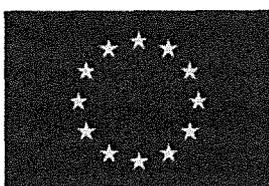


**National Midterm Evaluation Report on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programs in CYPRUS (Deadline for Submission: 30/6/2017)**

**Report Date: 30/6/2017**



**Erasmus+**



**Lifelong  
Learning**



**Youth  
in Action**

**Prepared by:**

**REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS**

**Erasmus+ NAU: Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development**

*Permanent Secretary:* Mr. George Georghiou ([dgepcd@dgepcd.gov.cy](mailto:dgepcd@dgepcd.gov.cy))

*Director:* Ms. Ioanna Kleanthous ([ikleanthous@dgepcd.gov.cy](mailto:ikleanthous@dgepcd.gov.cy))

*Coordinator:* Ms. Erica Kyriakidou, Planning Officer ([ekyriakidou@dgepcd.gov.cy](mailto:ekyriakidou@dgepcd.gov.cy))

**With the collaboration of the 2 Erasmus+ National Agencies:**

**Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes (Education and Training)**

**Youth Board of Cyprus (Youth)**

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## Executive Summary

The National Midterm Evaluation Report presents the views of the Republic of Cyprus (hereinafter referred to as "Cyprus") on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programs. According to Article 21.2 of the Erasmus+ legal base the Commission is required to submit a mid-term evaluation report by 31/12/2017. This mid-term evaluation should also take into account the results of an evaluation of the long-term impact of the predecessor programs. In Article 21.4, the legal base foresees that Member States shall submit a report to the Commission on the implementation and impact of the programs in their respective territories, by 30/6/2017. The findings of these reports will be reflected in the Commission's Staff Working Document on the evaluation.

The report covers the decentralized actions of Erasmus+, the Networks and their predecessor programs which are being implemented by the two National Agencies (NAs) in Cyprus. The National Agency implementing Erasmus+ (Education and Training) and ECVET is the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programs and the National Agency implementing Erasmus+ (Youth) and Eurodesk is the Youth Board of Cyprus.

The outcomes of the implementation of Erasmus+, the Networks and their predecessor programs are evaluated using a Questionnaire comprised of 21 set questions in 5 areas:

(a) Effectiveness [Questions 1-9], (b) Efficiency [Questions 10-15], (c) Relevance [Questions 16-17], (d) Internal and external coherence and complementarity [Questions 18-19], (e) European added value and sustainability [Questions 20-21].

The Main Conclusions are as follows:

(a) Effectiveness:

The analysis revealed that the programs successfully progressed towards their objectives with high absorption rates (see Annex 1). The beneficiaries pointed to the benefits of improved content and practice. However, less progress was made in addressing the horizontal priorities of the Program in the area of participation of people with special needs. Nevertheless, the NAs have intensified their efforts in order to improve the participation of this target group in Calls. Additionally, there is room for improvement and simplification of IT tools, as well as of the application and implementation procedures.

The programs contributed to national policy in education, training and youth by raising the competences of the main stakeholders and by exchanging good practices with other programme countries. However, the programs would benefit all even more if they managed to reach people outside of the formal education and training community and organized youngsters, such as people in and outside the labour market, early school leavers and enterprises. The involvement of enterprises can be further encouraged by providing incentives and reducing administrative burden.

(b) Efficiency:

During recent years the programs were characterized by a change of both substantial and technical requirements applicable to the management of the programs. These changes, although caused a substantial administrative workload and problems at the early stages of the implementation of the programme, essentially, at a later stage, improved the functioning of the management and control system, especially following the integration of the programs into Erasmus+.

(c) Relevance:

The analysis revealed that the objectives of the programs were highly relevant. Firstly, the objectives were closely linked with the priorities identified at EU level. Secondly, the objectives were coherent and supportive to the national policy developments and priorities. Thirdly, beneficiaries expressed the view that the programs were pertinent to their needs. Of course, the programs could be enhanced even further, according to current needs.

(d) Internal and external coherence and complementarity:

The evaluation revealed that overall the links between the European and National programs' objectives, priorities, strategies and initiatives are rather strong. Moreover, the integration of the previous programs into a single program considerably strengthened coordination, synergies, coherence of efforts and helped in avoiding possible duplications. Nevertheless, some overlaps may be identified (e.g. activities in the Adult Education (AE) and Vocational Education and training (VET) fields).

(e) European added value and sustainability

The evaluation revealed that the European added value of the programs was considerable. Firstly, the impact of the program at National and European level is obvious, considering the fact that in the absence of the programs, policy cooperation and interchange between the participating countries would have been considerably lower and fragmented. Secondly, the programs supported the development of a European dimension in education, training and youth. The value added of the European dimension was reflected by more intensive cooperation in these areas and by creating a sense of European citizenship among beneficiaries. Thirdly, the programs complemented similar national programs and priorities. The Education/ Training/ Youth practices that resulted from European programs can be considered sustainable, as they are embedded in the relevant National policies.

### **Methodology for the preparation of the National Midterm Evaluation Report**

The National Midterm Evaluation Report on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+, the Networks and its predecessor programs, was prepared by the National Authority of Erasmus+ in Cyprus (Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development) with the collaboration of the two National Agencies, i.e. the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes and the Youth Board of Cyprus.

The methodology used was a mixed method evaluation employing both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods as follows:

- Desk research reviewing policy documents, previous studies/evaluations, reports and reports from the National Agencies of Cyprus.
- Statistics from programs' platforms.
- Statistics from the Statistical Service of Cyprus.
- Statistics from Eurostat.
- Information/Feedback from the two National Agencies.
- Information/Feedback from the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Information/Feedback from the Human Resources Development Authority.
- Information/Feedback from the European Funds Unit of the Ministry of Interior (Responsible Authority for Home Affairs Funds).
- Information/Feedback from the Managing Authority of the European Social Funds in Cyprus.
- Information/Feedback from academics of universities in Cyprus.

## Answers to the Standard Questions

### Effectiveness

**(1) To what extent have Erasmus+ and its predecessor programs contributed to the realization of the Erasmus+ specific objectives (as listed in point B.2 in annex 3) 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.**

The **Education and Training Programs** had a positive contribution towards the achievement of the Erasmus+ specific objectives in Cyprus. Analytically, the following information can be provided:

#### **Specific objective (a): Improve the level of key competences and skills**

##### **- School Education (SE):**

- The participation of SE staff in training activities abroad, according to reported information, has improved the level of key competences relating to their profession, such as new teaching techniques, the use of new technologies in teaching, etc.
- The participation of schools, as well as other organisations with interest to SE to cooperation projects has improved the level of key competences and skills, not only of the staff but of the learners/pupils as well. The learning activities supported by this kind of projects contribute to the realisation of this objective.

- **Adult Education (AE):** the same applies to AE staff and learners, although the participation numbers for this sector are extremely low, due to budget limitations.

- **Vocational Education and Training (VET):** Learning mobility is a great opportunity provided to VET participants, which improves the level of key competences and skills:

- **Learners of VET secondary schools:** The short mobility period that is usually implemented for this target group (2 weeks in most cases) does not allow real improvement in the professional skills. However, learners have the opportunity to:
  - gain awareness of the profession they pursue and the relevant industry/the world of work in the specific field
  - develop personal skills which are essential for their professional advancement
  - develop generic skills, such as language skills, entrepreneurial skills etc.
- **Learners of VET tertiary schools:** This group of learners-participants have a great opportunity to improve the level of key competences and skills, as they are placed for longer periods of time, and they actually gain work experience. However, the number of participants of this group is still very low. The NA (EDU) tries to increase this number.
- **VET staff:** Through participation in programme activities VET staff has improved the level of key competences relating to their profession, such as new teaching techniques, the use of new technologies in their area of expertise etc.
- **Participation in cooperation projects:** The involvement in this kind of projects contributes to the improvement of key competences and skills of the participating individuals as well as the rest of the staff and learners of the participating organization. Many of the funded projects offer training opportunities through the participation in learning/training events and, therefore, VET staff and learners benefit by this action, for the improvement of their competences and skills.

- **Higher Education (HE)**

- HE learners:
  - Through their participation for studies, they mainly develop personal skills, such as independence, problem solving, cultural awareness etc., which are essential for their professional advancement.
  - Through their participation for placements, they gain awareness of the profession they pursue and the relevant industry/the world of work in the specific field.
  - In general they develop generic skills, such as language skills, entrepreneurial skills etc.
- HE staff: Through their participation to the programme, either for teaching or for training, they get acquainted with new scientific trends in their area of expertise and in teaching, in general they improve their skills and competences.
- Participation in cooperation projects (strategic partnerships, IP projects, centralised projects etc.): Staff and learners/students of HEIs involved in this type of projects have improved their key competences and skills.

**Specific objective (b): Foster quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalization**

- Participation to the programme contributes to the internationalisation of home institutions of staff participants, for all levels of Education and Training. Networks for future cooperation are also created.
- The quality of the education/training programs offered by institutions, as well the governance of these institutions, by using examples of good practice from abroad, is improved.
- Especially in the HE sector, participation in cooperation projects in the context of the programme fosters the innovation excellence.

**Specific objective (c): European Lifelong Learning area**

- The programme contributes to the creation and raise the awareness of a European lifelong learning area through:
  - the supported learning mobility of individuals
  - the offering of learning activities for all Europeans in all participating countries
  - the encouragement of use of Union transparency tools, that allow learners and staff/workers to be mobile
  - the exchange of good practices that is made possible through the cooperation projects.
- Policy reforms which concern the modernisation of Education and Training Systems are influenced by the programme through the exchange of practices and the European guidance for the implementation and the proper use of the European transparency tools, such as ECTS, ECVET, EUROPASS, Quality Assurance Agencies etc.

**Specific objective (d): International Dimension of Education and Training**

- The international dimension of education and training is particularly promoted in the HE sector with the newly introduced international mobility scheme of the programme. The results of this scheme remain to be seen as it is too early to be assessed, however, there is

some potential to achieve the international dimension through International Credit Mobility (ICM), Capacity Building Projects etc. The funds available for these actions are very limited, therefore, it will be hard to see a significant impact.

- The international dimension of education and training may also be promoted through the participation of international organisations in KA2 proposals, however, according to NA records, such participation is very limited.
- Additionally, Cyprus had a limited participation in Erasmus Mundus actions, therefore, conclusions about the enhancement of the international dimension through cooperation with partner countries in the context of the programme cannot be drawn.

**Specific objective (e): Improve language learning and intercultural awareness**

According to the beneficiary reports, this is one aspect that the programme has a significant contribution:

- Participants get exposure to other languages and become more confident in communicating in languages other than their mother tongue.
- The use of the schemes/tools provided in the context of the programmes (EILC, OLS) are helpful for participants in long term mobility.
- Participants appreciate the broad linguistic diversity of the Union.
- Participants become familiar with the great diversity of cultures in the Union.

**Specific objective (f): Promotion of European Integration through Jean Monnet activities**

Jean Monnet Chairs were awarded to some Cypriot HEIs. The experience of academics demonstrates the following:

*“The Jean Monnet activities of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes have indeed promoted European integration in Cyprus. Being in a relatively recent and geographically remote EU Member state, the population of Cyprus lacked a deep understanding of the policymaking process in the EU and the major European bodies that participate in this process. The Jean Monnet activities have clearly helped improve this understanding. The main contribution of these activities was in the field of political and legal studies, which was the topic of most Jean Monnet Chairs and Modules that were funded in Cyprus. There has also been some improvement of awareness on European energy and environmental policies in Cyprus, which has contributed to promoting European integration in these fields as well.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Zachariadis, Associate Professor, Cyprus University of Technology

The Youth Programme had a positive contribution towards the achievement of the Erasmus+ specific objectives in Cyprus. Analytically, the following information can be provided:

**Specific objective (a): Improve the level of key competences and skills**

Key Action 1 and specifically Youth Exchanges have contributed to the improvement of social and personal competences of young people, as testified by the participants' reports that are submitted with the final report of a completed project.

One of the most important objectives of the Youth chapter of Erasmus+ is the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities in the activities in order to improve their skills and competences, as well as to facilitate their inclusion in the society and the labour market. It is worth-mentioning that according to the statistical reports, for 2014, 712 participants out of 2.328 (30,58%) that were approved to participate in the 73 granted KA1 projects, were young people with fewer opportunities. So far, 69 out of 73 projects have been finalized and the number of young people with fewer opportunities is 409 out of 2.104 (19%). For 2015, 622 out of 2036 (30,55%) participants in the 62 KA1 approved projects by the NA were young people with fewer opportunities. So far, 46 out of 62 projects have been finalised and the percentage of young people with fewer opportunities is 29.7% (457 out of 1540).

**Specific objective (b): Foster quality improvements in youth work**

With regard to the objective related to quality improvements in youth work, 158 out of 179 (88,27%) Cypriot youth workers that participated in Mobility of Youth workers projects approved by our NA in 2014, supported that their participation in the activity contributed to their professional development. Specifically, 145 (81%) supported that they have gained practical skills relevant to their current job and 172 (96,09%) have developed new learning practices/methods for their work.

Regarding the enhancement of cooperation between organizations in the youth field and/or other stakeholders, 147 (82,12%) stated that through their participation in the project they have reinforced the cooperation with the partner institution/organisation, 92 (51,40%) that they have built cooperation with players in the labour market and 121 (67,60%) that they have built cooperation with players in civil society.

**Specific objective (c): To complement policy reforms at local, regional and national level and to support the development of knowledge and evidence based youth policy as well as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, in particular through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of Union transparency and recognition tools and the dissemination of good practices.**

Erasmus+ provides the possibility to organize structured dialogue meetings (through Key Action 3), by bringing together policy makers and young people to discuss policy reforms in the youth field at local, regional and national level. These meetings offer space for debate on issues relevant to Structured Dialogue or to the EU Youth Strategy and have as a result concrete proposals for several youth issues. In order to facilitate their impact on policy development, the outcomes of KA3 projects realized in Cyprus have been forwarded to the team in charge of the National Youth Strategy development in order to be examined and taken into consideration.

**Specific objective (d):** To enhance the international dimension of youth activities and the role of youth workers and organizations as support structures for young people in complementarity with the Union’s external action, in particular through the promotion of mobility and cooperation between the Union and partner-country stakeholders and international organizations and through targeted capacity building in partner countries.

At decentralized level, the Programme offers the opportunity for mobility projects between Programme Countries and Countries neighboring the EU. Since 2014, 54 projects with organizations from Neighboring Partner Countries were awarded by the NA, giving the opportunity to organizations, young people and youth workers to discover new cultures and exchange good practices in the frame of Youth Exchanges, EVS projects and training activities for Youth Workers.

**(2) To what extent has the progress on the realization of the specific objectives contributed to the realization of the Erasmus+ general objectives (as listed in point B.2 in annex 3) in your country?**

**Education and Training**

**General objective (a):** The Erasmus+ and its predecessor programs are complementing the national efforts towards the EU2020 and ET2020 targets. The exact contribution is not easily measured on the Cyprus performance on the EU2020 targets, but still it can be said that both National and Erasmus+ (and its predecessor) programs, have a relevant positive impact on the Cyprus performance in general. Moreover, the Council conclusions on the role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy have an overall impact on national policies as well as the Commission’s priorities.

**EUROPE 2020 TARGETS COMPARED TO CYPRUS PERFORMANCE (EU2020 & ET2020)**

<b>INDICATORS – BENCHMARKS ET2020</b>	<b>EU2020/ ET2020 TARGETS</b>	<b>NATIONAL TARGETS</b>	<b>EU28 AVERAGE</b>	<b>CYPRUS 2013</b>	<b>CYPRUS 2014</b>	<b>CYPRUS 2015</b>
Reduction of early leaving from education/training (EU2020)	Below 10%	10%	11.0% (2015)	9.1%	6.8%	5.3%
Participation of adults in LLL (age 25-64)	15%	12%	10.7% (2015)	6.9%	6.9%	7.5%
Increasing population with higher education qualif. (age 30-34) (EU2020)	At least 40%	46%	38,7% (2015)	47.8%	52.5%	54.6%
Participation in pre-primary education	95%	-	94.3% (2014)	89.5%	82.6%	89.6%
Employment rate of recent graduates (20-34)	82%	-	76.9% (2015)	62.1%	68.7%	68.8%

**General objective (b):** The programs had a somewhat limited direct contribution to the achievement of the ET 2020 benchmarks for Cyprus. Regarding participation in HE, Cyprus has a long tradition in Tertiary Education attainment levels (higher than the European benchmarks). The programmes have some contribution in limiting the numbers of early school leavers: the mobility opportunities offered by the programme for the pupils attending secondary VET schools is an incentive for them to continue their basic education in a secondary VET school.

**General objectives (c) – (e):** Impact not easily established and quantified.

**General objective (f):** As it is stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are reinforced by the specific objectives of Erasmus+ stated in the legal base through its actions and projects. On a general view the actions of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programs, through their specific objectives and consequently the various project implementation are directly and indirectly promoting the European values.

### Youth

Given that projects realized so far under Erasmus+ seem to contribute to the realization of the specific objectives, as described above, and since these objectives also serve the achievement of the eight areas of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), it is assumed that the general objectives are also realized at a good extent.

**(3) 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?**

#### **Education and Training:**

One of the Strategic Objectives of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) is its active participation in the European and international scene. An axis of this goal is the participation of the various directorates and organizations of the MOEC in European programs, which in turn, will foster the realization and the enhancement of educational policies at national level and the exchange of good practices, in close cooperation with European institutions and other organizations.

The MOEC is mostly involved in Erasmus+ actions that are funded either by the Foundation for the Management of Lifelong Learning Programs [NA(EDU)] of Cyprus or by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission. Erasmus+ actions are considered important in helping promote and support Ministry policies in education and training but also in helping develop and establish new policies which further the Ministry's aim for high quality education. Finally, Erasmus+ programs are also important in helping develop and establish new policies through supporting the exchange of ideas and expertise.

The Directorates of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education, the Pedagogical Institute of the MOEC as well as several departments are involved in a number of Erasmus+ projects which enable them to promote new policies, revise and improve existing ones and also address specific challenges, based on their strategic plans. Erasmus+ Actions are helping in the implementation of programs which work towards the implementation of the Ministry's policy to ensure quality education and especially in helping towards the support, training and

professional development of teachers so that they can respond to the demands of new teaching approaches and educational innovations.

Regarding teachers' professional learning, Erasmus+ projects implemented by the MOEC deal with key issues relevant to contemporary education and teachers' professional learning: differentiation of teaching, students with migrant background, resilience are some examples which show that our aim is to interact with European Institutions on issues that are a priority for Cyprus Education. Participation in Erasmus+ also fosters the exchange of examples of good practices, provides opportunities to compare and contrast issues, identify solutions and policies and see in practice how other countries deal with certain issues in their sociopolitical context.

Actions are more effective when they consist of research, implementation, collaborative work for implementation and when they lead to deliverables which have impact on the countries' policies (e.g. declarations, guides, international conferences with the participation of EU officers). They become more effective when more diverse countries participate in the project.

In relation to Adult Education, activities for the promotion of the EPALE and the European Agenda for Adult Learning enhance, among others, the cooperation and communication between the representatives of various organizations that promote Adult Education, support adult teaching staff, increase the awareness about the priorities of the Adult Education at European level and raise awareness of the adult population in Cyprus about available adult education opportunities. Complementary to the above, the funded projects also promote information and good practices among the various stakeholders of the country and disseminate the EU information on Adult Education (e.g. research studies, reports, EURYDICE publication).

Moreover it should be noted that the European policies, initiatives and tools related to the European Education and Training Programs have influenced policy developments in Cyprus, especially in the HE and VET fields. For example the Bologna Process has influenced policy developments in the HE sector (application of credit system, cycles of studies, learning outcomes, internationalisation strategies etc.) and the Copenhagen Process has influenced the National VET system. The Ministry of Education and Culture has adapted its policies taking into account the recommendations of the aforementioned Processes. The influence of the Erasmus+ actions is less obvious in the SE sector, as good practices observed during the implementation of the Erasmus+ actions by schools cannot be easily implemented, due to the centralized SE system in Cyprus. However, the participation of the Ministry, as well as the Pedagogical Institute to large cooperation projects, have influenced the SE policies.

All Erasmus+ actions have the potential to be extremely useful to the Ministry, if they are developed so that they respond to current and existing needs. They have a great deal of potential to develop local expertise and to motivate and stimulate the implementation of target policies.

### Youth

Regarding the influence of Erasmus+ on policy developments, KA3 can be considered to be the most effective - at least for the domain of youth - since the structured dialogue process that is followed in this type of projects often leads to the development of several consultation policy papers with specific recommendations for actions. It must be noted that Cypriot stakeholders and decision makers/policy makers are slowly getting more familiar with the consultation process thanks to this opportunity provided through Erasmus+.

It should be noted that the Youth Board of Cyprus has developed the National Youth Strategy, which was finalized in May 2017. Regarding the connection between Erasmus+ and the National Youth Strategy, first of all it should be pointed out that the NA was represented in the workshop organized by the Youth Board with the participation of several ministries and governmental services for defining the targets for each of the eight thematic priorities of the strategy. It should be also noted that these eight areas are the eight fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy (Education & training, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Health & Well-being, Participation, Voluntary activities, Social inclusion, Youth & the world, Creativity & Culture), which is one of the major objectives of Erasmus+. Moreover, all the outcomes of completed KA3 projects were gathered by the Agency and forwarded to the team in charge of the strategy development in order to be examined and taken into consideration.

Another way of influencing policy developments is related to the fact that the Erasmus+ Youth Programme has gained publicity, making many more youth/youth workers more familiar with its actions as well as the non-formal learning processes. This influences greatly the actions of the government in the domain of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

**(4) 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?**

#### **Education & Training & Youth**

The National Agencies, organize Dissemination events, in order to promote best practices under Erasmus+. Furthermore, they promote the “Erasmus+ platform for dissemination and exploitation of project results” and they additionally use their Facebook pages and Website in order to increase the visibility of project results of Erasmus+.

Additionally, and specifically for the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programs, the approach of over-budgeting the available funds for 5% (around €300,000 yearly), in case it is required, has been approved recently in order to achieve better absorption of the European funds and to maximize the effects of Erasmus+ on Cypriot beneficiaries.

Additionally, the Directorate General for European Programs, Coordination and Development, which is as well the NAU for Erasmus+, has established and operates an Information Portal (<http://www.fundingprogrammesportal.gov.cy>) which aspires to function as a first stop and as a central information point for all programs funded by European and/or national funds. The objective of the Portal is to facilitate interested citizens in identifying the appropriate funding opportunities from the European and National programs and schemes, as well as to give a comprehensive and direct dissemination of information in relation to the programs and the calls for proposals. The portal, among other, offers information on Erasmus+ and its relevant calls. The ultimate goal of this portal is the greatest possible utilization of available resources from European and national funds, which is expected to stimulate growth and job creation in the country.

**(5) 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?**

### **Education & Training**

KA1 (learning mobility) is definitely more effective than KA2 in all sectors. What makes it more effective is its own nature, as it is a one-off experience with more immediate impact on the participant, especially young participants from the HE and VET sectors. Funds are spent for a very specific reason, i.e. travel and subsistence and/or fees. As KA1 is considered a more effective action, individual mobility for learners through KA1 should be introduced for SE and AE sectors as well.

In contrast, the effectiveness of KA2 projects is more difficult to be assessed soon after their implementation. Their effects might be visible in the long run, therefore, some effects from the predecessor programs can be identified as contributing e.g. to changes in National Policies. However, it has to be noted that Innovation Projects submitted under KA2, might result in good end-products whose sustainability is not guaranteed practically. Furthermore, different NAs end up funding similar projects, i.e. projects with similar topics, products etc., which in the end are not used. The same topic, e.g. a platform on training for entrepreneurial skills, might be funded 5-6 times every year all over Europe, but none of the funded platforms might get to survive after the finalization of the project.

### **Youth**

Each Key Action of Erasmus+, aims at producing results at different levels – individual, institution and systemic- and from the NA's point of view, all key actions are relevant to the Programme's success and objectives. Based on the statistics and experience so far, KA1 can be considered as a more effective action for the young people, the youth workers and the youth field, in general. More specifically, KA1 aims on individual development by providing learning opportunities for young people and youth workers. The number of people that this KA reaches is the main determining factor for considering this action as more effective, since, based on the statistics for the approved projects of 2014 and 2015, 2328 and 2036 participants respectively, have the opportunity to participate in mobility projects. Moreover, this Action is the one that mostly encourages the participation of young people with fewer opportunities and special needs, which is one of the main target groups of the youth sector. The high number of participants in KA1 is also due to the higher budget allocated under this KA, compared to the other ones.

As already mentioned, KA2 has its own relevance for the programme and impact on youth work and youth policy. However, since the majority of projects have a longer duration than KA1 projects, the impact of the projects cannot be assessed easily at this point.

**(6) 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?**

### **Education & Training**

The integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has contributed to greater visibility of the programme. The uniformity that has been introduced has indeed simplified some things especially for potential beneficiaries. There is less confusion now regarding the programme among beneficiaries, as all the information about the programme can be found on one website. However, there are still things that need to be addressed in future programmes such as the following:

- The separation between the VET and AE fields are very confusing for the beneficiaries – the two fields could be merged.
- The non-participation of pupils in mobility activities of KA1 is an issue that needs to be addressed in future programmes.
- A platform should be created at European level with companies at which the students could refer to for Erasmus+ placements.
- The management of EPAL by another institution and not the NA (EDU) is not effective regarding synergies. The European Commission could require that ERALE is managed by the NA managing the Erasmus+.

### **Youth**

The integration of several programmes has led to more visibility of the Erasmus+ programme as well. Furthermore, Erasmus+ provides the opportunity for cross-sectorial projects which can be considered as the most positive, innovative element that was highly accepted by all the stakeholders. For instance, the target groups of the previous youth and LLP programmes were different, whereas in Erasmus+, the said target groups are merged; thus more people/organizations who were previously interested in LLP are now interested in youth programmes and vice versa.

However, there is still some confusion, especially among the youth sector beneficiaries, regarding the areas covered by Erasmus+ due to its name and its connection with the higher education. Regarding the youth field, although there is a separate youth chapter with specific objectives, the opportunities and the specificities of the youth sector are less visible, due to the Programme architecture. Moreover, the many different deadlines for KA1, KA2 and KA3 for the youth sector create more work load for the NA due to the 3 selection processes that should be carried out.

**(7) Is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what Erasmus+ is set out to achieve? Is the distribution of funds across the program's fields and actions appropriate in relation to their level of effectiveness and utility?**

**Education & Training**

Concerning the size of the budget, we consider that it is low compared to what Erasmus+ is set out to achieve. The proportion of participants compared to the actual population of beneficiaries is quite small, therefore, it is hard to have a wide impact.

The budget distribution across the program's fields and actions is appropriate except for

- a. the funds allocated to Master Loan Guarantee, which so far has actually no use for the beneficiaries
- b. the disproportionate amount that has been spent on the OLS, which participants seem not to use effectively.

**Youth**

Regarding the youth field and the budget allocated to the various actions, we have observed that there is a number of good quality KA2 projects that are rejected due to lack of funds and as a result, only 4-5 projects are approved per year. Therefore, the effectiveness and utility of KA2 is restricted due to the limited budget that is allocated for this action.

**(8) 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 program to remedy these?**

**Education & Training**

A number of difficulties are encountered in the application, implementation and reporting procedures of the Erasmus+ programme, although it has been developed with an aim to be less bureaucratic and simpler in structure than the predecessor programmes. These difficulties can be summarised as follows:

- The format and requirements of the application forms makes it very difficult for inexperienced applicants to enter the programme. The solution to that, besides simplification of the application forms and the award of newness points, is to allow National Administrative Rules, such as limiting the number of applications that each organisation is allowed to submit (KA2), limiting the number of mobilities per organisation (KA1), limiting the amount of grant (KA1), etc.
- There are also some financial difficulties for the participation of Cypriot beneficiaries. In several occasions in the past, the CY NA has communicated to the Commission the difficulties regarding travel costs, as expressed by beneficiaries. The unit cost allowed by certain distance bands, (particularly the 3000 – 4000 km) is too low for travelling to and from Cyprus, as there are no direct flights for the destinations that fall in this distance.
- At the early years of Erasmus+ there were difficulties arising from the poor functionality of the newly introduced IT tools for the programme management. Things are improving now, and we hope that these tools will remain the same for the new generation of the programmes.
- Finally, some difficulties are imposed by the management of the TCA actions especially when these concern Contact Seminars. A central management of their announcement and timing is definitely needed in order to make them more manageable for the NAs.

## Youth

The digitalization of the program with the use of various IT tools is one of the main challenges faced both by the Agency and the beneficiaries. The big number of the new IT tools and their reduced functionality, especially during the first two years, have created an increased workload for the NAs, especially for small NAs such as CY02 (YOU), and their use is often time-consuming and complicated. It is too difficult to keep up with all the changes and updates that these tools are still undergoing even now.

Furthermore, although the use of unit costs and lump sums has reduced the administrative burden for NAs and beneficiaries, in the case of travel costs, the way of calculating the distance between the hosting and receiving country is unfair for participants travelling from and to Cyprus, since the only option available is the use of airplane and there are no direct flights from most countries. Also for the youth exchanges the budget given for organizational support is rather limited. This makes it quite hard for the youth NGOs to successfully manage the costs of their projects or even make them reluctant to apply for a grant. As a remedy, the budget for the organizational support for youth exchanges could be increased.

Moreover, it has been observed that small youth organizations, that work on a voluntary basis or are newcomers to the Program and thus are inexperienced, cannot compete with large organizations which have the capacity to submit a bigger number of applications, which due to the applicants' experience, are ranked higher during the quality assessment. Therefore, these small organizations may never have the opportunity to realize an E+ project. This could be remedied by putting limitations on the number of applications that each organization can apply per round and also by including the newcomers' aspect in the award criteria.

Regarding KA2, as it was already mentioned, there is too high demand in comparison to the budget allocated. As a result, many quality projects are put on reserve list and applicants are rather dissatisfied with the fact that only 1 or 2 projects are granted per each round.

**(9) 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?**

### **Education & Training**

In the past there were too many platforms for disseminating programme results. The Dissemination Platform does look promising. However, the NA has not yet closed many projects, hence it does not have a great experience on the tool. Having a pool of projects as a reference tool is of course a good idea as in that way projects and their products are not just kept by the producers themselves. However, most of the times, these type of platforms are mostly useful for consultancies, universities etc., and less useful for ordinary people-beneficiaries.

More things need to be done at policy level for the promotion of results and research funded through KA2 projects – possibly through a centrally managed funding mechanism of really innovative and useful results. It is also important that concrete measures are taken so that the results of the Erasmus+ projects are spread as widely as possible.

At National level, good practice examples are disseminated by the NA through their events (dissemination event, conferences, kick-off meetings), the Annual Booklet, the webpage, the Facebook page etc. For the case

of KA2, these efforts are successful as regards dissemination, but as regards exploitation of the results by organisations other than the consortium organisations, the efforts are not so successful.

### Youth

The NA organizes at the end of each year a Dissemination Event for the promotion of successful projects. Also, in the frame of cooperation between the Youth Board and a group of media providers, good practice projects are promoted through various channels, such as TV, radio, internet and press. The results of Erasmus+ projects are also disseminated through the NA's Facebook page. These channels have been proved effective so far, given the number of viewers and social media followers.

Furthermore, project beneficiaries were trained on the Dissemination Platform of the European Commission and are encouraged to promote their results through this platform which is open to everyone. However, apart from the beneficiaries, the general public should also become aware of this platform in order to be considered effective and achieve its goal. Moreover, there is a need for promoting further the outcomes of KA3 projects, at both national and European levels, in order to achieve a better link between this action and policy development.

### Efficiency

**(10) To what extent is the system of cooperation and division of tasks between the Commission, Executive Agency, National Agencies, 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 program?**

Overall, the system of cooperation and division works efficiently and is well-functioning in Cyprus. Some areas of improvement are the following:

- With regards to the collaboration and the communication between the NAs and the EC, since there were many new features in the new Program in 2014 and there was little time for the NAs to get prepared and start implementing it, the collaboration could be described as challenging especially for the Youth sector. This ambiguity, as well as the introduction of many new IT tools which were not fully functional, resulted in many queries and problems that needed to be answered and resolved by the EC, which however did not always respond in a prompt and clear way. By now several improvements have been noticed in the communication with the EC in terms of time of response, clarity and available communication channels.
- With regards to EACEA, there is hardly any communication and the NAs would like an improved cooperation, at least to have more information regarding the responsible officers for each centralised action in order to be able to provide the necessary guidance to interested applicants.
- The system of cooperation between the NAs and the National Authority in Cyprus can be characterised as efficient and well-functioning and is based on the Agreement for the Coordinated Management of Erasmus+ in Cyprus between the NAU and the two NAs.

**(11) To what extent has the integration of several programs into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the program 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 program that could increase efficiency?**

### **Education & Training**

On the overall, the integration introduced by Erasmus+ contributed to the efficiency of the program. The CY NA (EDU), as small NA managing all Education and Training Sectors of the program, would like to see even more Action based uniformity to the implementation rules, keeping exceptions to the absolute minimum. This will create less confusion to beneficiaries. While we believe that the successor program should not introduce drastic changes to the present program (evolution, not revolution!) some of the changes that we would like to see are the following:

- Introduction of pupil mobility (short term mobility – i.e. one - two weeks) as a KA1 activity, in which pupils can participate with their teachers as accompanying persons (like the former Language Projects). The long term mobility, eligible under KA2 projects, does not seem to be working – it does not work at all for Cyprus (no requests for this type of mobility so far).
- In order to avoid several projects with the same theme funded by different countries, and the waist of European funds associated with this practice, the evaluation and selection of KA2 projects could be done centrally by the Commission, so that the best European projects are selected. The countries could keep their share of funds and the NAs could undertake all the other implementation aspects (promotion, agreement signing, monitoring, evaluation of reports, dissemination of results, etc.)
- Short term mobilities could be combined with virtual mobility, where relevant, as a follow-up activity, so as to maximize the impact of the learning mobility.

### **Youth**

Especially during the first two years of Erasmus+ implementation, the integration of several programs into one has resulted in higher administrative burden for the CY NA YOU in comparison to the management of the predecessor Programme “Youth in Action”. The NA had to invest more effort and time in making visible and clear the opportunities provided for potential beneficiaries in the youth field. Apart from that, applicants and beneficiaries needed much more support from the NA due to the standardization and the unified procedures (e.g. extensive use of IT tools, e-forms etc.) that were introduced with Erasmus+, which are much more complex than in the previous youth program. The same applies for the administrative procedures that are followed by the NA which mostly rely on the use of IT tools and are time-consuming. It should be noted however that, as the beneficiaries are becoming more familiar with the integrated Programme and its procedures, the administrative burden and the efforts of the NA are also decreased and thus leading to efficiency gains at all levels. Moreover, one of the novelties of the integrated Programme which is considered efficient for both the beneficiaries and the NA is the introduction of simplified funding mechanisms, through unit costs.

**(12) Do you consider that the implementation of certain actions of the program is more efficient than others? Are there differences across fields? What good practices of these more efficient actions of the program could be transferred to others?**

**Education & Training**

The implementation of KA1 action is more efficient, in the sense that:

- the implemented activities are easy to trace during the primary checks performed by the NA
- the beneficiaries know exactly what to expect from the activities and it is more clear to them how to implement these activities.

**Youth**

The implementation of KA1 can be characterized as the most efficient since it is easier to guide potential applicants, to monitor and support successful beneficiaries, to evaluate their final reports and the number of participants that are benefited from this action is much higher than in the other 2 Key Actions.

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

**Education & Training**

The simplified grants approach has resulted in the reduction of administrative burden on the NA, mainly during the evaluation of the final reports stage. However, the introduction of too many electronic tools for the beneficiaries has put a very heavy administrative burden on NA staff, as the beneficiaries need a lot of support for the use of these tools. Overall, the workload of the NA has increased after the introduction of Erasmus+, despite the introduction of the simplified grant approach.

**Youth**

Regarding the simplification of grants, at least from the NA's point of view, it has indeed relieved the administrative burden since the number of supporting documents that have to be checked by the NA is now limited, in comparison to the YiA. However, the NA believes that the EC should monitor the adequacy of the unit costs that apply to each country, action and budget category and revise them accordingly. For further reduction of the administrative burden the evaluation of the final report process could be further eased by the assessors and the NA since it is quite challenging to compare the initial application and the final report.

**(14) 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?**

**Education & Training**

Although the introduction of the IT tools for the management and implementation of the programme is welcomed, there are certain problems created by them:

- The workload resulting from the IT tools is a lot, both for the beneficiaries and the NA staff.
- The tools do not always communicate well with each other, thus causing extra effort and time to NA staff to identify problems in reports or in other data they need to produce through those tools.
- According to the participants' feedback, the participant's report in the Mobility Tool contains too many (unnecessary sometimes) questions, with duplications and overlaps.
- There is also a problem with late releases of certain IT tools. For the future programmes, managing tools should be ready before the introduction of the programme/action.
- The use of different platforms by beneficiaries which are not consistent with each other is confusing. For example, eTwinning is a very successful tool which runs for years. The creation of the School Education Gateway as another platform results in duplications regarding what the two platforms offer to a large extent. Of course the platform of eTwinning is only to be used by school education teachers, but there could be a different section – on eTwinning platform – for blogging among other staff and/or offering courses etc. As a result the eTwinning Platform could become bigger, retaining all its current features, and adding some new functionalities rather than creating another platform.
- For the case of Cyprus, it would have been easier to establish synergies with EPALE, if that had been managed by the CY01 NA.
- NAConnect is a good initiative needing a lot of improvements. However, colleagues throughout Europe do not use Yammer, and as a result a lot of topics raised might remain unanswered or not discussed. Furthermore, the persons participating in a discussion in Yammer should identify themselves, so that the rest of people will know how valid is an opinion/response.

### **Youth**

The widespread use of IT tools in Erasmus+ has increased the administrative burden of the NA, especially when they are not sufficiently functioning. This is due to the big number of IT tools, which are constantly updated, the time required by the NA to be trained on these tools and updates and of course, the time and effort spent on completing the procedures in every tool. Also, beneficiaries, especially coming from the youth field, need to spend much more time in order to familiarize themselves with the use of IT tools, with the support and the guidance of the NA. We believe that the number of IT tools should be reduced and connected to each other so that some functionalities can be completed automatically. Furthermore, before the implementation of any new program, the NAs should be able to test and get adequately trained on the new IT tools, during an adjustment period.

**(15) 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? What kind of rationalisation effort did you make in this respect?**

### **Education & Training**

As explained above, the workload of the NA has increased over the last few years due to several reasons:

- The decentralized budget managed by the NA has doubled since the creation of the NA in 2007, without a single increase on the number of staff.

- The institution based approach for the KA1 projects has not brought a decrease on the projects managed by the NA, as due to the nature of our schools/organizations in SE and AE sectors, most of the projects financed concern the mobility of 1 – 3 individuals. The decrease due to multiple participants in a project has been offset by the increase in the budget.
- The introduction of the new IT tools for the management of the program requires a lot of personnel time to support participants on the use of these tools, both during the submission of applications and the submission of final reports.
- New tasks are required by the NAs during the last couple of years, such as the management of International Credit Mobility, the Transnational Cooperation Activities, the School Education Gateway platform etc.

As a result of the above, and without the availability of extra funding to hire more personnel, in order to respond to the needs of the program, the NA cannot be engaged with development actions, but it is rather busy with day-to-day processing/management of the program.

Since the introduction of the Erasmus+ program, in order to optimize the efficiency of the resources deployed for the Erasmus+ implementation, the CY01 NA has been organized around Key Actions rather than Sectors, given the fact that

- (a) the new program has this type of structure
- (b) the same implementation rules apply more or less to all sectors
- (c) the number of projects funded in each sector by our small NA is rather small.

However, regrettably, it seems that lately the Commission is moving towards a sector based approach for the implementation of the program. At least, we would like to see the management meetings in Brussels to be organized around Key Actions instead of sectors, especially for the KA2 where the implementation rules should be uniform.

### Youth

Although the administrative burden and the workload has increased with the Erasmus+, the human resources of the NA remain the same as in the previous program. So far the financial resources from the EC and the NAU have been adequate for the program implementation.

### Relevance

**(16) 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?**

### Education & Training

Erasmus+ objectives continue to address the needs or problems they are meant to solve and these needs or problems are still relevant in the context of Cyprus.

## Youth

Regarding the Erasmus+ objectives in the field of youth (e.g. improvement of key competences, active citizenship, entrepreneurship and inclusion), the NA believes that they address to a good extent the current needs and problems that they are meant to solve, such as unemployment, lack of transversal skills, marginalization, racism and xenophobia. These needs or problems are of course still relevant for our country.

**(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?**

### Education & Training

- Overall the needs of different stakeholders and sectors are addressed by the Erasmus+ objectives. The only two groups that we believe that they are not adequately addressed by the program are Policy Makers and People in the Labour Market that they would like to acquire further education/training
- The program is successful in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the program's scope
- The Erasmus+ program is well known to the education and training community of Cyprus. This can be proved by the number of applications received, by the wide participation in NA events, by the number of visits to the NA's website etc.

## Youth

Regarding the needs of the youth sector and the relevant stakeholders, they are being addressed through the Erasmus+ objects at a satisfactory level. The Program may not be so successful in attracting small and inexperienced organizations that are among the target audiences within the field of youth, due to the challenges and difficulties described already in other sections.

### **Internal and external coherence and complementarity**

**(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+?**

### Education & Training

In our opinion the various actions that have been brought together in Erasmus+ are coherent.

Overlaps between VET and AE activities in both Actions (KA1 and KA2) can be identified, as well as in the case of eTwinning and School Education Gateway platforms.

## Youth

Although each action under Erasmus+ serves a specific objective and has its own aims, all these specific objectives are meant to address the Erasmus+ general objectives and from this point of view, the various actions can be considered as coherent. There seems to be some overlap between KA1 and KA2 since both actions provide opportunities for mobilities.

**(19) To what extent does Erasmus+ complement other national and international programs available in your country? Can you identify any tensions, inconsistencies or overlaps with other programs?**

## Education & Training

### European Social Fund and Youth Employment Initiative

Within the framework of the Operational Programme “Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion” a number of projects are implemented with co-financing by ESF and YEI, in complementarity to Erasmus+ Programme.

The following projects are currently executed according to national policies and they are aiming to upgrade Vocational Education and Training and Apprenticeship System, to enhance participation in Life Long Learning, to tackle early school leaving, to upskill the human capital and to promote social inclusion:

- Improvement of the quality, attractiveness and Efficiency of Vocational Education and Training in Cyprus and New Modern Apprenticeship
- Establishment of mechanisms for validating non-formal and informal learning
- Operation of Vocational Qualifications System
- Actions of Educational and Social Inclusion
- Job placement for the young unemployed tertiary education graduates for the acquisition of work experience in enterprises/organisations
- Job placement for the young unemployed secondary and post-secondary education graduates for the acquisition of work experience in enterprises/organisations

The co-financed projects are mainly implemented by the competent Ministries or Government Departments who are also implementing national programmes and as a consequence any form of inconsistency, tension or overlapping between those programmes was avoided.

### Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus Activities

Vocational training is extensively available in Cyprus for the employed, the unemployed and other groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market through a mixture of public and private provision such as colleges, training institutions, consultancy firms and enterprises.

The provision of training has been encouraged and strengthened primarily through the approval and subsequent subsidisation of training activities by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA), a semi-government organisation whose source of income comes from the Human Resource Development levy paid by all companies (civil servants and the self-employed are excluded). The HRDA is governed by a 13-strong Board of

Directors, comprising of representatives of government, employers and trade unions. The HRDA mission is to create the necessary prerequisites for the planned and systematic training and development of Cyprus's human resources, at all levels and in all sectors, for meeting the economy's needs, within the overall national socio-economic policies.

The HRDA, through financial incentives, promotes the implementation of a variety of training measures addressing the needs of the employees, the unemployed and the economically inactive. The HRDA is not a training provider itself, but it subsidises training activities implemented by public and private institutions and enterprises, which have to be assessed by the HRDA against specific criteria and, in the case of training institutions being, certified as Vocational Training Centres.

Training programmes for the employed include single-company training programmes in Cyprus and abroad, multi-company training programmes of standard and high priority and continuing training programmes for trade union officials.

Training programmes for the unemployed include schemes for the employment and training in enterprises, training programmes for enhancing employability, as well as schemes co-financed by the ESF for the job placement of unemployed young graduates in enterprises/organisations for the acquisition of work experience. The HRDA cooperates closely with the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance for the operation of these schemes. The HRDA activities do not cause any tensions, inconsistencies or overlaps with other programmes offered or with the Erasmus+ programmes, but rather they complement Erasmus+ programmes.

#### Ministry of Education and Culture

As an overall framework, Erasmus+ does not overlap with other national programmes and does not create tensions or inconsistencies. On the contrary, once a program is carefully designed – or selected – it can complement a variety of actions which take place locally and are organized by the Ministry and/or local organizations towards the achievement of the Ministry's goals. Projects dealing with diversity, for instance, such as SIRIUS and NAOS, were used to promote the implementation of new policies, reinforced the need for changes in regulations at national level and initiated changes in the national policy for students with migrant background.

#### Cyprus National Programme for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (2014-2020)

Under the Cyprus National Programme for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (2014-2020) one of the main national objectives is the support of the integration of third country nationals in the receiving society. To address this objective, there are various projects being/ will be implemented. As far as education is concerned, the following projects are included in the National Programme:

- Multilevel programmes for the acquisition of the Greek language targeting adults and children.
- Mother-language acquisition.
- Training programmes in skill acquisition, such as: computer skills, typing, sewing, cooking etc which can assist a third country national toward the labour market (in complementarity to the programmes offered by the European Social Fund). There is also a provision for evaluation of skills of third country nationals.
- Training of officials and stakeholders for issues related to integration, migration, asylum, social inclusion etc.

It can be said that the above projects complement the Erasmus+ actions.

### Other

Additionally there is Fulbright (USA), IAESTE (International Placement Program managed by Cyprus University of Technology), Pestalocci (funded by the Council of Europe, managed by MOEC – participation of teachers in training seminars within Europe) which complement the effects of Erasmus+ as well.

### **National Funding Scheme “Youth Initiatives” by Youth Board of Cyprus**

Concerning the field of youth and the non-formal learning, the Youth Board of Cyprus administers also a national funding scheme “Youth Initiatives” which however, provides funding for activities taking place only at local and national level and thus, there is no overlap or tension with Erasmus+.

### **European added value and sustainability**

**(20) To what extent Erasmus+ and its predecessor programs 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 program in order to increase its European value added?**

### **Education & Training**

The Erasmus+ as well as its predecessor Programs definitely produced positive effects/ results that would otherwise not be possible at national level. The sense of European cohesion and unity, the intercultural awareness, language learning etc. are definitely enhanced through the projects. Undoubtedly, Erasmus+ is the most important and effective tool to cultivate the European values and exchange of practices in all sectors of education and training in Cyprus.

More specifically, through participation in KA1 activities in the HE and VET sector, which entails the involvement of people of all levels of participating institutions, and through the participation of teachers/trainers in KA1, the European values are infused both at the level of teachers/trainers, as well as the learners/students. Undoubtedly, for the case of HE, the greatest impact lies with the students, as staff have also got other research opportunities within the EU through other funding programs.

To another extent, KA2 also produces valuable results, promoting the European values and cooperation. However, regarding sustainability, the successor Program to the Erasmus+ could be further enhanced. Valuable tangible deliverables are produced through Strategic Partnerships under KA2, which are not further elaborated, updated or improved after the finalization of a project. That is mainly due to lack of funds or resources. As mentioned above, a funding mechanism should be sought for the dissemination of results of excellent projects, because the Dissemination platform by itself is not a very effective dissemination tool.

Furthermore, it is a fact that Policy/Decision Makers, especially in countries with centralized Education Systems, are reluctant to take on board results that have been produced by Erasmus+ projects, for example to introduce changes to the curriculum or to adopt new teaching practices. For this reason, the Commission could design some activities/initiatives for Decision Makers of the countries with this type of system, in order to encourage them to become aware of these results and to implement them, if suitable to their country.

Finally, a mobility scheme under KA1 for the pupils of SE would be most beneficial for the promotion of European values among young people.

### Youth

Undoubtedly, Erasmus+ produces effects that are additional to the effects that would have resulted from similar actions initiated only at regional or national level, such as the National Program mentioned above, and this is due to its European and intercultural dimension. More specifically, it provides opportunities for networking and cooperation among different countries (Program and Partner Countries), with significant impact at both institutional and individual level.

**(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 in your country? Could the program use even higher budgets in an effective way? Do you see challenges to effectively use more money for particular actions or fields of the program?**

### Education & Training

The sharp increase in the budget that is foreseen in the coming years up to 2020 will be a challenge for Cyprus, given the limitations that there are on the percentages that have to be allocated in each sector/Action. Cyprus traditionally receives a very high number of KA2 applications, where the funding is very limited. The only way foreseen to absorb a sharp increase in the budget is to allow the NA to allocate a higher percentage in KA2.

The program could use higher budgets if the funds were spread evenly during the programming period/years.

Concerning the effective use of Erasmus+ funds, one could mention the E+ Loan Guarantee scheme, which has not been implemented efficiently at all, and which has created a lot of disappointment among potential beneficiaries. Better arrangements/schemes should be sought in the future.

### Youth

Taking into account the high demand in specific actions, it is almost certain that the Erasmus+ will be able to absorb in an effective way the future increase in the budget. Concerning the use of even higher budgets, this would be effective for KA2 where quality applications are often rejected due to the lack of funds, since the budget allocated for KA2 is not proportional to the funding required by beneficiaries for implementing KA2 projects.

**COMMITMENT AND ABSORPTION RATES OF THE 2 NATIONAL AGENCIES****Available/committed/absorbed budget for CY01 NA (EDU): Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programs**

Financial Year	Budget Heading	Budget Available (€)	Budget Committed till 31/05/2017(€)	Commitment Rate	Budget spent till 31/05/2017(€)	Absorption Rate till 31/05/2017	Status of the Agreement
2011	H1	4,294,000	4,224,403.93	98%	3,991,508.00	93%	Closed
2012	H1	4,907,000	4,814,061.66	98%	4,536,383.78	92%	Closed
2013	H1	4,939,991	4,876,101.14	99%	4,562,993.10	92%	Closed
2014	H1	6,443,403	6,437,678.00	100%	5,769,992.59	90%	Open
2015	H1	6,661,731	6,795,501.00	102%	5,617,204.78	84%	Open
	H4	488,370	446,235.00	91%	267,741.00	55%	Open
2016	H1	7,057,026	7,263,453.00	103%	4,343,902.68	62%	Open
	H4	431,460	416,325.00	96%	249,795.00	58%	Open

**Note:** Transfers between Budget Headings (H1 and H4) are not allowed.

**Available/committed/absorbed budget for CY02 NA (YOU): Youth Board of Cyprus (as of 31/03/2017)**

Financial Year	Budget Allocated by EC	Budget Committed till 31/3/2017	Commitment Rate	Budget spent till 31/03/2017	Absorption Rate till 31/03/2017	Status of the Agreement
2011	1,579,443	1,524,202.02	96.50%	1,269,970.44	80,40%	OPEN
2012	1,958,712	1,374,808.08	70.19%	1,213,244.45	61,94%	OPEN
2013	2,503,732	2,558,079.89	102.17%	2,248,555.60	89,80%	OPEN
2014	2,279,803	2,260,908.69	99,17%	2,022,233.11	88,70%	OPEN
2015	2,307,617.88	2,210,870.00	95,81%	1,901,879.60	82,42%	OPEN
2016	2,319,044.92	2,293,698.90	98,91%	1,734,809.81	74,81%	OPEN