁷ DG EAC (2016), *A study on the management costs of the national agencies for the management of the Erasmus+ programme*, prepared by Ernst & Young.

- Cost of living and labour were found to account for some differences in the management costs incurred, but not all, indicating the need to recalculate some of the EC contributions to cover the management costs.
- Difference of characteristics and requirements in each field of action.
- Size and organisation of the national agencies, with total management costs rising with the volume of work and applications managed by the national agency, but with no perfect correlation with the volumes handled.
- Differences in performance causing variations in management costs.
- Size of country and possible beneficiaries.

The evaluation team has also reviewed the implementation reports from the NAs for 2014 and 2015 to explore management issues identified for the Erasmus+ programme. In terms of central programme management, two challenges were voiced by several NAs. Firstly, the high complexity of implementation was seen as requiring more administration than expected due to, among other factors, the frequent deadline during the project lifecycles, and the large variety of project themes. Secondly, delays in the communication of key documents by the European Commission were noted as being a challenge for the implementation of projects and monitoring activities. The programme work guidelines were mentioned twice as well as the importance of keeping both NAs and the NAUs informed in parallel.

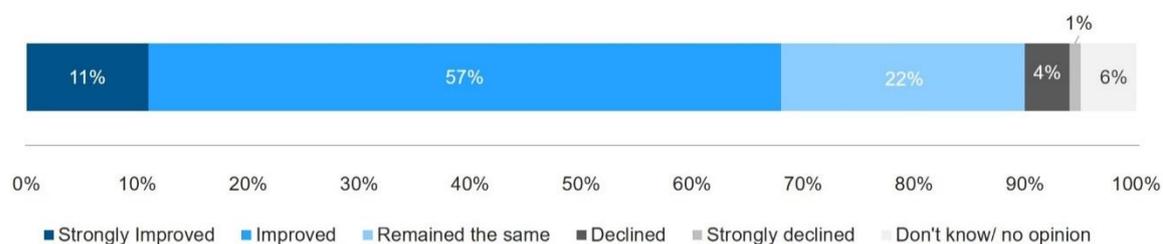
NA reports reviewed from the 2007–2013 period also raised similar management issues. In 45 NA reports, the frequent changes in documents and rules have been remarked as problematic by the NAs since this not only increases the workload but also leaves a bad impression with beneficiaries. This refers to both internal documents (e.g. NA guide) and external documents (e.g. application and reporting forms). Another frequent comment notes that the EC should make sure to include the NAs in the planning of programme changes. 22 NA reports also noted an overall high administrative workload for the LLP, especially in the early programme period, and especially in relation to Grundtvig and for small NAs.

Similar issues were also noted in the 2014–2015 reports.

The programme agencies surveyed were asked about their satisfaction with the guiding role of the Commission. Overall they showed satisfaction. The vast majority of them strongly agree or rather agree that the Commission plays well its different roles with regard to programme management. The only areas where the level of disagreement is 10 % or more concern clarity and relevance of award criteria as well as inputs about policy priorities²⁸⁸. The critical voice about award criteria refers to the fact that there is quite a lot of freedom for NAs to interpret the criteria and more could be done to make sure the NAs and the experts have the same understanding of these. Similarly, with regard to the policy priorities more could be done to make sure that these are understood by the experts. As shown in the figure below, the majority of respondents believe that the quality of Commission guidance has improved. Only a small number (five) consider it has declined.

²⁸⁸ See annex on the survey of programme agencies.

Figure 7.17 Compared to the predecessor programmes, the quality of guidance received from the Commission has improved



Source: ICF programme agencies

The agencies were also asked about coordination patterns. The following findings emerge.

- The body with which NAs cooperate the least is the EACEA (59 % of respondents state that they hardly ever cooperate with this agency).
- Most agencies regularly cooperate with all other types of bodies: national authorities, other agencies and the Commission.
- Overall the respondents are satisfied with cooperation with all the types of bodies even though the share of those who are strongly satisfied remains minor (with the exception of cooperation with other NAs).
- The vast majority of respondents consider that cooperation has improved.
- Within the agencies there is very frequent cooperation between the sectors of schools, VET and adult learning and a little less with higher education. There is much less cooperation with the youth sector.

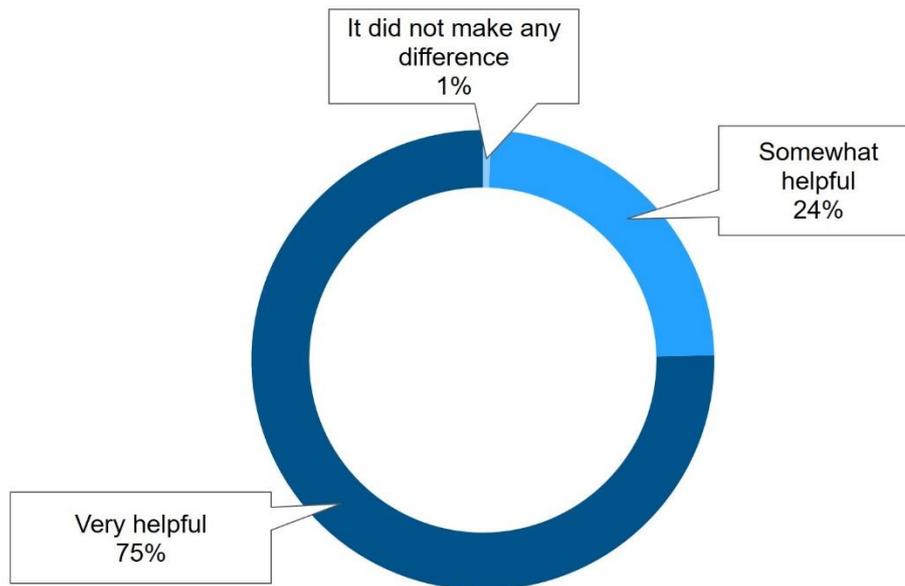
It was noted in the open-ended responses that the lack of cooperation with the EACEA can hamper the potential of system-level impacts of KA3 projects.

The views of agencies about the management tools (Mobility Tool, EPlusLink and others) were gathered through the survey as well as the review of agencies' reports. While overall the agencies welcome the existence of these tools and the fact that online management systems are now available, they also identify a number of shortcomings that go beyond the initial 'infancy' issues at the beginning of the programming period. These point to the fact that the user experience with these tools is rather suboptimal. The agencies highlight:

- the multiplicity of the tools;
- the time it takes to work with these systems;
- inconsistencies in data which they do not understand (typically between what is presented in the dashboard and what they extract themselves);
- issues related to the need to manually adjust data in the system when inputted by beneficiaries.

As one means to assess the cooperation and guidance provided within the programme, we have asked socioeconomic actors – beneficiaries – about their views on the support received from national agencies or the EACEA. As shown below, the vast majority of respondents were very positive about the support they received.

Figure 7.18 How helpful was the support you received to your organisation in the application process?



Respondents (n = 523)

7.5 Efficiency gains through changes in the new 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 the Erasmus+ programme?

To what extent has the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for national agencies, the 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?

The consolidation of several programmes into Erasmus+ was expected to result in a 40 % reduction of management costs. The rationale was that a bigger programme with unified procedures would be simpler to administer, the focus on larger projects would lead to savings and that the use of unit costs would further drive down the management costs.

While some of these assumptions have been confirmed, the overall savings are certainly more modest, though hard to measure exactly.

On the positive side:

- The programme has indeed moved towards fewer but larger projects, which means that there are fewer projects to administer.
- The unit costs are in most cases a welcome approach to grant management even though some of the predecessor programmes' actions used lump sums, which were even simpler.
- There is a significantly smaller number of types of actions and the procedures have become more unified.

Nevertheless:

- The costs of management fees to national agencies increased. The overall budget they manage has also increased due to decentralisation of certain actions. However, the overall programme budget increase is slower than the increase of management fees. An important limitation in assessing the change of management fees is that:
 - some actions that used to be grants managed by NAs have been moved towards NAs' core budget (hence the base is not comparable); and
 - the comparison with management costs of the EACEA is not available. The EACEA managed all international higher education mobility actions, of which an important share is now managed in a decentralised manner.
- The headcount of NAs has also increased under Erasmus+ more quickly than the increase in the overall budget.
- The decentralisation of the management of international higher education mobility actions has created an additional administrative burden on NAs as these actions need to be managed separately in a manner that is considered not proportionate to the size of budgets and numbers of beneficiaries.

Though the analysis of budgets does not give a clear idea of the savings in programme management, the responses of programme agencies suggest that they perceive an improvement in the efficiency of programme administration. In particular, the online management of applications and reports is welcome and so is, overall, the use of unit costs.

In the early years of programme implementation the NAs had to go through a process of adaptation as many new procedures were introduced. The programme management should now be reaching cruising speed and therefore it will be important to monitor the evolution of management fees to see whether the expected economies will materialise.

Table 7.22 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Decrease in management fees of NAs compared to predecessor programmes (in absolute terms but also considering the total project budget)	Desk research	 <p>The absolute values of management fees increased The share of the management fees within the overall programme budget also increased – this is likely to be related to the increased decentralisation (i.e. the share of the budget that is decentralised is higher) The share of fees in total budget varies. In some years this has decreased on predecessor programme but not all</p>
Decrease or stability in headcount compared to predecessor programmes	Desk research	 <p>The headcount continues increasing under Erasmus+, which is linked to increased decentralisation of fund management</p>
Share of agencies that perceive efficiency gains	Survey of programme agencies	 <p>The vast majority of agencies state that they have seen efficiency gains compared to predecessor programmes. Nearly two in five say they have seen large efficiency gains</p>
Efficiency gains are observed by the programme beneficiaries	Views of agencies, key informant interviews and case studies	 <p>The views are mixed. While efforts to simplify administration are recognised, beneficiaries also highlight issues linked to high number of applications (waste of time for proposals), underestimation of management costs, lack of proportionality in procedures</p>
Views on the extent to which use of unit costs simplified programme and project management	Survey of agencies and case studies	 <p>Overall the majority of respondents welcome the use of unit costs. In some cases the values are deemed insufficient</p>

7.5.1 Overall efficiency gains

The impact assessment for the current programme concluded that the establishment of a single programme would result in efficiency gains of 40 %²⁸⁹. This expectation seems to have been too optimistic.

The main management costs for this programme as covered by the EU are the costs of NAs and of the EACEA. The EU contribution to NAs has actually increased in absolute numbers compared to the predecessor period as shown in Table 7.23 This increase in absolute costs can be explained by several reasons.

- Inflation.
- Increase in volume of the total budget as the NAs' fees are proportionate to the budgets managed. An increased share of the budget is managed in a decentralised manner compared to the predecessor programmes. In particular, the management of mobility actions with partner countries in higher education used to be fully centralised and has been decentralised. The interviews identified that these actions require a very high level of administration from the NAs (in particular compared to other mobility actions), due to the fact that each regional budget line has to be managed separately. This is the case even if the number of mobile persons is very small.
- The fact that some activities which used to be a separate budget line have been moved to the core NAs' operating budget. For example, the management of several networks by NAs (e.g. ECVET network of national experts, Eurodesk). These used to be separate grants managed by NAs but are now part of the NAs' core budget. As a result the fees for the predecessor period are not fully comparable.

The share of NAs' management fees as a proportion of the overall budget varies greatly across years.

If only looking at the share of management fees compared to Youth in Action and LLP programmes' budgets (which were the only ones to have decentralised actions under the predecessor programmes), the management fees in 2014 and 2016 are indeed lower than under these two predecessor programmes. Under the predecessor programmes the international higher education programmes were managed centrally and therefore the management costs were only those of EACEA management.

In order to get a full picture of the management fees it would be necessary to assess also how the management costs of EACEA evolved over the two programming periods, but this data is not apparent from the EACEA annual reports nor from the programmes' annual reports. However, the figures reviewed suggest that any economy realised was lower than the initially anticipated 40 %.

Having said that, even though the expected saving of 40 % has not been materialised, overall the share of programme budget allocated to management is reasonable and proportionate to the size and complexity of the programme. The management fees of NAs oscillate between 3.22% and 3.52% of the overall budget of the programmes in the period 2011-2016. Compared to comparator national programmes the share of budget allocated to the management of Erasmus+ is on the low side (though exact comparison is not feasible)²⁹⁰.

²⁸⁹ 'The aim will be to reach a cumulative effect of these simplifications to a productivity increase of around 40 %.' Source: European Commission Erasmus+ Impact Assessment, Commission Staff Working Paper, SEC(2011) 1402 of 23.11.2011.

²⁹⁰ See annex on benchmarking.

Table 7.23 Management fees for NAs – LLP, YiA 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

Another possible efficiency effect of the integration into a single programme like Erasmus+ would be the reduction in the NA headcount figures.

To respect the confidentiality aspect, the data on the NA management costs has been aggregated at the EU level, by counting the NA headcount figures reported in the NA regular annual reports to the European Commission (see Table 7.23 **Error! Reference source not found.**). However, this comparison of trends needs to be treated with caution as not all NAs have reported their headcount figures on a regular basis. The change in the headcount figures was calculated only for those NAs which have provided the data in their annual reports.

Overall, across the whole evaluation period, and both for the LLP, Erasmus+ and Youth in Action programmes, the NA headcount figures have been increasing (see Table 7.24). The increase is sharper than the increase in budget. In the predecessor programmes, the growth has been minimal in the first years of implementation (1 %), but increased to 8–10 % in the latter years of the implementation. For the Erasmus+ programme, the NA headcount figures have increased on average around 5 % compared to the headcount figures in the predecessor LLP programme (similar growth is observed for the youth strand). This indicates that the efficiency gains expected from the Erasmus+ programme are not manifesting themselves in the reduction of NA headcount figures.

Table 7.24 Change in the NA headcount figures, by %, EU level

Programme	Country	Change in the 2007–2013 period			Comparison between predecessor and Erasmus+ programmes		
		Change 2009–2011	Change 2011–2013	Change 2009–2013	Change 2009–2015	Change 2011–2015	Change 2013–2015
LLP/E+	All available	1 %	9 %	8 %	8 %	14 %	5 %
YiA/E+ Youth	All available	1 %	8 %	10 %	13 %	8 %	7 %

Source: NAs’ annual reports

Though the efficiency gains have not been translated into a decrease of costs of headcount, they are perceived by the programme agencies as discussed below. This suggests that the resources available to them have been reallocated to different tasks and hopefully the agencies can provide a better service to beneficiaries with the money earmarked for programme management. As shown below, three quarters of agencies state that they have observed efficiency gains and nearly two in five have seen large efficiency gains. Interestingly the ‘No’ responses are concentrated in the sectors of youth and schools.

Overall, three years after the programme was launched the agencies are seeing the benefits of the changes made to programme structure as well as procedures. However, they also see room for improvement. In the open-ended questions agencies:

- welcomed the various IT tools (online applications and reports, dashboard, etc.) but also underlined the difficulties with the launch of these tools (also highlighted in the analysis of NAs’ reports) and pointed to room for improvement when it comes to their functionalities, user-friendliness and their number (too many tools and

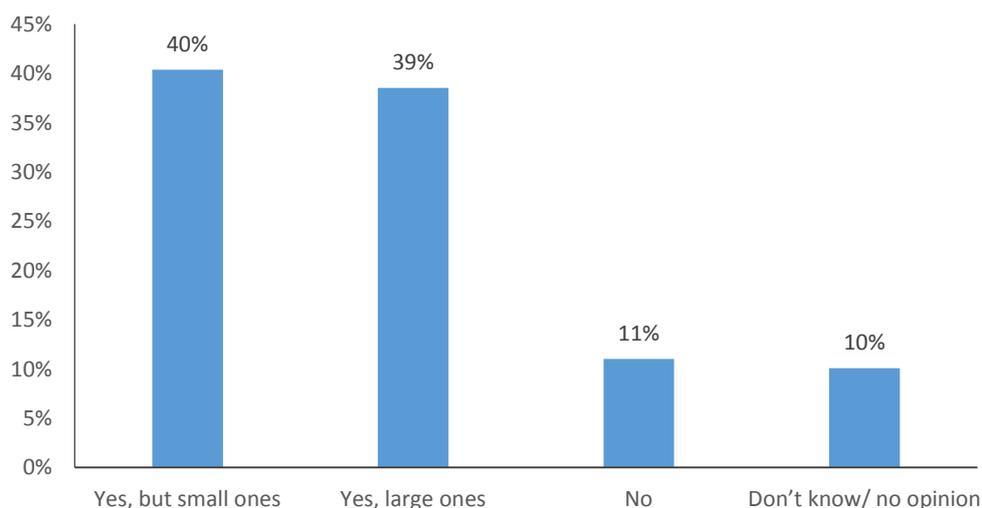
systems). Several respondents shared strongly negative opinions about the launch of the IT tools and their functionalities in the first two years of the programme;

- positively received the smaller number of types of actions but a few noted that with time changes are being introduced which de facto create subcategories of actions. It was also noted that the category of Strategic Partnerships was too broad and that beneath the heading were combined on one hand partnerships focusing on exchange and mutual learning and on the other hand projects aimed at innovation. A distinction was seen as necessary going forward;
- appreciated the simplification of rules that results from smaller number of types of actions and harmonisation of procedures. However, several respondents pointed out the limitations of the 'one size fits all' approach. They remarked that applying the same rules to small and large projects was creating inefficiencies for beneficiaries. They also noted that this creates barriers at entry²⁹¹;
- valued the single brand and the fact that it greatly facilitated communication towards beneficiaries;
- greeted the use of unit costs as discussed below.

There were several sector-specific observations.

- In higher education the administrative burden related to the management of international mobility actions was seen as completely disproportionate compared to the number of beneficiaries. This was confirmed also during key informant interviews.
- The use of unit costs in the school sector was seen as a step back in terms of complexity compared to the lump sums used in the past, which were seen as more appropriate for this target group.
- When creating the single set of rules, these were rather modelled on the LLP reality. For the youth sector this meant a big leap. Therefore negative remarks on the efficiency gains of the integration are more common from the youth strand than others.

Figure 7.19 Do you observe any efficiency gains in the Erasmus+ programme management compared to the predecessor programmes in your country and/or sector?

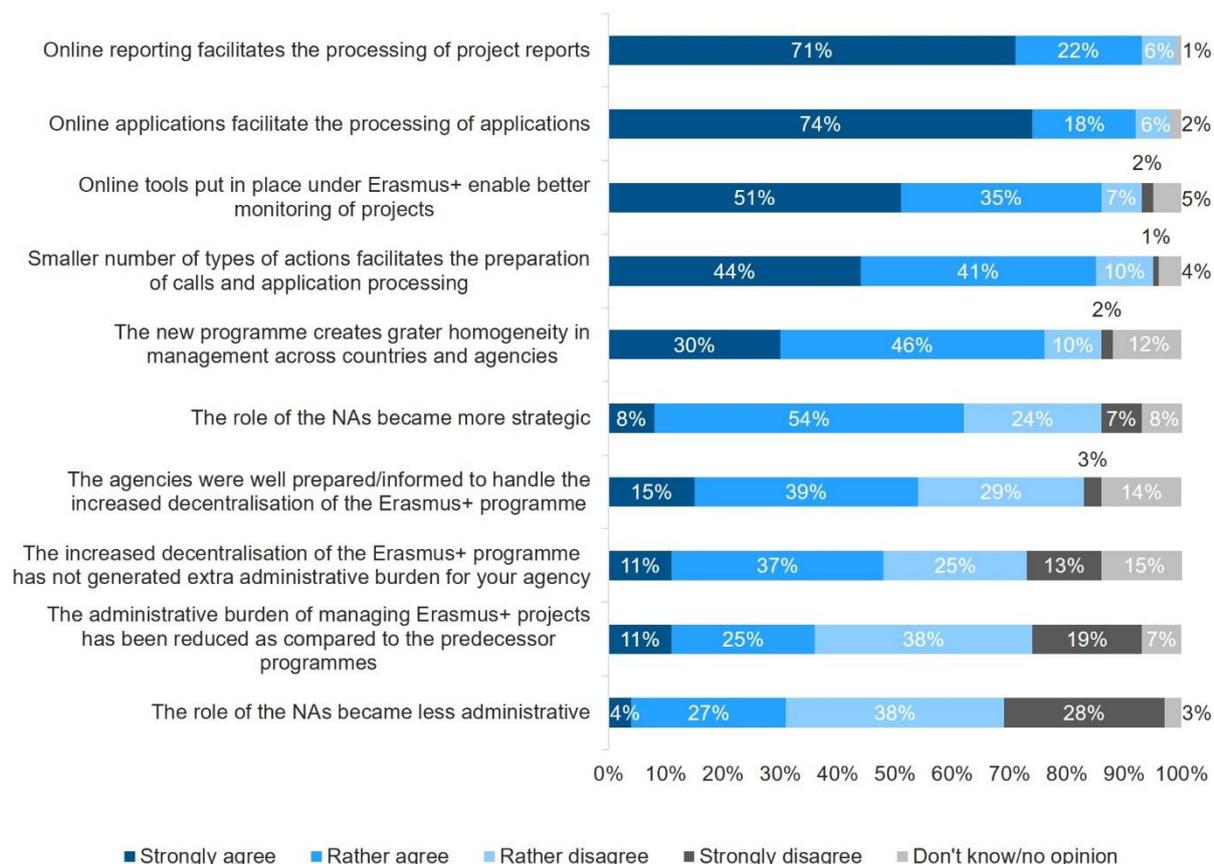


Source: Survey of programme agencies. Respondents (n = 109)

²⁹¹ For example, the requirement of having a VET Mobility Charter was noted as an obstacle for newcomers.

The main changes which agencies associate with efficiency gains are online reporting and applications 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 burden. Most of them disagree (or have no opinion) about statements which are associated with any positive evolution of administrative roles and tasks. These findings are presented in Figure 7.20.

Figure 7.20 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 review of NAs' reports for the period 2014–2015 shows the following main benefits and challenges of integration.

Table 7.25 Benefits and challenges of the new programme based on NAs' annual reports

Change in the new programme	Explanation	Judgement
-----------------------------	-------------	-----------

Change in the new programme	Explanation	Judgement
Introduction of new IT tools (functionalities, accuracy, user-friendliness)	In the first two years the provided IT tools were perceived as an impediment to the success of Erasmus+ by most NAs. Most commonly, NAs highlighted dysfunctions in the Mobility Tool and Erasmus+ Link. Also, the newly introduced application forms were criticised for causing excessive administrative workload for the NAs. Correcting applicants' mistakes was considered overly complicated and time-consuming	***
Lack of clarity on certain elements of application management	Most issues regarding the application process concerned insufficient guidance. NAs lamented a lack of information, especially on what qualifies as intellectual output, but also on various budgetary items	**
Use online systems for reporting and evaluation	The evaluation procedure was frequently subject to criticism. The provided reporting tools made it difficult for NAs to extract the necessary information. The figures were at times inconsistent and the extraction process cumbersome. Overall, it was considered difficult to retrieve reliable reporting figures from EPL. The monitoring requirements were often considered an administrative burden with little added value	**
Change towards a purely online application process	A simplified application process has increased the geographical scope of applications. The electronic submission of applications, without having to submit hard copies, has also been appreciated by the beneficiaries. This has led to an increase in applications and an increase in those reaching the minimum quality threshold required	✓✓
Single brands	NAs highlighted successful promotion and communication activities. Streamlining of actions was possible thanks to the common brand name	✓✓

Source: Annual reports of NAs – see Annex 11 (number of signs reflects frequency of mentions: 3 signs = more than 50 mentions; 2 signs = 15–49 mentions)

The efficiency gains are not expected only for managing bodies but also for beneficiaries. The evidence is less clear regarding the efficiency gains for this group. On the one hand, the following positive effects were noted by the agencies:

- online application process and reporting; and
- use of unit costs, which diminishes the requirements for documentation of resources invested.

On the other hand, the agencies also noted the following issues:

- complexity of the IT tools, especially at the beginning of the programme;
- lack of familiarity with the unit costs system and subsequent difficulties in design of applications;
- lack of understanding of what is expected under KA2, in particular Strategic Partnerships, and hence the difficulty to properly calibrate projects, thus spending resources on preparing applications without having a good idea whether the application fits into the scope.

The evidence of efficiency gains from case studies is very mixed. While some interviewed grantees agree that efforts have been made to simplify the administration for beneficiaries, others complained about the challenges. The challenges highlighted concern mostly:

- waste of resources due to low success rates;
- lack of proportionality (small and large projects have the same formal requirements when it comes to application forms);
- underestimation of the management time.

Some typical examples of issues mentioned are highlighted in the box below.

Quotes and extracts from case studies illustrating the complexities of management for beneficiaries

Multiplicity and complexity of IT tools:

'I have a whole map in my notebook with passwords for each system, with guidelines how to get to them, from where to reach them to get where I want to.' (Leading organisation in the youth sector)

Management time :

'I would say administering the project takes up around 50 % of my work time.' (Teacher – VET sector)

'We have a project with 17 partners and [an] administrator, who is responsible for the whole administrator work [and] gets only €3 per hour. But you understand that such work requires much higher competences. And a lot of hours. I think, there is a very big gap.' (Leadership – higher education)

Proposal preparation and competition:

'Efforts were made to diminish the paper work. I am not quite sure how much it was diminished. It just looks different.' (Leadership – higher education sector)

'Capacity-building proposals are too difficult. Almost the same as to prepare a proposal to Horizon 2020.' (Leadership higher education sector)

'Activities now have to have "intellectual outputs" in the form of products, and products need to be connected to multiplier sport events. Due to these changes, a proposal has now 90 pages in comparison to 50 pages before.' (Staff – sport sector)

'The efforts to prepare the proposals are more and more intensive as the competition has become very strong. The amount of detail to be included is significant. It was easier to get a grant under LLP Grundtvig.' (Teaching staff – adult learning)

Lack of proportionality:

'Small and big projects require the same administrative burdens, which is not efficient. Lots of organisation apply, break their necks, and lose confidence when they do not get funding.' (Staff sport sector)

Unit costs allocations:

'The only issue is the rigidity of the system (of unit costs). When for example leaving big city centres and visiting more rural areas it can be very difficult to stay within the budgeting parameters that have been set.' (Leadership – adult learning sector)

A separate aspect of the management processes is the user-friendliness of the application procedures in the Erasmus+ programme. The evidence reviewed so far shows

that there are technical issues negatively affecting the easiness of the application procedures, which can be especially burdensome for smaller applicant organisations (particularly reported in the youth and school sector). However, there are also positive changes in the types of organisations applying to the programme, which shows that such application burdens are also successfully overcome.

One indication of the user-friendliness of the application procedures is the development in the numbers of applicants to the programme. The EP study showed that more than two thirds of all participating NAs (68.6 %) do report changes in the received applications (such as such as those pertaining to the type of applicants, new audiences, different levels of interest or competition). However, the patterns of change in the applications vary depending on the education sector and the country. The NAs dealing with the youth sector have reported experiencing the second highest number of applications in the first two and a half years of the programme. The picture is more mixed in the school sector, on the other hand. Some NAs, predominantly from the medium and large countries, reported to the study an alarming decrease in the numbers of applications from schools. The NAs saw this as caused by heavy bureaucracy, insufficient resources at schools and the move towards a more institutional approach. Other NAs, all from (very) small countries, have reported an increase in interest and applications among schools. The study authors concluded that it was probably easier for the NAs in smaller countries to provide support and guidance to potential applicants within the available resources than for the NAs in larger countries.

A second indication of the ease of the application process is the extent to which different types of organisations participate in Erasmus+. The NAs reporting in the EP study stated that the lowest increase in participation was for social partners (22.9 % of the NAs), and somewhat higher for enterprises (38.2 %), while almost half of the responding NAs reported an increase in the participation of NGOs and public bodies, 47.1 % and 45.7 % respectively. This shows an increase in the participation from new and different types of applicants.

A further clear trend reported by the NAs has been a move towards submitting larger projects, and a higher selectivity in the programme, which leads to much lower success rates despite the quality of the project applications. A number of NAs expressed a view that smaller projects would soon disappear as smaller-sized applicants tend to refrain from applying in the resource-intensive application process, which poses a big challenge to less experienced and smaller-sized organisations (this was especially pronounced among the NAs in the youth sector). To remedy this situation, the NAs suggested:

- the introduction of a budget ceiling for projects;
- the reduction in the complexity of the tools. Currently, for example, the online application forms ask for excessive information, especially from smaller-sized organisations;
- the simplification of rules for smaller applicants; or
- the introduction of quotas for new applicants.

A significant share of NAs in the European Parliament study (41.7 % of 35 NAs responding to the study) expressed the opinion that 'the programme Erasmus+ becomes more and more a programme for large institutions, which shouldn't be the goal', especially under KA2. These NAs considered this to be linked to the 'complex structure of the programme' and the application forms, which 'makes the programme less accessible for vulnerable groups, small organisations and individuals'. This issue is raised by one in two 'E&T only' and 'Youth only' national agencies, by almost two in three NAs in medium-sized countries and one in two NAs in very small countries.

When asked about the main challenges in the implementation of Erasmus+, about one in four NAs (22.2 %) considered as a key challenge a late and sometimes faulty delivery of

online application forms, which had an impact on the application process as most NAs had to translate the forms into their national language. In the study, many NAs criticised the lack of stability of documents and the constantly changing rules and application forms.

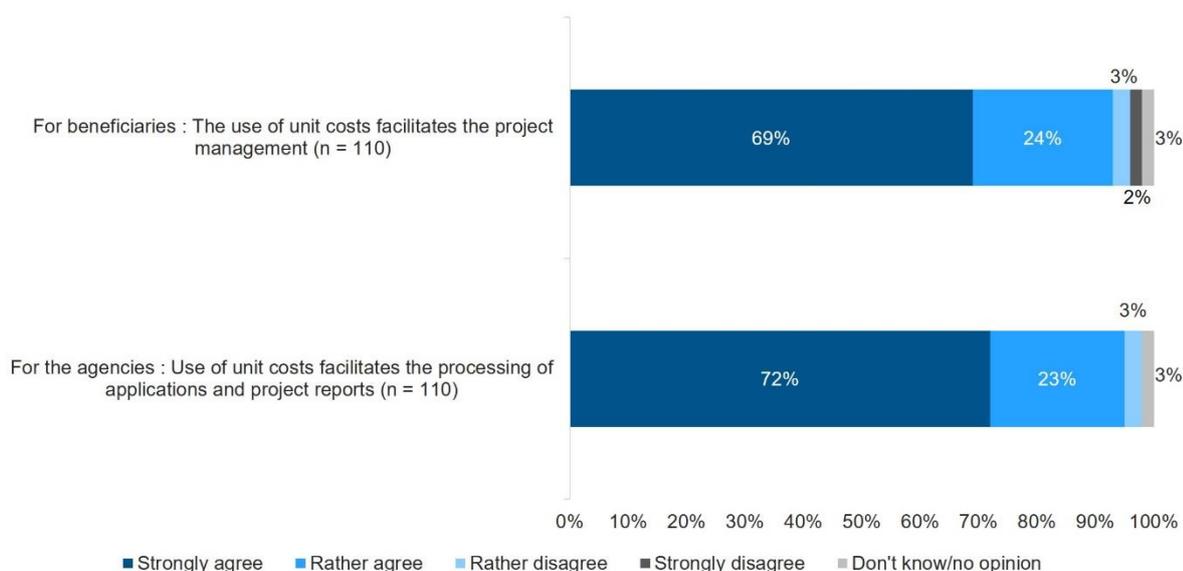
7.5.2 Unit costs

The new Erasmus+ programme has moved to a new model of financial management based on the unit costs in contrast to the previous system based on the reimbursement of real costs.

The scoping interviews undertaken for this evaluation in the inception stage confirmed the key change put in place to improve the efficiency (unit cost system) and effectiveness (competitive grant allocation) of the programme. Grant calculation is now based on a unit cost system, based on the staff inputs per key activity. This new approach is seen as simpler and supporting a more output-based approach than in the past. This change has led to many questions from applicants at the beginning of implementation.

The survey of programme agencies shows that overall they welcome the introduction of unit costs. They see efficiency gains in their own management of the programme as well as from the beneficiaries' point of view (Figure 7.21). This positive view on the use of unit costs was also captured through case study interviews.

Figure 7.21 Agencies' views on the use of unit costs



Source: ICF survey of programme agencies

This is confirmed by previous research on the first experiences with the new management system. The national agencies surveyed in the European Parliament study appreciated the unit costs system, which they considered to significantly simplify the financial management of Erasmus+.²⁹² Two key efficiency problems were identified by the national agencies in this study.

²⁹² Directorate-General for Internal Policies Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies Culture and Education (2016), Research for CULT Committee – Erasmus+: Decentralised Implementation – First Experience.

- In some countries, two parallel systems of unit costs and real costs were implemented in Erasmus+ as the national legislation obliged the beneficiaries to use the real costs system as well. This has caused inefficiencies and additional administrative burdens.
- In some countries, national agencies reported discrepancies between the levels of unit costs set and the actual expenses incurred, which indicates that the unit costs set are too low. A similar issue was identified for some centralised actions (capacity building in higher education in particular) and has been addressed in more recent calls. This can have negative consequences for beneficiaries and is a cause for concern.

Further challenges to ensure the efficiency of the new unit cost model were also highlighted in the scoping interviews during this evaluation. Interviewees highlighted that financial simplification has occurred only for bigger actions. The funding scheme (unit-based cost) is more complex for small applicants (having to justify each cost), which creates extra administrative burden and may discourage certain beneficiaries. Simplification is a key driver of Erasmus+; however, for the evaluation the challenge will be to establish the degree to which simplification has been achieved. Evidence gathered on this so far is mixed.

7.6 Monitoring mechanisms

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?

7.6.1 Summary

Major improvements have been made under Erasmus+ compared to the predecessor programmes when it comes to availability of monitoring data. 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 the DG EAC annual strategic plan, data is collected on an ongoing basis in relation to most of these indicators and targets have been set. The data for several of these indicators is computed on an ongoing basis and displayed in an interactive manner in a dashboard available to Commission services and the agencies. However, as discussed in the effectiveness section, there is room for improvement when it comes to:

- the quality of the data in relation to some of the indicators (e.g. participation of disadvantaged learners);
- the match between some indicators and the data that is collected through the monitoring system (e.g. size of organisations in the field of sport);
- fitness for purpose of some of the indicators (e.g. why is country coverage a relevant indicator for Jean Monnet);
- target setting (e.g. differences between sectors when it comes to targets about foreign language skills improvement);

- robustness of the results indicators which measure in most cases subjective perception of programme contribution;
- fitness for purpose of the impact indicators.

The monitoring arrangements in place have several functions (control and detection of irregularities, accountability and transparency, programme management). They comprise a series of processes using a variety of tools. The stakeholders surveyed and interviewed raised concerns about the complexity of the systems in place. This is confirmed by the analysis of national agencies' reports as well as by the logical analysis of the proportionality between the data collection mechanisms, the size and type of projects funded and the use made of the data collected. In other words much more data is collected than what is actually exploited, which means that the burden on beneficiaries arising from data collection is disproportionate to the use of the data.

Overall, the monitoring mechanisms are effective when it comes to providing an up-to-date overview of the state of play of programme implementation (accountability function) to the Commission internal services, the agencies and national authorities and also to the general public via the availability of statistics in annual reports and the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (EPRP) website.

However, there is less evidence of the use of the data for the purpose of programme management and decisions about planning. This could however be due to the fact that the monitoring arrangements have only been in place for a couple of years.

When looking at comparator national programmes the monitoring arrangements for Erasmus+ are in line with existing practices or stronger, which can be expected given the size of the programme.

The analysis in this section is based on a combination of stakeholder opinions collected through surveys (in particular the survey of programme agencies), key informant interviews and case studies, logical analysis of the arrangements in place, desk research (agencies reports) and benchmarking with other national programmes. The main limitation is the lack of comparison with other EU programmes, which has not been foreseen as part of this assignment.

Table 7.26 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Availability of monitoring data	Programme data analysis	 Major improvements have been made under Erasmus+ when it comes to availability of monitoring data. Systems have been put in place to enable data collection, the data is systematically connected and analysed
Views of stakeholders on user-friendly character of monitoring tools	Survey of agencies, NAs' reports, scoping interviews, review of programme data	 The set of monitoring tools is rather complex. Lack of user-friendliness has been highlighted in several other sections of this report
The extent to which project-level monitoring is proportionate	Logical analysis	 Though the voices questioning project-level monitoring tools are rare, a logical review of the processes in place, the compliance efforts needed compared to the use of these data and the size of the project shows that proportionality can be questioned, in particular for certain types of actions
View of programme agencies on the usefulness of legal basis indicators	Survey of programme agencies	 Overall the agencies welcome the legal basis indicators
Fitness of the legal basis indicators to assess programme performance	Logical analysis	 The output indicators are fit for purpose in most cases Result indicators are fit for purpose for KA1 but do not cover other types of actions sufficiently Impact indicators are not fit for purpose
Fitness for purpose of the monitoring data collected	Logical analysis	 While the fact that programme data is collected is a major improvement, the programme has gone in the opposite direction of too much data that is not being used. Furthermore the analysis identified several shortcomings in the validity and quality of the data
Erasmus+ is aligned with monitoring practices for other programmes	Benchmarking	 Erasmus+ monitoring follows similar procedures as other comparator programmes. In a number of areas Erasmus+ monitoring data is better than that available for other programmes

7.6.2 Overview of monitoring arrangements

The monitoring systems for Erasmus+ reflect how the programme and the monitoring needs have evolved during the past decade. At the moment there are several coexisting IT systems and tools supporting various monitoring functions of the programme – these are summarised in Table 7.27, and a more detailed picture is presented in Figure 7.22 Mapping of IT systems and business processes for Erasmus+. These two overviews alone give an idea of the complexity of these tools, as already noted in previous sections.

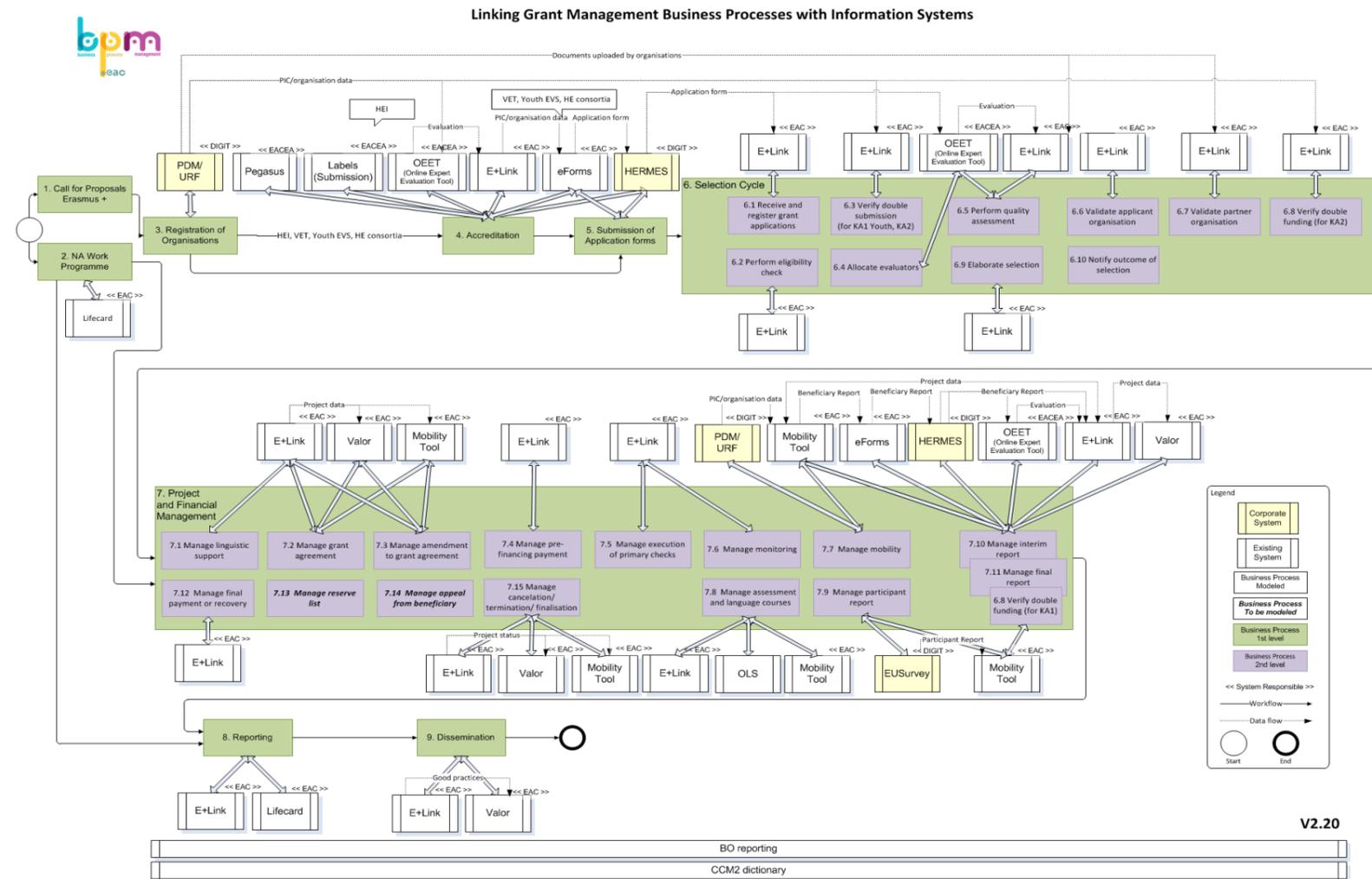
Table 7.27 Monitoring arrangements

Level and purpose	IT systems and tools
Project level – management	E+Link – the main system for management of decentralised grants (organisational level) Pegasus – the main system for managing centralised grants Mobility Tool – system for managing individual mobility actions
Project level – grant evaluation	OEET – online expert evaluation tool
Programme level – reporting and management	Business Object reporting → 'live' dashboard visualising key performance indicators
Programme level – dissemination	Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (EPRP) – summary overview of all grants (KA2 and KA3)

Level and purpose	IT systems and tools
Additional tools	<p>EU Survey – online survey administered for all KA1 beneficiaries through the Mobility Tool</p> <p>OLS – pre/post testing on language competence</p> <hr/> <p>PDM/URF – DGIT system for creation of unique organisational ID for all beneficiaries of EU programmes</p> <p>HERMES – DGIT system for management of application forms</p>

Source: ICF based on description of IT systems

Figure 7.22 Mapping of IT systems and business processes for Erasmus+



7.6.3 Suitability of indicators and targets used

One of the novelties of Erasmus + compared to predecessor programmes is the fact that a set of indicators have been defined in the programme legal basis and additional ones in the DG EAC strategic plan. Several of these indicators also have target values.

This approach of using a clearly predefined set of monitoring indicators is a clear improvement compared to the predecessor programmes.

However, the set of indicators chosen has a number of limitations:

- There is not a clear framework which shows how the chosen indicators relate to the programme objectives. As a consequence some of the programme objectives are not clearly covered by the indicators. For example there is no result indicator related to the objective to promote *sustainable development of partner countries in the field of higher education*. The objective of the programme related to Jean Monnet actions – excellence in teaching and research about the EU is not well covered by the indicators in place. The indicators cover geographical scope and numbers of students taking part in JM teaching actions. None of these indicators measures quality as per objective of excellence. The indicator on number of students is a valid output indicator as it gives an overview of the scale of the action (and as such is useful to assess EU added value). The indicator on country coverage seems of secondary importance as it relates to the ambition to strengthen teaching about the EU beyond the EU but this is not a specific programme objective.;
- On the other hand the relevance of some of the indicators used in relation to the programme objectives is unclear – for example there are two output indicators related to information and guidance networks - one on the numbers of users of Euroguidance and one on users of Eurodesk. There are however no output indicators on bigger and potentially more strategic networks/ platforms such as eTwinning or School Education Gateway.
- There are hardly any indicators related to key action 2 and the degree of cooperation, sharing and learning and innovation as a result of the programme;
- The target values for a number of indicators have been set at levels which appear either lacking ambition (lower values regarding outputs than what predecessor programmes delivered) or which appear somewhat arbitrarily set (e.g. the difference in values regarding learners' perception of improvement in foreign language skills across sectors). These issues are discussed in section on legal basis indicators in effectiveness.
- Finally the monitoring tools do not always enable to measure the extent to which a given indicator is being met as the data collected does not match the definition of the indicator. This is for example the case regarding the indicator on share of students who state that mobility helped them improve their key competences. This point again is discussed in the effectiveness section part on legal basis indicators.

7.6.4 Proportionality of monitoring systems at project level

The following systems and measures are available for project-level monitoring:

- online interim and final project reports and their data in EPlusLink (or Pegasus);
- assessment of reports by external assessors (OEET);
- specifically for mobility actions:
- population of data in Mobility Tool;
- survey of all beneficiaries;
- language testing through OLS;
- monitoring meetings organised by the agencies;
- on-the-spot visits (ad hoc) organised by the agencies.

According to the survey of programme agencies, the vast majority of them consider the monitoring mechanisms at project level as effective.

Selection process

In the current programme there are two types of application processes:

- automatic grants are allocated for some mobility actions under KA1 where an institution has proven to comply with a relevant mobility charter;
- grants based on an evaluation of two external assessors against a set of quality criteria.

Use of automatic grants is in general welcome by the organisations concerned as well as the agencies. The main issue raised by the beneficiaries is that not all demands can be satisfied given the budgetary envelopes (in particular in higher education); however, this is more an issue of budget availability rather than a concern about efficiency of this process of budget disbursement. In VET, some agencies believe the bar of the VET Mobility Charter is set too high for newcomers.

The evaluation of grant applications by external assessors is a well-established process commonly used by the Commission also for other programmes. Stakeholders are used to it and it is well accepted. The only areas where negative feedback was received from beneficiaries concern:

- lack of clarity about how some criteria are applied; and
- lack of detailed feedback to the rejected projects.

Having said that, the following logical analysis can be made.

- The process of application selection based on external assessors' judgements is useful to identify and eliminate project applications that are of low quality. It is less useful to identify and select the most promising projects when the mass of applications are of average quality. Most project assessors (62 %) tend to agree that the current selection process rewards those who are good at writing applications and reflects less well the true potential to deliver good results. Some organisations have a great deal of experience of writing project applications and others none or little. Furthermore, organisations work with intermediaries who prepare applications. Therefore there may be a mismatch between the application and the reality of the project idea and organisation's capacity to deliver it.
- As shown by the survey of project assessors as well as the expert panel assessment, the majority of applications received tend to be of average quality. To receive grants project applicants need to prepare detailed and long application forms (independent of the value of the grant), the quality of which is not necessarily related to the quality of results. There is a lot of flexibility in the assessment of project applications (the assessment grids are not particularly detailed, specifying more detailed criteria for points allocation). This flexibility means that a lot depends on the judgement of the assessor and, given the low success rates, very similar projects have different chances of success depending on who is assessing. Consequently, there is some element of arbitrary selection, which however does not pair up well with the need for detailed application forms.
- The success rates in certain sectors and certain types of actions are rather low meaning that there is a high number of applicants whose resources are wasted on writing detailed proposals.
- Therefore, the question can be raised whether a selection process that requires excellent applications yet which results in funding average projects is proportionate, in particular for projects of lower value. An approach based on less detailed proposals, taking into account criteria that could be linked to organisational features for example (bonus points for newcomers, organisations from disadvantaged areas,

etc.) could result in diminishing the costs of proposal preparation as well as the costs of application selection.

Implementation and closure

Several systems are in place for monitoring the portfolio of projects to programme agencies. These systems have been put in place to:

- identify irregularities;
- inform decisions about payments;
- provide data on outputs and results to enable performance-based management of the programme.

The review of programme data for this evaluation shows that there is much more data collected about individual mobility actions than about cooperation actions. Beneficiaries of mobility actions have to fill in an online survey after the mobility experience. The survey is administered to all beneficiaries. The survey is not the only form of report as all beneficiaries also have to submit an individual mobility report. Considering the values of mobility grants, having to do both seems disproportionate. Furthermore, the review of programme data by the evaluation teams suggests that no use is made of the data collected through individual beneficiaries' mobility reports.

Beneficiaries of other types of actions have to provide final reports which are assessed by external experts. Here again, the following questions about proportionality can be raised:

- the type of reporting does not take into account differences in project size;
- most of the data from the reports is not used for programme management but simply for payment authorisation;
- the reports as such are not the main project outputs based on which the quality of the project is judged. In particular, for larger projects, the quality is better judged based on the intellectual outputs produced (project deliverables).

7.6.4.1 Proportionality of monitoring systems for NAs and EACEA

The monitoring of the work of NAs and EACEA is monitored (i) through the data about project portfolios arising from the above systems and (ii) through the annual reporting of the agencies.

The annual reports of agencies have changed compared to the predecessor programmes. They follow a more open structure.

According to the survey of programme agencies:

- 69 % of agencies believe the time spent on reporting is proportionate to the size of funds managed (63 % agree and 6 % strongly agree); and
- yet they note the lack of time and resources for proper content-related monitoring and reporting rather than focusing on outputs and financial inputs.

The evaluation collected only ad hoc evidence that the monitoring data is actually used for performance-based management at the level of agencies. While through the online tools the agencies have access to data from the dashboard, beneficiaries surveys as well as project reports, only a couple of agencies seem to have in place strong performance-based monitoring systems (e.g. the French NA in education and training).

7.6.4.2 Monitoring indicators and related data

Compared to the predecessor programmes, the availability and quality of programme data has improved. The improvement was radical in certain areas – in particular the international actions in higher education but also for example actions in the youth strand. In others the improvement was smaller because some of the E+ tools were already being used under LLP.

The main improvements are:

- systematic data is now available on outputs while under predecessor programmes for some sectors even basic output data on numbers of final beneficiaries was missing (mobile teaching staff or mobile young people – e.g. in the youth field outside EVS);
- several results indicators based on beneficiaries self-perceived improvements are systematically monitored through ongoing surveys;
- OLS – though not primarily a system for programme monitoring – allows for robust measurement of language improvement;
- an interactive online dashboard is available for Commission services and the agencies presenting key performance indicators;
- performance targets have been set to enable judgements on programme performance – even though, as discussed in the effectiveness sections, several of these targets could be questioned.

Overall the programme agencies consider that the legal basis indicators provide a good overview of programme results and ensure effective measurement of progress made.

Nevertheless, the following negative observations can be made.

- The volume of data collected is disproportionate to the data that is actually being used or that is necessary.
 - (i) There are very large volumes of qualitative data from KA2 and KA3 projects that are never analysed or synthesised centrally.
 - (ii) The volume of data from KA1 beneficiaries is unnecessarily large. Smaller samples would be sufficient to get an accurate view of programme performance on core indicators. A more differentiated approach to the surveys could be used with ad hoc modules or longitudinal data.
 - (iii) More could be made from the analysis of beneficiaries surveys by carrying out more complex cross-comparisons.
- The IT systems are complex, which means that in order to be analysed the data requires a substantial volume of checks and cleaning manipulations.
- The questionnaires for the KA1 survey could be improved (and a similar survey could be administered for KA2 and part of KA3):
 - (i) It is not uncommon that on a similar topic, each sector uses a different formulation of a question, making cross-comparisons problematic;
 - (ii) The questions focused on results are formulated in a highly subjective manner meaning that respondents are likely to provide positive answers.
- The legal basis indicators have a number of shortcomings:
 - (i) Not all the data for these indicators is being collected through the monitoring systems in place (for example the data on sport is not in line with the definition of the indicators);
 - (ii) There are issues with the quality of the data in relation to some of the indicators (see section on effectiveness);
 - (iii) In some cases the definition of the indicator is different to the data collected (e.g. the indicator on Jean Monnet is about number of learners while the data collected is about number of participants).
- The impact indicators in the legal basis are not adequate to measure the impact of the programme. Some of the result indicators are not really about results but rather

about outputs (e.g. Jean Monnet or sport). There is little focus on result indicators from cooperation actions.

7.6.5 Use of the monitoring data

DG EAC appears to be the main user of the monitoring data for the moment. The monitoring data is available through the dashboard to DG EAC policy officers for their own monitoring of the programme. The data is also presented in annual publications. However there is overall little publicly available data on the programme performance. The annual reports focus primarily on funding distribution and outputs and only minimal use is made of the Erasmus + monitoring surveys. For example the 2015 annual report contains one reference to an indicator from the Erasmus + monitoring of survey (level of satisfaction with mobility). There are other European programmes (for example EASI, Horizon 2020) which have much more result focused annual reports. There are also EU programmes (e.g. ESF or Marie Curie actions) which have online dashboards on outputs and inputs available to the general public. This limited number of data available can negatively affect the visibility of programme performance.

However, the dashboard only uses some of the data that is being collected. In particular the data collected through the Erasmus + monitoring surveys is not systematically integrated into the dashboard and is generally under-analysed. The evaluation saw that the data was at best used to provide very basic descriptive statistics on frequency of different response patterns. Even simple more advanced comparisons such as cross-tabulations of different responses are not being done.

Another user of the data are national agencies. While they are aware of the dashboard and mostly appreciate its existence, they also underline that some of the functionalities of the tool are not optimal. Only a few cases were found where the national agencies take ownership of the data and carry out their own analysis. For example the French national agency did prepare publications based on the Erasmus + Monitoring surveys in the past.

Overall, the data appears to be under-analysed and underused for decision making purposes.

7.6.6 Comparison with national comparator programmes

Regular monitoring and availability of good data as well as quality monitoring tools are essential in assessing the efficiency of a programme. As shown in the table below, the regulation establishing Erasmus+ clearly outlines the need for regular monitoring and reporting on the performance and results of this programme. Such monitoring is particularly focused on European added value, distribution of funds leading to impact and the use of funds. The European Commission operates the Erasmus+ Project Results portal²⁹³, which gives access to descriptions, results and contact information of all projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessor programmes in the field of education, training, youth and sports, including good practices and success stories, impact and policy relevance.

Table 7.28 Overview of the monitoring of Erasmus+

Monitoring of Erasmus+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1. The Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, shall regularly monitor and report on the performance and results of the Programme as measured against its objectives, with particular regard to:

²⁹³ Available online at: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

Monitoring of Erasmus+

- (a) the European added value referred to in Article 3;
- (b) the distribution of funds associated with the education, training and youth sectors, with a view to ensuring, by the end of the Programme, an allocation of funding which guarantees a sustainable systemic impact
- (c) the use of the funds derived from the external instruments as referred to in Article 18(4) and their contribution to the respective objectives and principles of those instruments

Source: 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

Looking at the comparator schemes, the level and detail of monitoring is highly variable. Four programmes monitor and 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 been evaluated – and we assume that such evaluations will be performed annually (or at least more than once). 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.

The facts from the Baltic–American Freedom Foundation are published to demonstrate the levels of funding and degree of participation.

Furthermore, there are schemes among the comparators that had partial evaluations. For example, the review of the Causeway programme in 2012–2016 was carried out with the Irish beneficiaries but not the British ones. Feedback from the UK participants was gathered in the Zambia Summary Report of the IDEALS programme. In the case of AKTION, evaluation was conducted 18 years ago on the Czech side and 15 years ago on the Austrian side. Since then, the programme has been considered to be of high quality and no evaluations have been made. Having said that, the Austrian side did an analysis in 2015 based on research publication outputs, and the cooperation with the Czech Republic has been evidenced as the most intense.

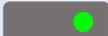
The table below summarises the findings, highlighting the alignment of Erasmus+ monitoring with its comparators. It comes across as rather well aligned with the approach taken by 10 comparator schemes in terms of performance evaluation or other planned monitoring activities. It has partial alignment with four other schemes, where the programme’s activities are being reviewed and controlled via annual reports or similar information. Little or no alignment is noted in relation to two comparators (IDEALS and CTEP), where monitoring is done through somewhat voluntary participation. Overall, the findings suggest that the monitoring activities of Erasmus+ follow a very similar practice to that of its national comparators. This is a positive finding as some of the comparators that are well aligned with Erasmus+ have extensive monitoring arrangements and undergo complex independent evaluation, in line with the general approach to supporting better governance and improving the efficiency of the programmes. The monitoring and evaluation system of Nordplus Higher Education Programme, in particular, shows significant similarities with Erasmus+. Erasmus+ is a much bigger programme than any of its comparators. Yet the monitoring arrangements seem to be very similar between Erasmus+ and its comparators, which suggests the relative efficiency of Erasmus+. Although more investigation of the specific evaluation methods and tools used by each of the comparators would be needed, as well as the

evidence on the resources and capacities needed to undertake this monitoring for Erasmus+, the findings from this benchmarking exercise suggest that Erasmus+ is able to monitor much larger funds using similar approaches as some of the much smaller schemes.

There are two areas in which Erasmus+ monitoring practice can be considered better than that of other programmes:

- availability of true result data based on actual pre/post competence assessment through the OLS; and
- availability of a large volume of beneficiary survey data collected on an ongoing basis rather than solely during one-off evaluation exercises.

Table 7.29 Traffic-light visualisation of the alignment of the monitoring of Erasmus+ with the comparator schemes

Comparator scheme	Comparator scheme	Alignment of the monitoring of Erasmus+
AKTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are annual reports ▪ The evaluation was done 18 years ago on the Czech side and 15 years ago on the Austrian side. Since then, the programme has been considered as high quality and no evaluations have been made ▪ The Austrian side did an analysis in 2015 based on research publication outputs and the cooperation with the Czech Republic has been evidenced as the most intense 	
Baltic–American Freedom Foundation professional internship programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foundation Facts are published to demonstrate the levels of funding and degree of participation 	
Causeway – British–Irish Exchange Programme for Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Léargas undertook a review of the Causeway Programme from 2012–2016. This review was carried out with beneficiaries from the Republic of Ireland through an online survey, a review of submitted final reports and a one-day evaluation event in the Léargas office 	
CEEPUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each mobility within the project is being reviewed/controlled by the staff of the DZS in the database 	
Charles de Gaulle Trust partnerships (British Council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ n/a 	data points missing
Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Send out evaluation form; however there is no obligation ▪ Different agencies will collect their own information ▪ No real evaluation 	
Denmark–USA programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All beneficiaries are obliged to send reports on their activities, in some cases also with small stories from participants that are published on the beneficiaries’ websites 	

German–French elementary school teacher exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants send a report at the end of their mobility stay Annual synthesis report is prepared Stakeholders to this programme (representatives of ministries) meet once or twice per year to discuss the evolution of the programme 	
Gjør Det! (Do It!)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SIU evaluates the scheme through a close dialogue with the institutions. SIU uses good practice from Erasmus+ in their evaluations of the scheme There are regular gatherings and kick-off seminars with the project managers from the institutions 	
IACOBUS Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An evaluation covers the programme activities from 2014/15 The evaluation provides an overview of activities, funding and a survey among participants Apart from that, only call documents and call results are published 	
International Inspiration Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final evaluation of the International Inspiration Programme was published in 2013 	
Nordplus Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All organisations that receive financial support from the Nordplus Adult programme must submit a project report within 30 days of the end of the contract period and an interim report is required for projects with duration of 18 months or more The programme was evaluated in 2015 	
Prämienprogramm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual reports for 2013 and 2014 were performed The programme was audited by the German Federal Court of Auditors. However, the audit is not published A recent evaluation only touching on the programme is not yet published 	
Programme for Cooperation of Schools and Scholarships (EEA and Norwegian funds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were 17 monitoring visits conducted in two years 	
The Fulbright Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evaluations but there some internal annual reports 	
The German–Turkish Youth Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of the Youth Bridge is ongoing 	
The Nordplus Higher Education Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone receiving a grant is obliged to submit a final report Nordplus agencies carry out inspections, including financial audits, and all documents related to the project have to be kept for a minimum of five years after the final report is submitted The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat is 	

	responsible for submitting an annual report on Nordplus activities, based on reports from the main coordinator, to the Council of Ministers for Education and Research/Senior Officials for Education and Research and the Education and Research Ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme was evaluated in 2015 	
UK Sport's IDEALS programme (International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each participant is required to fill out a report at the end of their exchange (at least for some of the universities) 	

Note:  – full alignment,  – partial alignment,  – little or no alignment

7.7 Anti-fraud measures

To what extent have the anti-fraud measures allowed for the prevention and timely detection of fraud?

The number of fraud cases reported is low compared to the scale of the programme. Overall there is a limited scope for fraud in the types of actions carried out under the programme. The main concerns are coordinators failing to honour obligations to other partners, and possible multiple submissions of project applications. There is a high degree of satisfaction with the detection mechanisms among programme agencies.

Table 7.30 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
Number of cases of fraud reported	Commission central data	 The number of cases reported per year is minimal compared to the number of projects funded
Share of agencies that consider that the measures in place are sufficient	Survey of programme agencies	 The vast majority of agencies consider that the measures are fully sufficient
European Commission considers the measures as sufficient	EC interview	 The Commission sees the current measures as proportionate to the risks of fraud within the programme but at the same time continues to enhance the mechanisms to detect fraud

According to the legal basis in Regulation 1288/2013, there has been a system of controls put in place for the programme to prevent fraud at the EU and national levels (see table below). The main features of anti-fraud measures to be observed by programme national agencies are defined in the *Guide for national agencies: Implementing the Erasmus+ programme*²⁹⁴.

Table 7.31 Summary of the key anti-fraud measures for the Erasmus+ programme

Level	Key anti-fraud measures
-------	-------------------------

²⁹⁴ http://www.bip.nauka.gov.pl/g2/oryginal/2016_05/ebc75c7ced412dbf6c8adf396da8c919.pdf

EU level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In line with the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS, coordinated by OLAF), DG EAC has developed its own anti-fraud strategy, which is updated regularly ▪ DG EAC participates in the Fraud Prevention and Detection Network and keeps close contact with relevant colleagues in EACEA, REA, etc. ▪ The Commission is responsible for the supervisory controls with regard to the Programme actions and activities managed by the national agencies (Article 31) ▪ The Commission or its representatives and the Court of Auditors conduct audits, on the basis of documents and on the spot, in relation to all grant beneficiaries, contractors, subcontractors and other third parties and can conduct audits and carry out controls in relation to the national agencies (Article 32) ▪ OLAF may carry out on-the-spot controls and inspections of economic operators concerned directly or indirectly by such funding (Article 32)
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The national agencies are responsible for the proper management of programme funds and primary controls of grant beneficiaries for the programme actions and activities (Article 31) ▪ National agencies designate an independent audit body (Article 27 5) ▪ National agencies reimburse funds not recovered in the cases of fraud (Article 27 (13))

Source: Regulation 1288/2013

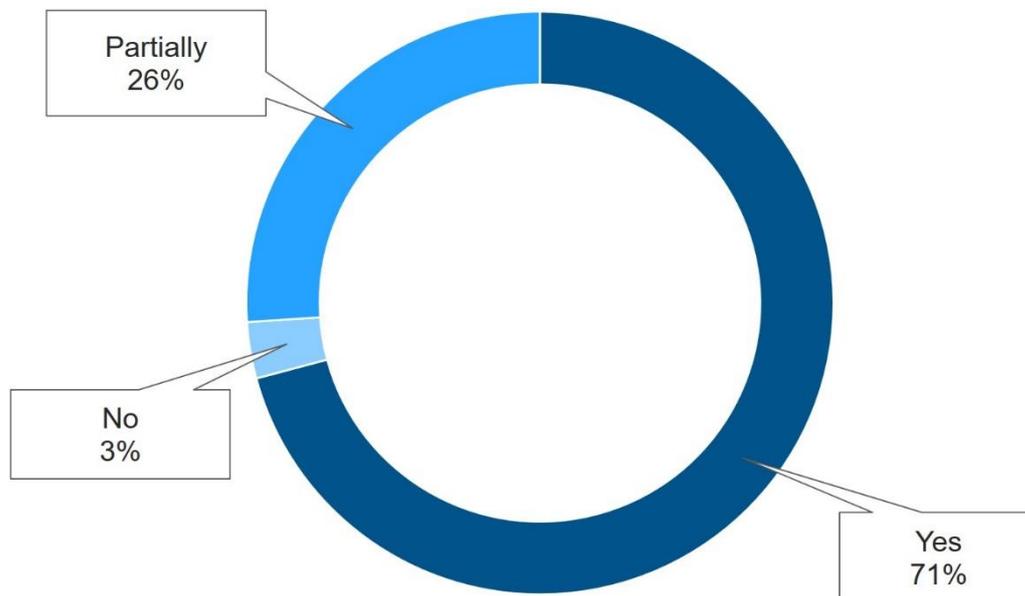
The guide for national agencies defines the steps and procedures for identifying, handling and reporting irregularities and fraud. In line with this procedure, the agencies report any cases to the European Commission. The numbers of cases reported for Erasmus+ so far is minor compared to the volume of programme beneficiaries²⁹⁵. The cases reported concern primarily occasions where leaders failed to honour obligations to their partners. In all cases NAs proceed to recover the necessary amounts.

In the survey of programme agencies, the agencies were asked about the numbers of cases. All stated that the number of cases was minimal (one or two per year or per the whole period) or none. Hardly any agencies commented on the type of fraud. In a few cases the agencies mentioned that they occasionally receive multiple requests for the same project.

The agencies were also asked whether they considered the measures in place as sufficient. As shown in Figure 7.23 most of them consider these are fully or partially appropriate. Only three respondents stated they were not appropriate and suggested improvements (see below).

²⁹⁵ In the context of the Yearly Management Declaration, NAs are required to report all cases of irregularity and potential fraud. The 2016 reports showed a very small percentage of projects affected.

Figure 7.23 Are the current anti-fraud measures appropriate in preventing and detecting suspicions of irregularity or fraud in a timely manner?



Respondents (n = 97). 1 'other' response omitted from graph)

The following suggestions were made about how to improve the current anti-fraud measures.

- Facilitate checks for multiple submissions of identical projects – across countries. The currently existing system was considered by one respondent as too complicated and resulting in arbitrary results. Checks based on a similar system and tools to verify plagiarism were recommended.
- Ban organisations guilty of fraud from further applications as well as the persons responsible for these organisations. Make a public blacklist of organisations proved guilty of fraud. Such a list is already in place at Commission level, in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) database, which NAs now have access to; however, it is not public and open to potential applicants.
- Increase the number of 'on-the-spot' checks and provide more time for these verifications.

Each of these suggestions was mentioned by a couple of respondents.

The Commission described measures that are being taken to address the above. However, it is also necessary to consider the ratio of administrative burden compared to money saved and recovered. There is awareness of the fact that the low number of fraud cases identified could be somewhat underreported; however, the cases of fraud identified remain minor. The main challenges noted concern quality rather than fraud as such (for example similar applications being submitted from one year to another). Given the volume and type of challenges there is a perception that current detection measures are proportionate. At the same time the Commission is exploring possibilities on how to strengthen fraud detection as the programme moves to its later phases, where more tests and checks can be performed on the accumulated population of grants.

8 EU added value

8.1 Summary

This section shows that overall EU funding for Erasmus+ has strong EU added value. This is supported by an analysis of several criteria and indicators. The analysis of EU added value builds on the analysis presented in the effectiveness section. The main sources of insight are, in addition to results on effectiveness, benchmarking with comparator programmes, a survey of programme agencies, logical analysis and a Delphi survey of experts. As for all other sections this is complemented with feedback from the OPC and national authorities' reports.

In the sectors of education, training and youth, the analysis shows clear added value in terms of the following.

- Scale – other comparable actions in areas of student and staff 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+. Individual actions exist in all the sectors covered by Erasmus+ but these are separate programmes. 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 could 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 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 relatively small number of countries covered by the SLGF, the EU added value is:

- a reduction in interest rates (compared to what the same financial intermediary normally charges if they cover that segment);
- a removal of the guarantor/collateral/resource requirement; or
- the opening of new product lines (if the segment would not have been served at all otherwise).

In the sport sector the assessment of EU added value is made difficult by the fact that the strand is new and started 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) actions has declined over the years since the action was launched, as the volume of research about the EU and teaching about the EU grew. This growth is not related to JM funding as this represents only a small share of research and teaching activities. 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 limited, given that teaching about the EU in this sector has become a common practice. The same applies to research. The situation is somewhat different in countries outside the EU where the opportunities to study about the EU are lesser. There is potential for greater EU added value targeting other audiences which have fewer opportunities to learn about the EU.

Most reports of national authorities confirm the above findings by stating that Erasmus+ and the predecessor programmes produce effects that could not have been attained through actions at national level only. Country reports highlight Erasmus+ impacts on the following.

- International mobility and cooperation opportunities.
- Internationalisation of institutions and organisations.
- Innovation and quality improvements based on learning from others.
- The promotion of European values and intercultural awareness.

Erasmus+ added value is more strongly acknowledged by the national reports in the youth sector. National funds for this sector are scarce and do not usually support internationalisation. In the sports field, the European added value is seen as being linked to the development of international activities beyond competitive activities but it is mentioned in a small number of reports.

The absence of Erasmus+ would result in the following,

- Steep decrease in mobility of learners, staff and international cooperation of organisations.
- Inequalities when it comes to access to mobility across countries and socioeconomic background.
- 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 of staff that would affect negatively learners too.

According to the NAU reports, collaboration between institutions and organisations at European level would be more complex to realise without Erasmus+. It would also be more difficult to ensure equal opportunities to participate for different organisations as opportunities would probably be linked more directly to organisational or regional resources.

The results of the Open Public Consultations indicate that opinions among the different categories of respondents (individuals replying in their private capacity and representatives of an organisation) are consistent. Overall the majority of respondents believe that the Erasmus+ programme brings clear benefits to the actions implemented.

- 96 % of respondents (n = 1264) agreed or strongly agreed that the Erasmus+ programme is funding activities which would not have been funded otherwise. Only nine respondents strongly disagreed.
- Similarly, 97 % of respondents (n = 1189) agreed or strongly agreed that the Erasmus+ programme is contributing to improving the national, European or

international support measures for the education, training, youth and sports sectors. Again, only nine respondents strongly disagreed.

- Further, 91 % of respondents (n = 1044) strongly agreed or agreed that lessons learnt from the Erasmus+ actions (which they were most aware of) are being disseminated (applied elsewhere). Notably, those with more detailed knowledge of the Erasmus+ programme were more likely to agree or strongly agree with this statement (92 %, n= 583) than those whose knowledge was to 'some extent' (90 %, n= 461).

Respondents also identified areas where they believed the Erasmus+ programme has clearly added value to the actions implemented on the national, European and international level including:

- providing opportunities for networking and cooperation between different stakeholders;
- facilitating cultural exchange and supporting mobility; and
- internationalisation.

A limitation of this analysis is the fact that the benchmarking could only cover a selection of programmes. The programmes were selected to ensure coverage of all the sectors as well as types of actions. To ensure sectoral coverage and types of actions coverage, examples of much smaller actions (in the sports field) are analysed alongside bigger programmes. The benchmarking did not use scale as the main criterion for selection and therefore, when talking about scale effects of Erasmus+, the sample of programmes used for comparison cannot be seen as representing all large initiatives, as if that was the case there would be a large imbalance in the sectoral coverage of benchmark programmes.

Another challenge is the fact that the survey of programme agencies relies very much on the perception of the experts responding rather than clear facts about other initiatives. The same applies to the Delphi survey. This analysis assumes that the respondents (national agencies' staff and persons in charge of assessment of applications) are highly knowledgeable about other activities concerning mobility and international cooperation in their countries and sectors.

8.2 Added value compared to national and international actions

What is the additional value and benefit resulting from EU activities, compared to what could be achieved by Member States at national and/or regional levels?

What does the Erasmus+ programme offer in addition to other education and training support schemes available at both international and national levels?

The evaluation found clear and strong volume effects as well as scope effects of the programme. The programme enables to reach out to substantially more learners, staff and organisations than any of the comparator programmes or the comparator programmes combined. The programme also enables to reach out to groups that are much more rarely covered by other programmes.

The evaluation also identified examples of process effects. In particular the well trialled and tested approach to mobility in higher education and its related quality framework are mainstreamed within the programme but also beyond. This concerns the principles of the University Mobility Charter. There are also other examples of process effects at EU level (for example from EVS to the EU Aid Volunteers scheme).

The only type of added value analysed where the results are less positive concerns role effects. It seems that the innovation potential of the programme is insufficiently exploited and as a result the innovations are rather ad hoc.

The main source of evidence for this evaluation is the comparison with other programmes through the benchmarking analysis, complemented with the results of the survey of programme agencies.

Box 1 Initiatives and programmes covered in the benchmarking analysis

Name	Sector(s)	Type(s) of action	Name	Sector(s)	Type(s) of action
AKTION	Higher education	Cooperation/ capacity- building projects Mobility	IACOBUS Programme	Higher education	Mobility
Baltic–American Freedom Foundation professional internship programme	Higher education Schools	Mobility	International Inspiration Programme	Sport	Cooperation/ capacity- building projects
Causeway – British–Irish Exchange Programme for Youth	Youth	Mobility	Nordplus Adult	Adult learning	Cooperation/ capacity- building projects
CEEPUS	Higher education	Mobility	Prämienprogra mm	Schools	Mobility
Charles de Gaulle Trust partnerships	VET	Cooperation/ capacity- building projects Mobility	Programme for Cooperation of Schools and Scholarships (EEA and Norwegian funds)	Schools, Higher education	Cooperation/ capacity- building projects Mobility
Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP)	Adult learning	Mobility	The Fulbright Programme Italy	Higher education, Adult learning	Cooperation/ capacity- building projects Mobility
Denmark–USA Programme	VET	Cooperation/ capacity- building projects Mobility	The German– Turkish Youth Bridge	Youth	Mobility
German–French elementary school teacher exchange	Schools	Mobility	The Nordplus Higher Education Programme	Higher Education	Cooperation/ capacity- building projects Mobility
Gjør Det! (Do It!)	VET	Mobility	UK Sport's IDEALS programme (International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport)	Sport	Mobility

Table 8.1 Key indicators

Indicators	Sources of data	Judgement
The extent of volume effects identified	Benchmarking and survey of programme agencies	 The programme funds substantially more mobility actions than comparator programmes. It also funds substantially more cooperation actions than comparator programmes
The extent of scope effects identified	Benchmarking and survey of programme agencies	 The programme covers fields rarely covered by other international mobility or cooperation actions in particular in the field of sport but also other sectors (except higher education).  The programme covers system-level cooperation actions that are very rarely covered by other programmes
The extent of role effects identified	Analysis of effectiveness	 The programme has positive effect on internationalisation of organisations and their networks. It does also have some innovation effect on organisations but hard impact on organisations is relatively rare and happens only where favourable conditions exist
The extent of process effects identified	Survey of programme agencies	 Examples of process effects exist at national as well as European level

The added value of the Erasmus+ programme was judged according to five main criteria.

- Volume effects – to what extent does Erasmus+ lead to a scale of action which would not have been otherwise achieved through national actions.
- Scope effects – to what extent does Erasmus+ engage target groups or types of actions or sectors that would not have been otherwise covered.
- Role effects – to what extent does Erasmus+ support innovation which is mainstreamed through other channels.
- Process effects – to what extent does Erasmus+ support process innovation which is translated into operational and implementation choices in participating countries.
- Transnational cooperation effect – to what extent does the programme support cooperation between countries that would not have happened otherwise.

8.2.1 Volume effects

Volume effects of Erasmus+ are judged according to the extent to which the Erasmus+ interventions have complemented/added value to national policy measures when it comes to the scale of international mobility and cooperation. The assessment of volume effects is mostly based on the benchmarking of Erasmus+ against comparator programmes.

8.2.1.1 Existence of comparable programmes

To answer the question of volume effects it is important to assess the extent to which there are any comparable initiatives funded nationally or internationally. The analysis shows that comparable national and international actions do exist (bilateral programmes, philanthropic actions, etc.) but that there are more of them focusing on mobility than on cooperation actions (grants).

The initial mapping exercise of comparator programmes (see Annex 12) identified 58 schemes across Europe which were comparable to Erasmus+. This included programmes which are active in more than one European region (i.e. mobility from Eastern to Northern Europe) and for the purposes of this study, these programmes counted for each region rather than just one. The same logic is applied when looking at field, activities and

target groups. Note that this mapping was not expected to be comprehensive. It was done for the purpose of selection of programmes for in-depth analysis. Nevertheless, it informs us about the scale and profiles of comparable initiatives.

Of the 58 potential comparator programmes two thirds fund either short- or long-term mobility-related activities (note that the analysed programmes could include short-term or long-term activities or both). Around one third of the comparable programmes included a measure of cooperation or partnership-building activities.

This in itself is a finding as it shows that the majority of comparable nationally or internationally funded international programmes in education, training, youth or sport focus on mobility and only a minority on cooperation grants.

A survey conducted with the national agency representatives asked about their awareness of relevant national or international programmes active in their countries. The relevance was indicated by having actions corresponding to those of Erasmus+ (KA1 mobility, KA2 and KA3 cooperation actions) and covering fields that correspond to Erasmus+ (mobility of learners, mobility of staff/practitioners, cooperation actions among organisations, and additionally system-level exchanges and innovation).

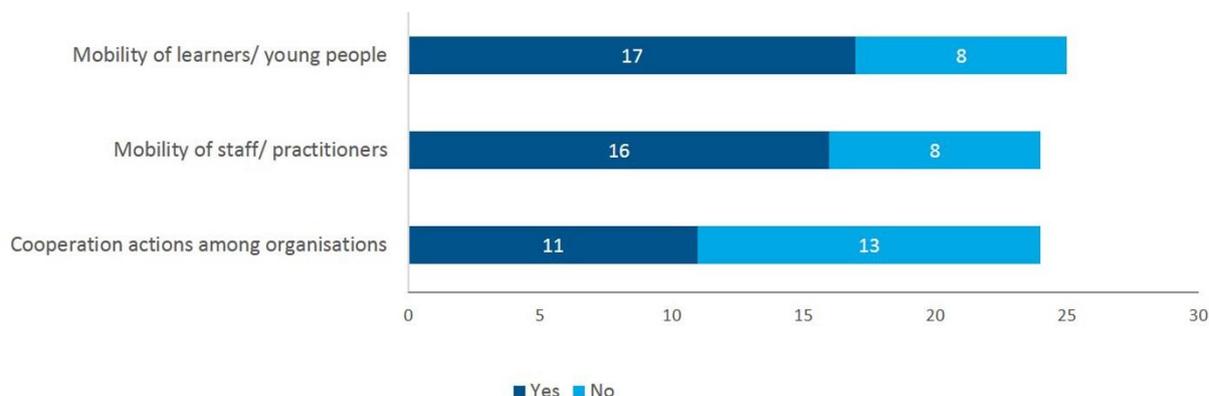
The above mapping can be complemented by evidence from the survey of programme agencies – specifically looking at the responses of national agencies.

The analysis of the survey shows that the volume of comparator mobility programmes, according to the views of national agencies, does not reach the same coverage as Erasmus+, with a significant portion of the informants not being able to identify similar national or international programmes in their country.

- Of the total national agency respondents 43 % knew of similar programmes that covered mobility of learners as opposed to 57 % who did not know.
- Of the total national agency respondents 42 % knew of similar programmes that covered mobility of staff/practitioners as opposed to 58 % who did not know.
- Of the total national agency respondents 38 % knew of similar programmes that covered cooperation actions among organisations as opposed to 62 % who did not know.

Only in the field of higher education was it possible for the national agencies to identify and name a high number of comparable programmes: 66 % of the respondents could identify and name comparable programmes covering mobility of learners and 65 % could identify comparable programmes covering mobility of staff/practitioners (see Figure 8.1 below). As key informants, with a good knowledge of the landscape, this would indicate that there are more higher education-related programmes which have comparable features to Erasmus+. This is an important consideration because for all other fields and for all types of actions less than 50 % of respondents knew of comparators.

Figure 8.1 National agency representative awareness of existing national or international programmes comparable to Erasmus+ in the HE field



Source: Results from survey with national agencies, calculations performed by the evaluation team

However, when it came to cooperation actions, the HE field demonstrates similar survey results to other fields where less than half of respondents are aware of comparators. Overall, 40 % of respondents could identify comparable programmes covering cooperation actions among organisations. Therefore, if there are cooperation actions, they are either not as well known or they tend to be less common than mobility actions in the HE field.

8.2.1.2 Scale of Erasmus+ compared to other programmes

The next question is to assess the scale of these programmes compared to Erasmus+. The analysis of comparator programmes shows that the scale of Erasmus+ is much bigger than that of other comparable schemes.

This assessment is made via the following sources:

- data about student mobility in general;
- data on outputs of comparable programmes; and
- views of programme agencies.

All three sources point to the conclusion that Erasmus+ scope effects are significant.

In the HE field the data on student mobility enables an approximate assessment of programme market share. However, this calculation is only very rough as the Eurostat data covers degree mobility (i.e. students who go abroad for a full degree) and not credit mobility.

In 2015 the total number of EU higher education students who benefited from degree mobility had reached 331,078²⁹⁶ (we acknowledge that the figure lacks input about mobility numbers for Spain, Greece and Poland). Erasmus+ supports only marginally degree mobility through the Joint Master’s Degree actions but most of the funding goes to credit mobility. There are only a few other actions that support credit mobility (see below) and they are of a much smaller scale. Therefore it is likely that Erasmus+ represents a great share of credit mobility in higher education. HE learner mobility supported by Erasmus+ in 2015 had reached 301,267 individual students (nearly the same number as degree mobility according to Eurostat). As these two modes of mobility are mutually exclusive it can be assumed that there were around 650,000 students mobile in higher education and of them around half were mobile thanks to Erasmus+.

²⁹⁶ Eurostat (2017), Degree mobile graduates from abroad by education level, sex and field of education. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/educ_uae_mobg01

A pilot study on IVET learning mobility and general youth learning mobility²⁹⁷ estimated that roughly 3 % of VET learners from 16 countries that participated in the study benefit from mobility actions. While the study acknowledges that the data is not of sufficiently good quality, it still can be used to conclude that the share of Erasmus+ funded mobility in this total number is significant. The reasoning to underpin this judgement is as follows.

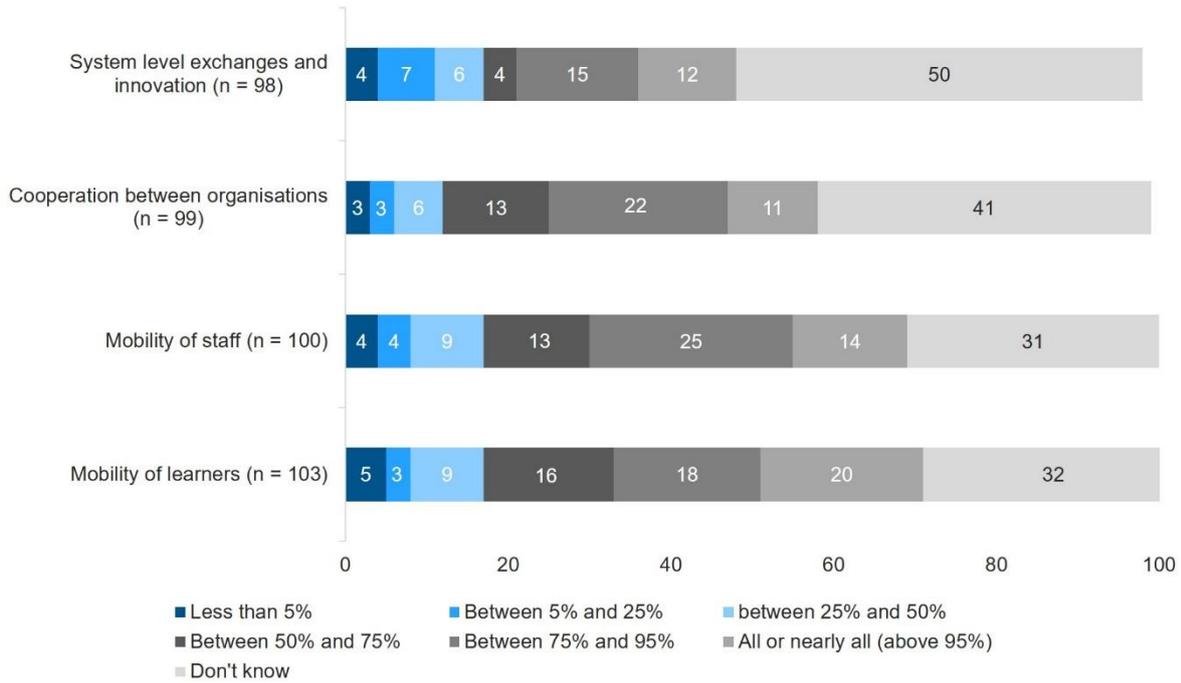
- 3 % would correspond to roughly 320,000 learners if taking the sum of total VET students in these countries in 2015. Note that this is only a proxy as the Eurostat survey was not based on a survey of VET learners in a specific year only. The basis for the 3 % calculation is not all the students enrolled in VET in a given year but all the respondents who had an upper secondary VET qualification (independent of when they studied).
- Some of these students would have been mobile in the first year of their studies and others later on so if the above is reported to a specific year it is likely to be a lot lower.
- In 2015 Erasmus+ allowed for 109,866 individuals to benefit from VET learner mobility and 46,000 in the 16 countries that took part in the Eurostat survey. Across three years (which is a common duration of VET studies) the programme supported around 150,000 mobile VET learners in these countries and if a five-year perspective is taken it would be around 210,000 (as the numbers in earlier years were lower).
- It is not clear whether the Eurostat survey surveyed only young people of a certain age or the whole population surveyed by LFS; therefore an accurate comparison between these numbers cannot be made but it is likely that a majority of the people who responded positively have been mobile through Erasmus+ or predecessors.

There is no comparable data about staff mobility nor is there comparable data about student mobility in other sectors.

National agencies were also asked about their perception of the market share of Erasmus+. If not considering the 'Don't know' answers, of which there were many, the data shows that most respondents consider that Erasmus+ funds more than 75 % of actions of a given type. Only when looking at system-level exchanges and actions did a relatively high number of respondents think the share of Erasmus+ was below 50 %. Interestingly many thought that the ESF was funding a strong share of activities in this area.

²⁹⁷ Eurostat (2015), Pilot data collection 2014 on IVET learning mobility and general youth learning mobility.

Figure 8.2 Perceived market share of Erasmus+ (number of responses)

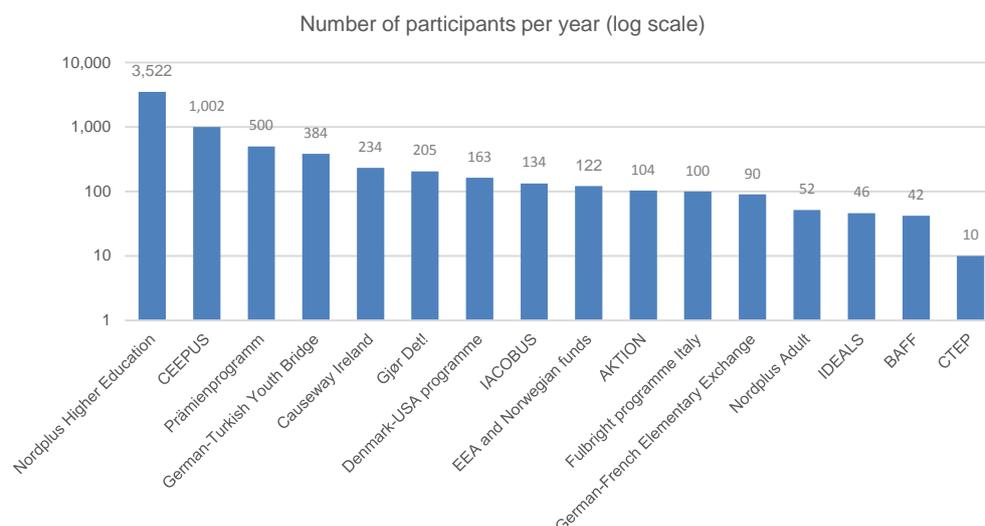


Source: Survey of programme agencies

8.2.1.3 Outputs of comparator programmes

Erasmus+ covers a variety of participants (i.e. teachers, learners, young people, youth workers, researchers, experts, and administrative staff). All other comparative schemes have a much narrower focus in terms of type of participants, which is noticeable in the numbers of participants. Figure 8.3 below shows the number of participants supported by the comparator schemes. Overall the comparator programmes are also much smaller in scale than Erasmus+ and predecessors. For reference, Erasmus+ has funded over 500,000 mobile learners every year since 2012 (earlier years saw smaller numbers). In higher education alone there were over 300,000 mobile students supported in the past years.

Figure 8.3 Number of participants in comparator schemes (average per year) – various sectors



Source: Consortium

Note: Average calculated based on the data reported from the managers of the comparator schemes; number of years taken into account in calculation varies. International Inspiration Programme and Charles de Gaulle Trust partnerships are not included as the data was not available.

This figure shows that the numbers of the Erasmus+ scheme participants can hardly be compared with the number of participants in the selected comparator schemes because of the differences in scope and variety of participants. The overview of the alignment of the number of participants in the Erasmus+ scheme with the comparator schemes is presented in the table below.

Table 8.2 Traffic-light visualisation of the alignment of the number of participants in Erasmus+ with the comparator schemes

Comparator scheme	Number of participants	Alignment of the number of participants in Erasmus+
AKTION	2015: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 645 students 216 academics (including within projects) 79 Czech people went to Austria; 25 Austrians came to the Czech Republic (small interest from Austria) <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Average of movement between Austria and the Czech Republic: 104	
Baltic-American Freedom Foundation professional internship programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2011 autumn-2012 spring: 37 scholarships 2012 autumn-2013 spring: 40 scholarships 2013 autumn-2014 spring: 47 scholarships 2014 autumn-2015 spring: 42 scholarships 2015 autumn-2016 spring: 44 scholarships <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Average: 42 scholarships	
Causeway – British-Irish	Approx. 234	

Comparator scheme	Number of participants	Alignment of the number of participants in Erasmus+
Exchange Programme for Youth		
CEEPUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2014/15: 576 incomings (625.5 scholarship months) and 426 outgoings (554.5 scholarship months) <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Total: 1,002 mobilities	
Charles de Gaulle Trust partnerships	n/a	Data point missing
Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to be significant, has now decreased significantly because of political changes 10 teachers exchanged in 2016 	
Denmark–USA Programme	Total 163: 108 students and 55 staff in projects awarded in 2015	
German–French elementary school teacher exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80–100 per year <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Average 90 per year	
Gjør Det! (Do It!)	150–180 learners and 20–60 accompanying persons per year <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Average per year: 205	
IACOBUS Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HE: 367 VET: 37 Scheme running 2014, 2015 and 2015, amounting to 134 per year 	
International Inspiration Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 256,000 practitioners 594 schools (of these, 288 were UK schools and 306 were overseas schools) Over 18.7 million children and young people <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not sensible to calculate the average as the time span is not known 	Available data does not allow for a sensible comparison
Nordplus Adult	In 2015: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen adults' key competences and recognition of adults' informal and non-formal learning (28 applications) To support adult education and learning to meet the challenges of modern citizenship (46 applications) To strengthen the link between adult learning and working life (35 applications). Of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 grants for preparatory visits 10 grants for exchange of teachers 8 grants for exchange of adults learners 1 grant for thematic networks 25 grants for development projects 1 grant for mapping projects <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Total number of mobility grants: 52	
Prämienprogramm	Approximately 500	
Programme for	Average/year: 122 mobilities	

Comparator scheme	Number of participants	Alignment of the number of participants in Erasmus+
Cooperation of Schools and Scholarships (EEA and Norwegian funds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 145 student mobilities and 98 staff mobilities in two calendar years 	
The Fulbright Programme Italy	Approximately 100 per year	
The German-Turkish Youth Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Exchange and Global Challenges between Germany and Turkey: 100 Go International – an exchange programme for VET students (since 2015): 9 New Horizons – Youth Exchange between Germany and Turkey: 155 young professionals Bridge Builders between Germany and Turkey: 120 <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Total: 384	
The Nordplus Higher Education Programme	2014/15: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total – 3,801; student – 1,564; teacher – 976; express – 1261 2013/14: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total – 3,434; student – 1,451; teacher – 829; express – 1,154 2012/13: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total – 3,331; student – 1,507; teacher – 742; express – 1,082 <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Average per year: 3,522	
UK Sport's IDEALS programme (International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport)	Since 2006, more than 400 British students, 74 university staff members and 30 young professionals (those working in the sporting environment) <i>Calculation by the evaluation team:</i> Average per year for 2006–2016 (11 years): 46	

Note: – full alignment, – partial alignment, – little or no alignment

8.2.2 Scope effects

Scope effects look at the target groups reached compared to other comparator programmes.

The evidence from benchmark programmes and the NA survey provide a solid case that Erasmus+ is a strong boost to mobility and cooperation in every field it targets. Disadvantaged groups are a special case of beneficiaries whose opportunities for mobility are largely the result of Erasmus+ intervention. The sports field is supported by only a small number of similar programmes among which Erasmus+ stands out as having the largest outreach.

Looking further into the fields covered by the comparator programmes, the school field was the target of around half of the identified schemes, with the higher education field constituting a little over 35 %. Significantly lower number of programmes included the

fields of youth and VET, both being below 20 % of the total 58 comparator programmes. And lastly, adult learning was found in around 10 % of the programmes.

The largest target groups of comparator programmes are students (school and HE) who are included in nearly 80 % of the 58 schemes. All the other target groups (that correspond to Erasmus+) are found in a significantly lower percentage of programmes, with teachers at around 22 %, youth at around 17 % and adults at around only 10 %.

The agencies were asked about their awareness of other comparable initiatives. The results show that:

- in the school sector slightly less than half of the respondents were aware of comparable actions (these covered evenly mobility of learners, practitioners and cooperation projects);
- in the VET sector fewer respondents were aware of comparable actions;
- in higher education around two thirds of respondents were aware of comparable actions;
- in adult education less than one third were aware of comparable actions;
- in the youth sector less than half were aware of such actions.

The analysis of the shortlisted comparator schemes provides evidence of a disparity between support for different fields covered by these programmes. Specifically:

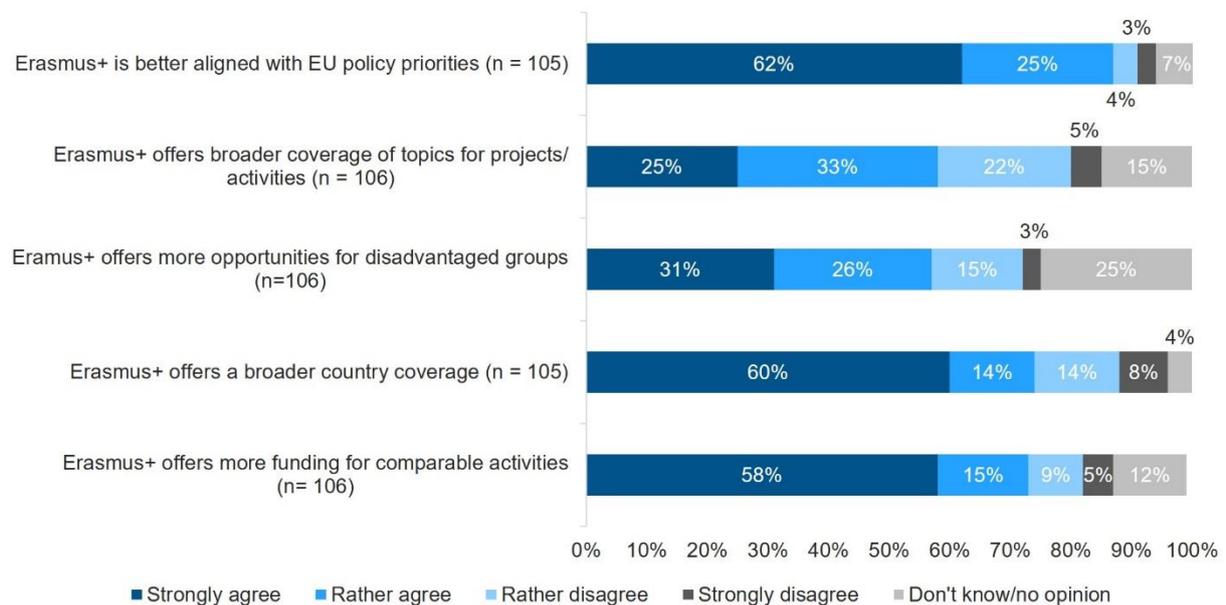
- 39 % of the shortlisted schemes supported actions in the higher education field;
- 28 % of the shortlisted schemes supported actions in the VET field;
- 22 % of the shortlisted schemes supported actions in the school field;
- 11 % of the shortlisted schemes supported actions in the youth field;
- 11 % of the shortlisted schemes supported actions in the sport field;
- 5 % of the shortlisted schemes supported actions in the adult field.

These numbers reinforce the results of the national agency survey, where the largest share of comparable programmes was identified for the higher education field. The shortlist can be said to be roughly representative of the cross-section of programme types found (in the long benchmarking list), for example, the field of youth was covered by less than 20 % of the total comparator programmes and adult learning was found in around 10 % of the programmes.

The analysis of the survey results for the three least supported fields (youth, sport and adult) reveals further nuances in terms of their development. The survey results demonstrate national agencies have knowledge of more programmes than the shortlist indicates. This could be explained by national agencies having a higher level of exposure to similar schemes which are comparable to Erasmus+.

It is evident that the strengths of Erasmus+ have positioned it to take up its significant role as a go-to programme for mobility and cooperation in terms of country coverage and funding. These two indicators may not be all that surprising; however, one aspect emerged that particularly demonstrates how Erasmus+ is a boost to other national programmes. This is the opportunity it creates for disadvantaged groups. Over two thirds of the respondents agreed with the notion that Erasmus+ offered more opportunities for disadvantaged groups (in comparison to other similar schemes).

Figure 8.4 To what extent do you agree with these statements about the comparison between Erasmus+ and other comparable initiatives?



Source: Survey of programme agencies

In Erasmus+ KA1, 9 % of participants had special needs or come from a disadvantaged background. When the study team undertook the initial evaluation of comparator programmes roughly 16 % had specific measures addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups. The youth field had the largest share of disadvantaged participants in KA1 mobility actions, with disadvantaged participants making up 24.7 % of the total number of participants in 2015. Considering that the youth field is among those that have fewer comparator programmes, the role Erasmus+ plays in supporting those with a disadvantaged background is undeniable.

Perhaps the largest scope effect is observable in the non-competitive sport field where, if not for Erasmus+, support available for learners, practitioners and organisations to engage in mobility and cooperation would be highly questionable. In the long list of comparator programmes only 3 % were directed at the sport field (see Annex 12, Figure 2.2 'An overview of the comparator schemes by the fields of activity'). Erasmus+ can be considered one of only a handful of programmes that targets the sport field and certainly the programme with the highest reach.

8.2.3 Role effects

While the volume and scope effects of Erasmus+ are substantial, its role effects appear to be more modest. Role effects are about the role the programme has in spurring innovation and mainstreaming it.

The section on effectiveness showed that while there are examples of innovations that emanate from funded projects, these are:

- ad hoc rather than systematically identified and mainstreamed;
- modest in scale compared to the volume of projects funded and outputs produced; and that
- soft changes and evolutions are more common than deep changes in institutional practices.

The key added value of the programme does not emanate from its capacity to support innovation. This could however be enhanced in the future as the programme does have a number of ingredients that could make that happen (collaborative approaches, policy willingness to use the programme to enhance innovation, attractiveness).

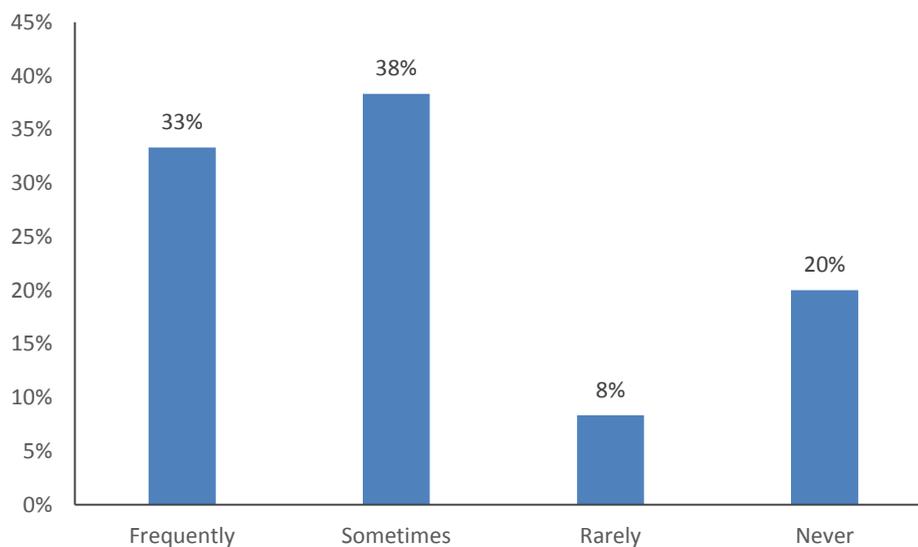
8.2.4 Process effects

Considerations about process effects are about the role of the programme implementation in influencing operational and implementation approaches of other programmes at EU or national level.

At national level the programme appears to have influenced other comparable programmes when it comes to the following.

- Quality frameworks, in particular for mobility such as the university and VET charter (there are clear examples that these criteria are also used for other programmes).
- Some types of actions have inspired types of actions funded through other programmes.
- Administrative rules of other comparable actions sometimes follow the same rules as Erasmus+.

Figure 8.5 Is there any influence/spill-over effect from Erasmus+/predecessor programmes to other programme(s) managed by your agency?



Respondents (n = 60)

Respondents have given the following examples of Erasmus+ process effects.

- Innovations from the EU programmes (administration, political targets) are often used in the national programmes as well.
- Focus on quality of mobility and cooperation with partners is a key factor which influences other programmes.
- Erasmus+ and predecessors have set the framework for student and staff mobility between higher educational institutions.
- The concept of learning outcomes and the European Quality Charter for Mobility are also applied in other programmes.
- There are similar elements in E+/LLP and the Nordplus programme: quality assurance and administration of Nordplus mobilities are very much inspired by Erasmus+.

- The youth exchange project educational concept has inspired and influenced the national programme 'Youth meetings' (national youth exchanges between youth from different cultural/language backgrounds).
- Erasmus Belgica follows the same rules as Erasmus+.
- At programme management level: best practices of EU programmes are continuously benchmarked and transferred to national programmes. Example: accessibility grants for participants with special needs. At participant level: e.g. Erasmus Mundus alumni are active in collaboration projects with their home countries, in partnerships funded by the Finnish government, both in industrialised and developing countries. Previous Tempus-funded partnerships are active in nationally funded Russia-related programmes.

At EU level several process effects have also been identified.

- The newly introduced EU AID Volunteers scheme for volunteers in humanitarian aid, also managed by the EACEA, follows similar principles as EVS when it comes to selection of participating organisations.
- A similar approach is also being envisaged for the European Solidarity Corps.
- There are other actions such as Erasmus for young entrepreneurs which use comparable approaches to Erasmus+ learner mobility schemes.

Furthermore, there are process effects within the programme. In particular the use of a mobility charter and the related automatic allocation of grants (no grant application being needed) was introduced from higher education to VET.

8.2.5 Degree of cooperation at country level

To what extent does the Erasmus+ programme promote cooperation between participating countries?

The data for this section is not covered in depth here as it is discussed in the effectiveness section under centrality of countries. Overall the network analysis showed that there is good integration of countries within programme-funded networks and that the integration is changing over time with countries that were more peripheral moving to more central positions. Overall the network analysis shows a good degree of cooperation.

When it comes to the added value of this cooperation, this is largely linked to the scope effects discussed above.

The programme supports cooperation at different levels:

- learners;
- staff and organisations;
- policy makers and stakeholders.

The greatest added value from a more systemic perspective comes from cooperation at the level of staff and organisations and that of policymakers and stakeholders.

The analysis of scope and scale effects found that the programme definitely enables international cooperation of a varied group of organisations and staff at a scale that is incomparable to other actions.

When it comes to cooperation of policymakers and stakeholders this cannot be fully differentiated from the OMC activities in the sectors concerned as the two are closely interlinked. While the OMC is a key vehicle for cooperation at this level, many activities organised in the context of ET 2020, the EU Youth Strategy and the EU Work Plan for Sport are funded through Erasmus+.

8.3 Added value compared to predecessor programmes

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?

In the grand scheme of things the key results of the programme have not radically changed between the two programming periods. The results for learners and staff are comparable and that is also the case for results at organisational level. It is too early say whether this programme will achieve stronger system-level changes.

The greatest added value of Erasmus+ compared to the predecessor programmes can be summarised as follows.

- Scale – the programme enables to reach out to more learners and staff and the scale potential has not yet been fully materialised as the budget increase is progressive and most of it will be observed in the next years of the programme.
- Cross-sectoral cooperation – the degree of cross-sectoral cooperation has indeed increased compared to the predecessor programme with the inter-sectoral co-participation rate moving from 47 % to 70 %. However, the inter-sectoral cooperation measured in this study is not necessarily about cooperation between for example the school and youth sector or higher education and the VET sector. Some of the increased cross-sectoral cooperation is due to an increase in the following types of partnerships: universities–enterprises, universities–public authorities, civil society organisations–enterprises, and civil society organisations–public authorities;
- Positive process effects within the programme such as some approaches to managing mobility are being streamlined to other sectors (for example automatic grants have been expanded to holders of the VET Mobility Charter as inspired by higher education).
- Efficiency gains – in particular when it comes to digitalisation and those related to the management efforts of the programme agencies but also increasingly in terms of beneficiaries.
- Better monitoring and tools to inform about performance of the programme – though there is still room for improvement to make these user friendly and sufficiently exploited.
- Clearer and systematic approaches for dissemination and exploitation of results underpinned by an overarching strategy led by DG EAC.
- Clearer international dimension (in higher education and youth). The integrated programme addresses the fragmentation issues reported in the interim evaluations of its predecessors. The fragmentation arose from the fact that multiple programmes funded international mobility, capacity building and cooperation in higher education (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa and Edulink).
- High/better visibility: the programme’s branding is well known and highly visible in media/social media. The fragmented nature of its predecessors, with different ‘brand names’ for each programme and even for each strand within a programme did not give such a visibility. The visibility of LLP as a programme overall was for example overshadowed by the fact that Erasmus was by far the most visible LLP subprogramme.
- Increased attention paid to ensuring synergetic approaches between the programme and policy priorities in the different fields covered: the alignment of the programme with ET 2020 working groups is for instance clearly set in the renewed mandate of the latter as in Erasmus+ priority objectives. However, as the evaluation found, in practice there is room to further strengthen this alignment.

- Existence of a clear pillar devoted to support system-level actions: this possibility offered through KA3 is a novelty value by most respondents.

The question of repetitive actions was also discussed under effectiveness. Their main added value comes from:

- reaching out to new learners – though mobility is repetitive it does reach out to different audiences each year;
- strengthening results at organisational level – repeated participation of organisations is needed to achieve deeper effect.

8.4 Consequences of 'no Erasmus+'

What would be the most likely consequences of stopping the Erasmus+ programme?

This section is based on findings extrapolating from evidence presented earlier in the report complemented with the insights from the Delphi survey. It shows that in absence of Erasmus+ there would be clear negative effects on mobility, international connectedness and more generally on the attitude to the EU among learners and staff and subsequently also organisations.

A Delphi survey of experts who frequently assess Erasmus+ applications and are selected for their expertise in a given sector by the programme agencies was used to give an indication of the likelihood with which other plausible alternatives would compensate for Erasmus+ (see methodological comment in the box below).

Overall, the views collected suggest that there would be little compensation from other sources.

- In most sectors of the programme, substantial compensation through other actions (national, philanthropic, sectoral, organisational or private ones) is unlikely. Higher education is the sector where a higher number of possible alternatives were considered as likely but even in this sector most alternatives were seen as unlikely.
- The alternatives which suggest that there would be compensation from public sources (national/regional level) or philanthropic sources are seen as least likely.
- The alternatives seen as most likely are those that would be funded by families or organisations on their own and therefore resulting in inequalities of access.

Even where compensation would exist this would vary across countries, with some countries having more resources to invest in this type of activities than others.

Box 2 Methodological explanation

The Delphi survey asked experts to rate how likely/unlikely they considered a range of alternatives to Erasmus+ funding. They were given alternatives for each of the types of actions (learner, staff mobility and cooperation actions). The alternatives were tailored to each sector but all had some comparable options which covered public funding, philanthropic funding or self-funding by individuals or organisations.

The table below gives an overview of how likely or unlikely the alternatives were considered overall. It shows that in general most of the alternatives were considered as unlikely.

The index is complemented by an extract of those alternatives that were seen as most likely and most unlikely in each sector.

Table 8.3 How likely is it that other actions would compensate for Erasmus+ funding if this was to cease?

	Learner mobility	Staff mobility	Cooperation actions	Alternatives considered as UNLIKELY	Alternatives considered as LIKELY
Schools	n/a	Unlikely (66 % 27 %)	Unlikely (70 % 26 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public authorities (national, regional or local) would have increased national funding for international mobility of school staff/ cooperation projects or created such funding if it did not already exist Many school teachers would go for an exchange abroad on their own initiative (self-supported) Many schools would have bilateral arrangements for international cooperation projects which would be funded from their own budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be no action of public authorities replacing (fully or partially) Erasmus + funding for international mobility of school staff Some schools would have bilateral arrangements for exchanges of staff and international cooperation projects which would be funded from their own budget The European Social Fund would have been used to fund international cooperation projects in schools
VET	Unlikely (62 % 25 %)	Unlikely (57 % 30 %)	Unlikely (55 % 31 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and regional or local public authorities would have increased funding for international mobility of VET learners, staff and for international cooperation projects in VET or created such funding if it did not already exist Many VET learners and teachers would go to study abroad on their own initiative (self-supported) Many VET providers would have bilateral arrangements for exchanges of VET staff which would be funded from their own budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be no action of public authorities replacing (fully or partially) Erasmus + funding for international mobility of VET learners Some VET learners and VET staff would go for an exchange abroad on their own initiative (self-supported) Some VET providers would have bilateral arrangements for exchanges of VET staff and international cooperation projects which would be funded from their own budget The European Social Fund would have been used to fund international mobility of VET staff and to fund international cooperation projects in VET
Adult education	n/a	Unlikely (66 % 27 %)	Unlikely (54 % 36 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public authorities (national, regional or local) would have increased national funding for international mobility of adult learning staff and for international cooperation projects in adult learning or created such funding if it did not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some adult learning centres would have bilateral arrangements for exchanges of staff and for international cooperation projects which would be funded from their own budget The European Social Fund would have been

	Learner mobility	Staff mobility	Cooperation actions	Alternatives considered as UNLIKELY	Alternatives considered as LIKELY
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> already exist Many adult learning centres would have bilateral arrangements for exchanges of staff and international cooperation projects which would be funded from their own budget Many adult learning centres would have a European/ international dimension in their teaching and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> used to fund international mobility of adult learning staff and for international cooperation projects in adult learning There would be no action of public authorities replacing (fully or partially) Erasmus + funding for international cooperation projects in adult learning
Higher education	Partially likely (51 % v 43 %)	Partially likely (52 % v 42 %)	Partially likely (50 % v 42 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public authorities (national, regional or local) would have increased national funding for international mobility of students or created such funding if it did not already exist Many higher education students and staff would go to study abroad on their own initiative (self-supported) There would be more private company funding supporting international mobility of higher education staff or philanthropic funding supporting international cooperation projects in higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some higher education students and staff would go to study abroad on their own initiative Some higher education institutions would offer international mobility exchanges of students, staff and would have bilateral arrangements / joint degrees with national and EU wide higher education institutions which would be funded from their own budget The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions would have been used to fund international mobility of students at higher levels of studies (masters/PhD) and international mobility of higher education staff. The Horizon 2020 and FP7 would have been used to a greater extent to fund international cooperation projects in higher education National funding for international cooperation projects in higher education would not be reduced
Youth	Unlikely (59 % v 31 %)	Unlikely (58 % v 32 %)	Unlikely (53 % v 33 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public authorities (national, regional or local) would have increased national funding for international mobility of young people/ volunteers, youth workers and international cooperation projects of youth organisations or created such funding if it did not already exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some youth organisations would offer international mobility exchanges for youth workers and for international cooperation projects from their own budget Some youth workers, young people and volunteers would go for an exchange abroad on

	Learner mobility	Staff mobility	Cooperation actions	Alternatives considered as UNLIKELY	Alternatives considered as LIKELY
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be more philanthropic funding supporting international mobility of young people/ volunteers in youth organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> their own initiative (self-supported) The European Social Fund would have been used to fund international mobility of young people/ volunteers and to fund international cooperation projects of youth organisations
Sport			Unlikely (57 % 32 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public authorities would have increased national funding for international cooperation projects in the field of sport or created such funding if it did not already exist National funding for international cooperation projects in the field of sport would be reduced There would be more philanthropic funding supporting international cooperation projects in the field of sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be no action of public authorities replacing (fully or partially) Erasmus + funding for international cooperation projects in the field of sport Some sport federations would have bilateral arrangements for international cooperation projects which would be funded from their own budget
Jean Monnet			Unlikely (64 % 33 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be more philanthropic funding supporting awareness-raising activities about EU studies Governments would have invested in teaching and research about the EU There would be actions replacing the Jean Monnet funding for teaching, research or awareness raising in the field of EU studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers would have used other national grant opportunities Universities would have included activities related to European perspectives without the need for additional funding Universities would have implemented from their own budgets activities focused on the EU such as seminars, conferences, debates, dialogue with policymakers, journalists and other specialists

Source: Delphi survey of experts (219 responses – between 24 and 40 per sector)

The experts were also asked to judge what would be the effect of the absence of Erasmus+ on various areas where Erasmus is seen as having an effect.

Overall the experts consider that the absence of Erasmus+ would have a range of negative or very negative effects.

- In all sectors of education, training and youth the absence of Erasmus+ is believed to result in much lower numbers of internationally mobile learners and staff. This confirms the earlier statement that compensation, if existent, would only be partial.
- In all sectors the degree of international cooperation would also be negatively affected.
- The absence of the above would negatively affect those areas where Erasmus+ is found to be making a positive contribution (internationalisation, foreign language skills of mobile learners and staff, attitude towards the EU).

Table 8.4 What would be the effect of the absence of Erasmus+?

	Effect on learners	Effect on staff	Effect on cooperation between organisations	Types of effects with clearest consensus among experts
Schools	<i>Not asked as no individual mobility at learner level²⁹⁸</i>	Very negative (79%)	Very negative (98%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In absence of EU funding the number of mobile teachers and international cooperation projects in schools would have been much lower The professional development opportunities for school staff would be negatively affected The overall degree of international mobility of school staff in the EU would be negatively affected The transnational exchanges on topics and methods of professional interest of school staff in the EU would be lower The extent to which new ways of working between teaching staff in schools are being introduced would be negatively affected
VET	Negative (74%)	Negative (61%)	Negative (54%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In absence of this EU funding the number of mobile VET learners, staff and international cooperation projects of VET in the EU would have been much lower The European dimension in VET education would be much lesser The overall degree of international mobility of VET learners in the EU would be negatively affected The accessibility of mobility to learners from low and middle income families would be negatively affected
Adult education	<i>Not asked as no individual mobility at learner level²⁹⁹</i>	Very negative (86%)	Very negative (75%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In absence of this EU funding the number of mobile trainers and international cooperation projects in adult learning would have been in the EU much lower The level of intercultural competences of staff in adult learning institutions in the EU would be negatively affected The overall degree of international mobility of staff in adult learning institutions in the EU would be negatively affected

²⁹⁸ Though the programme has effects on learners even outside mobility it was considered that asking experts about the potential effects on learners for those strands where there is no mobility would lead to very vague responses

²⁹⁹ Though the programme has effects on learners even outside mobility it was considered that asking experts about the potential effects on learners for those strands where there is no mobility would lead to very vague responses

	Effect on learners	Effect on staff	Effect on cooperation between organisations	Types of effects with clearest consensus among experts
Higher education	Very negative (84%)	Very negative (85%)	Very negative (82%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In absence of this EU funding the number of mobile higher education students, staff and international cooperation projects of higher education institutions in the EU would have been much lower ▪ The overall degree of international mobility of higher education students and staff in the EU would be negatively affected ▪ The accessibility of mobility to students from low and middle income families would be negatively affected ▪ The extent of transnational exchanges on topics and methods of professional interest of staff in higher education institutions in the EU would be negatively affected ▪ The extent to which higher education institutions offer courses / programmes in other languages would be negatively affected
Youth	Very negative (88%)	Very negative (81%)	Very negative (76%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In absence of this EU funding the number of mobile young people, volunteers, youth workers and international cooperation projects of youth organisations in the EU would have been much lower ▪ In absence of EU funding youth exchanges with neighbouring countries would have been much lower ▪ The overall degree of international mobility of young people in the EU would be negatively affected ▪ The level of political and community engagement of young people and youth workers in the EU would be negatively affected ▪ The overall degree of international mobility of youth workers in the EU would be negatively affected ▪ The extent to which new ways of working between youth workers are being introduced would be negatively affected ▪ The extent to which youth organisations are interconnected internationally would be negatively affected ▪ The capacity of youth organisations in my country to deliver good quality youth work would be negatively affected
Sport	<i>Not asked as no individual</i>	<i>Not asked as no individual</i>	Negative (71%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The scale of activities put in place by sport organisations to work with disadvantaged young people would be negatively affected ▪ The degree of cooperation between civil society and sport organisations in the EU would be

	Effect on learners	Effect on staff	Effect on cooperation between organisations	Types of effects with clearest consensus among experts
	<i>mobility at learner level³⁰⁰</i>	<i>mobility at staff level³⁰¹</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> negatively affected The degree of activities to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles in the EU would be negatively affected
Jean Monnet	<i>Not asked as no individual mobility at learner level³⁰²</i>	<i>Not asked as no individual mobility at staff level³⁰³</i>	Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The absence of Jean Monnet would have mainly impact on the countries outside the EU highly affecting the number of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> studies with integrated European dimension modules taught about the EU research project about the EU students and researchers taking part in programmes/ modules about the EU

Source: Delphi survey of experts (219 responses – between 24 and 40 per sector)

³⁰⁰ Though the programme has effects on learners even outside mobility it was considered that asking experts about the potential effects on learners for those strands where there is no mobility would lead to very vague responses

³⁰¹ Though the programme has effects on learners even outside mobility it was considered that asking experts about the potential effects on learners for those strands where there is no mobility would lead to very vague responses

³⁰² Though the programme has effects on learners even outside mobility it was considered that asking experts about the potential effects on learners for those strands where there is no mobility would lead to very vague responses

³⁰³ Though the programme has effects on learners even outside mobility it was considered that asking experts about the potential effects on learners for those strands where there is no mobility would lead to very vague responses

The Delphi survey presented above confirms the findings that can be drawn based on the analysis of programme effectiveness. The most obvious consequence of no action in this field at EU level would be a radical decrease in the scale of international cooperation activities at all levels and in all sectors. Student and staff mobility would drop steeply but so would any other cooperation activities between organisations.

The following might result from decreased learner mobility via Erasmus+.

- Some countries might compensate by scaling up the other comparable schemes. However, given the starting point these actions would be highly unlikely to reach the scale of Erasmus+.
- Differences in opportunities to access mobility would increase between countries as some countries would not be able to afford funding mobility from national funds.
- Differences between sectors would also increase and would probably concentrate on higher education where the existence of other schemes is greatest.
- Some mobility would still be funded by the learners/families themselves – most likely in higher education sector but also other sectors when it comes to actions such as foreign short-term language stays.
- As a consequence of the above differences in opportunities for mobility would also increase between those from more well-off family backgrounds and those from low-income families. The latter would most likely not be able to afford disbursing the amounts needed for sending young people abroad for a substantial period of time.

In turn this would negatively affect the international outlook of young people. It would also marginally negatively affect their foreign language skills, although other channels to develop these skills would continue being used. It would negatively affect their understanding of and support for the EU. This would be a result of both:

a) the lack of mobility;

b) the signal sent to young people and stakeholders that the most popular programme is being downscaled or discontinued. This would negatively affect many more than those who actually directly benefit from the programme.

Stopping Erasmus+ would also negatively affect international connections at organisational level. As above the scale of national actions might increase slightly but not sufficiently to replace the current programme. The above described issues – differences across countries, across wealthy and less wealthy organisations, sectors – would be also observed at organisational level. Over time the connections between organisations and staff would fade out and this would lead to a much smaller international outlook among education, training, youth and sport organisations. As a result the staff would be less internationally minded, which would have a negative effect on learners as well, given the globalised nature of our economies.

Stopping Erasmus+ would also very negatively affect the structures at national level which exist to support mobility and cooperation – namely the national agencies. These would certainly not survive such as cut as even though they often also manage other schemes these are of a much smaller scale. If these infrastructures did not exist the efficiency of other comparable schemes would probably be negatively affected in many countries. As shown in the efficiency section, Erasmus+ is managed particularly efficiently due to its scale.

At organisational level, in particular in universities, management structures would also suffer greatly. If the international cooperation offices disappeared or were radically downscaled this would again negatively affect the efficiency of management of other schemes. It would certainly also negatively affect results as:

- quality of mobility would diminish;

- recognition would relatedly diminish; and
- access for the disadvantaged would suffer as only those who were strongly motivated would find ways to access other schemes in the absence of central support.

9 Conclusions and recommendations

This evaluation analysed a body of primary and secondary data on Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes, thus expanding the body of existing evidence which shows the positive contribution of the programme to young people across the EU but also to participating organisations. The evidence presented in earlier sections shows that the programme continues to deliver strong EU added value and merits its reputation as one of the flagship achievements of the EU.

Each chapter related to the evaluation criteria begins with a summary of the main findings for a given evaluation criterion. These summaries give an overview of the main messages for each evaluation criterion. They are therefore not repeated here. Instead of making another set of conclusions evaluation criterion by criterion, this section summarises the main transversal findings. These are followed by findings related to aspects of the programme that could be further improved, followed by recommendations.

9.1 Main transversal conclusions

Erasmus+ continues to deliver good results for young people but also to be a well known and well regarded programme in general. Since their launch in the 1980s and 1990s, the EU programmes funding transnational mobility and organisational cooperation in education and training have contributed to developing the skills and competences of high numbers of young people. More generally, these programmes have provided a transformational experience for many young people and durably influenced their personal and professional paths. They have affected many practitioners in the sectors concerned and strongly enabled the internationalisation of participating organisations. The current programme continues to deliver strong results. The programme delivery but also its visibility have strongly benefited from the simplified structure and integrated nature of the programme, with the new programme structure being easier to understand by beneficiaries and easier to administer.

The programme continues to be a strong symbol of how the EU benefits citizens directly.

Building on the findings in earlier sections of the report, this section identifies the main clearly positive transversal conclusions. These conclusions are not accompanied by recommendations (as in the subsequent section) as they point out the key elements of the programme which are key to its success.

Conclusion 1 – Erasmus+ continues to be highly valued by the general public as well as by all stakeholders

Erasmus+ is an extremely well-known programme with a very strong positive image. Though not all the aspects of the programme are known to the same extent, the programme remains a flagship programme of the EU. It is regularly identified by citizens as one of the key positive results of the EU (according to the standard Eurobarometer surveys).

Beyond this positive image of the programme among the general public, the programme is extremely well regarded by young people as well as all types of stakeholders, be it policymakers in relevant sectors, social partners and civil society, or practitioners.

When criticisms are voiced these concern specific parts of the programme or certain modalities of disbursement.

A vast body of evidence was collected pointing to the fact that the programme is generally perceived as a great success. The main findings are as follows.

- Based on the standard Eurobarometer 53 % of the general public have heard about Erasmus+. Erasmus+ (and comparable student exchange programmes) arrive in third place when the general public are asked about the most positive results of the EU (mentioned by 25 % of respondents).
- Key informant interviews show a high level of positive sentiment about the programme. The key informants see the programme as particularly well aligned with the needs of learners and practitioners.
- Responses to the OPC also show that the programme is highly valued among stakeholders and the general public (though most respondents were either organisations or practitioners).
- This is confirmed by the reports of National Authorities, which also underline the strong relevance of the programme.
- The social media analysis identified a high volume of discussion about the programme. While a lot of the posts are neutral in terms of sentiment expressed (which is also linked to the fact that many are rather informative), an important share are positive and what is even more striking is that there is very little negative discussion about the programme.
- Programme beneficiaries report above 90 % satisfaction rates for learners and even higher rates for practitioners.

Conclusion 2 – The programme delivers a unique package of results

Formally, according to the programme's legal basis, the main aims of the programme are skills and competence development of learners (including foreign language skills), improvement of the quality of education and training, internationalisation, excellence in teaching and research about the EU and awareness of EU policies and priorities in the area of education, training youth and sport policies. The evaluation found that several of these objectives are clearly met by the programme – in particular when it comes to the results for learners and practitioners. However, the programme does even more than that.

For most learners, Erasmus+ mobility is if not life-changing than definitely memorable. Besides the fact that the programme contributes to their skills development and future career prospects, the experience of living abroad leads to deep changes in their personal development.

Beyond this, the programme stimulates a positive attitude towards the EU among both learners and practitioners; it also contributes to networking and strengthening the social capital of learners as well as practitioners. Finally, it contributes to the development of openness to other cultures and acceptance of difference.

The programme also has a range of soft effects on organisations and ultimately also on education, training and youth policies (this is less the case for sport, where the actions are new).

The combination of these effects is unique to international mobility and cooperation actions. While there are other programmes funding comparable actions, these are of much smaller scale and cover a more narrow set of organisations or sectors.

The evaluation identified a broad range of results and impacts at the level of learners, practitioners, organisations and to a certain extent also systems and policies.

The effects of the programme are clearest for learners undergoing mobility. This however does not need to be mobility as part of KA1 (or equivalent under predecessor

programmes). Mobility actions that are embedded into KA2 cooperation projects are equally highly valuable for the individuals involved. Competence and skills development are only one part of the 'package' of results delivered. They are possibly the part which would be most easy to replace by other national initiatives which do not require transnational mobility. There are however other elements that stem from participation in international exchanges and cooperation which are hard to stimulate in other settings – these concern the development of an international outlook, autonomy and independence, a positive attitude towards the EU and more generally positive civic and political awareness. These results are demonstrated by a mix of evidence combining a quasi-counterfactual assessment based on beneficiaries' surveys, comparisons between beneficiaries and a control group, self-reported feedback of beneficiaries as well as qualitative interviews and case studies.

The programme also delivers a broad range of results for practitioners. It offers a great professional development opportunity by enabling practitioners to attend training but also by giving them the opportunity to learn on the job from other people and through self-reflection. The programme provides an opportunity to reflect on one's own practice via soft benchmarking and by reflecting on the processes and results achieved by peers. As for learners, it also has positive influence on practitioners' perception of the EU and their general civic and political awareness as well as openness to other cultures. It is also important to mention that the programme is associated with higher use of practices that are considered as encouraging integration of disadvantaged learners. As for staff, these effects have been documented through a range of sources (same as for learners).

Via practitioners the programme also influences organisations, their international connectedness but also the teaching/learning practices, approaches, methods and concrete tools used. However, the changes at organisational level are progressive and small scale and continued participation is needed for deeper transformations.

When asked in a Delphi survey about plausible alternatives to Erasmus+, the experts consider that:

- it is rather unlikely that alternative measures would be able to compensate for Erasmus+ funding for learners, practitioner mobility and international cooperation. While alternative public funding sources exist, they are small scale and given the budgetary constraints they would not compensate on the same scale. Private sources – in particular payments of families and learners – would compensate a little but they would at the same time result in deepening financial barriers to access. Organisations (universities, schools, youth organisations) might also compensate partly but not to the same extent. There are notable differences between sectors, with higher education being the sector that would most likely see at least some compensation;
- there is no single alternative other than international mobility and cooperation that would result in comparable results. To achieve the full range of results, a greater variety of actions (than the three main types of actions under Erasmus+) would be needed.

The added value of the programme is also supported by the analysis of comparator programmes.

The programme also results in a range of system-level effects. These are linked to:

- Open Method of Coordination activities (expert groups, etc.) as these are funded from the programme;
- specific projects which succeed in receiving policy support and which are translated into systemic improvements; and
- reaching out to a critical mass.

The latter is directly linked to the expenditure per programme sector. 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.

Conclusion 3 – The integrated programme has become well accepted as it did clearly simplify the programme architecture

The initial resistance to integration of the programmes seems to have been overcome. While some dissenting voices can still be heard, overall there is a growing consensus that an integrated programme is beneficial for the promotion of the programme, its visibility but also its administration and the simplicity of its architecture.

Discontent comes mainly from those sectors which have been negatively affected by changes in budget allocation but also to a certain extent by changes in types of actions (in particular from small actions to larger ones).

While the integration has not yet delivered the scale of efficiency gains that were initially anticipated, it has led to greater simplicity of programme architecture that is beneficial for both beneficiaries and those in charge of management. It also makes programme monitoring clearer, thus enhancing the transparency of what is funded and consequently also accountability. Having said that, there is some evidence that the simplification in particular under KA2 may have gone too far and that there would be benefit in differentiating between smaller (sharing and learning) and larger (innovation) projects.

The following evidence shows that the integration has become more accepted.

- The programme visibility is strong as per social media analysis and also confirmed by the Eurobarometer results.
- 78 % of programme agencies strongly agree or agree that the single programme is better branded than predecessor programmes and a similar pattern is observed in the analysis of agencies' annual reports.
- The key informants interviewed expressed positive views about the integrated nature of the programme and its benefits.
- Though most national reports do not go into the details about the effects of programme implementation, the views and positions expressed are largely positive.
- The OPC also supports the view that the integration of the programme was a positive step and that it led to greater transparency of the architecture: 89 % of respondents who answered the given question stated that the structuring of the programme into three Key Actions is working well.

The main reason why stakeholders view the integration as a step forward is the simplification of the structure into three Key Actions (with a practitioner mobility being de facto treated as a subaction) and the matrix structure with sectors on the one hand and Key Actions on the other. This replaces a complex programme architecture with a very large number of types of actions, some of which were very small both in project size and also in overall budget allocation.

However, the analysis of programme effectiveness shows that the simplification, in particular for KA2, may have gone a step too far. The Strategic Partnerships offer an 'à la carte' approach to project design whereby project promoters can combine a variety of types of actions into a project. This has positive effects as it enables them to decide on the best activities most suited to meet the project objectives. On the other hand, it has two disadvantages.

- It diminishes the identity of this type of action as it is no longer clear what Strategic Partnerships are for exactly. Subsequently, project applicants are left somewhat in the dark about what kind of projects are being sought.
- It puts together in the same basket projects of very different scale and with very different ambitions. This means that applicants for small Strategic Partnerships need to meet the same requirements as applicants for large ones. Furthermore, it makes it hard to clearly assess the effects of these actions.

Conclusion 4 – 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 majority of the programme funding goes to the four main education and training sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adult learning) and youth. Having a programme that covers all these sectors in one strongly enhances the internal coherence of the programme. The borders between these sectors are not clear-cut: many VET providers are in fact 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. Having a single integrated programme covering all these sectors sends the message that the learning opportunities offered (be it through formal, non-formal or informal learning) are equally important for the development of young people.

There is some tension in the internal coherence of the sport sector. On the one hand, certain projects focusing on social inclusion are comparable to the actions under the youth strand, and on the other hand some other aspects of the sport strand are highly specific and rather niche (e.g. projects focusing on measures to address threats to sport).

The internal coherence of the programme resulting from the lifelong learning coverage is supported by the following evidence.

- Social network analysis shows that there is a strong degree of cross-sectoral cooperation in the programme as part of KA2 and equivalent in previous programming period and that this has increased sharply compared to predecessor programmes. In all the sectors covered by the programme, the majority of projects include at least one organisation which can be considered as heterophilic (i.e. from another sector). Note that enterprises as well as public authorities when partnering with education/training providers were also considered as contributing to cross-sectoral links – meaning that the degree of cross-sectoral cooperation is not only measured by linkages between one of the programme sectors³⁰⁴.
- Logical analysis of programme architecture based on programme documentation shows complementarity and lack of overlaps.
- Key informant interviews overall support the statement that the actions and sectors within the programme are mutually supportive.
- 73% of programme agencies see that the programme supports internal synergies;

³⁰⁴ Schools, VET, adult education, higher education, youth, sport.

- Key informant interviews and case studies identified some examples of synergies even though it was hard for many respondents to pinpoint with precision what they saw under the rather broad concept of synergies.

The OPC did not ask questions about the internal coherence of the programme. The national reports did comment on this aspect, though not systematically. Some examples of internal synergies were noted but it was also noted by several countries that while the programme offered opportunities for synergies, these were not sufficiently exploited in practice.

Conclusion 5 – The programme management structures are well established and fit for purpose, with no major inefficiencies being identified

The management structures for Erasmus+ build on those set up for the LLP and YiA programmes, which were both designed around a similar management approach. The management structures are:

Fit for purpose: the mixture between decentralised and centralised actions ensures:

- through decentralised actions: proximity to the target audience, tailored support to applicants/beneficiaries, country-relevant approaches to dissemination, possibility to ensure alignment with national priorities;
- through centralised actions: alignment with EU-level priorities and the possibility to issue ad hoc actions that respond to urgent political priorities, efficiency for those actions that are small in scale, and fair competition for those actions that aim at excellence and are designed to be selective.

Generally known and well perceived by the beneficiaries.

Communicating well among each other with no major inefficiencies existing regarding the overall programme management set-up.

The main challenge hampering the efficiency of the programme management is linked to the funding for the international dimension in higher education. The current arrangement requires all NAs to manage each budget envelope from the DEVCO budget separately. Even if a country gets only a very small budget funding a small number of motilities per year, related to each of the DEVCO financial instruments it needs to be managed and administered separately. The burden on beneficiaries related to the application process is also discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The main evidence supporting the positive conclusion about programme management structures is as follows.

- Compared to comparator programmes at national level, the costs of programme management are reasonable and in most cases lower than for other programmes.
- The programme agencies provide positive feedback on the guiding role of the commission.
- The sectoral respondents from the agencies also report that they frequently cooperate with colleagues from other sectors in programme implementation.
- The socioeconomic actors surveyed gave very positive feedback on the support provided by the national agencies, showing the fitness for purpose of having decentralised structures that can maintain a relationship with beneficiaries.

- The OPC respondents agreed that the management of Erasmus+ has been simplified for the beneficiaries³⁰⁵.

The review of programme management structures shows that the coordination between the different bodies is overall at a good level. The sole negative point identified is that some national agencies complain about too infrequent contacts with the EACEA. The inefficiencies in the programme management are linked to other aspects of the programme implementation rather than management and coordination, as discussed below.

9.2 Areas for improvement and related recommendations

The recommendations focus only on negative findings and aspects of the programme that merit improvement. For each recommendation the underpinning conclusion is presented first.

Conclusion 1 Relatively low levels of innovation in the cooperation actions funded by the programme in particular under Strategic Partnerships and comparable predecessor actions

The quality of activities funded under KA2 and their outputs varies greatly. Many of the projects are about cooperation and sharing and learning rather than about innovation. The sharing and learning activities have a clear merit and they enable staff and organisations to improve their practices and methods but they have limitations when it comes to stimulating innovation. Most of the cooperation projects fund activities that are innovative in their context (i.e. they are not part of core activities of the participating organisations) but they are not innovative in more general terms when looking at best practices with regard to pedagogical methods or approaches proposed.

One of the difficulties is that the programme architecture (types of actions) and the programme guide do not clearly call for proposals that would result in such innovations or at least transposition of innovations into practice – except some centralised actions. The Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances (which are all centralised actions) are expected to result in stronger cooperation between education/ training and businesses and spur innovation of curricula and qualifications and more generally more entrepreneurial culture in education/ training organisations. However this evaluation took place too early to assess the extent to which this innovation ambition is being materialised. However these initiatives only cover the sectors of higher education and VET and they focus primarily on cooperation between education/ training and businesses and less so on other dimensions where the programme could innovate such as pedagogies, assessment or approaches for social inclusion.

In Strategic Partnerships though the objective of innovation is stated in the programme guide there is no specific feature in the programme design which would optimise and enhance such innovation.

KA2 contains the following types of actions:

- Strategic Partnerships in the field of education, training and youth;
- Knowledge Alliances;
- Sector Skills Alliances;
- Capacity Building in the field of higher education;
- Capacity Building in the field of youth.

³⁰⁵ However, through the OPC, several pan-European organisations noted that the decentralisation of funds made it difficult for these types of organisations to benefit from the funds.

- Platforms such as eTwinning, EPALE, education gateway.

Of these types, the first one – Strategic partnerships - has the greatest variety in terms of what projects actually do. The other types of actions were not covered in great depth when it comes to results in this evaluation as they were largely not completed yet at the time of selecting projects for in-depth analysis (i.e. autumn 2016).

In Strategic Partnerships the programme guide does define two types of strategic partnerships those aiming at innovation and those aiming at sharing and learning. However these are defined rather theoretically as in practice both are treated as the same type of action during application process as well as project completion. The expectation of innovation is formulated in very broad terms and could be interpreted as low scale innovation (something new for the organisations taking part) rather than an innovation that could be associated with state of the art thinking about a given approach/underpinning problem.

The following findings show that the level of innovation in the programme and in particular in relation to KA2 and partly KA3 is limited:

- The majority of project assessors consider that the share of projects that apply innovative methods is low to average. The same applies to the share of projects that focus on new issues. The project assessors are somewhat more positive about the share of projects that are of good quality but overall they still see that this is between low and average;
- The expert panel assessment of selected project outputs also shows that while projects deliver a high volume of outputs there are very few outputs that can be considered as innovative in more absolute terms when thinking about the state of the art approaches in a given sector. In particular under the predecessor programmes (LLP mostly) a lot of focus was given on use of ICT which meant that many projects designed ICT based solutions which however, were not necessarily innovative when it comes to the pedagogical methods embedded or even the solutions chosen. Furthermore, given the rapid evolution of technologies, ICT based products (such as e-learning modules) become very rapidly obsolete.
- The lack of innovation is also noteworthy when looking at the case studies carried out. While the case studies give examples of learning and organisational changes they give no or very little evidence of broader innovation.

The study findings show that there are currently clearly two sub-types of actions within the Strategic partnerships. They have different ambitions and potential and there would be merit in differentiating between them:

- Smaller scale exchanges where the main benefits arise from the process of cooperation. Though the outputs are often used by those who developed them they have little potential for mainstreaming. The emphasis in these projects could be more on emphasising the criteria which focus on the quality of cooperation and exchange rather than the production of intellectual outputs and emphasising dissemination. While it should be possible for these projects to disseminate their work and to reach a broader audience if they wish so, this should not be a key expectation as their main benefits are for those taking part directly;
- Larger scale projects with some innovation potential. These are projects the ambition of which is (or should be) beyond their direct beneficiaries. Given that in the sectors of schools, youth, adult learning there are no large scale actions such as knowledge alliances or sector skills alliances, strategic partnerships are the only sector in which organisations in this sector could innovate. However the approach to projects that aim to be innovative should be different than those in the first category. It would be justified for the award criteria and the approach to project selection to be different.

The lack of innovation means that the programme potential from cooperative actions in particular strategic partnerships and comparable predecessor actions is not being fully exploited.

The current design of types of actions does not clearly encourage truly innovative projects across all the sectors. Actions explicitly aimed at innovation are only present in higher education and VET sectors. The strategic partnerships can cover a broad range of activities of which innovative actions are part but the innovation element is not put forward. It is mentioned in the programme guide as one of several types of activities but it is not specifically encouraged in the award criteria.

The current programme design favours actions where innovation is rather local (i.e. the output is new to the organisations concerned even if it is a mainstream approach in other organisations). There are several reasons why the current structure of types of actions, the programme guide and the application process are unlikely to result in outputs that are innovative at a broader scale (i.e. they are new not only to organisations taking part but in general in a given country(ies) or sectors) are trialled and tested:

1. Innovation is not defined in the programme under Strategic Partnerships. The terminology is very vague and it is therefore not clear what kind of innovation, at what level, etc. is sought (if any);
2. Proactive action or communication to stimulate innovative applications is not encouraged. Some agencies may be developing such proactive support towards potential beneficiaries but such cases are likely to be ad-hoc;
3. There is no clear process in place at the application stage to identify actions that have strong innovation potential and to further enhance their capacity. The process of identification of good practices focuses on completed projects only;
4. Innovation implies some taking of risk while the whole approach to the funding is based on the principle of risk minimisation thus favouring actions that are rather risk free.

Recommendation 1 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.

To enhance innovation in the programme this would require a specific type of action that is designed differently than the very broad and open strategic partnerships. This differentiation would entail giving priority to the development and testing of innovative ideas.

The action would need to be defined so as to reflect the factors and preconditions for innovation in the design of project applications, allowing greater flexibility in relation to the implementation of these projects.

The Commission may also consider working in partnership with other institutions working in the area of innovation in education to pool resources and expertise to support these “high-risk/ high-gain” projects.

Conceptually, three types of projects could be linked to “innovation”:

1. Projects related to changes/ innovation in the local context, aided by cooperation and mutual learning (these can facilitate the adoption of widely “tried and tested” effective practices in contexts where they had not been applied before); this could continue under strategic partnerships

2. Projects related to the widespread early adoption of innovative approaches that have been shown to lead to improvements in various aspects of education; this could continue under strategic partnerships
3. Projects supporting the development of innovation (new ideas/ approaches) and/ or supporting the testing of innovative/ promising ideas/approaches where there is not yet clear evidence that they work.

The first category is not a new type of project. This covers the small scale strategic partnerships as they currently exist. No specific changes would be required other than those focusing on simplification of the administrative burden discussed below. This is comparable to the 'school-only' strategic partnerships that already exist in the school sector. However many VET providers are also schools and many adult education organisations or youth organisations are even smaller bodies than schools. Therefore, this approach could be applied in most sectors (it is probably of least interest in higher education).

The second category would focus on transfer and mainstreaming of approaches that have proved to be innovative. It is a second step to the third category of projects in case where the third category has resulted in effective and innovative results. Comparable type of action existed in the LLP in the VET sector (transfer of innovation projects).

The specific innovation action, the third type above, would fund the third type of projects.

The call for these projects should specify a clear requirement to carry out a solid needs analysis prior to the award of the contract. In addition to a needs analysis this should also contain stakeholder engagement plan and a dissemination strategy. These items need to be in place from the beginning to allow sufficient time for engagement. Innovative projects (high risk/ high gain) bids may have stringent minimum quality criteria for funding and more extensive time-scales for delivery, and could include a steer towards specific areas.

As mentioned, the specific action would need to be defined to reflect the preconditions for innovation. This may entail, for example, additional flexibility regarding aspects such as geographical coverage of the partnership or the distribution of tasks –which currently in practice tend to incentivise roughly similar levels of commitment from participant organisations. Small and agile partnerships may help to reduce transaction costs for these projects and their willingness to work on an innovative idea within a group. Innovation may come from individuals, rather than organisations, coming together. Given the high risk of innovation, co-financing by beneficiaries may be particularly challenging.

It should also be noted that often applicants are not aware of what is innovative and what is not. Here, the involvement of higher education (the most innovative education sector according to the OECD³⁰⁶ and the sector where there is a clearer overview of what may be innovative) in partnership with schools, VET centres, etc. and also private companies may be given greater priority. Partners already working at the state of the art would need to be involved in these projects –which may entail giving greater weight to the quality and experience of the team than in other calls.

The Commission could also proactively explore the establishment of partnership/ match funding with other organisations -including foundations- which invest in this area in order to pool resources (economic but also in terms of mentoring/ expertise and awareness raising of funding opportunities amongst innovative organisations who have already received funding from those organisations).

³⁰⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/Measuring-Innovation-in-Education-England.pdf>

An incubator approach to the development of truly innovative and high potential ideas could be put in place whereby the projects would be regularly monitored but they would also have the opportunity to learn from each other.

Those projects that result in high potential outputs should benefit from top up grants for mainstreaming. Their outputs could be used as a template for those in the 2nd category of projects focusing on transferring innovation.

Conclusion 2 System level effects in particular those stemming from grants remain ad-hoc

One of the ambitions of the current programme was to strengthen the broader effects of the programme on organisations and systems.

While examples of system level effects have been identified they remain ad-hoc.

System level effects within the programme can happen through several channels:

The open method of coordination activities which are funded through the programme and which are indeed associated with positive developments according to OMC evaluations;

- By reaching out to a critical mass of staff and organisations. This can be through mobility actions or cooperation actions. The extent to which this is currently happening varies greatly across the sectors with the higher education sector being best covered followed by VET. The sports and adult learning sectors are too small to have systemic effects through critical mass;
- Learning and transfer of lessons learnt stemming from one specific project. There are examples where public authorities (co)design a project with the intention to use its results as inspiration for mainstreaming. This type of activities is sought under the KA3 policy experimentation actions. However examples of such projects can also be found in KA2 types of actions.
- Learning and transfer of lessons learnt stemming from systemic assessment of a group of projects on a given topic. Examples where public authorities brought together several projects on a specific issue with a view to learn from their experience have also been found.

The effects through the 1st type of channel are not in the hands of those in charge of the programme design as they rather depend on the design of the OMC and its activities. This conclusion refers more specifically to system level effects stemming from grants funded by the programme.

The second channel for systemic effects can be influenced through programme design by adjustments to the scale and distribution of budgets.

The third type of policy learning from the programme is already stimulated through projects for policy experimentations. However, these projects were not completed at the time of field work for this assignment and hence it is not clear to what extent these actions succeed in stimulating mainstreaming and transfer.

The fourth avenue for policy learning is not specifically stimulated through the programme. There could be a specific budget for national authorities to use in order to carry out thematic monitoring and evaluation of selected actions so as to identify lessons learnt for a specific policy.

Through key informant interviews, the evaluation identified several examples where the programme had influence on national policies through this type of monitoring and transfer.

Recommendation 2 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.

The evaluation identified cases where projects or groups of projects were influential at system level or where they were used as pilots to inform national reforms.

- This is particularly strengthened when there is strong buy in and accompanying process from the side of national authorities.
- The examples identified typically benefitted from an approach where the national authorities brought together groups of Erasmus + funded projects (or predecessors) working on a given topic to identify relevant messages for the national agenda.

This was done by a combination of activities:

- The national authorities identified organisations that were active in EU funded projects relevant to a given topic. This is partially possible thanks to the existing monitoring tools such as EPRP (and previously ADAM and equivalent) but the search options currently available could be further improved to facilitate this form of searching;
- The national authorities brought these persons together in seminars, working groups or other forms of platforms to identify how national policies could better support a certain approach (for example strengthen work-based learning in VET).

KA3 could contain a type of action that would serve this purpose. The action would not be transnational but would have a national focus. National authorities in the given sector would be the sole possible beneficiary of a given action (or bodies to which they delegate such responsibility such as national agencies in areas of education, training, youth or sport). They would need to demonstrate that the project is linked to both national and European priorities and that there is an intention to learn from the programme beneficiaries to inspire national policy. To further strengthen the link with the OMC, it could be a requirement for these actions to be aligned with the OMC priorities.

Such thematic monitoring and evaluation or even action research could be organised according to national priorities. The priorities could be around themes (for example work-based learning or STEM teaching) or they could be about specific methods and approaches (for example validation of non-formal and informal learning).

Conclusion 3 Participation of hard to reach groups remains a challenge

To respond to the criticism of being an elite programme, Erasmus+ has put in place actions to strengthen the participation of disadvantaged groups. Specific top up grants as well as grants to fund accompanying persons are now available for those who may need such assistance.

The programme uses several categories to measure participation of disadvantaged groups or those with fewer opportunities. The section on effectiveness discusses the issues identified with this data which means that it is not possible to clearly conclude about the actual level of participation of these groups.

What can be said nevertheless is that even if the participation of disadvantaged groups and those with fewer opportunities was on or above target as shown by the programme

data, this is mostly made up by those who are the least excluded from the categories used.

The effectiveness section and the related annexes show that:

- The participation of organisations that have high shares of disadvantaged learners is low;
- Based on survey data, the participation of those young people who have minority background or learning difficulties is small;
- The analysis of pre-post surveys of school pupils suggests that the schools/ teaching staff select those who are rather 'good students' or at least well motivated students to participate in mobility actions as part of strategic partnerships since they have a different background and different response trends than the control group in the same category;
- The fact that schools (or VET schools) tend to select participants based on motivation or even performance is confirmed by the case studies.

In some strands of the programme that fund individual mobility, in particular EVS or mobility in higher education, those who take part can suffer from a number of disadvantages but they are highly unlikely to be 'hard to reach' groups. While these actions do benefit to learners with some forms of disadvantage their openness to young people combining multiple disadvantage and being from so called 'hard to reach' groups is limited. This is also confirmed by the case studies which show that individual mobility is mostly benefitting those with no disadvantage or the high achievers among those who initially have some form of disadvantage. These actions rely on individuals to come forward and apply for the programme and those who are hard to reach are highly unlikely to do so on their own initiative. They need to be supported and accompanied in the process.

Therefore, to reach out to those who are most disadvantaged and unlikely to participate in the programme, the programme should target organisations who work with these people (rather than aiming for the individuals directly).

Recommendation 3 To increase participation of disadvantaged groups, specifically target organisations which work with these audiences. Consider for example additional award points to such 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.

The social inclusion dimension of the programme is currently not clearly apparent in the legal basis and the programme objectives. The general objectives do not refer to this dimension of the programme and when looking at specific objectives it is only mentioned under youth and sport. This is in contradiction with the following:

- The EU policy agenda (EU2020 and ET2020 as well as Youth strategy) have a clear dimension that emphasises social inclusion;
- The low levels of participation of disadvantaged groups have been highlighted as an area for improvement in other evaluations and studies;
- The programme does have potential to attract the interest of organisations working with young people in various situations of disadvantage; and
- The financial instruments funding the international dimension have a clear focus on social inclusion and the aim of international actions in higher education should clearly

emphasise this ambition. The DEVCO evaluation of international actions in higher education funded under Erasmus+ concluded that there was a need to strengthen the approach to strengthen inclusiveness in these actions.

It should be made more clearly apparent in the programme legal basis.

More concretely, the evaluation identified several areas for improvement when it comes to involvement of disadvantaged groups:

- There is room for improvement regarding participation of disadvantaged groups in KA1. In higher education there is scope to improve efficiency of Erasmus+ funding for mobile students by targeting more specifically those who could not afford to go on mobility without receiving the funding support. In this sector 21.3% of students state that they would have gone abroad even in absence of Erasmus+ funding. This suggests that there is room to target more specifically those who have less opportunities to access funds for studying abroad. Equivalent data is not available for VET and EVS under youth but given the fact that mobility in these sectors is generally less common, it is likely that the share of those who would have been mobile even in absence of the funding is smaller.
- Direct support for these groups is only available under KA1 while the most hard to reach groups are least likely to benefit from KA1 (possibly with the exception of the youth sector and the youth exchanges).
- Therefore there should be clear focus on increasing involvement of these groups in KA2.
- The best means to reach hard to reach groups through KA2 is to target specifically organisations that work with them. There could be additional points given to projects where these organisations are a key partner for example. Such action did exist under Comenius but has been discontinued which is regretted by beneficiaries.
- Given that most organisations select learners for mobility (even blended mobility as part of KA2) the chances of reaching out to those who are disadvantaged are highest by reaching out to those organisations that work with them. Unless the grants enable organisations to involve a whole class/ group without selection, the selection approach will be continued. It would be hard to explain to teachers/ leadership that they should exclude those with better results to favour those in difficulty. Therefore to maximise the chances that the programme reaches out to the most disadvantaged:
 - The organisations that host the most disadvantaged should be engaged. This way even if there is a selection within the organisation, those participating are still likely to be more disadvantaged than those in other organisations; and
 - If possible, the grants should be designed so as to enable participation of a whole classroom, without selection.

The interviews and case studies show that there is not a lack of interest in this programme from the side of organisations working with these audiences. The problem is however that they compete for funding with others which serve more well off target groups and who may have more resources themselves (for example to hire an external firm to prepare a project application). Some form of positive discrimination could be used to facilitate access to those organisations that can demonstrate that they serve hard to reach target groups.

Another challenge identified by the evaluation is the disparity of the data on participation of disadvantaged groups. Several definitions co-exist within the programme causing difficulties in measuring participation of this target group. In particular, if there is a clearer political intention to reach hard to reach groups, this should be based on a unified definition so the target audience is clearly defined. If this criterion is used as basis for

allocating additional award points for example, there would be a need for a very clear definition of what is meant by this target group.

Conclusion 4 In practice, the alignment of projects funded with key EU priorities lags behind

In the programme guide, the EU priorities are indeed covered and so are they in the programme legal basis. However, in practice, the projects focusing on key issues identified by EU2020 or ET2020 such as early school leaving, higher education attainment, basic skills, etc. remain relatively rare. The resources available for KA2 and partly also KA3 are spread too thinly across too many topics. This means that they are unlikely to have the system level effect that could arise from reaching out to a critical mass of organisations.

While overall the key informants and experts believe that the alignment between the programme and EU level priorities has improved, in practice there is still room for improvement:

The overview of topics covered by projects based on programme database shows a very broad thematic coverage by the programme. The resources are spread across a very broad variety of issues. Within each sector there are over a dozen of topics projects can work on. Many projects cover multiple topics suggesting that they often tackle them only superficially;

- The mapping of selected projects shows that the coverage of key topics such as early school leaving is marginal. Only a small share of the projects selected at random focused on key priorities on the EU agenda based on the review of their documentation (rather than based on the topics they select themselves);
- Even where examples were identified which mentioned among their objectives one of the key EU priorities (diminishing early school leaving for example), a more detailed look at their activities shows that this is not necessarily a primary objective. Most of the projects reviewed which said they focused on early school leaving, in practice appeared to have only a minor focus on this issue. Therefore it was concluded that while the programme funds actions aimed at these key priorities they remain a minority;
- The programme is very open when it comes to possible priorities and applicants choose those that please them. The review of projects topics shows that the topics selected most often are only partially aligned with EU priorities. The most commonly chosen topic, among KA2, is ICT – new technologies and digital competence, followed by curricula and teaching methods (a topic that is very broadly defined), creativity and culture and foreign language teaching.
- The project assessors consider that the share of projects they assess which is aligned with EU priorities is average or even low. However a relatively high number of the assessors stated that they did not know about the level of alignment with EU priorities which suggests that they are not sufficiently clear either about the priorities themselves or what kind of alignment is sought.
- Currently the main EU priorities are at the same level as other priorities in the programme guide. They are covered but projects can choose whether to focus on them or on others. In the application forms, priorities such as early school leaving, participation of disadvantaged, basic skills are at the same level as topics such as creativity and culture or foreign language learning and teaching.

The DEVCO evaluation of international programmes (predecessors as well as Erasmus+) in higher education underlined: the absence of an overall strategic framework of what the EU intervention in this field aims to achieve;

It also noted the need to realign the actions funded also with the priorities of partner countries in line with the principle of co-coordination of development actions.

Recommendation 4 The programme guide should clearly emphasise a smaller number of priorities. These should be prioritised in the selection process.

The ET2020 priorities or the Youth Strategy priorities are already quite high in numbers and broad. Therefore the programme guide and the award criteria could focus on those priorities that are clearly identified in these strategic documents. As there is a high number of these priorities, focusing on them would not negatively affect the programme openness and it would enable a fairly broad coverage of programme actions. At the same time it would strengthen the programme alignment with EU priorities.

If the expectation is maintained that the programme should more clearly contribute to the EU2020 targets, these need to be somehow prioritised in the programme guide and the selection process. For example by giving additional points to those projects that clearly identify how they can address a given issue.

There should also be better clarify what are examples of approaches in how an Erasmus+ project can tackle a given issue. The challenge is that at the moment many projects tick that they aim to improve early school leaving but when looking deeper into these projects there appears to be a lot of 'EU speak' with little clarity as to how concretely this contribution will be made. There is also typically no evidence in the project final reports that such contribution has been made.

Finally the project assessors could be more clearly briefed about what is expected in terms of alignment with EU priorities. Better clarity about expected alignment would help both project applicants and experts assessing applications what to search for.

Conclusion 5 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.

Historically higher education has been prominent in the predecessor programmes and the flagship action –student mobility – started within this sector³⁰⁷. It is also indeed a sector in which there is very clear evidence of positive effects on learners but also on organisations as well as systemic effects. As discussed below, evidence of results is also available and strong in other sectors even though there is less tradition of large scale surveys and therefore of robust impact measurements. The schools, VET and youth sectors also show clear evidence of effectiveness and EU added value. The sports and adult education sectors receive very small budgets which mean that their broader

³⁰⁷ Even though a small mobility action in the VET sector did exist for training young workers abroad in the period 1964-1991

effects are very diluted.

The budget increase for Erasmus + compared to predecessor programmes was distributed so as to maintain more or less the same distribution of funds across sectors as under predecessor programmes (with the exception of sport which was a new addition).

Nearly half of the budget (48%) is contracted within the higher education or higher education international sector. If considering also the Jean Monnet actions, the share of the sector is 51% and it would be even higher if considering the budget for the student loan guarantee³⁰⁸.

Greatest share of the mobility funding for learners is contracted within the higher education sector (66% including international). The higher education sector also represents a significant share of budget allocated for staff mobility (43%) and nearly one third of the budget for cooperation actions³⁰⁹. Furthermore, higher education institutions are strongly present in projects funded through other strands. Consequently higher education is the greatest beneficiary of the programme.

At the same time higher education is the sector which has seen important effects since the programme has been launched but also in the more recent period. Predecessor programmes have supported the development of a strong infrastructure within higher education institutions to facilitate student mobility and recognition of their credit. Credit mobility has become much more common thanks to the programme. This means that important organisational and system level effects have already been achieved.

It is also the sector where other opportunities supporting internationalisation exist:

- When it comes to international cooperation opportunities for organisations and staff there are other EU and international programmes – namely Horizon 2020. Even though these programmes mostly focus on research (and not teaching) they do partly have the same target groups as Erasmus + staff mobility actions and cooperation projects;
- Regarding student mobility other opportunities also exist at national and international level but these are much smaller in scale than Erasmus +.

Though these opportunities are not of a comparable scale as Erasmus +³¹⁰ they are more common than in other sectors such as VET or schools.

Higher education is also the sector where a relatively high share of mobile learners (21.3%) who receive support state that they would have gone on mobility even in absence of EU funding. This means in most cases that their families would cover the costs of the stay abroad. However they would not have been able to go abroad in most cases had there not been the infrastructure funded by Erasmus+ within higher education institutions. This suggests that there is room for improvement when it comes to targeting those students who would otherwise not be able to afford going abroad without Erasmus + funding. For others they can still benefit from the institutional structures even without receiving grants.

³⁰⁸ This data is based on the budget execution in the period 2014-2016 (all commitments covering programme countries as well as partner countries – H4 budget included). See section 7.1 on efficiency. The breakdown of the budget is as follows: 36.8% for higher education programme countries, 11.3% for higher education international, Jean Monnet 2.5%

³⁰⁹ See sections on 7.3.3 and 7.3.4 on cost-effectiveness. Data based on Erasmus + dashboard.

³¹⁰ they are either much smaller – e.g. Nordplus programme – or have a different scope and focus (research not teaching)

Overall, the EU support to higher education as part of Erasmus + (be it student or staff mobility but also organisational cooperation) has reached a critical mass with current levels of funding.

The analysis of effectiveness shows that there is evidence of positive results for mobility actions in all sectors covered (when it comes to both learners and staff). It also shows that the evidence of positive results of cooperation actions is also spread across the sectors, though the evidence is somewhat weaker in the sectors of adult learning and sport where the great diversity of actions and breadth of issues covered creates fragmentation and hampers clear results (see recommendations specifically about these sectors below).

Allocation of a very high share of the budget to higher education could be seen as reflecting some alignment with the EU2020 target on higher education attainment. In that case however there should also be a much stronger funding for the school sector and VET which are most affected by the phenomenon of early school leaving (second education EU2020 target).

The need for internationalisation, the need for skills and competence development and the need for pedagogical and methodological innovation are strong in sectors such as VET or schools.

The OPC as well as the national reports show that stakeholders believe that the other sectors covered by the programme are underfunded.

This is also supported by the evidence of very low success rates in certain sectors for both KA2 but also KA1.

Recommendation 5 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.

Without creating competition between the sectors, there should be a recognition in any distribution of additional funding for the fact that other sectors than higher education are making a strong contribution to young people, practitioners and organisations without having equivalent opportunities for international cooperation as higher education. In particular learner mobility in VET and youth sector, but also school sector (mobility under KA2) is associated with clear results for learners. Staff mobility is associated with very positive results across all sectors.

The needs for competence development of young people, the need for professional development of staff and through that for enhancing the quality of education, training and youth work and the need for internationalisation which is one channel of innovation are clear across the sectors.

Furthermore, considering the broader socio-economic needs and issues (early school leaving, youth unemployment in particular for those with lower levels of qualifications, etc.) there are other sectors which would benefit from increased opportunities for mobility and international cooperation in particular if these can be linked with innovation and quality improvement.

At the same time it needs to be recognised that in sectors such as VET or school sector, the level of individual mobility or group mobility is unlikely to reach the same scale as in higher education as the profile of the target group is very different. The aim should not be only about increasing the volume of long term mobility actions but greater recognition of the contribution of shorter mobility actions which are currently rather 'hidden' within the key action 2 would improve the visibility of the contribution of the programme in these sectors.

Other sectors could also be actively encouraged to benefit from the experience and innovation capacity in higher education sector. This would create positive spill over effects from higher education beneficiaries to other sectors. For example there could be more emphasis on participation of future teachers in mobility or cooperation actions these are higher education students but whose participation will ultimately benefit also the sectors or school or VET. Cooperation on curriculum development or design of innovative pedagogies as well as technological or methodological cooperation in the sector of VET could be more clearly encouraged. If such synergies were fostered the benefits for other sectors would accrue while maintaining the funding levels for the higher education sector.

Conclusion 6 The application process creates important burden and does not clearly focus on those criteria that matter most for effectiveness

At the moment the application process is the same for projects of very different sizes and scopes. The application forms require a high numbers of descriptions, which are sometimes seen as not useful or even overlapping.

When considered together with the low success rate in particular in certain types of actions, the application process results in high costs for applicant organisations.

The application forms are at the moment very similar for all types of actions. They are possibly too complex for small scale exchanges and too constraining for innovative actions³¹¹ where a more open process would be beneficial. For the innovative actions the application forms do not enable to very well articulate a full logic of the initiative in an open manner.

Inefficiencies in the application process due to complexity of forms and low success rates have been identified via:

- Case studies which pointed to a) the time needed to prepare applications combined with low chances of success b) the duplications and the fragmentation of information about a project created by the form;
- Survey of socio-economic actors which identifies application process as the main barrier to programme participation together with a barrier linked to lack of staff to prepare applications and administer the projects;
- Review of application forms which shows a high number of open text boxes some of which have very similar headings;
- Review of national agencies' reports which also identified application forms as constraining, and;
- These concerns have also been voiced in the OPC as well as the national reports.

³¹¹ This finding refers more specifically to strategic partnerships and equivalent actions under predecessor programmes. The Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances have not been analysed in depth.

Those concerned about the complexity of these procedures point to the fact that the online application forms and reports have gone down the road of over-specification. Similar information is requested under different headings. Conceptually there may be differences in the items required but in practice when describing a set of activities or a project it is logical to speak about these items together in one field rather than in several different places.

Another element identified by the evaluation was the fact that the award criteria do not sufficiently reflect some of the key success factors for effectiveness of cooperation projects. The award criteria are currently defined at a general level (relevance, quality of project design, etc.) and then additional specification is provided through a list of bullet points in the programme guide. While the list of more detailed explanation provides very useful elements which are indeed critical for the success of a project. These could be a basis for sub-criteria for selection but at the moment the assessment is done at a more general level without going through sub-criteria. It is therefore not clear how much 'weight' these bullet points carry and whether and how they are truly applied by the experts during project selection.

A lot of emphasis is placed on the application process as a means to ensure effective use of the funding while very little emphasis is put on accompanying the projects and enabling them to realise their potential via review and advice at mid-term. However, given the nature of parts of the projects, in particular the smaller scale ones, there is not a clear cut relationship between the quality of the application and the quality of the project and its ultimate results. In fact as the analysis shows there is an important share of projects that achieve lower quality scores on completion than at application suggesting a certain disconnection between the application form and the real quality of the work delivered. Given that this disconnection exists, less emphasis could be put on the application form in particular for smaller and simpler projects (such as those aimed at sharing and learning as described in recommendation 1). For the bigger projects on the other hand, more could be done regarding their ongoing monitoring and feedback (this is already the case for some centralised actions such as Knowledge alliances).

Recommendation 6 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.

The application forms are structured by the award criteria. It is questionable whether this is the best approach. For example the relevance criterion should be judged on a full reading of a project approach rather than on the text under relevance only. The review of project applications and reports shows that a lot of the text under relevance is very vague.

Furthermore, the award criteria for cooperation projects are currently only partially aligned with the enablers for success or success factors in particular when it comes to bigger and more ambitious projects. For example:

- A needs assessment is not always required³¹² (this would be more suitable for some types of actions – in particular the bigger ones - than others). While it is mentioned in the list of clarifications under relevance, the existence of a needs analysis is not a criterion in its own right;

³¹² Needs assessment is required for Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Councils

- A logical framework or an intervention logic is also not required while it is a common practice in funding schemes to request grantees to demonstrate how given actions are aimed to lead to expected results;

The application forms could be:

- Much simplified in particular for smaller scale projects. For small scale actions the applications could be much shorter. Given that the main benefit for these actions stems from participation in mutual sharing and learning there is little added value in asking them to demonstrate impact for example as that will in any case be soft and relatively modest; and
- More structured by key success factors such as needs analysis, logical framework rather than the generic award criteria, this is in particular the case for the bigger more complex projects.

At the moment a mid-term review of projects is only practiced in some cases and in most cases there is only a final review. The final review serves the purpose of accountability but it does not enable the projects to improve as it comes too late. A softer mid-term review which would focus on progress made and recommendations for next steps would be beneficial. The costs of the mid-term reviews could be offset by diminishing the costs of reviews for small scale applications.

A simpler process (closer to automatic grants in KA1) could also be considered for the small scale projects whereby the projects need to satisfy certain selection criteria and provided that these are met the grant is awarded. Given that the demand is much higher than the available funding the selection could be organised at random, first come first serve basis or a more simple points system.

Conclusion 7 Student Loan Guarantee Facility is not currently living up to initial expectations

In the first years of implementation the SLGF had a very slow start with only a small number of financial institutions already using this instrument and only a modest numbers of beneficiaries.

The initial estimates of the numbers of potential users clearly overestimated students' appetite for loans.

The Student Loan Guarantee Facility is a new instrument with clearly a slow start. Under the most optimistic scenario the instrument would reach some 60,000 students by the end of this programming period. The lower estimate is that it would reach some 35,000 students. This is substantially less than the initial ambition of 200,000 students.

Recommendation 7 Review the ambition for Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF) 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 budget should therefore be recalibrated accordingly.

In order to maximise the potential of this instrument the following more detailed recommendations are presented in the report focusing specifically on this scheme:

- There is a need to adapt the SLGF roll-out strategy for the outgoing students on the one side and for the incoming students on the other:
 - Outgoing students: Focus on trying to recruit more traditional financial intermediaries which would finance their outgoing students - only in countries where there is a gap left by national schemes, since under the SLGF, financial intermediaries have the option to offer the loans only to outgoing students and if there is a financial intermediary in each country, the facility would still ensure equal access and balanced geographical coverage. This is the case in Turkey and now also in France.
 - Incoming side: try to attract some financial intermediaries which will specialise in the coverage of incoming students - either located in markets receiving high numbers of incoming students or multicountry ones. Those financial intermediaries will need to invest substantially to establish partnerships with credit bureaus from around Europe to limit fraud and this model is more suited to Fintech like Future Finance than to traditional banks – whose loan application processes typically imply the applicant resides in the country. Focus the recruitment efforts towards universities in countries where it is likely their legal framework allows them to take some financial risks and where the financial needs are high, for example because fees paid by students are high.
- In countries with limited portability of national scheme, there is a case to exploit more the synergies with national schemes / national promotional institutions to encourage them to complement their offer to outgoing students with a mobility support (partially) guaranteed under the SLGF facility and/or to open up their national scheme which might be currently reserved for their nationals to incoming students. For that purpose, contacts would probably need to be initiated at the higher, political level, between the Commission / EIF and the Member States / Ministries. Reasons for considering EFSI to complement national scheme instead of SLGF (where it is the case) should be further examined.
- Legal basis permitting, correct the flaws in the design regarding the no-payment-during-the-studies condition and the maximum loan amount.
- Where financial intermediaries are in place, the EC / EIF should support them in their communication strategies (via a share of the budget allocated for that purpose).

Conclusion 8 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

In the period covered by this evaluation, the sport strand of the programme funded some 130 projects. The numbers of projects is increasing over years as more funding is available for this strand but nevertheless the overall capacity of the sport strand is small compared to the ambition and the breadth of objectives. Compared to the actual funding capacity of this strand the number of objectives is too high. The sport strand aims to fund:

- Actions aimed at promoting social including through sport;
- Actions aimed to combat threats to sport (doping, match fixing, discrimination);
- Actions to promote physically enhancing activities; and
- Actions aimed at supporting dual careers of athletes.

Even if all the projects focused on only one of the above four objectives the scale of the funding would still be very small to achieve meaningful results at a broader level than

individual organisations.

The projects funded under the sport strand of the programme are all aligned with the EU Work Plan for Sport. However in practice when looking at the projects funded there appear to be two categories of Sport collaborative partnerships. These are:

- Project that focus on promotion of physical activities and in particular social inclusion through sport; and
- Projects that focus on more technical priorities such as combating threats to sport or enhancing dual careers of athletes.

The first category of actions is somewhat comparable to the activities funded through the youth strand. In fact there are more sport organisations taking part in the youth strand than in the sport strand. This is due to the fact that sport organisations are in fact only one of several types of beneficiaries in the sport strand. Other types of organisations (civil society organisations as in the youth strand) are strongly present as well. This shows that there is a thin line between the social inclusion activities in the sport strand and the youth strand.

From coherence perspective, these social inclusion activities are those that are best aligned with the rest of the programme activities and the overall programme intervention logic.

The other activities (combating threats to sport and dual careers) on the other hand create a real specificity of the sport strand. The survey data shows that the actions that focus on combating threats to sport or dual careers remain a minority. Given the small scale of these actions their broader effects and linked to that their EU added value remain unclear. The financial incentives provided via the programme for actions in this area are too modest to make a broader change.

Recommendation 8 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.

If the budget envelope for sport remains modest as it is currently the case, the sport strand should focus on a much more targeted set of actions where the EU added value would be clearer. Though it is too early to conclude specifically about the effect of the sport strand as it is new, the broader effect is likely to be very diluted as the actions funded are very fragmented and small in numbers.

To achieve more narrow focus there is a need to focus on a smaller set of priorities and very clear types of actions.

The actions that focus on social inclusion through sport could be integrated into the youth strand as they are similar and there are already similar actions funded under the youth strand.

The self-standing sport strand should be refocused to provide targeted support where there is a clear potential for EU added value. Projects focusing on the more technical priorities (combating threats to sport or dual careers) are currently few in overall numbers and still spread across several very different issues: anti-doping, discrimination in sport, match-fixing or dual careers. A more detailed assessment should be done of the

EU added value of the funding in each of these areas in order to decide where to invest the funding as a priority³¹³.

Conclusion 9 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

Jean Monnet grants largely benefit to higher education institutions to carry out research and teaching about the EU. The analysis of programme relevance shows that there is a high volume of research about the EU outside the Jean Monnet grants and that the need to stimulate research about the EU, which existed when the programme was founded, is much less clear, at least when looking at higher education institutions within the EU.

Though there is no clear data about the volume of teaching about the EU across the EU, the data from the survey of higher education staff shows that the majority of respondents (in the EU) are in organisations which offer some teaching about the EU. There does not appear to be a lack of teaching about the EU at higher education level within the EU (the situation is likely to be different in partner countries).

Furthermore higher education graduates are the group that is most knowledgeable about the EU when compared to those with lower levels of qualifications.

The analysis of trends about research which concerns the EU shows that the numbers of publications about the EU have rocketed in the past decade. There are 4 times more publications about the EU being published every year compared to 1990. The vast majority of these publications are funded outside grants related to Jean Monnet.

The survey of Jean Monnet students shows that the grants reach mostly those students who are enrolled in programmes related to the EU or who have studied more than one course about the EU. In other words the funding benefits those who are most likely to be already developing an understanding of the EU.

The survey of Jean Monnet beneficiaries among staff shows that most staff who receive the grant (77%) spend more than 50% of their teaching targeting EU specialists.

The effectiveness section of Jean Monnet volume shows positive results in terms of students enhanced understanding of the EU (JM beneficiaries are more knowledgeable about the EU than other peers). However this needs to be reflected together with the fact that these are young people who are already most likely to be interested in the EU.

Jean Monnet is a part of the programme which receives few positive mentions in the OPC or countries national reports.

Overall, the underpinning need for an EU programme that funds teaching and related research predominantly in higher education about the EU in the current form is not clear cut. Higher education is the sector that already offers most opportunities for teaching about the EU and it is also the sector in which there are most knowledgeable students about the EU. There are other target groups such schools which have lower opportunities to access teaching about the EU or who have much lower levels of understanding of the

³¹³ This would require a higher number of completed projects than what was available at the time of this evaluation. Furthermore it would also require benchmarking with other actions aimed to address these priorities carried out at national or international level which was not feasible as part of this evaluation that covered the programme overall.

EU that should be addressed in the future call for proposals. The new legal basis could cater for this need.

Recommendation 9 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).

Though Jean Monnet grants have recently paid more attention to engaging broader audiences than universities, there is still strong focus on reaching out to academics and higher education students (most of those reached are students who take part in studies on the EU or have had other modules on the EU).

The need to strengthen understanding of the EU is much bigger among other target groups (pupils, VET students, adults, etc.).

There is a need for an action that focuses on improving understanding of the EU but the current types of actions under Jean Monnet do not enable to tackle the core of this problem which lies outside universities.

The current legal basis directs the funding very much towards beneficiaries in the higher education sector. To refocus this strand of the programme the legal basis would need to be changed to focus on other sectors of education and training than higher education.

Conclusion 10 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.

Adult learning is a very broad and fragmented sector in general which covers a very diverse set of target groups and activities. In Erasmus + this sector receives a small share of funding. As with sport, considering the variety of topics, there is a risk that the scarce resources are spread too thinly to make a significant difference.

The contribution of the programme in this sector is highly fragmented resulting in an unclear profile of this sector within the programme. Though the clarity has improved by taking out some actions focusing on future teachers which were covered under LLP there is still room for improvement. The types of organisations benefiting from it suggest that there is a lot of diversity which is confirmed by a review of selected projects.

Given the small budget allocation such disparity negatively affects effectiveness.

Adult learning is the sector which has the most diverse group of beneficiary organisations. In fact the main beneficiary of this strand are civil society organisations rather than adult education providers. The latter represent only 19% of the strand. The funding therefore serves a very diversified target audience. Given the limited resources for this strand, similarly to the sport sector, there is a high risk of dilution of any positive effect due to small scale of the intervention.

It is also noteworthy that a high number of staff who responded to the survey as having benefitted from adult education strand spend most of their time teaching to the cohort of young people. This is based on the survey data of staff beneficiaries. This suggests, and

it has been confirmed by the case studies, that a fair share of beneficiaries in this strand are organisations and staff that are also providers of VET or of higher education. In other words they are not the 'core' group of adult education providers.

When looking at the topics of activities funded it is apparent that there is a great diversity of issues being tackled and these are tackled each time by a small number of projects. As in sport this means that the small share of the programme that goes into tackling these issues is unlikely to make clear cut differences thus negatively affecting the EU added value.

The combination of these characteristics means that:

- Broad target groups with many different needs means that the actions funded are varied and as a result the effect of the programme is highly fragmented and diluted;
- The priorities and topics are also numerous hence further contributing to the fragmentation;
- The types of activities are varied as in other strategic partnerships but the budget envelope is even smaller further exacerbating the above issue.

Recommendation 10 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

Given the scale of the funding the programme would benefit from targeting a smaller number of types of organisations and target groups.

This sector has strong potential to reach to organisations working with hard-to-reach and strongly disadvantaged groups (for example those working with migrants, socially excluded, etc.). International cooperation between these organisations has the potential to build their capacity, improve their learning and teaching approaches and more generally enhance the quality of support provided to these publics.

The sector could also focus on a much smaller number of more targeted priorities that would be clearly aligned with the EU policy agenda for example:

- Pedagogies specifically focusing on basic skills of adults;
- Approaches focusing on attracting and reaching out to hard to reach groups to reintegrate them in education/ training; or
- Approaches strengthening validation of non-formal and informal learning for this target groups.

Other options exist when it comes to targeting specific segments of the adult learning sector. However in other segments it is likely that either of these situations exists:

- Overlap with what Erasmus + does in the VET sector;
- Overlap with what Erasmus + does in higher education sector;
- Strong private provision which is already rather international; or
- Overlap with the EU level activities around cooperation in the public employment sector.

A more specific analysis of the EU added value of EU investment in different segments of the adult education sector could be made to refine the prioritisation.

Conclusion 11 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.

The discussion in the effectiveness section underlines challenges with several of the key indicators for this programme as well as the quality of the data collected in relation to some indicators.

The efficiency section monitoring shows that most of the effort in terms of monitoring data collection is currently at the level of KA1. Data on KA2 results is not available through the monitoring system.

The efficiency section also shows that while a lot of data is collected, a lot of it is not analysed and thus not used for the purpose of improving the programme.

The shortcomings of the monitoring systems are identified via:

- The analysis of the monitoring data and of the monitoring processes by the evaluation team;
- Feedback on the monitoring process extracted from programme agencies annual reports;
- Feedback of programme agencies through the survey;
- Logical analysis of the tools and their coverage compared to the programme types of actions and their size.

The analysis shows that the level of monitoring is not proportionate to the size of projects/ activities' budgets nor is it proportionate to the use made of the data. Several agencies complain about the difficulty of using the data in its current format and the fact that the monitoring systems related to the data collection are complex.

Furthermore, there is relatively little data available on programme performance in the public domain. The annual performance reports focus primarily on outputs and contain very little data from the Erasmus + monitoring surveys. While there are regular publications of success stories, there is much less publicly available data on key performance indicators.

This lack of publicly available data on programme performance is negatively affecting the visibility of programme contribution.

Recommendation 11 Improve the monitoring process by expanding it to KA2 (and KA3). Better utilise and analyse the data collected to inform decision making.

Erasmus + made clear improvements when it comes to availability of monitoring data. Much more data is now being systematically collected.

However there is room for improvement when it comes to availability of data to the general public (and potential beneficiaries) about the performance of the programme.

Clear improvements could also be made in the user-friendliness of the systems supporting the data collection.

In addition there is a need to improve reliability of certain indicators – namely that on disadvantaged groups and participants.

Furthermore, the beneficiary questionnaires currently collected provide a very good basis for monitoring however:

- Some questions could be harmonised across sectors;

- There is no need ask all the questions to all beneficiaries. Survey modules could be used focusing on certain issues in greater depth with a smaller sample size;
- Much better use of the data could be made. The data appears under-analysed currently. Many more cross-comparisons and detailed analysis could be extracted looking at relationships between variables.

Finally – an equivalent survey based process of monitoring could be put in place for KA2.

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).

Priced subscriptions:

- via one of the sales agents of the Publications Office of the European Union
(http://publications.europa.eu/others/agents/index_en.htm).



■ Publications Office