



Combined evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

Synthesis of the National Authorities' Reports on the implementation and the impact of Erasmus+ (volume 6)

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***Synthesis of the National Authorities' Reports on the
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(volume 6)

Prepared by ICF

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1 Introduction

This report synthesises the feedback provided in national implementation reports submitted by national authorities as part of the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and ex-post evaluation of predecessor programmes.

This document provides an analysis of all NAU reports as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 National implementation reports

National implementation reports

1. Belgium (three reports: BEEnl, BEfr and BEde)
2. Bulgaria
3. Czech Republic
4. Denmark
5. Germany
6. Estonia
7. Ireland
8. Greece
9. Spain
10. France
11. Croatia
12. Italy
13. Cyprus
14. Latvia
15. Lithuania
16. Luxemburg
17. Hungary
18. Malta
19. Netherlands
20. Austria
21. Poland
22. Portugal
23. Romania
24. Slovenia
25. Slovakia
26. Finland
27. Sweden
28. United Kingdom
29. Iceland
30. Liechtenstein
31. Macedonia (former Yugoslav Republic of)
32. Norway
33. Switzerland (contribution)
34. Turkey

The report includes a first section on the methodology used by national authorities to collect data. This is followed by the analysis of country reports' content organised according to the evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and EU added value.

Assertions are often followed by a list of countries in brackets. The research team aimed to map all countries for some of the elements analysed. However, it should be noted that information is highly spread across the different sections in country reports. As such, it is possible that the list of countries in brackets is not complete in some cases. Also, for some assertions, only some examples are provided (in this case the list is preceded by 'e.g.').

The level of detail of the information provided and the clarity and quality of the examples given varies across national reports. For this reason, there are no concrete examples in this report from all the Programme countries. In any case, examples have been selected from a variety of countries.

2 Methodology used by national authorities to collect data

The development of national implementation reports has involved the review of documentation and statistics concerning the programme and related policies. Countries have also conducted ad hoc consultations with relevant stakeholders.

Table 2.1 summarises the main methods used for primary data collection. In some countries, there are variations in the methods used between fields (education and training, youth and sport). The following table summarises the most common methods used by countries across all three fields.

The most often used data collection methods are interviews and surveys (used by 25 out of 34 countries). Surveys are the preferred method to collect the opinion of beneficiaries (21). Interviews are most often used to gather the views of national agencies (20) but also from national authorities (14) and beneficiaries (14).

In addition to interviews and/or surveys 11 countries use focus groups. 14 countries use other methods, either in addition to the previous or as exclusive method/s for data collection. These include workshops (BEde, DE, PL, NL, SI), seminars, meetings or ad hoc consultations (IT, PT, SE, SK, UK), position papers (FR), case studies (PL, SE), literature review (UK) and a self-evaluation report to be completed by the national agency (DK). In Cyprus the methods used are not specified.

Table 2.1 Methods used for primary data collection

	Interviews					Focus group					Survey					Other methods (e.g. position papers, workshops) / method not specified				
	NAU	NA	Benef.	Other ₁	N/s	NAU	NA	Benef.	Other ¹	N/s	NAU	NA	Benef.	Other ₁	N/s	NAU	NA	Benef.	Other ₁	N/s
AT		•	•									•								
CY																•	•		•	
BEd e	•	•	•				•									•	•			
BEfr													•							
BEnl					•	•	•						•	•						
BG											•		•							
CZ	•	•											•	•						
DE	•	•											•						•	
DK			•										•	•			•			
EE	•	•	•			•	•	•					•							
EL										•			•		•					
ES		•		•									•	•						
FI	•	•	•										•							
FR																			•	
FY	•	•									•	•	•	•						
HR				•									•							
HU	•	•		•				•					•							
IE		•	•										•							
IS								•					•							

	Interviews					Focus group					Survey					Other methods (e.g. position workshops) / method not specified					
	NAU	NA	Benef.	Other ₁	N/s	NAU	NA	Benef.	Other ₁	N/s	NAU	NA	Benef.	Other ₁	N/s	NAU	NA	Benef.	Other ₁	N/s	
IT										•					•						•
LI	•	•	•																		
LT	•	•	•					•													
LU	•	•	•																		
LV	•	•	•	•				•	•												
MT		•	•										•								•
NL	•	•	•	•									•		•				•		
NO	•	•	•	•																	
PL	•	•		•									•	•				•	•		
PT															•			•			
RO		•				•			•				•	•							
SE															•	•	•	•			
SI					•						•	•	•	•				•	•		
SK					•										•	•	•				
TK		•	•	•			•			•			•								
UK															•						•

¹ Other consulted stakeholders include: non-participating organisations/individuals (control group) (BEnI, DK, HR, PL, SI), applicants whose applications were rejected (LV), academics/experts (AT, CY, FY, TU), stakeholders in the relevant fields (CZ, DE, FR, HR, NL, PL, SI), employers (NO, PL), employers' representatives (ES), national application evaluators (FY, PL, RO, SI, TU), internal auditors of Erasmus+ (LV), and representatives of regional authorities including beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries (ES).

Note: NAU: National Authorities (national/regional government departments); NA: National Agencies; Org./PM: organisations, project managers; Indiv. Part: individual participants (students, youth, staff). N/s: not specified.

3 Relevance of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

This section includes the analysis of the information concerning the following standard questions of the national implementation reports:

- To what extent do the Erasmus+ objectives continue to address the needs or problems they are meant to solve? Are these needs or problems (still) relevant in the context of your country? Have the needs or problems evolved in such a way that the objectives of Erasmus+ or its successor programme need to be adjusted?
- To what extent are needs of different stakeholders and sectors addressed by the Erasmus+ objectives? How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope? Is the Erasmus+ programme well known to the education and training, youth and sport communities? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?

This section addresses the following aspects:

- Programme's alignment with national policy priorities
- Programme's responsiveness to stakeholders' and sectors' needs
- Programme's visibility
- Programme's suitability for addressing hard-to-reach groups

Most country reports refer to a positive alignment between the Programme and national policy priorities. There are a limited number of concrete examples of the types of needs considered to be addressed by the programme at national level. Interestingly, 'softer' results –providing opportunities for individuals to live meaningful experiences and acquire important skills, promoting inclusion and diversity, and developing a European identity- are most frequently mentioned. These and other national needs are discussed in section 3.1.

As for the Programme's responsiveness to sectors' needs there appears to be a tension between those who believe that tackling employability should remain in the spotlight and those who call for a better balance with other priorities such as social responsibility and cohesion (see section 3.2).

Some countries observe a lower participation from certain sectors and link it to a lower visibility of the Programme among relevant stakeholders. However, low visibility is only one of the factors contributing to low participation. Other issues such as a limited know-how about the application procedures have also been pointed out (see section 3.3).

Many countries consider that further efforts can be made to increase the Programme's suitability for addressing hard-to-reach groups. Also, a few call for more clarity and consistency on the definitions used and the rules applying to disadvantaged participants in Erasmus+. This and other aspects are discussed under section 3.4.

3.1 Programme's alignment with national policy priorities

Overall, national authorities consider that Erasmus+ is relevant to country needs. Most reports indicate that Erasmus+ objectives are well-aligned with national and/or institutional priorities in the fields of education and/or youth (AT,

BEde, BEfr, BEnl, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, SE, SK, TR, UK)¹.

The needs considered to be most addressed by Erasmus+ are:

- Opportunities for individuals to live meaningful experiences and acquire important skills, including employability and language skills (e.g. BEde, BEfr, BEnl, FI, HU, LI, MT, NL, RO)².
- The internationalisation of national education systems (e.g. DE, DK, FI, HU, LI, LV, NL).
- The development of a European identity among participants, including learners/youth and staff (e.g. BEde, FI, LT, MT, PT, SE).
- The promotion of inclusion, diversity and active citizenship (e.g. IT, LT, LV, NL, PT, SE).
- Tackling youth unemployment and providing education and training opportunities for low-skilled workers (e.g. DE, IE, IT, LT, PT).
- The development of innovative and quality practices and working methods (e.g. AT, FI, LI, NL, UK).

In **Denmark**, internationalisation, including mobility among students and staff, is a priority in national policy and among the educational institutions. To promote internationalisation within higher education, the Danish higher education institutions receive an “internationalisation rate” for every student they receive or send as a part of an exchange agreement, including Erasmus+. By law, the institutions are also obligated to ensure a balance between incoming and outgoing student mobility.

Ireland explains that Erasmus+ growing emphasis on employability, including youth employment, aligned the programme with the Irish national agenda and important synergies arose at national and European levels.

In **Latvia**, the Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020 establishes an increase of the proportion of young people in youth organizations and initiative groups to 17% (compared to 12% in 2013). Erasmus+ is considered an essential tool for supporting this objective.

Several reports highlighted as a positive point the flexibility of Erasmus+ objectives: objectives are considered broad enough to make it possible to address different challenges, including new, emerging challenges (e.g. EE, IE, NL, NO, SI). For instance, informants from Norway highlighted the fact that the Erasmus+ programme addressed the changing refugee situation by including the integration of migrants and refugees as an additional programme target for 2016.

However, some countries consider that the programme should adapt better to local or national needs (e.g. DE, HU, LT, LV, SI, SK). Hungary and Lithuania mention 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.

¹ This point was not specifically mentioned in the written contribution from Switzerland. Please note that this country was not asked to submit a report, but rather a shorter written contribution. This explains why many of the aspects analysed in this report are not specifically addressed by Switzerland.

² Please note that the lists of countries preceded by ‘e.g.’ present examples and not the full mapping of countries to which the corresponding assertion applies.

The Luxembourgish report suggests that the relevance of Erasmus+ is likely to be stronger in countries with a lower number of national initiatives with similar objectives or where the related issues (e.g. youth unemployment) are more pressing. The Luxembourgish Youth ministry stresses that Erasmus+ is more relevant in Eastern or Southern European countries where youth work is not well funded. In Luxembourg enough funding would be available outside of Erasmus+. It also considers that the need for international exchange is greater in countries other than in Luxembourg due to the diversity of its population. No similar considerations have been found in the other reports.

Country reports refer to the following needs that could be further addressed by Erasmus+:

- The objectives connected to the Paris Declaration and the prevention of radicalisation (e.g. FR, LU, SK).
- Traineeships and opportunities to enhance employability skills (e.g. BEnl, FI, IT, TR).
- Transversal skills, social and personal skills (e.g. BEde, SI).
- The promotion of higher/tertiary VET (e.g. LI, TR).
- Digitalisation (e.g. FI). This is already being explored by some projects such as the EMREX17 project, funded by Erasmus+ Key Action 3, which aims at supporting the exchange of student data on achievements between higher education institutions.
- Sustainable development related to the 2030 Agenda (e.g. SE).

Countries sometimes provide more specific appreciations of the relevance of the Programme per sector. The table below lists the country reports that specifically refer to the alignment of Erasmus+ with national priorities and strategies in each sector.

Countries most often mention the relevance of the Programme to national priorities in the sector of Higher Education (HE) –mainly concerning internationalisation- closely followed by school education, youth and Vocational Education and Training (VET). Fewer countries refer to national priorities in the adult education sector and only Turkey comments on the relevance of the Programme to the Sport sector.

Table 3.1 Country reports making concrete positive statements about the relevance of the Programme to national priorities according to the sectors

School education	VET	Higher education	Adult learning	Youth	Sport
16	14	18	11	17	2
AT, CY, DK, EL, FI, HU, IE, LI, LT, MT, NL, NO, SI, RO, TR, UK.	AT, BEfr, CY, DE, DK, FI, HU, LI, LT, MT, NL, NO, RO, TR.	AT, CY, DE, CZ, DK, EL, FI, HU, IE, LI, LT, MT, NL, NO, RO, SI, TR, UK.	AT, CY, DK, EL, FI, LI, LT, MT, NO, NL, SI.	AT, BEde, BEnl, CZ, DE, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, NO, NL, PT, SK, TR, UK.	TR, UK

3.2 Programme's responsiveness to stakeholders' and sectors' needs

National reports do not indicate major differences in programme's responsiveness to different sectors and stakeholders.

Several reports discuss that certain Erasmus+ objectives are more relevant for some fields than others. For instance, skills development is considered to be more relevant in the education and training sector; key competences to be more relevant for school education than for higher education; the promotion of inclusion, diversity and active citizenship to be more relevant in the youth sector; or innovation and excellence to be too ambitious goals for school and adult education.

There are some discussions on whether the programme 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. For instance, the Slovenian report indicates that stakeholders in the youth field consider that the objective of employability has been somehow imposed to the youth sector to the detriment of other aspects more relevant in this field (e.g. social responsibility, social cohesion). According to the report from Norway, the focus on employability is considered to have been given too much priority by some organisations in the higher education and school sector to the detriment of the intrinsic and cultural value of education. However, Norwegian informants from the VET sector believe that even more emphasis should be put on these skills.

In **Flanders (BEnl)**, the objectives of the Erasmus+ are deemed relevant. However, the report explains that these were formulated in the period of the economic crisis. Consequently, they focus attention on VET, traineeships and employability. However, other societal challenges emerged in the meantime (e.g. refugee crisis, radicalisation of young people, "fake news") that directly impact the society. According to the report, this should lead to a better balance between economic and societal objectives which is also reflected in the allocation of budgets across the various fields of the programme.

As for the responsiveness to stakeholders, some reports mention that people from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special needs (e.g. AT, BEde, EE, IS, LU, NL), refugees (e.g. FR), companies (e.g. CZ, EE, ES, HR, IT), policy-makers (e.g. CY), people in the labour market (e.g. CY), and the elderly population (e.g. EE) could be further addressed by the programme. For instance, the Estonian report observes that taking into account the ageing population, elderly people's needs could be further addressed by Erasmus+, for instance via adult education. They could be involved in voluntary work and mobility. The Czech report observes that the possibility of offering traineeships to foreign students is underused among Czech companies, and adds that it would be useful to encourage Czech companies to accept programme participants from abroad.

3.3 Programme's visibility

The unification of the different programmes under the Erasmus brand is considered to have contributed to a greater visibility of the programme overall. However, Erasmus+ is still often exclusively associated with the mobility experience of university students and non-higher education sectors and the youth field may have lost visibility.

Some countries observe that participation in Erasmus+ is lower in primary education and/or in the early childhood education and care (e.g. DE, FI, RO) and link this to a lower awareness of the programme in these sectors. Hungary

reports that the Sport chapter is little known in the sport community, although the tendency has been slowly changing with the introduction of the small-collaborative partnerships.

However, low visibility does not seem to be the sole explanation for low participation. Reports also refer to low participation in the adult education sector and attribute it to limited know-how about the application procedures, a lack of dedicated personnel and low success rates. In Germany, low participation in dual VET appears to result from a mix of low awareness of Erasmus+, difficulties with the application procedures, and organisational issues: mobility periods are considered too long in the sector.

In **Germany**, Erasmus+ and KA1 in particular is not reaching dual VET. This is due to the fact that the language and terminology used is often alien to the sector and not easily understood. The application procedure is too long and complex for the sector and application deadlines are not flexible enough. Information about Erasmus+ needs to be better disseminated in the sector. The mobility periods should also be made more flexible. For example, in order to increase mobility rates, exchanges should be shortened and could be combined with virtual meetings.

In **Austria**, the increasing numbers of apprentices participating in Erasmus+ are believed to be a sign of success. However, the country report explains that it is still a challenge for SMEs to organise mobility for their apprentices, in particular if it involves long periods abroad, without being able to replace them.

Country reports do not often contain suggestions on how to increase visibility. Iceland authorities suggest awarding an Erasmus+ recognition to participating institutions. The following box includes suggestions of dissemination actions at national level.

In **Slovenia**, a group with various experts and policy officials alerted that school staff and other stakeholders are often not aware of European policies and programmes and proposed a weekly presentation of Erasmus+ projects at the ministry of education.

In **Iceland**, participants in a focus group discussed the possibility of having an employee at the municipality that would focus on helping schools apply for Erasmus+ and other funding opportunities. That might be of particular help to smaller schools that do not have the resources to hire staff to work on this.

3.4 Programme's suitability for addressing hard-to-reach groups

As mentioned in the Finnish report, Erasmus+ has given the opportunity to visit other countries and gain new experiences to pupils and young people who would have not otherwise been able to afford it. However, according to many of the country reports, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special needs are not sufficiently addressed by Erasmus+ (AT, BEde, BEfr, BEnl, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY,³ HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, LT, MT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR).⁴

³ The former Yugoslav Republic of Makedonia report does not strictly indicate that these groups are not sufficiently addressed but recommends that the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility further encourages and supports projects that include youth or students with fewer opportunities or with special needs.

⁴ This issue is not specifically mentioned in the contributions from CH, DK, LI, NO and UK.

The additional funding available for disadvantaged participants is seen as a positive development but it is not sufficient on its own. These young people need additional support and institutions are not always able to provide it. It was also pointed out that the European Volunteer Service (EVS) is strongly competitive, hence disadvantaged youth have little chance of participating in this programme without help.

Both Portuguese and Hungarian authorities observe that the high contribution needed from families to mobility in higher education creates an obstacle to participation for those from low income families. The Portuguese report refers to the need to further analyse and quantify the financial contributions of families and national governments. According to the country's recent estimations the contribution of families can reach 50%.

Some countries call for more clarity and consistency on the definitions used and the rules applying to disadvantaged participants in Erasmus+ (e.g. FR, IT, NL). For instance, the Dutch report mentions that monitoring of disadvantaged participants is made difficult by the European Commission's definition of lower opportunity and special needs youth/students which is quite broad, and by the fact that the registration of these students is only required for VET institutions. The French report asks for a harmonisation of the rules to acknowledge handicap in the different sectors: currently, in higher education, it is possible to recognise that a participant has handicap throughout the whole project while in the other sectors this needs to be established from the start of the project.

Countries detect differences in the extent to which disadvantaged groups are targeted in the different sectors, but trends vary by country. For instance, in Denmark, Estonia and Latvia participants from disadvantaged backgrounds seem to be better targeted by the Youth field. However, Iceland observes that participation of disadvantaged young people in the Youth field is low. This is also mentioned by the Slovakian report, which states that reaching and addressing the needs of Roma youth requires specific interventions, currently not sufficiently supported by the Programme.

There were no references to unequal participation by regions. The Bulgarian report specifically mentions that the Programme objectives take into account the needs of those in small towns and rural areas.

The following box gives one example of a national initiative to promote the participation of disadvantaged students in Erasmus+, and one example of a project specifically targeting a hard-to-reach group.

In **Poland**, the National Agency implements projects co-financed under the ESF Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (KED OP) to support Erasmus+ projects, such as the 'Foreign mobility of disabled and disadvantaged students' project. This project funds scholarships for students with disabilities and provides additional funds for disadvantaged students receiving grants from their home universities.

In **Turkey**, as a result of a KA2 adult education project implemented by Sincan Public Training Centre, adult training is delivered at the Sincan Prison using a tailored methodology and curriculum.

4 Coherence of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

This section includes the analysis of the information concerning the following standard questions of the national implementation reports:

- To what extent are the various actions that have been brought together in Erasmus+ coherent? Can you identify any existing or potential synergies between actions within Erasmus+? Can you identify any tensions, inconsistencies or overlaps between actions within Erasmus+?
- To what extent does Erasmus+ complement other national and international programmes available in your country? Can you identify any tensions, inconsistencies or overlaps with other programmes?

Overall, national authorities do not identify major issues in the coherence among Erasmus+ actions. However, reports mention some concrete examples of inconsistencies and lack of synergies between Erasmus+ actions and fields (see section 4.1). There are currently different national, bilateral and international programmes with similar objectives or scope to Erasmus+, but countries do not detect any important overlaps (see section 4.2).

4.1 Internal coherence

Country reports identify certain inconsistencies between KAs. An issue mentioned in several reports is the fact that student mobility in the field of school education is not included under KA1 but can be covered under KA2, creating some confusion among schools (e.g. CY, DK, FR IT, LV, UK).

A few countries observe that the coverage and scope of some sectors overlap, creating some confusion among beneficiaries. Overlaps are observed between VET and adult education (e.g. CY, TR) and between VET and school education (e.g. SK). In a similar vein, the Portuguese report calls for increased synergies between actions in VET and adult education and between adult education and youth mobility.

Countries also detect some inconsistencies related to the differences in grants for certain actions, for instance:

- The budget for internships abroad is lower than for studying abroad while this is not always justified as internships are not always paid (e.g. NL).
- In the youth sector, the budget for training activities is higher than the budget for youth exchanges (e.g. DK, NL). The Danish report explains that as a result of this difference more applications are received for training activities and many have to be rejected given that most of the funds are allocated to youth exchanges.

The Dutch and Latvian reports also observe that the reimbursement for travel costs varies between KA1 and KA2, without a clear rationale. Both the Netherlands and Makedonia point out inconsistencies in the differences in the length of the training in KA1 and KA2: In KA1, training programmes should last at least two days, whereas in KA2, they should last at least five days (KA2).

In the youth field, the Flemish report observes that the distinction between youth worker and participant is not always clear cut in youth work, and some applicants are likely to be tempted to choose the sub-action with more attractive funding rules. This might be explaining the increased popularity of youth worker mobility in Flanders.

Some reports give examples of synergies between the different actions, for instance:

- KA2 projects can have an impact on KA1 projects. In Denmark, there are strategic partnership projects that have led to development of tools and databases to heighten the quality assurance of VET students' mobility projects, which have been implemented by the vocational colleges working within KA1.
- KA3 can also have positive effects on KA2 and KA1. According to the Turkish report, the project CoHE on quality assurance on higher education is likely to have a positive effect on KA1 and KA2 projects developed by higher education institutions.
- Mobilities under KA1 can be a precursor of strategic partnerships and vice-versa (e.g. LT, LV, NO).
- In the youth sector, within KA1, young people often start participating in a collective mobility to later continue with an individual mobility, either in formal or non-formal education (e.g. FR).

However, there does not seem to be a systematic exploration of potential synergies between different types of actions. The Dutch report explains that the main reason why synergies between KA1 and KA2 are not further explored by their institutions is that there are often different responsible persons for the different KAs, in particular in higher education institutions.

Some countries observe that synergies between fields are not much exploited (e.g. BEnl, EE, HU, NO, SI, SK, UK). The Hungarian report explains that the national agency is not prepared to manage the increased cross-sectoral approach. Norway and Slovenia specifically refer to the lack of noticeable synergies with Youth and Sports:

- Norway and Slovenia report a low interest of the education and training sector to cooperate with the youth sector. Norwegian stakeholders believe that cooperation between the youth and the education sector often goes one way: the youth sector tends to involve more often the education and training field (e.g. in strategic partnerships) than the other way round. The Slovenian report detects a 'paternalistic' attitude of education institutions towards youth organizations and the belief that the youth field should do the first move to promote cooperation.
- The Norwegian national agency in charge of the education and training and sports fields finds that even though sports can promote inclusion and learning in the school sector, the way sport is organised in Erasmus+, allows for little connection with the fields of education or inclusion. They suggest taking out sports from Erasmus+.

4.2 External coherence

Programme countries participate in a variety of national, bilateral and international schemes which involve actions that are similar to those developed under Erasmus+:

- National-level programmes:
 - Several countries have their own mobility programmes for students and teachers, including initiatives developed by higher education institutions (e.g. DK, CY, EE, FI, HU), 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).

- There are also some relevant initiatives in the field of youth. For instance, the Estonian national agency for youth implements the national programme ‘Youth meetings’ and the ESF action ‘Development of youth worker training’. In Italy, the National Youth Policy Fund promotes the right of young people to cultural and professional training, as well as their inclusion in social life.
- Bilateral initiatives such as:
 - The German-Turkish Youth Bridge Programme, which provides opportunities for exchanges of the youth and the higher education sectors between Turkey and Germany; and
 - The Swiss Financial Mechanism, focused on supporting the connection between secondary VET and the labour market in Slovakia.
- International programmes, such as:
 - NordPlus in Nordic and Baltic countries, promoting mobility and project partnerships among other activities.
 - Fulbright Programme, a United States’ scholarship programme.
 - Pestalozzi Programme, a training programme for education professionals funded by the Council of Europe.
 - The Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS), which supports university networks operating joint programmes and mobility grants for students and teachers.
 - The European Economic Area (EEA) and the Norwegian Financial Instrument (NFI) LV05 ‘Research and Scholarships’, which offers scholarships for studies in Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein for university lecturers and students from any level and field of study.

Country reports do not identify specific overlaps between Erasmus+ and other national and international programmes. They explain for instance that Erasmus+ is different from national initiatives in the following aspects:

- It provides mobility opportunities to a wider number of beneficiaries (e.g. EE, MT, NL).
- It supports the mobility for longer periods of time or of different target groups or sectors than national initiatives (e.g. EE).
- It supports (a high number of) cooperation projects overall or in certain sectors not supported by national initiatives (e.g. EE, in the youth sector, MT).
- Its geographical scope is wider than that of other national and international initiatives (e.g. CY, EE, LV, NL).
- There are no other initiatives to support policy reform similar to Key Action 3 (e.g. EE).

Slovenian stakeholders consider that national initiatives in the youth sector are insufficient and therefore Erasmus+ cannot be a supplement to them but it is rather addressing basic needs in the sector.

In a different vein, Danish authorities inform that according to national data on mobility, an important part of their higher education students prefer English-speaking countries such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia when choosing where to study abroad. This links to data that shows that they often choose programmes and funding sources other than Erasmus+ to support their studies abroad.

A few reports mention examples of synergies between the Programme and national activities:

- In Norway a number of schools, in particular in the VET sector, utilise VET mobility strategically to be able to offer students specialised training in a sub field they cannot offer at their own school, and that is often not even available in the country.
- In Finland, Erasmus+ is considered by some a good starting point for the development of deeper bilateral relationships.
- In Finland, incoming Erasmus+ exchange students in some regions have been offered the possibility to visit schools and give country and culture presentations.
- Co-funding of projects by several EU programmes in Cyprus. For instance, a number of projects under the operational programme 'Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion' are co-funded by the European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative and Erasmus+. For instance, this is the case of the projects 'Improvement of the quality, attractiveness and Efficiency of Vocational Education and Training in Cyprus and New Modern Apprenticeship' and 'Establishment of mechanisms for validating non-formal and informal learning'.

Countries also mention a few cases where synergies could be improved. For instance, France points out that the Europass coexists with a variety of skills portfolios proposed by education and training providers. National authorities 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.

5 Effectiveness of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

This section includes the analysis of the information concerning the following standard questions of the national implementation reports:

- To what extent have Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ specific objectives in your country? Are there differences across fields? Please provide, where relevant, your assessment for each of the specific objectives and provide evidence and examples where possible.
- To what extent has the progress on the realisation of the specific objectives contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ general objectives in your country?
- What specific approaches (such as co-financing, promotion or others) have you taken in order to try to enhance the effects of Erasmus+ in your country? To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified?
- Do you consider that certain actions of the programme are more effective than others? Are there differences across fields? What are the determining factors for making these actions of the programme more effective?
- What challenges and difficulties do you encounter while implementing the various actions of Erasmus+? What changes would need to be introduced in Erasmus+ or its successor programme to remedy these?
- To what extent have Erasmus+ actions influenced policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport in your country? Which actions were most effective in doing so? Are there marked differences between different fields?
- To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ made the programme more effective in your country? Do you see scope for

changes to the structure of Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase effectiveness?

- To what extent are the approaches and tools that are used for disseminating and exploiting the results of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes in your country effective? Where can you see the possibilities for improvements?

5.1 Contribution to Erasmus+ general and specific objectives (results and impacts)

National authorities were asked to report on the alignment of activities and Erasmus+ general and specific objectives. The following table summarizes Erasmus+ objectives.

Table 5.1 Erasmus+ objectives

General objectives	Specific objectives Education and Training	Specific objectives Youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Europe 2020 objectives, education headline targets. ■ ET 2020 objectives. ■ Development of partner countries in higher education. ■ Framework of European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) objectives. ■ Developing European dimension in sport. ■ Promotion of European values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve key competences and skills, and their relevance to the labour market and a cohesive society. ■ Promote language teaching and learning, EU linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness. ■ Foster quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation. ■ Promote a European lifelong learning area. ■ Enhance international dimension of education and training (cooperation with partner countries). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve key competences and skills and promote participation in democratic life and the labour market. ■ Foster quality improvements in youth work. ■ Complement policy reforms, support evidence-based youth policy and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. ■ Enhance international dimension of youth activities (cooperation with partner countries and international organisations).

Source: ICF based on Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

Regarding the general objectives, the Slovakian report observes that while the objectives and activities are well configured in the adult learning sector, due to the low number of projects, no real improvement has been observed in relation to the target of 15% of adults in lifelong learning. No further concrete comments have been identified with regards to the general objectives. Country reports tend to focus on the specific objectives.

Overall, country reports 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 (see Table 5.2). 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. More policy-level results are mentioned in the youth sector (see further information on this point under section 5.1.6).

Table 5.2 Overview of the frequency with which results at different levels are mentioned (by sector)

	Individual level learners	Individual level staff	Organisational level	Policy level	TOTAL
School education	26 BEde, BEfr, BG, CY, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HR, LT, LU, IE, IS, IT, MT, NL, NO, PL, RO, SE, SK, TR, UK.	23 BEde, BEnl, BEfr, CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, FY, HR, IE, IS, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PT, RO, SE, TR, UK.	15 BEfr, ES, FI, FY, HR, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, PT, SE, TR, UK.	8 BEde, EL, FI, FY, HU, RO, SI, TR.	72
VET	26 AT, BEnl, BEfr, BG, CY, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LV, , MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE, TR, UK.	17 AT, BEnl, BEfr, CY, EE, ES, FI, FY, HR, HU, IE, IS, LT, NO, PL, TR, UK.	10 AT, BEfr, BEnl, ES, FI, FY, IT, LT, LV, TR.	4 FI, FY, PL, RO.	57
Higher education	26 AT, BEnl, BEfr, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HR, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, RO, SE, TR, UK.	15 BEnl, BEfr, CY, EE, ES, FI, FY, IE, IS, LT, NO, RO, SE, TR, UK.	13 BEnl, BEfr, CY, DE, ES, FI, FY, HR, IT, LI, LT, SE, UK.	8 EE, EL, HU, FI, LT, RO, SI, TR.	62
Adult learning	13 BEfr, BG, CY, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, NL,	8 BEfr, CY, EL, ES, LT, NO, TR, UK.	3 BEfr, BEnl, ES.	1 HU.	25

	Individual level learners	Individual level staff	Organisation level	Policy level	TOTAL
	NO, SE, TR, UK.				
Youth	25	11	10	15	61
	BEd, BEnl, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE, SI, TR, UK.	BEnl, CY, EL, FI, FR, IT, LT, LV, NO, PT, UK.	BEnl, EE, ES, FI, FY, IT, LT, NO, NL, UK.	BEd, BEnl, CY, EE, EL, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, NO, NL, PL, SI, TR.	
Sport	3	-	2	1	6
	FI, SE, TR.		HU, UK.	HU.	
TOTAL	119	74	53	37	

Findings are further discussed in the sections below.

5.1.2 Key competences and skills

Most reports refer to the improvement of the level of key competences and skills of students, youth and staff (AT, BEd, BEfr, BEnl, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR, UK).⁵ The mentioned skills and knowledge acquired include for instance:

- Learners and youth: personal development (e.g. independence, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-confidence, ability to cope with new environments) (e.g. BEnl, CY, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, IE, IS, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, TR, UK), social and civic skills (e.g. DE, LT, LU, MT, NL, SK, UK), ICT skills (e.g. IS), entrepreneurial skills (e.g. CY, IT, MT), communication skills (e.g. IS, LT, LV, PL, UK), technical/professional knowledge and skills (mostly in the case of HE and VET) (e.g. AT, BEd, DK, HU, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO⁶, PT). Transversal skills are also mentioned (e.g. CY, HU, NL, NO).
- Education and training staff: language skills (e.g. DE, FI, IS, LV, TR, UK), new teaching and learning practices and methods (e.g. BEnl, CY, FI, FR, LT, LV, MT, UK), increased project management skills (e.g. FI, PT), ICT skills (e.g. LV), and personal and social skills (e.g. LV). It is also seen to promote peer learning and networking among staff (e.g. FI, PT), promote job satisfaction (e.g. BEnl, FI, IS, UK) and contribute to professional development (e.g. BEnl, IS, UK).
- Youth organisations' staff: new teaching and learning practices and methods (e.g. BEnl, CY, LT), and communication skills (e.g. LV). Erasmus+ is also considered to contribute to professional development (e.g. BEnl, CY, EL, LT, and PT).

In **Hungary**, according to questionnaires filled in by participants in 2014-2016,

⁵ This point was not specifically mentioned in the written contribution from Switzerland.

⁶ Norwegian informants referred to improved subject specific competence for pupils in fields not offered at the pupils' school.

the Programme supported the improvement of the skills of the participants. The satisfaction level regarding the development of the general (problem solving, creative, analytical), practical, and professional skills of the participating pupils and students is above 90% in most cases. There is a similar level of satisfaction among teachers, trainers, and youth specialists participating in mobility.

Reports also refer to the relevance of the skills acquired to the labour market. Some indicate an impact of Erasmus+ on employability, mainly among HE and VET students (e.g. BE, FI, FR, IS, LV, MT, NL, NO, SE), or in related aspects such as the awareness of the profession (e.g. CY). In most cases this is based on the self-reported perceptions of participants. Denmark used administrative data to analyse the employability of higher education graduates who had participated in Erasmus+ (see below).

Denmark compared a group of higher education graduates who had participated in Erasmus+ with a group who had not taken part in mobility (control group 1) and a group who had participated in other exchange programmes (control group 2). Taking as control group the higher education students who had not participate in any type of exchange, small but positive significant effects of Erasmus+ on employment was found 6 and 12 months after graduation. The effect on employment 24 month after graduation was positive but insignificant. Taking as control group other exchange students, the impact analysis shows no significant effects of Erasmus+ on the employment status 6 months after graduation; a small and marginally significant negative effect when considering employment 12 months after graduation; and no significant effects of Erasmus+ after 24 months. The report concludes that the direct link between Erasmus+ and employment is expected to be weak and explains that there are several other factors which are likely to be influencing employability (e.g. network, prior work experience, grades, subject of final thesis, etc.).

In the **Netherlands**, according to the results of a survey among students who participated in Erasmus+, a majority of students and youth believed that their gained knowledge and skills adds value to their CV (over 90% of university students and higher professional education students, and 83% of VET students). Respondents also believe that their career prospects benefit from their Erasmus+ experience.

In Malta, a study sought to evaluate the impact of the European Voluntary Service on the participants' future educational and professional perspectives. According to the key findings, 'the majority of the respondents stated that through the EVS they now have a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals' whilst others 'mentioned that they are now planning to engage in further vocational, formal and non-formal educational opportunities.'

Reports refer less often to the impact of Erasmus+ on young Europeans' active citizenship and participation in democratic life. This result is observed in a few countries (e.g. BE, EE, IS). However, other reports (e.g. NL) mention that there is little proof of such result or that evidence is limited.

This observation can probably be explained by a selection bias: those who are already more active citizens are more likely to decide to enrol in Erasmus+ activities. Thus, Erasmus+ may not further increase their participation in democratic life.

Another result mentioned by national reports is the strengthening of European identity among young people and staff (e.g. EE) and the social inclusion of young people (e.g. FI, LV).

Erasmus+ objectives in the youth field refer to the improvement of key competences of young people with fewer opportunities. Some national authorities comment on this matter. Erasmus+ mobility is perceived to particularly benefit marginalised youth in Norway and Flanders. The Flemish report informs that the transition into the new programme resulted first in a decrease of young people with fewer opportunities in 2014, but has since then been restored and stabilizes again on the level before 2014.

In **Norway**, several informants, both from the National Agency and from the participating organisations explain that mobility projects give marginalised youth a chance to be in a new context where they are given a new role, are seen with fresh eyes, and learn new skills. This makes them feel competent, and contributes to changing their self-perception. Upon their return, they are seen as more resourceful and often participate more.

5.1.3 Language teaching and learning, EU linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness

The improvement of language skills and the willingness to use foreign languages (AT, BEde, BEfr, BEnl, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE,⁷ EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR, UK)⁸ and of cultural awareness and intercultural skills (AT, BEde, BEfr, BEnl, CZ, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR, UK)⁹ of students, youth and staff are often mentioned in country reports.

In **Slovakia**, a repeated and strong influence was recorded in connection with the language instruction of pupils. The application of CLIL methods in school practice as the result of the Erasmus+ projects is explicitly noted by the State School Inspectorate in its 2015/2016 report.

5.1.4 Quality improvements, innovation, excellence and internationalisation

Many reports refer to the impact of Erasmus+ on the internationalisation of participating organisations (e.g. BEde, BEnl, CY, CZ, DK, EL, EE, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, LI, LT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, RO, SI, TR, UK).

Countries also report a positive influence of Erasmus+ on the quality of education and training provided by participant organisations (e.g. BEnl, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, LT, LV, MT, NO, PL, RO, SE, SK, TR, UK). Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships and mobilities allow for the development of new teaching methods, often innovative for participating organisations, which can have a positive impact on quality.

Erasmus+ is also believed to promote the quality and professionalization of youth work (e.g. BEnl, EL, ES, FI, IE, IT, LT, NL, NO, PL, SI, SE, SK, UK).

⁷ The report specifies that participating students rated the improvement of foreign skills lower than other aspects such as the experience of learning mobility as such, personal development and the improvement of cultural knowledge.

⁸ The report from CH does not specifically refer to this aspect.

⁹ The reports from BG, CH and LI do not specifically refer to this aspect. The Bulgarian report refers to an 'enrichment of the culture'.

In **Finland**, according to an e-survey conducted for the mid-term evaluation, 86% of respondents representing the higher education sector completely agreed with the statement 'Erasmus+ is a significant part of my organisation's international cooperation' and 75% agreed with the statement 'International cooperation and mobility would have decreased significantly without the Erasmus+ programme'. The majority of the respondents from the other sectors of education also agreed with these statements.

In **Slovenia**, youth organisations' stakeholders believe that the programme has contributed to the 'literacy' of organizations active in the youth sector as well as set a clear array of operating principles that improved the efficiency of organizations and capacity of the entire sector. The programme has become the tool for the development of new policy mechanisms, for testing new ideas in this policy field as well as a fountain of new and innovative approaches.

5.1.5 European lifelong learning area

Country reports do not often reflect on the objective of promoting a European lifelong learning area and there are few concrete examples of impacts in this area.

Some country reports refer to the recognition of studies followed abroad (credit transfer). The Finish report observes that there is an improvement of recognition procedures, while the Estonian report refers to difficulties in credit transfer.

The Dutch, Flemish, Latvian and Maltese authorities report an increase in the use of Youthpass in Erasmus+ compared to Youth in Action. For instance, in Latvia, the national youth agency has set the target that the average share of participants receiving Youthpass in Erasmus+ should be 85%. This share has been of 79% in 2014 and 91% in 2015.

5.1.6 Support to youth policies and reforms

Country reports do not often give concrete examples on how Erasmus+ contributes to policy development in the youth field. The following are some interesting examples:

- In Norway, Erasmus+ has been used to enable youth participation in the political and administrative processes at local and regional levels. There are several examples of municipalities that use Erasmus+ to engage youth locally. When returning from mobility stays, the municipalities recruit them to contribute actively back in to their community, in the context of youth councils. For instance, in 2013, a project with participants from youth councils in Mid-Norway focused on promoting youth participation in transportation planning. Politicians from both the regional and the national level participated, and as a result of the attention it brought, the government has suggested making youth participation in transportation planning statutory.
- In Poland, a youth project resulted in the establishment of a county-level youth council.
- The Norwegian report also mentions an NGO-initiated project that trains youth leaders in leadership, decision-making, campaigning and how to press for political action on relevant topics. In 2015, several participants in the project, among them four Norwegians, were sent to Paris to participate in the COP 21 on climate change.

- The Slovenian report explains that Erasmus+ has helped youth organisations to gain visibility and become more influential in the country. In particular, this is the case of the National Agency MOVIT which is perceived to have become an influential actor in national policy developments that contribute to the realization of Erasmus+ objectives and an important supporter of the youth sector.

Some reports consider that KA3 has been particularly useful to promote structured dialogue between youth and political decision-makers at local, regional and national level (e.g. PT, BEnl, FR, LV). The Portuguese report adds that the funding available for these projects has been insufficient. In Ireland, the suite of national core policies in the area of Youth -Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (2014), the National Youth Strategy (2015) and the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making (2015) make reference to the youth field of Erasmus+ and refer in particular to the consultative routes with young people that have emerged from structured dialogue (KA3).

The Lithuanian report observes that the impact of KA3 projects depends on the approach of municipalities to youth policy. In municipalities which have a youth coordinator acting as an intermediary between youth and local authorities, youth organisations are more likely to engage in closer relations with decision-makers, and be involved in cross-sectoral cooperation.

5.1.7 International dimension (cooperation with Partner Countries and international organisations)

Country reports do not often refer to the impact of Erasmus+ on the cooperation with Partner Countries and international organisations.

The Swiss national authorities consider that Erasmus+ project award criteria contain a major barrier to cooperation with non-programme countries. The criterion 'the extent to which the involvement of a participating organisation from a Partner Country brings an essential added value to the project (if this condition is not fulfilled, the project will not be considered for selection)' is considered to discourage programme countries to cooperate with partner countries. According to the Swiss report, to avoid automatic exclusion based on this criterion, several National Authorities advise their target audience not to include partner countries in their projects.

The Swiss national authorities believe that there is insufficient information of how programme countries can safely include partner countries as full or associate partners. To tackle this, they propose that the programme could allow evaluators to suggest excluding a partner country organisation from a project consortium, instead of rejecting the whole project, if the added value of the partner cannot be demonstrated convincingly.

Another aspect Swiss authorities criticise is that, once part of a consortium, Partner Countries do not have the same opportunities as Programme Countries (e.g. limited access to funds and access to certain activities), and this discourages international collaboration.

The Lithuanian report argues that the greatest challenge faced by HEIs is the implementation of mobility between Programme Countries and Partner Countries. It explains that the application process and administration of these projects is significantly more burdensome than of those involving only Programme countries, while the benefits that they render to the institutions are

still difficult to grasp. Additionally, the Lithuanian authority considers the available grant for this action insufficient.

The Polish national authority reported that HEIs made efforts to attract students from Partner Countries (mainly from Ukraine). However, due to the low budget available the impact remains rather limited.

5.2 Effects on policy developments

Based on the information gathered by country reports, Erasmus+ can have an impact on policy developments through different means:

- Erasmus+ supports EU-level processes such as Bologna and Copenhagen which have an impact on national education and training systems (e.g. BE, FI, IT, NO, RO, TR).
- Involvement of local authorities in projects is likely to influence local policy developments (e.g. LT, NL, NO, TR).
- The involvement of government departments in Erasmus+ projects helps work towards the implementation of governmental policies (e.g. CY, IS).
- The availability of funds for mobility and internationalisation through Erasmus+ has motivated the introduction of these activities in national strategies (e.g. FI).

KA3 projects bringing together policy-makers and youth organisations are expected to impact policy developments (e.g. FR, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, TR) (see also section 5.1.6). The Dutch National agency suggests the introduction of KA3 at a decentralised level for educational and training institutions as well, as a way to strengthen the effects of the programme on policy development in this field.

In **Italy** a KA3 project is carried out by the Ministry of Education that deals with the national recognition procedures. It aims to create a system that facilitates the use of European transparency and recognition tools (ECTS and Diploma Supplement) and assures quality and accreditation in order to harmonize national evaluation with the European system, according to the new Guidelines on Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

In the **Netherlands**, in the city of Den Bosch, the municipality's collaboration with educational Institutions in KA2, affected the local policy agenda by highlighting educational issues and prioritising topics.

In **Iceland**, the Government Agency for Child Protection participated in an Erasmus+ project which aimed to improve procedures in child protection services by offering workshops for Child Protection Committees and professionals all over the country. These workshops involved discussions about processes and procedures and ultimately led to improvements in the field.

5.3 National-level approaches to enhance the effects of Erasmus+

Based on the information contained in the country reports, national entities can enhance the effects of Erasmus+ through different means:

- Support given by national agencies to participants (all countries).
- Support to dissemination activities (all countries).
- Additional funding to national agencies by national authorities (e.g. FI, LV, NO).
- Top-up funding to mobility or other actions by national authorities (e.g. CY, DE, EE, LV, NO, PT).
- Top-up funding to mobility by higher education institutions (e.g. FI, NL).

- Top-up funding to mobility or other actions by external entities (sponsorships) (e.g. NL).
- National incentives to mobility and internationalisation (e.g. EE, NO).
- Facilitate the engagement of previous higher education Erasmus+ participants with potential participants in schools to promote the Programme (e.g. IE).

In order to facilitate the transition from LLP to Erasmus + in the school sector in 2014-2015 **Italy** funded a specific National Training Plan which presented to stakeholders the content and potential of the new Programme with the aim of increasing the number of beneficiaries.

In **Germany**, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) often co-finances projects in the field of VET. For instance, since 2016, it has provided funding for mobility projects which are accessible to trainees, in particular those from Small and Medium Enterprises.

In **Estonia**, performance-based funding for higher education institutions, introduced in 2017, includes as two of its six components 'student mobility' and 'share of foreign students'. This is expected to stimulate mobility and internationalisation in the sector.

In **Malta**, the Ministry of Education and Employment introduced the 'Project Implementation Directorate' (PID) that cooperates closely with the Maltese NA in assisting schools to successfully manage their projects by providing them with extra support throughout the implementation period. By way of example, the PID arranged meetings with schools that were in the need of further assistance to plan and manage the project grant more effectively.

5.4 Effectiveness per field and type of action

There does not seem to be an agreement on the differences in the level of impact of KA1 and KA2. Several country reports explain that there is no substantial evidence of such differences (e.g. DK, EE, NO); certain stakeholders observe that the impact appears to be more significant in the case of KA1 (e.g. BEnI, CY, FI, IT, HU, LV, MT, SI, TR, UK); and other hypothesize that KA2 projects may end up having longer-lasting effects on organisations than individual mobilities (e.g. FI, RO).

Arguments for a greater impact of KA1 include:

- Higher number of participants in KA1 compared to KA2 (e.g. BEnI, CY, FI, LV, MT, UK).
- Despite its potential, the effectiveness of KA2 is severely limited due to budgetary constraints and the low number of awarded institutions (e.g. HU).
- Lack of interest in KA2, especially in the field of higher education (e.g. SK).
- Communicating the achievements of KA2 projects is more difficult due to the complexity of this action (e.g. BEnI, HU).
- The sustainability of end products of KA2 projects or the use of results by other organisations is not guaranteed over time (e.g. CY, FI).

Within KA1, some stakeholders argue that longer mobilities have longer-lasting effects (e.g. CY, FI, NL). This would be for instance the case of the European Voluntary Service compared to other youth changes. As a concrete example, the Cypriote report observes that the short mobility periods usually implemented in VET in the country (2 weeks) do not allow for the improvement in professional skills.

Some stakeholders observe that different actions have effects at different levels (e.g. MT, NL, NO, SI). For instance, Dutch participants believe that KA1 and KA3 have a greater effect at the individual level while KA2 has stronger effects at organisational level.

KA3 is often highlighted as having the greatest potential to affect policy making (e.g. LT, NO, TR). For instance, the Turkish report observes that KA3 projects are tackling the need of young people of better communication with relevant decision-makers. As an example, the report refers to a project promoting participation of university students in policy making through their involvement in the preparation of the Regional Strategy Plan.

A few reports refer to differences in the skills and knowledge acquired depending on the sector. For instance, the Dutch report explains that language skills were most frequently enhanced in the case of students, while for young people participating in youth activities, their social and civic skills were mostly strengthened. The Flemish report also highlights the latter skills in the case of youth, and underlines the importance of social inclusion in the context of the refugee crisis.

5.5 Factors influencing effectiveness

Country reports refer to some factors that are considered to have a positive impact on effectiveness, for instance:

- The availability of experienced staff in the institutions applying for projects who can focus on international cooperation and mobility is likely to increase application success rates and facilitate project management. This condition is more often met in higher education than in other education sectors and fields (e.g. FI, LT).
- The involvement of the organisation leader is an important factor to facilitate participation in Erasmus+ (e.g. FI, NO).
- Good cooperation and good relationships with partners (e.g. IS, LT).
- Clear objectives and good project management (e.g. IS, RO).
- Support from the national agency (e.g. HU, IS).
- Effects at organisational or system level are more likely to happen if the project is aligned with organisational or national priorities (e.g. FI, NO)

A few reports also refer to challenges influencing effectiveness.

- Low number of KA3 projects, resulting in limited policy-effects (e.g. HR, HU, MT).
- High-quality projects have to be rejected due to lack of funding (e.g. DE, LV, MT, NL, PT).
- Youth in Action had provided grants for small but valuable local activities for youth, which are not included in Erasmus+ (e.g. BEnl, CH, HU, MT).

5.6 Dissemination of Erasmus+ results

Country reports refer to a variety of dissemination channels (e.g. Erasmus+ dissemination platform, events, websites, social media). In the Netherlands, some higher education and VET institutions have used the results of internal institutional surveys about the effects of Erasmus+ to disseminate the effects of the programme during information meetings and events, and are considering the use of videos.

Despite dissemination efforts, some observe that the results of projects are seldom further exploited (e.g. BEnl, FI, HU, IT, MT, SI, TR). While this can be due to factors external to the programme itself (professionals' lack of time) some suggest that dissemination channels should be improved, for instance by:

- Focusing efforts and additional resources on the identification and dissemination of the most interesting projects and results at national or EU level (e.g. BG, CY, FI, HU, TR).
- Improving the user-friendliness of the Erasmus+ dissemination platform (e.g. BEnl, IE, FI, MT). The search function of the platform, for example, was described as difficult to use.
- Further involving national authorities and/or municipalities in the dissemination of Erasmus+ and its results (e.g. IS, RO, SI).
- Providing further guidance to project coordinators in relation to good dissemination practices (e.g. HU, MT).

5.7 Changes in effectiveness related to the new structure of the programme

National reports do not include evidence on the impact of the new structure on effectiveness. They gather information on how the new structure is affecting implementation. Overall, national reports consider the change in the programme structure to be positive but difficulties are also mentioned.

Benefits observed include:

- More opportunities for cross-sectoral cooperation (e.g. EE, NL, NO, SI).
- More opportunities to work with non-European partners (e.g. FI, PT).
- Shortened mobility periods, which is considered to facilitate participation of VET students and staff (minimum two weeks, as opposed to normally three weeks in prior programmes, and minimum two days instead of five for staff mobility) (e.g. DK).

The Dutch and Latvian national authorities report that Erasmus+ is perceived to put a stronger focus on quality instead of quantity (number of participants) when compared to the previous programmes. Current application procedures encourage applicants to write applications and deliver projects of a higher quality. For instance, according to both education and youth organisations, the requirement of submitting a development plan with KA1 applications encourages organisations to think about a strategic long-term quality approach towards Erasmus+ projects.

Country reports also refer to tensions resulting from the new programme structure, in particular:

- The new structure takes less into account the specificities of the youth field and reduces its visibility (e.g. CY, EE, HU, LV, MT, SI).
- The new programme offers less opportunities to more vulnerable individuals (e.g. young Roma people who experience language barriers due to their lower educational attainment and knowledge of foreign languages). Their participation used to be linked to projects presented by local youth initiatives. It is now more challenging for these initiatives and for informal groups of young people to get projects approved (e.g. MT, SI, SK).
- The exclusion of secondary and adult education students from KA1 mobility has reduced the opportunities for these target groups (e.g. CY, ES).
- The centralised application process in the sport sector is criticised as it makes it more difficult to reach grassroots organisations (e.g. FI).

- The Online Linguistic Support for VET is not sufficient to address the language needs of this target group (e.g. DE).
- The Master Loan scheme has not had the intended effect (e.g. DE, FI).

As a response to these difficulties, national reports do not propose a restructuring of the programme but rather more concrete changes, such as the Introduction of individual mobility through KA1 in secondary education and adult education (e.g. CH, CY, FI). With the aim of facilitating the participation of vulnerable youth, reports propose for instance:

- A simplification of application procedures in the youth field to facilitate the participation of youth groups (e.g. EE).
- The Finnish report comments on a suggestion from a group interview at the national agency to divide youth exchanged into two different types:
 - One, consisting of short 1-2 week exchanges, organised on a short notice and that could work according to a pre-determined programme;
 - And the second one consisting of longer 1-2 year exchanges where young people participate actively in all phases of the project.

The short-term exchanges would be more accessible to people who have difficulties to commit to long-term processes and could be the first step towards longer term exchanges in countries where conditions for youth work are not satisfactory.

6 Efficiency

This section includes the analysis of the information concerning the following standard questions of the national implementation reports:

- Do you consider that the implementation of certain actions of the programme is more efficient than others? Are there differences across fields? What good practices of these more efficient actions of the programme could be transferred to others?
- Is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what Erasmus+ is set out to achieve? Is the distribution of funds across the programme's fields and actions appropriate in relation to their level of effectiveness and utility?¹⁰
- To what extent Erasmus+ will be able to absorb in an effective way the sharp increase in the budget that is foreseen in the coming years up to 2020 in your country? Could the programme use even higher budgets in an effective way? Do you see challenges to effectively use more money for particular actions or fields of the programme?¹¹
- To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in your country, both at the level of the National Agency/ies and on the beneficiaries' and participants' level? Do you see scope for changes to the structure of Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase efficiency?
- To what extent has the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies and programme

¹⁰ This question is included under the section of 'Effectiveness' in the National Report Guidance.

¹¹ This question is included under 'European added value and sustainability' in the National Reports Guidance. In this table, it is under 'efficiency' since the responses of countries are likely to make links between the appropriateness of the current budget (e.g. fields and actions where it is sufficient, or where it would benefit from an increase), and the potential uses of the foreseen additional budget.

- beneficiaries and participants? Are there differences across actions or fields? What elements of the programme could be changed to further reduce the administrative burden, without unduly compromising its results and impact?
- To what extent is the level of human and financial resources that is available for the implementation of the programme in your country adequate? What steps did you take to optimise the efficiency of the resources deployed for the Erasmus+ implementation in your country?
 - To what extent are the IT tools provided by the Commission adequate for the efficient management and implementation of the programme in your country? Do they answer your needs? Give specific examples where they can be improved. Is the set of IT tools appropriate or should it cover more/less elements of the programme implementation?
 - To what extent is the system of cooperation and division of tasks between the Commission, Executive Agency, National Agencies, European Investment Fund, National Authorities, Independent Audit Bodies, and Erasmus+ Committee efficient and well-functioning from the point of view of your country? What are the areas for possible improvement or simplification in the implementation of Erasmus+ or a successor programme?

Country reports express concerns about different aspects related to the Programme's efficiency including: the limited funding and the limited capacity of stakeholders to present good quality projects in some fields and sectors; the complexity of administrative procedures related to application and reporting; and the multiplicity of IT platforms and the lack of links between them (see section 6.1). Many countries believe that new structure of the programme has led to positive changes but there are also some dissonant voices in this respect (see section 6.3).

Regarding the implementation and management structures, most countries report an overall satisfaction with the division of tasks and cooperation in Erasmus+. However, some national agencies would like to see improved cooperation with the EACEA. Also, a few countries (e.g. IT, NO) criticise the action of the Independent Audit Body both in terms of the resources consumed and the pertinence of such a mechanism when other audits are already being performed at national level (see section 6.3).

6.1 Cost-effectiveness

6.1.1 Budget size and distribution. Capacity of absorption of future budget increase.

Country reports alert that success rates (funded projects out of the total number of applications) are low in some of the actions and fields (AT, BEfr, BEnl, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, FY, HU, HR, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK, TR, UK).¹² This is attributed to limited funding and to the limited capacity of stakeholders to present good quality projects in some fields and sectors. Success rates appear to be particularly low in KA2, the youth field, and adult education.

¹² This issue is not specifically mentioned in the reports from BEde, BG, FI, IE, IS, LI, LU and SI. The Bulgarian report indicates that there has been a slight decrease of the success rates under KA1 and KA3. The Finnish report notes that the budget for partnerships projects should be increased as the number of projects is extremely low at the moment, in contrast to the previous programme periods, especially in higher education. The Slovenian report indicates that in the youth sector success rate is around 25% and gets down to 16% in the case of KA2 projects.

When discussing the countries' capacity of absorption of future budget increase, reports refer to the following points:

- National authorities are concerned that human resources at national agencies will be insufficient to manage the foreseen increase in budget.
 - Some country reports indicate that the adequate absorption of the foreseen increase in budget would require that more funds are dedicated to national agencies, namely to hire more staff (e.g. EE, LI, SI).
 - It is also suggested that an increase in funds should be accompanied by a simplification of administrative procedures for applicants, participants and national agencies. The simpler application and reporting procedures are, the less support agencies need to give to applicants and participants.
- Some countries call for more flexibility on how funds are distributed at national level to help ensure that the full budget is absorbed (e.g. CY, NO, PT, SI, UK). For instance, smaller countries often ask for the possibility to redistribute funds from KA1 to KA2 where the unmet demand is higher (e.g. CY, SI and SE). The Irish report provides a similar recommendation: that flexibility would enable the agencies to respond to issues of national context which may require a percentage of the set budget to be redistributed appropriately to where it is in demand (e.g. where there are oversubscriptions in an area such as adult education, or where budget has been assigned to international regions which are not taken-up by students).

The capacity of absorption of additional funds also depends of the level of interest of target groups for the different types of actions. Countries report that:

- In KA1, there is potential to increase the number of mobilities. Depending on the country, this process may run smoothly – as the demand is already higher than the number of available grants (e.g. FI, NL, NO in VET) - or require additional efforts to remove barriers and increase motivation to participate (e.g. EE).
- In KA2, the number of quality applications is higher than the number of supported projects. A budget increase in this action will be welcomed (e.g. CH, HU, NO, PT, RO).
- KA3 is a less clear case. In some countries budget has not been fully used (e.g. NL). There may also be a need to support applicants to increase the quality of applications. According to the Turkish report, the national agency and national authorities consider KA3 to be of high importance in achieving the country objectives at system level; however currently, only KA347 in Youth field is implemented.

In terms of the interest per field, according to country reports:

- In the field of education and training, the level of absorption is likely to vary by sector. For instance, the Norwegian report observes a stronger demand by higher education and VET while the level of absorption is likely to be lower in the case of general and adult education. According to the Polish report, additional budget in school education, adult education and VET sector would be beneficial at the cost of the field of higher education. In Macedonia, adult learning would require additional financial capacity.
- The youth sector is seen as the most severely impacted by the decrease of resources and funding to date has been limited (the level of decentralised funding is still lower than in the last year of the Youth in Action programme). Consequently, the sector is expected to absorb additional funds easily as funding to date has been limited (e.g. HU, IE, IT, LV).

- 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.

As a recommendation, it would be useful for countries to have information on the distribution of future funds and the potential new responsibilities of national agencies in advance so that they can plan accordingly.

6.1.2 Administrative procedures

In spite of acknowledging some simplification of administrative procedures, according to country reports, participants express concerns about complex administrative procedures related to application and reporting (AT, BEde, BEfr, BEnl, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR, UK).

For instance, some consider that application and reporting forms tend to be repetitive (e.g. LV) and some questions are too long and difficult to interpret (e.g. BEnl, HU, FI, IE, IT, LT, NO, PL, UK). As another example, country reports observe that applications require indicating in advance the number of participants and it is difficult for institutions to establish this a long time in advance (e.g. FY, NL).

Administrative procedures in KA2 are perceived to be particularly time-consuming (e.g. AT, CH, DK, HU, LI, LT, LV, MT, NL). According to the Lithuanian report, organisations taking part in Strategic Partnership projects as coordinators, have been observed not to undertake the same role for a second time in a row due to the demanding administrative obligations. In the Netherlands, participants consider that the financial responsibility for foreign partners leads to higher administrative burden than in other KAs. The Latvian report observes that a certain amount of financing requires a financial guarantee, which is difficult to prepare and obtain in Latvia. The reports from Austria and Lichtenstein comment that the budget for project management in KA2 is insufficient.

Administrative burden mainly affects institutions that do not have staff specifically dedicated to internationalisation (more often in non-higher education and the youth sector). The Estonian report explains that it is necessary to improve the capability of certain organisations to apply for grants and carry out projects, in particular those in the field of sports and adult education. It suggests that it would be possible to use the know-how of the youth field for capacity-development in the fields of sport and adult education. The national agencies responsible for youth and experienced organisations could provide advice about how to apply for grants, implement projects and report on the activities developed.

More concrete aspects mentioned in country reports include, for instance:

- According to the Swiss report, Erasmus+ favours large-scale cooperation projects with a high number of participants, leaving out institutions which would like to start with smaller projects.
- The Icelandic report mentions that there seem to be different rules between national authorities regarding the language participants can use when applying to funding, and this has created some confusion among participants.
- The Norwegian report observes that administering the different learning agreements and institutional agreements is very resource intensive for the institutions. Gathering all the needed signatures is time consuming and it is

particularly difficult to get the receiving institutions to sign the learning agreements before the semester starts.

- In Iceland, Erasmus+ youth volunteers and VET mobile learners have been perceived as threatening by unions which thought they might be replacing paid staff. The ministry of education needs to better inform unions on the rules regulating mobilities to avoid conflicts between the unions and the organisations hosting volunteers.

Some national stakeholders also criticise the frequent changes to the programme structure. Adapting to new changes is described as time-consuming to participants and national agencies (e.g. EE).

Some of the recommendations given by countries to reduce administrative burden and barriers to participation include:

- Developing sector specific programme guides in order to simplify the application procedure for the youth field and the school and adult education sectors;
- Simplifying the language used in documentation;
- Simplifying learning agreements to make it easier for student and staff to read and understand;
- Introducing electronic learning agreements and electronic signatures (e.g. NO, PT);
- Using training videos and social media to reduce the need for assistance of National Agencies and reduce their administrative burden;
- The adoption of charters similar to those already in place for higher education and VET, also in other sectors. Charters reduce the amount of work for National Agencies when analysing the suitability of potential project partners;
- As a way to promote the participation of smaller organisations, it is suggested that there could be a limit to the number of applications each organisation can submit (e.g. LV). Evaluation criteria could also favour new candidates or there could be a 'lighter' version of the application procedure for smaller organisations and newcomers.

To enhance the effectiveness of the E+ youth chapter, a framework for the implementation of the principle of proportionality has been elaborated by the **Flemish NA**. This principle of proportionality aims to promote the diversity among the applicants, improve the accessibility of the programme for small, inexperienced organisations, organisations working with priority target groups, informal youth groups and voluntary organisations, improve the internationalisation of organisations in the Flemish Community and the relevance of projects for youth work and youth policy in Flanders and Brussels.

6.1.2.1 Costs calculation

Overall, it appears that the **simplified grants** approach is considered to have resulted in the reduction of administrative burden, but this opinion is not unanimous (e.g. in Estonia, over one third of surveyed higher education institutions believe that administrative burden has increased; the Lithuanian report claims that the previous model of funding (lump sum) was more suitable than the new one (unit costs) when it comes to long-term pupil mobility in the school education sector, which is now part of Strategic Partnerships).

Many stakeholders claim that **travel costs** are often insufficient (e.g. AT, BEnl, CY, ES, FY, IT, LI, LT, MT, PT, UK). They explain that, in addition to the distance, calculations should take into account the existence of direct flights and whether

the points of departure and arrival are capitals/main cities or not. Travelling from a secondary city or village to a main airport can involve high costs. Some participants asked for travel costs to be compensated according to real costs.

Other criticisms and challenges referred in national reports include:

- The need to calculate mobility grants based on the exact start and return dates (FI, LT, NO). It is difficult to predict the exact duration of a long mobility in advance and this leads to extra work afterwards as it requires adjustments and reimbursements to the national agency.
- The differences in daily rates of participants in youth exchanges and participants in youth workers mobility do not seem justified (NO).
- The mobility costs of students and staff in the higher education sector are a few times higher than the cost per participant in the youth sector (HR).

A few countries commented on country-specific issues related to the costs calculation:

- The Estonian, Lithuanian and Slovakian reports mention that the category of cost of living where these countries are placed does not correspond to reality. They mention that staff wage rates are too low.
- The Lithuanian national authorities also mention that, in the case of KA2 projects, the unit cost rates applicable in relation to the production of intellectual outputs in the country are too low, resulting in difficulties to engage experts from other countries in project activities.
- In Iceland, unfavourable exchange rates and high living costs create difficulties to youth mobility.
- The Swedish report refers to the Commission's evaluation of the administrative grant to the national agencies according to which more expensive countries are at disadvantage compared to countries with lower price levels, which can affect staffing in the national agencies. According to the Swedish report it may also affect the willingness of groups and organisations in high-cost countries to embark on a long and time-consuming application process.
- In the Netherlands, an obstacle for foreign European Volunteer Service (EVS) volunteers and Dutch host organisations, is the obligation to sign up (and pay) for Dutch health insurance, next to the health insurance that has already been arranged for participants by the European Commission. Dutch host organisations are subject to large fines when they do not comply with the rules regarding Dutch health insurance. But the mandatory Dutch health insurance leads to extra costs for participants when they are not covered by the volunteering organisation.
- In Romania, there are sometimes discrepancies between the national financial regulations and those of Erasmus+. Therefore, the beneficiary cannot take advantage of the financial flexibility provided by the Programme.

6.1.3 IT tools

Country-level stakeholders and participants acknowledge the usefulness of IT tools but also report on different issues related to their use, mainly: the multiplicity of systems, the poor links between them (meaning that the same data needs to be entered multiple times), technical issues and low user-friendliness.

With regards to technical issues, participants inform that there were important difficulties in the beginning, when the new tools were introduced, but the

situation has improved with time, in particular as from 2016 (e.g. FR, FY, HU, IE, LT, LV, MT, SK). However, project coordinators in Austria consider that the response time to IT tickets is too long.

Participants express that the tools provided for the management and implementation of the programme could be more user-friendly. For instance, national authorities from Austria, Hungary and Lichtenstein report that recording data in the Mobility Tool is perceived to be very time-consuming by applicant organisations.

Some suggestions of improvements include:

- Allow national agencies to import excel documents into the Mobility Tool to avoid writing all the names of participants (e.g. HU, IS).
- Simplification of the language used (e.g. FI).
- Need of user-friendly instructions for the procedures where these are missing or are too technical (e.g. SI).
- To provide NAs with access to a central database, including information on all projects implemented (e.g. SE).
- The Mobility Tool should allow to adjust the budget allocated to students, when they do not receive maximum grants (e.g. FI).
- To establish a public version of the Erasmus+ Dashboard (UK).
- Provide project coordinators with an authorisation to access the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) platform considering that they are responsible for introducing the tool to participants (e.g. HU). Related to OLS, the Swedish report suggested that those students who attain level C2 prior to leaving for mobility could perhaps be excluded from the language test on their return.

Still on the OLS, the Lithuanian and Slovakian reports observe low utilisation levels and question the benefits of the tool. The Greek report underlines the importance of the OLS for refugees but refers to difficulties to ensure the use of licenses (see box below).

In **Greece**, 11 out of 37 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) took part in the OLS for refugees' action, mainly those close to places where refugee camps are located. The National Agency has requested 4,351 OLS licenses for refugees and 150 OLS licenses for operators in total. The beneficiaries cooperate with at least 20 different partner organisations all over the country. Nevertheless, just a few licenses have been allocated to participants at the moment.

The main problems beneficiaries face are:

- The lack of coordination in camps or other hospitality structures, where the refugees are established.
- Communication difficulties between beneficiaries (HEIs) and other involved actors such as NGOs, municipalities and other bodies.
- The lack of adequate facilities for refugees (internet connection, mobile devices, etc.) and the lack of an interface in Arabic, Farsi and Urdu in the OLS application, as many refugees do not speak English or their level is rather poor.

The NA is trying to maximize the coordination between NGOs and Universities and to this end had a meeting with officers from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNCHR) in Greece responsible for the education of refugees.

In another vein, beneficiaries consider that the assessment and the level of the courses is too difficult for someone who has no previous experience with the language.

Some reports describe issues related to the Participant Identification Code (PIC). For instance, beneficiaries have faced difficulties in obtaining the PIC (e.g. AT, BEnl, TR, UK). Applying for a PIC requires completing a form, which is time-consuming, and having a digital signature, something that some participants are not familiar with, in particular small businesses.

As for the links between different tools, participants observe that it should be possible to copy-paste information between tools and reduce the redundancy of the information that needs to be entered in the different tools. More specifically, some mention that it would be useful to link the OLS platform and the mobility tool (e.g. IT, LU). The Swedish report suggests combining all the different IT systems into an integrated system.

Some country reports also refer to the frequent changes made to the IT tools. National agencies would like to be informed in advance and receive information on the reasons behind the changes (e.g. SE).

6.2 Implementation and management structures

Most countries report an overall satisfaction with the division of tasks and cooperation in Erasmus+ (AT, BEde, BEnl, BEfr, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR, UK).¹³

In terms of the **communication between the European Commission and national agencies**, some difficulties were reported at the beginning of the programme, but the situation is perceived to have improved over time in terms of the clarity and timeliness of response by the Commission. The introduction of Yammer is considered positive as it helps making sure that the voices of all national agencies are heard. The Flemish report suggests to use a single channel of communication between the national agencies and the EC/EACEA, since currently there are different tools in place.

Some **National Authorities** consider that the **communication with the Commission** could be strengthened. For instance, the Slovenian national authority considers that better communication would help clarify the roles of the Commission and the National Authorities in terms of the monitoring of Erasmus+ activities.

In a different vein, the Italian and Flemish reports call for a more fluid and structured communication between DG EAC and DG EMPL with regards to Programme priorities and implementation, in particular in the VET sector.

According to country reports, national agencies would like to see improved **cooperation with the EACEA** (e.g. CY, DE, FI, IT, HU, NO, SI). In particular, National Agencies would like to have more information on centralised actions to be able to provide the necessary guidance to potential applicants.

No major difficulties were mentioned with regards to the cooperation between national agencies and national authorities.

Some reports refer to the activities taking place as part of Programme Committee meetings, national agencies (NA) meetings and working groups, for instance:

¹³ This point is not specifically addressed in the Swiss contribution and the Portuguese report. The Norwegian report does not provide an overall opinion; it focuses on describing the different issues and positive aspects.

- Norway regrets that Programme Committee meetings and the NA meetings are increasingly focusing on technical and administrative issues and less on policy content. The national authority and the national agency perceive that policy content is moving under the working groups' discussions and believe that this is not the ideal forum for policy decision-making. They consider that policy discussion and decision should be ultimately under the Programme Committee.
- The Hungarian NA would appreciate more frequent formal and informal meetings among NA and further support from the EC in this regard to facilitate horizontal learning activities.
- The Finnish authorities indicate that there are currently few opportunities for sport-specific discussions. These mainly take place in the Committee meetings but there is usually little time left to focus on sport.

Also, the Norwegian NA questions the need for the Commission's audit of their activities, claiming that internal and external audits are already in place and their results are available to the Commission. To this point, the Italian report adds that the duties and responsibilities of the Independent Audit Body have been a subject to frequent change which results in both additional costs and additional managerial burden. The report from Luxembourg also mentions that external audits are regarded as exaggerated and taking too many resources from national agencies.

6.3 Efficiency gains through changes in the new programme

The opinion of whether the new structure of the programme has led to changes in efficiency is not unanimous neither among countries nor within countries among different stakeholders.

In some countries a positive opinion seems to prevail (AT, BEfr, BEnl, BG, CY, CH, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, PL, PT, SE, SI, TR, UK). In other countries, stakeholders consider that the changes to the structure of the programme have led to insufficient efficiency gains or no gains overall (BEde, CZ, FI, LT, MT, NL, RO, SK). In a third group of countries, national authorities report different opinions depending on the National Agency, sector or key action (DK, LI, LU, LV, NO).

Positive changes referred by different stakeholders and countries include:

- The introduction of simplified forms of grants, mainly lump sums and unit costs.
- The use of uniform application forms.
- The fact that the application procedure has been mostly digitalised.
- The possibility to apply by institution instead of by participant.
- The reduction of the number of Key Actions to the current three.
- The decentralisation of strategic partnership activities has made them more accessible to higher education institutions.
- The fact that all the information about the programme is available in one website, making it easier for applicants to find the information.
- The introduction of the VET mobility charter leading to simplified applications.
- The possibility of undertaking staff mobilities in the education sector of only three days (compared to the minimum of five days in the Lifelong Learning Programme).

The main criticisms are:

- The unified programme rules and procedures do not adjust well to the different fields.
- National Agencies now have less possibilities to adapt the programme to the needs of each sector.
- As in predecessor programmes, the application procedure continues to be a considerable administrative burden for applicants.
- Project management has become more time-consuming, in particular in the case of KA2.
- Application and reporting procedures are still complex and there are issues with IT tools. As a result, National Agencies need to spend a lot of time in support to applicants and participants.
- The integrated programme guide is perceived as confusing by applicants as each action is covered in several places.
- The school education sector perceives that the application process has become more complex and demanding. For some the language used, including references to innovation, intellectual outputs and multipliers is perceived as alienating.

Another concern expressed by stakeholders is that the new programme structure is perceived to be favourable to larger organisations. Larger organisations more often have dedicated staff to European projects. They are able to submit a higher number of applications that are likely to rank higher in the evaluation.

There is little information on how the perception of changes in efficiency varies depending on the field and sector. In Finland, the VET sector appears to have a more positive opinion of the impact of the changes in the structure of the programme on efficiency, compared to school, higher and adult education. In the meantime, it is evidenced through a number of reports (e.g. CY, HU, LT, LV, SK) that the youth sector received the changes in the programme structure in a rather negative way, claiming the new youth chapter to be less efficient than the Youth in Action Programme.

7 EU added value

This section includes the analysis of the information concerning the following standard question of the national implementation reports:

To what extent Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes produce effects that are additional to the effects that would have resulted from similar actions initiated only at regional or national levels in your country? What possibilities do you see to adjust Erasmus+ or its successor programme in order to increase its European value added?

Most countries agree that Erasmus+ and the predecessor programmes produce effects that could not have been attained through actions at national level only (AT, BEde, BEnl, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FI, FR, FY, HU, HR, IE, IS, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR, UK)¹⁴. Country reports highlight Erasmus+ effects on:

- 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.

¹⁴ This aspect is not specifically addressed in the report from BEfr and the contribution from Switzerland.

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.

Erasmus+ added value is more strongly acknowledged in the youth sector. National funds for this sector are scarce and do not usually support internationalisation (e.g. EE).

In the sports field, the European added value is linked to the development of activities beyond competitive activities (e.g. FI). Erasmus+ allows for the development of more diverse activities with a longer time perspective related for instance to the importance of sports and physical activity in everyday life and cross-border cooperation between grassroots-level actors.

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