NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT OF ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME IN REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
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1. Introduction

The Erasmus+ Programme was launched in 2014 and it is based on an integrated approach which ensures effective interaction between all sectors in the field of education and training, youth and sport. The Programme supports actions in the field of: school education, higher education, vocational education and training, adult education, youth and sport. The Programmes aims to build strong partnerships between the education and business in order to promote innovation and competitiveness, while promoting the employment with a special emphasis on combating the youth unemployment. The Programme provides three main Key Actions:

- Learning mobility of individuals (Key Action 1);
- Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (Key Action 2);
- Support for policy reform (Key Action 3).

The Erasmus+ Programme is the result of the integration of the following European programmes, which was acting during the period 2007-2013 - The Lifelong Learning Programme, The Youth in Action Programme, The Erasmus Mundus Programme, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, Programmes of cooperation with industrialised countries in the field of higher education.

In Republic of Bulgaria, during the period 2007-2013 the European programmes “Lifelong Learning” and the “Youth in Action” were implemented by the Human Resource Development Centre to the Minister of Education and Science and the National centre “European Youth Programmes and Initiatives” to the Minister of Youth and Sport, which then performed the functions of a separate National agencies for these two programmes.

By Decree № 277 of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers from 6th December 2013, the Human Resource Development Centre was re-established in its capacity of a National Agency on the implementation of Erasmus + Programme and its Rules of organisation and operation has been adopted.

By Decree № 18 of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers from 16th January 2014, the Minister of Education and Science has been designated as a NAU for the management of the Erasmus+ Programme.

On 10th June 2014 a Council of Ministers’ Decree № 150/10.06.2014 for the closure of the National Centre “European Youth Programmes and Initiatives” has been adopted. Its activity, the assets, the liabilities, the records and other rights and obligations related to the “Youth in
Action Programme” have passed to the Human Resource Development Centre, within the framework of the functions provided for that purpose in its Rules of organisation and operation and in its capacity of the National Agency on the implementation of Erasmus + Programme. In 2016, the structure of the Human Resource Development Centre was changed and the Rules of organisation and operation were amended by Decree № 194/03.08.2016 of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers (State Gazette № 61/03.08.2016).

2. Scope

The National report on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ Programme in Republic of Bulgaria was prepared according to the art. 21.4 of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport.

The National report on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ Programme in Republic of Bulgaria covers the beneficiaries under the “Lifelong Learning Programme” and the “Youth in Action Programme”, the beneficiaries, participants, projects and actions, funded under the Erasmus+ Programme during the period 2014-2016. During this period, the Human Resource Development Centre has provided grants in the amount of, as it follows: in 2014 - 23 223 060 Euro, in 2015 - 25 242 606,78 Euro and in 2016 - 26 989 518,82 Euro.

The data analysis of implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Republic of Bulgaria during the period 2014-2016 shows:

❖ Key Action 1 – Learning mobility of individuals

Since the launch of the Erasmus+ Programme in 2014, the number of the received applications under Key Action 1 has increased from 832 in 2014 to 1023 in 2016. The number of the funded projects has also increased from 290 in 2014 to 333 in 2016. On the other hand, success rate has decreased minimally from 34,86 % in 2014 to 32,55 % in 2016 due to the increased interest to Key Action 1 by the beneficiaries and not a proportional increase of the budget against the interest of the beneficiaries.

❖ Key Action 2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices

Since the launch of the Erasmus+ Programme in 2014, the number of the received applications under Key Action 1 has increased from 236 in 2014 to 266 in 2016. The number of the funded projects has increased from 27 in 2014 to 40 in 2016. The success rate has also
increased from 11.74% in 2014 to 15.13% in 2016 due to the increased interest to Key Action 2 by the beneficiaries.

❖ Key Action 3 – Support for policy reform

Since the launch of the Erasmus+ Programme in 2014, the number of the received applications under Key Action 3 has increased from 60 in 2014 to 78 in 2016. The level of the funded projects remains stable both in 2014 and in 2016. On the other hand, success rate has decreased minimally from 11.67% in 2014 to 8.97% in 2016 due to the increased interest to Key Action 3 by the beneficiaries and not a proportional increase of the budget against the interest of the beneficiaries.

3. Methodology for the preparation of the National Report

The National report on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ Programme in Bulgaria was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science with the active assistance of the Human Resource Development Centre.

For the preparation of the National report on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ Programme in Bulgaria, the Ministry of Education and Science prepared a standardized questionnaire, covering the standard questions according to the guidance on the planning, scope, methodology and content of the National Reports on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ Programme.

The Questionnaires was sent to the central administration institutions in Republic of Bulgaria, the Regional Departments of Education, the Higher Education institutions, the competent directorates within the Ministry of Education and Science, to all program beneficiaries and participants under the Erasmus+ Programme and the beneficiaries under the Lifelong “Learning Programme” and the “Youth in Action Programme”. 472 filled-in questionnaires were received in the Ministry of Education and Science and an analysis of the provided answers was done.

The preliminary evaluation of the of the impact of Erasmus+ Programme, which was assigned by the Human Resource Development Centre and done by the Institute for training of personal in international organizations, has also been used for the preparation of the this National report.

A number of key documents have also been used for the preparation of the Midterm evaluation and for the National report – Erasmus+ Programme guides for the period 2014-

4. Executive summary

The following five criteria are considered in the Midterm evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Relevance, Internal and external coherence and complementarity and European added value and sustainability, which covers all fields of the Erasmus+ Programme - School education, Professional education and training, Higher education, Adult education and Youth, as well as the interest to and the success rate under the Key Actions of the Erasmus+ Programme from its launch until now.

❖ Key findings for each criterion:

❖ Effectiveness

- Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes meet the expectations of the beneficiaries in Bulgaria;
- Currently, Erasmus+ Programme achieves the specific objectives set out therein as well as general objectives, which are set out therein;
- Erasmus+ Programme influences positively the policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport at local, regional and national level in Bulgaria;
- All actions of the Erasmus+ Programme are equivalent in effectiveness, efficiency and significance;
- The integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ Programme has made the programme more effective;
- There is no need for a change in the structure of Erasmus+ Programme or its successor programme in order to increase the effectiveness of the Programme;
- The approaches and tools that are used for dissemination and exploitation the results of Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes are effective;
- It is necessary to increase the funding for dissemination of the results;
- It is necessary to increase the funding for all actions and fields of Erasmus+ Programme, as well as unification of the mobility rates.

➢ Efficiency
- The integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ Programme has resulted in efficiency gains for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria on the level of the National Agency, as well as on the level of beneficiaries and on the level of participants;
- There is no need for a change in the structure of Erasmus+ Programme or its successor programme in order to increase the efficiency of the Programme
- The integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ Programme has resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for the National Agency and the programme beneficiaries and participants.

➢ Relevance
- The Erasmus+ Programme objectives continue to address the needs and problems they are meant to solve;
- The Erasmus+ Programme reaches target audiences and groups within fields of education, training, youth and sport;
- The Erasmus+ Programme is exclusively successful and very well known to all stakeholders.

➢ Internal and external coherence and complementarity
- The Erasmus+ Programme creates useful synergies between the actions and the fields of the Programme;
- There are neither inconsistencies nor overlaps between the actions within Erasmus+ Programme, nor inconsistencies or overlaps with other programmes at national and European level.

➢ European added value and sustainability
- Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes increases the European value added and the sustainability of the project results;
- Erasmus+ Programme can also absorb higher budgets;
Erasmus+ Programme must continue beyond 2020.

In relation to the interest to and the success rate under the Key Actions of the Erasmus+ Programme from its launch until now, we state that an increased interest is observed to all Key Actions by the programme beneficiaries and participants, an increased success rate to Key Action 2. Given the increased interest and not a proportional increase of the budget against the interest of the beneficiaries to the Programme, a slight decrease in the success rate under Key Action 1 and Key Action 3.

5. Answers to standard questions
5.1. Effectiveness

| Question 1 | To what extent have Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes meet the expectations of the beneficiaries? Are there differences across fields? Please provide, where relevant, your assessment for each of the specific objectives and provide evidence and examples where possible. |

A significant part of the respondents – 83,9 % considers that the Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes largely meet the expectations of the beneficiaries. 9 % of the respondents find it difficult to assess at this stage whether the Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes meet the expectations of the beneficiaries, while 7,1 % do not think that the Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes meet the expectations of the beneficiaries. In general, the respondents consider that there are no differences between the fields in principle. Some of the differences found arises both from the nature of the fields of the Programme themselves and the specificities of the policies in the field concerned, as well as by the potential beneficiaries to which they are addressed. All fields are being appropriately connected with the main objectives of the Programme. The beneficiaries surveyed are implementing projects under different Key Actions. According to them, all of the specific objectives of the Erasmus + Programme in the fields of education and training, youth and sport are clear, precise and oriented towards the attitudes, needs and interests of all beneficiaries and that they contribute to the policies at local, national and European level. They consider that the programme fully meet the expectations of the beneficiaries.
Question 2  
To what extent has the progress on the realisation of the specific objectives contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ general objectives?

83.1% of the respondents state that the progress on the realisation of the specific objectives has fully contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ Programme general objectives. 9.6% of the respondents find it difficult to assess at this stage, while 7.3% of the respondents do not think that the progress on the realisation of the specific objectives has contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ Programme general objectives.

Question 3  
To what extent have Erasmus+ actions influenced policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport in Bulgaria? Which actions were most effective in doing so? Are there marked differences between different fields?

84.4% of the respondents respond that the Erasmus+ Programme actions significantly influence positively the policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport, and 7.5% of the respondents find it difficult to assess at this stage whether the Erasmus+ Programme actions influence policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport, while 8.1% of the respondents do not agree that the Erasmus+ Programme actions has influenced policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport at all. In general, the respondents consider that all Actions of the Programme are effective. According to them, there are no significant differences between the fields and each field and action has its place in the Programme. As the most effective, they define the following actions:

- the mobility in each field;
- the sharing, transferring and exchanging of experience and good practices;
- the strategic partnerships in each field;
- the opportunities for cooperation and partnership with foreign beneficiaries, organizations and participants;
- the trainings and the seminars in each field;
the activities which lead to enhancement and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences and to enhancement of the level of proficiency in a foreign language.

The respondents did not point out significant differences between the fields, and according to them they are equivalent in effectiveness and significance.

**Question 4**

What specific approaches (such as co-financing, promotion or others) have you taken in order to try to enhance the effects of Erasmus+? To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified?

The respondents have indicated the following approaches:

- Promotion, which is present in almost all the answers, alone or in combination with other approaches. This approach is realized in different ways, depending on the specifics of the action, capacity and capabilities, including financial, of participants, namely through: information meetings, local training events, open-door days, classes, seminars, round tables, national and international forums, publications in the media (paper and electronic, regional and national); using the relevant institutional site, social networks, partner networks, networks of professional associations/federations, thematic networks; issuing books about the experience of participation in the Programme and manuals to help future participants with information about the conditions for application, selection procedures, potential partners and their curricula; posters, placards, brochures, albums, and advanced tools – videos, interactive presentations, flashmobs; parades, exhibitions, festivals; sharing of personal experience via informal channels; connecting potential participants in the Erasmus+ Programme with fellow former participants in order to obtain useful practical information about the host country, standard of living, conditions in the host institution and sharing of experience;

- Co-financing as a major way to increase the effectiveness of the Programme is indicated by many, though not all participants in the poll. The indicated sources and ways of co-financing are: - through their own budgetary resources; by attracting partners; using their own organizational and logistical capacity; voluntary work in the development, implementation and reporting of the project; personal funds of the project participants and their parents; support from local authorities; "in a specific way" - eg. by recognizing the
successful Erasmus-stay of outgoing students without payment of semester fee and other similar techniques; raising additional funds from charities and philanthropy;

- Other approaches or combination of approaches: inclusion in the activities of more stakeholders than previously envisioned in the project, conducting part of the project activities jointly with other institutions in order to develop ideas for follow-up activities after the conclusion of the current project, generating new projects under other international programmes; linking the project activities with the educational content and organization of lessons; institutional measures relating to the recognition of credits; enhanced cooperation with organizations with similar profile, conclusion of general interinstitutional agreements for cooperation; establishment of an institutional system of rules, procedures and mechanisms, as well as a logistical structure of units and positions to serve the processes; conclusion of bilateral agreements on the development of new projects; multiplication of the activities through the sharing of experience and good practices with colleagues from the country and abroad with a view to the application of fulfilled activities and participation in following projects and other programs in the same, an extended or a new partner format.

Regarding the approaches, 81.5 % of the respondents are firmly convinced that the approaches undertaken by them have been effective. 10.3 % of the respondents find it difficult to assess whether the approaches undertaken by them have been effective or not, while 8.2 % of the respondents rather believe that the approaches undertaken by them have not been effective.

Most of the respondents are of the opinion that the Programme is well structured, the requirements are easily executable, approaches and methods used so far are effective and have worked well without creating difficulties, so that no major changes are required. Along with this, some improvements are possible and somewhere necessary. According to the received answers, the points requiring improvements are, as it follows:

- the work on projects under the Erasmus+ Programme to be recognized, under certain circumstances, as a qualification activity by the national institutions;
- inclusion of more beneficiaries under the various projects;
- expanding the participation of local authorities and institutions;
- restoring the possibility of application of individuals and independent projects;
- separation of the promotion activities from the management and implementation of the project;
- preparation of individual reporting documents and reports on activities;
- materials from the activities and the projects implemented with the support of Erasmus+ Programme to be disseminated and promoted by the National Agency, in order to achieve a greater effect and impact at the national level;
- establishment of a national website, an on-line library with the project results of Bulgarian organizations;
- reinforcing the media appearances and work with the media;
- organization of an annual national workshop to exchange experience among participants in ongoing projects under the Erasmus+ Programme;
- increase of the funding and reduction of the size of the co-financing of activities;
- achieving greater efficiency in funding;
- allowing more flexibility in the planning of budgetary expenditures for institutional support;
- allocation of more resources to conduct training seminars, purchase of materials, etc.;
- providing more funds for students' and young people mobility;
- increasing the student's grants in order to promote the mobility;
- differentiation of the monthly grants in accordance with the standard of living in the respective country.

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<th>Question 5</th>
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<td>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?</td>
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The respondents consider that all Actions of the Erasmus+ Programme are sufficiently effective, since they lead to positive results, and the Programme itself fulfils its objectives. Part of the respondents could not judge whether certain actions are more effective than others, since they work in a specific Programme field. According to the respondents, differences between the Programme fields do not exist, as they are all equivalent in effectiveness and significance. As a main determining factors to increase the effectiveness respondents indicate the following:
- the level of foreign language proficiency of participants;
- the choice of a suitable and reliable partner;
- the increase in funding;
- the required level of co-financing and the availability of pre-financing for the activities;
- the existence of clear and user friendly requirements, guidelines and explanations;
- the recognition and validation of skills and qualifications;
- the dissemination and exploitation of the project results;
- the introduction of national priorities;
- the needs of the stakeholders;
- the simplification of the application form;
- the promotion of the Programme and the results of activities;
- the formation of good organization and teamwork within the organizations;
- the presence of stable partnerships between education and business;
- the human factor – personal skills, competencies, values, morals and motivation of the participants and beneficiaries;
- taking into account the interest, attitudes, preferences and desire to work and implement the activities on the part of the beneficiaries;

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<th>To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ made the programme more effective? Do you see scope for changes to the structure of Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase effectiveness?</th>
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60.8% of the respondents fully believe that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ Programme has made the programme more effective. 27.8% of them find it difficult to assess whether the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ Programme has made the programme more effective, while 11.4% consider that integration did not make the programme more effective at all. In general, the respondents do not see a need for a change in the structure of Erasmus+ Programme or its successor programme, as according to them the structure is not the one and only decisive factor for the effectiveness of the Programme, as well as they think that the frequent structural changes will not positively affect the results and do not lead to increased effectiveness. They believe that by the integration of all predecessor programmes into one, the bureaucracy has decreased while funding
opportunities and cooperation between various fields of education, training, youth and sport have increased. As major opportunities to increase the effectiveness respondents point out:

- the reintroduction of individual mobility and individual application;
- the reintroduction of the Study visits, the intensive programmes and workshops;
- the simplification of application forms;
- the increase of the number of participants, mobility activities, the funding and funds for administration and management;
- the increase of funds for learning foreign languages;
- part of the respondents propose to separate the individual fields into separate programmes.

| Question 7 | 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? |

The respondents are divided in terms of whether the budget is appropriate and proportionate in relation to aims which are set to achieve the Erasmus+ Programme, and whether the distribution of funds across the programme’s fields and actions in terms of their level of efficiency and relevancy is appropriate. Some of them consider that it is appropriate and proportionate, and that the distribution of funds across the programme’s fields and actions in terms of their level of efficiency and relevancy are appropriate as well. In their view, the budget which they have foreseen was sufficient for the implementation of their project activities. Another part of the respondents were of the opposite opinion. The respondents who do not consider that the budget is appropriate and that the distribution of funds is appropriate consider that some fields and actions receive more funding than others. According to them, the individual support for each beneficiary and participant in the Programme, the rates and grants for students and youth activities, the funds for international meetings and trainings, the funding for travel costs, the funds for management and implementation of the project, the funding of projects for development and implementation of innovations should be increased and revised. Other respondents propose that the rates on different actions should comply with the standard of living, in order to avoid the need for additional considerable self-financing and co-financing by the participants.
A large number of respondents share that they have not encountered challenges and difficulties while implementing the various actions of Erasmus+ Programme. The respondents who shred that they have encountered challenges and difficulties indicate that those do not result from weaknesses or from the structure of the Programme. The difficulties and challenges which the respondents indicate that have met have been overcome in a timely manner with the assistance of the staff of the Human Resource Development Centre. As main challenges and difficulties the respondents point out:

- the need for co-financing;
- the currency conversion;
- the low rate for Bulgaria's participation in the Programme;
- the volume of documentation;
- the insufficiency of funds to cover transportation costs;
- difficult and detailed application form;
- the expenditure's accounting;
- the insufficient experience of the partner organizations;
- the registration in the portal ECAS/EU Login;
- the insufficient funding;
- the lack of clear instructions on the documentation for reporting projects;
- the finding of a suitable and reliable partner;
- the difficulties in reporting in the Mobility Tool+;
- the insufficient fluency in a foreign language of participants and partners;
- the unrealistic expectations and poor preparedness of the participants;
- the lack of translation of documents and of the online platforms into the language of the Programme country;
- the differences in education curricula and programs;
- the validation of acquired credits in the receiving institutions;
- the political situation in the host country;
the intercultural differences.

As necessary changes, the respondents suggest:

- simplification of the application forms;
- simplification of the reporting of expenditures;
- the need for bigger advance instalments;
- the increase in funding;
- the promotion of foreign language learning;
- the update of the distance calculator;
- the increase of the amount of transportation costs;
- the translation of documents and online platforms to the language of the Programme country;
- the increase of the grants and rates for mobility.

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<th>Question 9</th>
<th>To what extent are the approaches and tools that are used for disseminating and exploiting the results of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes in Bulgaria effective? Where can you see the possibilities for improvements?</th>
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75.8% of the respondents consider that the approaches and tools that are used for dissemination and exploitation of the results of Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes are fully effective. 15.4% of them find it difficult to assess at this stage whether they are effective or not, while 8.8% think that the approaches and tools that are used for dissemination and exploitation the results of Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes are not effective at all. As opportunities for improvement, the respondents believe that such improvements can be done by:

- the simplification of application forms and the reporting of the projects;
- the introduction of national priorities and events;
- the use of platforms for dissemination and exploitation of results which are available in the languages of the Programme countries;
- the drafting and dissemination of good practices’ compendia;
- the funding of national meetings between organizations for sharing experience and successful best practices;
- the increase of the budget for dissemination of results;
- the encouragement of greater involvement of all types of media and more effective use of the social networks;
- the creation of more electronic platforms for dissemination of the results;
- greater publicity;
- the establishment of a centralized website for the results of all projects which should be accessible to all stakeholders and in all languages of the Programme countries;
- all beneficiaries to be obliged to present the results of their projects;
- the creation of national websites for the dissemination of project results.

5.2. Efficiency

| Question 10 | 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? |

55.7% of the respondents fully agree that 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 is efficient and well-functioning. 38.1% of the respondents find it difficult to assess, while 6.2% of the respondents consider that system of cooperation and division of tasks is not efficient and well-functioning. As a possible improvement can be pointed out the need of more joint meetings between the Commission, Executive Agency, National Agencies, European Investment Fund, National Authorities, Independent Audit Bodies, and Erasmus+ Committee, and as a simplification in the implementation of Erasmus+ Programme or a successor programme can be pointed out the timely notifications for any issues as well as the timely sending of any documents concerning the Programme.
To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria, 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?

50.5% of the respondents are firmly convinced that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ Programme resulted in efficiency gains for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria at the level of the National Agency. 38.3% of them find it difficult to assess whether the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria, while 11.2% of the respondents consider that integration resulted in efficiency losses at the level of the National Agency.

55.1% of the respondents are firmly convinced that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ Programme resulted in efficiency gains for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria at the level of the beneficiaries. 31.9% of them find it difficult to assess whether the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria, while 13% of the respondents consider that integration resulted in efficiency losses at the level of the beneficiaries.

55.3% of the respondents are firmly convinced that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ Programme resulted in efficiency gains for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria at the level of the participants. 30.4% of them find it difficult to assess whether the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria, while 14.3% of the respondents consider that integration resulted in efficiency losses at the level of the participants.

As a whole, the respondents do not see a need for a change in the structure of Erasmus+ Programme or its successor programme as, they think that a new structural change will not increase the efficiency, but may only cause confusion among beneficiaries and participants because it will take time to catch up with innovations and will not positively affect the results. They think that through the integration of all predecessor programmes into one, the bureaucracy has decreased while the opportunities for funding and cooperation between
various fields of education, training, youth and sport have increased. As major opportunities to increase efficiency the respondents view in:

- the reintroduction of individual mobility and application;
- the reintroduction of the Study visits;
- the simplification of application forms;
- the increase of the funding;
- the encouragement of and the increase of funds for learning foreign languages;
- part of the respondents propose to separate the individual fields into separate programmes.

| Question 12 | 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? |

Overall, the respondents do not consider that certain actions of Erasmus+ Programme are more efficient than others and for them the different actions are equivalent in effectiveness and significance. There is also an understanding that each action has its specificity, while the differences between fields are due to their characteristics and relevant policies for each fields which allows the attainment of the objectives set forth. Each action implemented by the Programme, regardless of the respective Key Action, is significant and capable to achieve sustainable results. They also believe that individual actions have its rationale and each of them complement the others. The respondents consider that the fields of the Programme are well distinguished in its current form and the transfer of activities can lead to confusion and reduction of the effectiveness and efficiency of Erasmus+ Programme.

As the most efficient they define:

- the mobility in each field;
- the sharing, transferring and exchanging of experience and good practices;
- the strategic partnerships in each field;
- the opportunities which lead to enhancement of the level of proficiency in a foreign language and for trainings.
Question 13

To what extent has the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies and programme beneficiaries and participants? Are there differences across actions or fields? What elements of the programme could be changed to further reduce the administrative burden, without unduly compromising its results and impact?

66.6% of the respondents consider that the system of simplified grants resulted in a significant reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies and programme beneficiaries and participants in the Erasmus+ Programme. 24.6% of them find it difficult to assess, while 8.8% of the respondents think that it has not resulted in a significant reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies and programme beneficiaries and participants in the Erasmus+ Programme. As a whole, the respondents are of the opinion that differences between the fields do not exist, as the existing ones relate to the specific conditions for participation in and application with projects under Erasmus+ Programme and depend on the specific Action. They consider that the system of simplified grants is very well structured. In their view, the integration of the previous programmes into the Erasmus+ Programme has led to a significant reduction of the administrative burden for all stakeholders concerned and the current version is optimally relieved. Their main proposals for further reduction of the administrative burden are:

- the inclusion of more IT tools in the submission and reporting of the projects;
- the simplification of the application form;
- relief in accounting in institutional level;
- dropping the Certificate of Attendance;
- updating and unification of all rates for all countries;
- the avoidance of duplicate information that is filled in the online platforms;
- the funded distances should not be calculated with the assistance of calculator that measures a straight line between two metropolises,
- the introduction of uniform rules on financial reporting for all countries;
- further refining of the transport costs.

Question 14

To what extent are the IT tools provided by the Commission adequate for the efficient management and implementation of the
programme in Bulgaria? 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?

75.4% of the respondents claim that the IT tools provided by the Commission are fully adequate for the efficient management and implementation of the Programme. 13.5% of them find it difficult to assess whether the IT tools provided by the Commission are adequate for the efficient management and implementation of the Programme or not, while 11.1% think that they are not adequate at all. The respondents consider that the IT tools are appropriate and adequate, they facilitate the implementation of the Programme and meet their expectations and needs, and their introduction have greatly reduced the administrative burden and improved the administration of the Erasmus+ Programme. They consider that the existing set of tools should not be changed neither to be expanded nor to be constricted. As specific examples for improvements to the IT tools, the respondents propose:

- the IT tools should not be constantly updated;
- the instructions for them as well as more clearly written rules related to data and information input in the Mobility Tool + should be made available to all languages of the Programme countries;
- to reduce to the lowest possible levels the blockages, stops and mistakes given by some of the platforms - ECAS/EU Login, Mobility Tool +;
- the transfer between the individual budget items should be able to be reflected;
- the division of the project management budget should be available and should show the different costs.

Question 15 To what extent is the level of human and financial resources that is available for the implementation of the programme in Bulgaria adequate? What steps did you take to optimise the efficiency of the resources deployed for the Erasmus+ implementation in your country?

Adequate and effective capacity of the human and financial resources consistent with the requirements of Erasmus+ Programme is provided to a very large extent and the quality of all
the activities of the Programme is likewise guaranteed. Maximum efficiency of employees by optimizing the structure and full utilization of available expert resources has been achieved. The active, targeted and well focused public consultations with relevant target groups of the Programme and their active engagement in the process of its implementation contribute to the increased visibility of the Programme, a clearer understanding of its objectives and the promotion of the practice of respecting the interests of civil society in the exercise of its powers. Within the adopted assumptions for the medium-term budgetary forecast for the period 2014-2016, no income policy for the employees in the budgetary sphere has been provided for, but only offset of the planned increase in the minimum wage for the country. In this connection, in view of the change, as of 01.01.2014, of the statute of the Human Resource Development Centre from a servicing unit under art. 33 (a) of the Education Law to a separate structure under art. 60 of the Law on Administration, the resulting changes in the cost of salaries and staff insurance contributions are reflected in the draft budget and the 2014 budget itself. Through the restructuring of personnel costs inside the system of the authorising officer by delegation, additional 58.5 thousand leva for salaries and social security contributions were allocated to the Human Resource Development Centre for 2014. In the default assumptions for the medium-term budgetary forecast for the period 2015-2017, staff costs in the budgetary sphere are reduced with 10 percent and only the growth in the minimum wage for the country is subject to compensation. Maintenance expenses are also decreased by 10 per cent, limiting the inclusion of new budgetary policies in the estimates for 2015. For the period 2015-2016, Human Resource Development Centre as National Agency for the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme implements to a full extent its financial plan, which can be seen in the accounting reports at the end of each budget year:

- in the specified plan for 2015 amounting to 1 167 000 Leva, the implementation of its budget by the end of the period represents 1 166 817 Leva;
- in the specified plan for 2016 amounting to 1 042 000 Leva, the implementation of its budget by the end of the period represents 1 041 154 Leva;

5.3. Relevance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 16</th>
<th>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? Have the needs or problems evolved in such a way that the objectives of Erasmus+ or its successor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22
84% of the respondents consider that the Erasmus+ Programme objectives continue to fully address the needs or problems they are meant to solve. 9% of them cannot give a definite answer, while 7% think that Erasmus+ Programme objectives no longer address the needs or problems they are meant to solve. Respondents consider that the needs or problems which the Programme meant to solve are still of a great importance to them. They think that the objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme are set in a way that takes into account each of their evolution and they are always in line with the needs of the beneficiaries. They consider that the Programme is sufficiently flexible in its present form and continues to create wider opportunities. The respondents do not consider that the objectives need to be adjusted, as they offer to be paid more attention to the talented children and young people as well as those in small towns and rural areas.

**Question 17**

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?

82.2% of the respondents consider that the Erasmus+ Programme objectives are largely addressed to the needs of different stakeholders and sectors. 9.2% of them find it difficult to assess, while 8.6% do not agree at all that the Erasmus+ Programme objectives are addressed to the needs of different stakeholders and sectors. Respondents indicate that the Programme is extremely successful in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope. In their view, the Erasmus+ Programme is very well known to the communities in the fields of education and training and youth. At the same time, they note that it is not so well known in the field of sport. According to the respondents, the Programme is attractive, popular and easily accessible to all target groups to all of its fields without restrictions, as well as it attracts more and more newcomers. A small part of the
beneficiaries consider that the people in the smaller towns and villages are not reached to a significant extent, and they propose an increase in the funding for their attainment.

5.4. Internal and external coherence and complementarity

| Question 18 | 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+? |

64.9% of the respondents fully agree that the various actions that have been brought together in Erasmus+ Programme are coherent among themselves. 26% of them find it difficult to assess whether the various actions are coherent among themselves or they are not, according to 9.1% of the respondents the various actions that have been brought together in Erasmus+ Programme are not coherent among themselves at all. In general, the respondents indicate that there are many positive synergies between all fields and actions of the Erasmus+ Programme. According to them, all actions and synergies provide opportunities for personal expression, improvement of the communication, improvement of the level of language proficiency, development of creativity, enrichment of the culture, improvement of the qualification, acquisition of new skills, etc. As existing or potential synergies between the actions, they highlight the synergies between: the students and pupils mobility, pupils and teachers, the European Adult Learning Programme and the Electronic Learning Platform for Adults in Europe, mobility for teaching and student mobility, Key Action 1 and Key Action 2, Key Action 1 and Key Action 3, eTwinning projects and Erasmus+ Programme actions, PhD. students participating in student mobility for learning, then implement staff mobility for teaching assignments or staff mobility for training, different cross-sectoral synergies between each field, joint master's programmes, dual degree programmes and collaborative research, Key Action 2 and eTwinning, eTwinning, Key Action 2, Key Action 1 and Europass, interschool partnerships and projects, partnerships between higher education institutions. The respondents do not consider that there are inconsistencies or overlaps between the actions within Erasmus+ Programme. They think that the actions and the fields of the Programme complement each other.
According to the replies of 60% of the respondents, Erasmus+ Programme fully complements other national and international programmes in Bulgaria and in EU. 24.6% of the respondents find it difficult to assess due to the fact that they have not worked under other programmes, while 15.4% of the respondents consider Erasmus+ Programme does not complement other national and international programmes at all. Almost all of the respondents do not consider the Erasmus+ Programme has neither inconsistencies nor overlaps with other Programmes. In their view, it complements the existing programmes, as well as it is unique and provides enormous opportunities.

5.5. European added value and sustainability

69.8% of the respondents think that Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes significantly produce effects that are additional to the effects that would have resulted from similar actions initiated only at local, regional or national levels in Bulgaria. 16.3% of them cannot answer the question, and 13.9% of the respondents consider that Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessor programmes cannot produce effects that are additional to the effects that would have resulted from similar actions initiated only at local, regional or national levels. Overall, respondents considered that the program in its current form fully contributes to European added value and sustainability, as it is structured well and there is no need for adjustment. Opportunities to increase its European added value and sustainability respondents see in:

- the approval of a larger percentage of projects;
- the involvement of a larger number of participants;
- the funding of more projects to enhance the key competences and of more mobilities;
- the creation of more opportunities for organizations from different parts of the EU to learn from each other and exchange experiences among themselves;
- the realization of more trainings;
- the simplification of the application form and method of application;
- the extension of the system for dissemination of results;
- the increase of the grants and mobility rates;
- the development of indicators for reporting on the added value and sustainability of results;
- the continuation of the program beyond 2020.

| Question 21 | 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? 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? |

72.4% of the respondents consider that Erasmus+ Programme will fully be able to absorb in an effective way the sharp increase in the budget that is foreseen in the coming years up to 2020. 17.1% of them find it difficult to assess whether or not the Programme will be able to absorb it, while 10.5% of the respondents do not think that Erasmus+ Programme 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. Almost all respondents consider that Erasmus+ Programme can be able to use in an effective way larger budgets which according to them will contribute to the funding of more projects and activities, as well as to the involvement of more beneficiaries and participants. Through the implementation of a bigger number of projects and activities, a better accomplishment of the objectives of EU 2020 and its flagship initiatives would be achieved. As main challenges respondents identify: the ensuring of the future co-financing, satisfying the need for a larger number of expert staff of National Agencies, the poor financial capacity of some of the beneficiaries.
6. Conclusions and suggestions for improvements to Erasmus+ and for a future programme

Since the launch of the Erasmus + Programme till now, a greatly increased interest towards the all three Key Actions by the beneficiaries and participants in Programme is being observed. Through the integration of the all predecessor programmes into one Programme, the bureaucracy procedures have been simplified, the opportunities for funding and cooperation in the fields of education and training, youth and sport have increased, the administrative burden has been reduced for all stakeholders concerned and the current version of the Programme is optimally relieved. The existing differences between the fields and the actions of the Erasmus + Programme arise both from the nature of the fields of the Programme themselves and the specificities of the policies in the field concerned, as well as by the potential beneficiaries to which they are addressed. All fields are being appropriately connected with the main objectives of the Programme, as each fields and action has its place in the Programme, and the different actions have its rationale and each of them complement the others. Any activity implemented by the Programme, regardless of the respective Key Action, is significant and capable to achieve sustainable results, and each of them is effective and efficient. The most effective and efficient actions are the mobility in each field, the sharing, transferring and exchanging of experience and good practices, the strategic partnerships in each field, the opportunities for cooperation and partnership with foreign beneficiaries, organizations and participants, the trainings and the seminars in each field, the activities which lead to enhancement and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences and to enhancement of the level of proficiency in a foreign language. The specific objectives of the Erasmus + Programme in the fields of education and training, youth and sport are clear, precise and oriented towards the attitudes, needs and interests of all beneficiaries and that they contribute to the policies at local, national and European level and the programme fully meet the expectations of the beneficiaries. The objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme are set in a way that takes into account each of their evolution and they are always in line with the needs of the beneficiaries and the Programme is sufficiently flexible in its present form and continues to create wider opportunities. The Erasmus + Programme is exclusively successful, very well known to the communities in the fields of education and training and youth and it is attractive, popular and easily accessible to all target groups to all of its fields without restrictions, as well as it attracts more and more newcomers.
Suggestions for improvements to Erasmus+ Programme and for a future programme:

❖ Funding:
- increase in the funding and funds for administration, management and promotion of the projects and their results;
- encouragement of and increase of funds for learning foreign languages;
- funding of a larger percentage of projects;
- increase of the grants and mobility rates, in order to comply with standard of living and to avoid serious co-financing by the participants;
- updating and unification of all rates for all countries;
- further refining of and more funds for the transportation costs;
- reduction of the size of the co-financing of activities;
- increased and revised individual support for each Programme beneficiary and participant;
- increasing the funds for management and implementation of the project;
- availability of pre-financing for the activities;
- bigger advance instalments.

❖ Management and Administration of the Programme:
- simplification of application forms;
- the development of indicators for reporting on the added value and sustainability of results;
- IT tools should not be constantly updated;
- instructions for them as well as more clearly written rules related to data and information input in the Mobility Tool + should be made available to all languages of the Programme countries;
- inclusion of more IT tools in the submission and reporting of the projects;
- introduction of uniform rules on financial reporting for all countries;
- separation of the promotion activities from the management and implementation of the project;
- relief in accounting in institutional level;
- preparation of individual reporting documents and reports on activities;
- update of the distance calculator.
Dissemination, Exploitation and Recognition of the project results
- extension of the system for dissemination of results;
- drafting and dissemination of good practices’ compendia;
- encouragement of greater involvement of all types of media and more effective use of the social networks;
- creation of more electronic platforms for dissemination of the results;
- creation of national websites for the dissemination of the project results;
- work on projects under the Erasmus+ Programme to be recognized, under certain circumstances, as a qualification activity by the national institutions;
- use of platforms for dissemination and exploitation of results which are available in the languages of the Programme countries;
- all beneficiaries to be obliged to present the results of their projects;
- materials from the activities and the projects implemented with the support of Erasmus+ Programme to be disseminated and promoted by the National Agency;
- recognition and validation of skills and qualifications;

Structure of the Programme:
- reintroduction of individual mobility and individual application;
- reintroduction of the Study visits, the intensive programmes and workshops;
- increase of the number of participants and the mobility activities;
- realization of more trainings;
- to be paid more attention to the talented children and young people as well as those in small towns and rural areas;
- dropping the Certificate of Attendance;
- funded distances should not be calculated with the assistance of calculator that measures a straight line between two metropolises,
- possible separation of the individual fields into separate programmes.
- introduction of national priorities and events;
- expanding the participation of local authorities and institutions;
- establishment of a national website for dissemination of the project results;
- strengthening the partnerships between education and business;
- continuation of the program beyond 2020.
### 7. Annexes

Table 1: Number of submitted applications and funded projects, success rate, amount of grant awarded for each type of action and total for all Key Actions in 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Action</th>
<th>Type of Action</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Submitted applications</td>
<td>Funded Projects</td>
<td>Success rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning mobility of individuals (KA 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>School education staff mobility (KA 101)</td>
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<td>204</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET learner and staff mobility (KA 102)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>131</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>56.49%</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education staff mobility (KA 104)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>2.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth mobility (KA 105)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>376</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (KA 2)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training (KA 202)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>17.86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for higher education (KA 203)</td>
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<td>9.52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for adult education (KA 204)</td>
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<td>10.34%</td>
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<td>Strategic Partnerships for youth (KA 205)</td>
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<td>8.57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for Schools Only (KA 219)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total for Key Action 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>236</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.74%</strong></td>
<td><strong>5444297</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support for policy reform (KA 3)</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structured dialogue between young people and policy makers (KA 347)</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total for Key Action 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.67%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Number of submitted applications and funded projects, success rate, amount of grant awarded for each type of action and total for all Key Actions in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Action</th>
<th>Type of Action</th>
<th>Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submitted applications</td>
<td>Funded Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School education staff mobility (KA 101)</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>32</td>
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31
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning mobility of individuals (KA 1)</th>
<th>VET learner and staff mobility (KA 102)</th>
<th>158</th>
<th>69</th>
<th>43.67%</th>
<th>4 428 574.00</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education student and staff mobility (KA 103)</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9 747 184.00</td>
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<td>Higher education student and staff mobility between Programme and Partner Countries (KA 107)</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>39.02%</td>
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<td><strong>Total for Key Action 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>304</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.31%</strong></td>
<td><strong>19 467 443,18</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (KA 2)</th>
<th>Strategic Partnerships for school education (KA 201)</th>
<th>56</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>12.50%</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Key Action</td>
<td>Type of Action</td>
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<td>Funded Projects</td>
<td>Success rate</td>
<td>Amount of grant awarded</td>
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<td>School education staff mobility (KA 101)</td>
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<td>Higher education student and staff mobility between Programme and Partner</td>
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<td>56,82%</td>
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</table>

Table 3: Number of submitted applications and funded projects, success rate, amount of grant awarded for each type of action and total for all Key Actions in 2016
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (KA 2)</th>
<th>Total for Key Action 1</th>
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<th>333</th>
<th>32.55%</th>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>19.15%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11.39%</td>
<td>748,225.00</td>
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<td>1,295,485.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total for Key Action 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>266</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.13%</strong></td>
<td><strong>6360142</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for policy reform (KA 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Structured dialogue between young people and policy makers (KA 347)</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.97%</td>
<td>163,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total for Key Action 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.97%</strong></td>
<td><strong>163,400</strong></td>
<td></td>
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