Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus + (2014 – 2020) and the predecessor programmes (more specifically the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programmes)

AUTHORS: Grant Thornton Services
STATUS: Final VERSION
DATE OF REPORT: August 2017
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This Evaluation Report has been prepared following the adjudication of the Contract for the Erasmus+ Mid-Term Evaluation, with Grant Thornton Services being the successful bidders following a tendering procedure.

This report has been collated and prepared in line with the Terms of Reference of the Tender of the Erasmus+ Mid-Term Evaluation (Reference number: MEAIM/051/FPD/2017) published on the 20th of March 2017 and congruent to the guidelines provided by the European Commission (EC) as stipulated in the Evaluation Roadmap¹. Furthermore such guideline comply with the requirements of the Better Regulation Guidelines.²

The analysis was carried out over a six-week period commencing on the 1 August 2017 and reflects the situation as at August 2017.

In line with the tender proposal – Erasmus+ Mid-Term Evaluation (Reference number: MEAIM/051/FPD/2017), the core purpose of this mid-term evaluation is to:

- “Assess the long-term results and impact of the predecessor programmes (Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus, ALFA, Tempus, Edulink, Sport preparatory actions where applicable);

- “Assess the effectiveness of the measures taken to achieve the Erasmus+ programme’s objectives and evaluate the efficiency of the Programme and its European added value. It will also address the Programme’s internal and external coherence, the continued relevance of all of its objectives, and the scope for simplification.

Grant Thornton Services would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Abigail Camilleri Director Funds, Funds and Programmes Division within the Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto (MEA) who was spearheading this Evaluation as well as Mr Joseph Schembri, Chief Executive officer, MT National Agency (EUPA) and all his staff for their availability and assistance throughout the whole evaluation process.

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¹ Evaluation Roadmap. Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+. 01/2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the interim evaluation of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Malta for the period 2014 – 2020, with a focus also on assessing the long-term results and impact of the predecessor programmes, in line with the guidelines by the EC and the terms of reference of the Tender for same.

The methodology adopted incorporated the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data comprising desk research, official documents produced and collated by EUPA, a number of face-to-face interviews, the distribution of questionnaires to beneficiaries and a workshop with individuals that are currently involved in Erasmus+ and were also involved in the predecessor programmes.

Summary of Evaluation Results

The main findings of the predecessor programmes (more specifically those pertaining to lifelong learning and the Youth in Action Programmes) are highlighted in Chapter 2 of this report and indicate the positive impact and positive results of the two programmes under review.

With respect to the main findings of the mid-term analysis carried out, these are summarized below, with Chapter 3 of this report providing the complete findings of this mid-term evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Relevance</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highly Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Highly Satisfactory</td>
<td>Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Scores could range from a maximum of +2 (highly satisfactory/highly likely) to a minimum of -2 (highly unsatisfactory/highly unlikely).

* The rating relates to the likely impact – in view of the Programme’s timeframe (2014 – 2020) with this evaluation taking note of the first three years and consideration given to the fact that a number of projects were still not concluded by the time of evaluation.
Overall conclusions:

- The Erasmus+ Programme is highly relevant and successfully taps the objectives it seeks to address as well as the broader EU endeavours regarding education and skills development.

- Both this Programme and the predecessor programmes have proved to be highly effective on an individual level in the attainment of interpersonal skills, as well as specific skills, and the personal and professional development of participants.

- The focus of mobility is highly relevant to Malta particularly more so in view of the nation’s insularity. Indeed, the programme is very often the first opportunity individuals have to travel overseas and truly comprehend the international dimension of the EU.

- Following a low start were the objectives of the Programme were not clear, participation in the Programme increased. Likewise, the National Agency has placed a lot of effort on increasing the quality of the applications and this has borne its fruit.

- Though extremely important and indeed promoted both at EU level and locally, the long-term benefits of the programme are not always easily quantifiable as are the advantages of informal learning. Such positive aspects as the benefits attained through mobility, and the interaction with different cultures cannot be undermined, though these positive social impacts are likely to be more pronounced over time.

- The administrative burden did not decrease as was anticipated as a result of the integration and is still deemed to be too high. Furthermore, the one-size fits all approach with respect to applications is proving to be impractical, particularly for smaller enterprises/organisations.

- The Programme successfully targets lower opportunity students and youth as well as individuals with special needs. In this respect the NA has worked considerably to ensure that this segment is successfully tapped at a local level. The benefits derived from such endeavours (and more specifically from the inclusion of these distinct clusters) cannot be easily quantified at this stage.

- The focus on partnerships is viewed to positively with respect to instigating collaborations with international organisations and in so doing further emphasising the internationalisation of the programme. That said, it must be noted that this has acted as a deterrent to small entities that generally work at the grassroots at regional (a village) level and in so doing adversely effected certain positive endeavours that were experienced under the predecessor programmes.
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

Conclusions per evaluation criteria

- **Effectiveness** – the Programme is effective in contributing to a large extent to the intended outcomes particularly, in relation to the acquisition of new skills, internationalisation as well as personal and professional development of individuals. The effectiveness of the programme with respect to lifelong learning are less easily quantifiable though equally important.

  At education institution level, the programme is effective in internationalisation, through the sharing of practices and communication that ensues through the project

  The Programme is deemed to interlink with Malta’s policy developments (though not considered to directly influence it). Furthermore, more time has to elapse to be able to determine the long term impact of the Programme.

- **Efficiency** – the integration of the predecessor programmes aided in creating better understanding of the whole programme among the various sanctions of the programme, and collaborations over Key Actions (KAs) and sectors. That said, the amalgamation of the predecessor programmes however did not result in lessening the administrative burden that was anticipated. A one size fits all approach at application stage is not proving to be appropriate. Equal applications procedures for large and small organisations is deterring the latter from applying for funds. This ought to be tackled when one takes into consideration the fact that in many instances the smaller entities are volunteer run with little manpower and involved on the grassroots.

  After the initial glitches, the IT tools are today seen to as an asset that facilitates matters, though it is being suggested that the various tools be amalgamated to increase further efficiency.

- **Relevance** – the Programme is viewed to positively and highly relevant to the needs of Malta, with the EC highlighting the need for further impetus on adult learning. The Programme could also be used to instigate motivation among the younger generation on the importance of schooling. Exchanges and possible innovative endeavours could in this respect aid decrease the currently high percentage of early school leavers. Matching overseas educational programmes to the kills/desires of the pupil could aid in this respect.

- **International and external coherence and complementarity** – there are hardly any programmes that the opportunities offered by Erasmus+ in relation to mobility and
internationalisation activities. For this reason, the programme is viewed to positively and is not deemed to overlap or be inconsistent with other programmes.

- **European added value and sustainability** – the research indicates how the Programme has enabled projects to materialise that would otherwise not have come to life. As indicated earlier on the mobility aspect of the programme is highly relevant for Malta and adds value. Furthermore, the Programme contributes towards the Europe 2020 and ET 2020 objectives.

  The fact that focus was shifted from an individual applying to an institution was viewed to very positively and deemed to further aid in the sustainability of projects that are more easily passed on and descended than impacts that occur at an individual level. Nonetheless there is the need to further strengthen the dissemination of information both during the projects’ execution and upon completion.

**Recommendations**

Increasing cross sectoral projects – the benefits of such endeavours are far reaching, though to-date these have not been maximised. A dedicated budget for cross-sectoral projects may aid increase application submissions. Additionally, an increase in budget for KA 2 is desirable for collaborations.

Increasing attractiveness of the programme – the current application process that is applicable to all is not viewed to positively. The Commission could seek to design a ‘simpler’ application for first timers and for the smaller organisations, with a focus on relieving the existing administrative burden that is currently hindering such organisations from applying.

**Amend the current guidance book** – The guidelines are currently not viewed as a tool that truly assists NA in its endeavours to successfully promote the Programme and more importantly tap distinct segments. The amount of information about programme rules and procedures was perceived as a challenge and as ‘too burdening’ by beneficiaries. The information thus has to be condensed considerably and be better split such that different sections focus specifically on distinct target groups. This make it easier for potential beneficiaries to determine how the Programme can be of benefit to them. At present, the guidebook is considered to be far too long and confusing, with interviewees indicating that one tends to get lost in the detail.

The MT NA provided as significant assistance and guidance in particular, by distributing an operational handbook in order to support beneficiaries. In addition, one to one meetings were held on a regular basis with the beneficiaries in order to assist them with the smooth implementation of their projects. Furthermore, the NA created a handbook to better guide stakeholders during the implementation process; this was received positively as it constitutes a reference point for the beneficiaries throughout the project lifecycle. During the various monitoring meetings implemented, the NA noted that new beneficiaries do require further support in the first months especially in
relation to the programme rules and procedures, since various queries do arise in the first months of implementation, especially in the case of Key Action (KA) 2 projects.
## Glossary of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€</td>
<td>Euro</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedefop</td>
<td>European Centre for the Development of Vocational training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DQSE</td>
<td>Directorate for Quality Standards in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EACEA</td>
<td>Executive Agency Education, Audio-visual and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early childhood education and care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET</td>
<td>Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUPA</td>
<td>European Union Programmes Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVS</td>
<td>European Volunteering Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>FITA</td>
<td>Foundation for IT Accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPD</td>
<td>Funds and Programme Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITS</td>
<td>Institute of Tourism Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA</td>
<td>Key Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNPD</td>
<td>National Commission for Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLP</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ltd</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBB</td>
<td>Malta Business Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCAST</td>
<td>Malta College of Arts Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAIM</td>
<td>Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDE</td>
<td>Ministry for Education and Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEUSAC</td>
<td>Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFF</td>
<td>Multiannual Financial Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MITA</td>
<td>Malta Information Technology Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Malta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAU</td>
<td>National Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>Not in Education, Employment, or Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLS</td>
<td>Online linguistic Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PID</td>
<td>Project Implementation Directorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALTO-YOUTH</td>
<td>Stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART</td>
<td>Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Sized companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCA</td>
<td>Transnational Cooperation Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCP</td>
<td>Training and Cooperation plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YiA</td>
<td>Youth in Action</td>
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</table>
EVALUATION REPORT
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The Erasmus+ Programme was launched in January 2014\(^3\) as the single EU programme for education, training, youth and, for the first time, sport. Adopted as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) package 2014-2020, the Programme integrates seven previous programmes in the following fields:

- Education and training at all levels, in a lifelong learning perspective, including social education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), international higher education (Erasmus Mundus), vocational education and training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult learning (Grundtvig);
- Youth (Youth in Action), particularly in the context of non-formal and informal learning; and
- Grassroots Sport, supporting transnational projects that encourage integrity, good governance and dual careers for athletes.

The programme also includes an international dimension aimed at supporting the Union’s external action, including its development objectives, through cooperation between the Union and partner countries. Its main key actions are:

- Key Action 1 - Learning Mobility of individuals
- Key Action 2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices,
- Key Action 3 - Support for policy reform,

Moreover, the programme has two dedicated areas, namely Jean Monnet (sub-programme, subsidies activities in the field of European studies) and Sport.

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Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

The Erasmus+ Programme was developed to support the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) and the EU Youth Strategy, in addition to the policy agendas for education, training, youth and sport.

The ET 2020 cooperation framework sustains the overarching socio-economic goals of the EU. Structured around common objectives for lifelong learning, mobility, social cohesion, active citizenship, creativity and innovation, it helps Member States to improve the quality and efficiency of their education and training systems by exchanging experience and best practice as well as monitoring progress.

Along with education and training, the Programme also covers youth, mainly through the EU Youth Cooperation Framework, which covers the years 2010-2018. The Framework has two main objectives: to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the job market, and to encourage young people to actively participate in society.

The Erasmus+ Programme was also designed to increase the added value and the impact of EU actions by exploiting synergies between fields and actions through efficiency gains and simplification. It was developed to support the EU strategic agenda by promoting investment in people, benefiting both individuals and society and contributing to growth and prosperity. It aims to support young people and adults in the acquisition and the enhancement of skills, and to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness and efficiency of education and training systems. It also promotes youth participation in society and the European dimension of grassroots sport.

Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation is in accordance with Article 21.2 and 21.3 of the Erasmus+ legal base that requires the Commission to submit a mid-term evaluation report on Erasmus+ by 31st December 2017. Reference is also made such that the evaluation also takes into account the results and long-term impact of the predecessor programmes.

Furthermore, and more specifically, in line with the tender ‘Results to be Achieved by the Contractor’, (in addition to the above) the evaluation sought to:

“Draw conclusions on the different actions included in Erasmus+ and assess to what degree these conclusions are different across the sectors (schools, vocational education and training, higher education, youth, adult education) included in the programme and across the different target levels (individuals, institutions, systems) and across the different Key Actions. It will also have to assess the extent to which the programmes have been contributing to policy development and implementation in the participating countries”.

This report was consequently drawn up with due consideration to the above and in response to the pre-determined questions set by the Commission that focus on the Programme’s: relevance,
efficiency, effectiveness, internal and external coherence and complementarity along with the European added value and sustainability.

The European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) Malta

The Erasmus+ programme as well as the predecessor programmes are/were locally managed by the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA).

The European Union Programmes Unit was established in 2000, and in 2007 the Unit was established as a legal autonomous Agency (EUPA, 2013) through the Legal Notice 128 of 2007 and as amended by Legal Notice 21 of 2015. This Agency was set up following the European Union’s Programmes management approach that sought to undertake a decentralised approach whereby National authorities would be responsible for setting up National Agencies (NA) accountable for managing the programmes within the country. This approach was deemed opportune to be in closer proximity to the target audience and consequently better reach out to project applicants and beneficiaries by providing the necessary information and support.
METHODODOLOGY

This is primarily a formative evaluation, and in line with the tender document has been structured following the evaluation criteria as highlighted by the European Commission, namely:

I. Relevance
II. Efficiency
III. Effectiveness
IV. Internal and external coherence and complementarity and
V. European added value and sustainability.

In line with the proposal, the methodology adopted comprised both qualitative and quantitative data guided by the European Commission’s methodological guidance for evaluations and by the work plan for the process agreed to during the Inception Phase.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative data is deemed useful when evaluating a programme in view of its provision of possible “explanations” for changes in certain conditions. Thus this is an important element in linking project interventions with observed changes. With regard to the evaluation in question, the qualitative research comprised one-to-one meetings with the individuals managing the Programme within the National Agency (EUPA) as well as with beneficiaries of the Programme. In both instances, effort was made to interview individuals that were also involved in the predecessor Programme/s so as to attain valuable information in relation to how/to what extent the current Programme objectives are being met also in relation to the set-up prior to Erasmus+.

Quantitative Research

An element of quantitative research was also carried out and comprised two main elements:

- Analysis of statistical information provided primarily from official EUPA documents and the EC database/s
- The distribution of a questionnaire for participants and beneficiaries. In this respect Grant Thornton Services specifically designed and subsequently uploaded an online questionnaire for the specific target groups to attain further insight on the project’s effectiveness and better assess the achievement or otherwise of the intervention objectives. The surveys were primarily close-ended questions. In certain instances the survey comprised statements to
which respondents had to indicate their agreement/disagreement using a 7-point Likert Scale.

The results derived thereof from both quantitative studies are presented in this document.

**Scoring**

When carrying out the evaluation, more specifically in relation to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness internal and external coherence and complementarity and European added value and sustainability, the evaluation team utilised the following scoring parameters, namely:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Highly satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>0/ A</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>Highly unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were given due consideration in the drawing up of this report. Indeed the authors ensured correctness and credibility, honesty, avoidance of plagiarism, and the pursuit of the truth throughout the whole process of data collection, and subsequently when drafting the here presented evaluation.
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

Interviewees and participants in the questionnaires were notified of the scope of the study and ensured confidentiality and that the data/findings would ensure anonymity and be used exclusively for research purposes.

**Limitations**

The evaluation is based on the information attained through the methodology adopted as agreed to with the Contracting Authority and as highlighted here above, bearing in mind the stringent timeframes to undertake this study.

Despite the possibility of being bias in relation to the information provided through the face-to-face interviews and also from the questionnaires, the methodology approach adopted] incorporates different methods of data collection that seeks to mitigate this limitation.
CHAPTER 2: EVALUATION OF THE PREVIOUS PROGRAMMES

Overview

The mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme also required Grant Thornton Services to assess the long-term results and impact of the predecessor programmes. For the purpose of this analysis and in agreement with the Contracting Authority, the main focus of this chapter will be directed at the main predecessor programmes, namely:

- Lifelong learning Programme (LLP); and
- Youth in Action (YiA)

Methodology

In order to assess the long-term results and impact of the predecessor programmes Grant Thornton Services adopted a three-phased approach that comprised:

I. Desk Research – with particular focus on:
   - Mid-term evaluations of the individual programmes (where available)
   - Official reports drawn up by EUPA
   - Official EC reports and documents
   - Statistical data available on specific EC platforms
   - Other reports pertaining to the topic in question commissioned by EUPA Malta such as: ‘Analysis of the YiA Results and Evaluation of Programme Impact’ carried out by Maria Brown and Anneliese Sammut.

II. Face to face interviews with EUPA employees that were directly involved in one or more of the YiA Programme; as well as

III. Face-to-face interviews with beneficiary/ies.
Analysing data

A review of data over the seven year period provides indicative information, however caution must be exerted when interpreting data in that there was a major issue due to the suspension of funds in 2010 that had adverse repercussions on the number of beneficiaries in both 2010 and 2011. The NA felt that such suspension of funds resulted in adverse repercussions on the programme’s perception among potential beneficiaries\(^4\). Nonetheless the National Agency’s endeavours proved fruitful with the number of applications received in 2012 and more so in 2013 reaching pre 2010 results.

When discussing the impact of the programmes a distinction ought to be made between tangible and intangible results. On the one hand there is statistical data that substantiates the claim that the programmes successfully targeted a wide range of individuals and institutions, on the other, there is qualitative data collated from various reports that highlight how the programmes were deemed to be highly effective and fruitful to the beneficiaries, though such positive repercussions are difficult to quantify numerically, also because in certain instances the positive impact of such programmes is deemed to be long lasting, such as enabling locals to shift their insular perspective on life to one that is more inclusive (the benefits of which cannot be easily quantified).

Furthermore there are a number of good practices that are highlighted in the yearly reports – a few of which are mentioned in this report - that illustrate the positive impact the programmes have had thanks to the implementation of projects with the outputs/results derived thereof to also have far reaching benefits in the medium and longer term, though not quantifiable numerically.

Presenting findings on Results and Impact

When determining the results and impacts of the Projects under review, the following spheres were analysed:

- Number of activities undertaken throughout the programme period;
- Geographical coverage;
- Acquisition of new skills;
- Outreach and integration;

\(^4\) EUPA – Lifelong Learning. Yearly National Agency Report. Period 1 January 2012 – 31 January 2012 (page 4) "The NA is of the opinion that prospective applicants were hesitant to apply for funds as a repercussion of the suspension of funds in Malta."
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

- Cooperation;
- Level and nature of awareness of European priorities;
- Awareness and/or learning experiences;
- Personal and professional development;
- Impact on young people;
- Support for those with limited opportunities; and
- Dissemination of information.
Youth in Action Programme

Overview

Targeting young people aged 13 to 30, the Youth in Action Programme sought to provide young people with opportunities for non-formal and informal learning with a European dimension, and encouraged the involvement of disadvantaged young people such as those with fewer opportunities.

Actions and Priorities

Actions

This programme comprised 5 Actions:

**Action 1: Youth for Europe**  
Supported exchanges and initiatives encouraging young people’s participation in democratic life. It comprised 3 sub-actions, namely: Youth Exchanges, Youth Initiatives and Youth Democracy Projects (Office Journal of the European Union, 2012).

**Action 2: European Voluntary Service (EVS)**  
Comprised a ‘Youth in Action’ Scheme which encouraged 18-30 year olds to undertake long or short term volunteering in Europe.

**Action 3: Youth in the World**  
Encouraged cooperation with partner countries by building networks, while promoting information exchange and assistance in cross-border activities. Sub-action 3.1 promoted cooperation with neighbouring countries of the enlarged Europe and supported youth exchanges and training and networking projects.

**Action 4: Youth Support**  
Promoted the development of exchange, training and information schemes, with specific focus on sub action 4.3 - Training and

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6 In relation to what was relevant for Malta

7 Analysis of the Youth in Action Programme (YiA) Results and Evaluation of Programme Impact. Maria Brown and Anneliese Sammut. 2013
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

**Systems**

Networking of those active in youth work and youth organisations that supported the training of those active in youth work and youth organisations, in particular the exchange of experiences, expertise and good practice as well as activities which may lead to long-lasting quality projects, partnerships and networks.

**Action 5: Support for policy Cooperation**

Contributed to the development of policy cooperation. This Action consisted of 3 sub-actions, namely Action 5.1, which included meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy.

**Priorities**

The Programme revolved around four permanent priorities:

I. European Citizenship – to raise awareness in young people that they are citizens of Europe, and encourage them to shape the future of the European Union.

II. Participation of young people – to encourage and promote young people to be active citizens who care about the communities they live in and believe in the value of representative democracy.

III. Cultural diversity – to respect the young people’s origins and promote a desire to fight discrimination and racism.

IV. Inclusion – to give opportunities to disadvantaged young people, while also encouraging projects with focus on such a theme.

In addition to the permanent priorities, the Programme consisted of specific annual priorities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For 2007:</th>
<th>For 2008:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- European Year of Equal opportunities for all</td>
<td>- European Year of Intercultural Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improving young people's health.</td>
<td>- Combating violence against women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For 2009:</td>
<td>- Sport as a tool to promote active citizenship and social inclusion of young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- European Year of Creativity and Innovation</td>
<td>- Promoting healthy lifestyles through physical activities including sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Combating violence against women</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For 2010:</td>
<td>For 2011:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion</td>
<td>• European Year of Volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Youth unemployment and promotion of young unemployed people's active participation in society</td>
<td>• Youth unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness-raising and mobilization of young people around global challenges</td>
<td>• Inclusive growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness-raising to global challenges</td>
<td>• Global environmental challenges and climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Young people's involvement in the revision of the European framework of cooperation in the field of youth policy</td>
<td>• Creativity and entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intercultural dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For 2013:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness-raising about EU Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouraging participation in the 2014 European elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promoting young people's commitment towards a more inclusive growth, and notably:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stimulating young people’s spirit of initiative, creativity and entrepreneurship, employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promoting healthy behaviours,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results and impact

Projects and activities

As evidenced from the table below, the total number of projects submitted increased steadily over the three year period 2007 – 2009 and once again following 2010 (during which year Malta was suspended of funds).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of projects submitted</th>
<th>No. of Projects funded</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the type of activities such projects related to (table overleaf), ‘national youth initiatives’ represented on average one third of the overall projects over the seven year period of the Programme’s duration with projects pertaining to this activity increasing over the last two years of the Programme to represent half the overall projects by 2013.

‘Exchanges’ then followed with 30% of the projects pertaining to this activity, though such projects experienced overall gradual decline over the period 2011 – 2013.

Throughout the Programme period various initiatives were undertaken in relation to the Training Cooperation Plan. These proved to be highly effective and far reaching through the provision of training and information both locally and overseas:

- On the quality of applications for potential and current beneficiaries – with such a stance aiding increase the quality of applications received throughout the programme period;
- For potential and current beneficiaries with respect to the sub programmes;

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8 This analysis does not incorporate Training and Cooperation plans (TCPs) - the National Agencies’ instrument of quality support in their role as an intermediate structure

9 Data does not include Training and Cooperation Plan projects
In relation to the overall priorities of the programme as well as specific yearly objectives. By way of example, in 2012 the NA embarked on activities addressing global challenges and climate change. One particular example related to the support of the partnership-building activity Handle with Care which supported participants in developing projects concerning the theme ‘Environment and sustainable development’ combined with healthy lifestyles and behaviours.

Indeed the NA Yearly Reports, and interviews conducted were in accord with the findings of the report – Exploring YiA - that evidenced that the Training and Cooperation Plans contributed ‘to developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organisations in the youth field’ and ‘... the development of competences (attitudes, values, skills and knowledge) of youth workers and youth leaders involved in the projects, both as youth leaders and as participants in T&N/TCP activities...’.

Number of Projects Granted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Form for YiA Programme – Decentralised Actions. Official Documentation from EUPA

Geographical coverage

The predecessor programmes have been highly effective in enabling locals to interact with different nationalities both through outgoing placements as well as incoming placements. While the impact of such a stance cannot be easily quantifiable it is undoubtable that such interactions raised awareness

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among locals that they are citizens of Europe. Such collaborations enabled a better understanding and indeed respect towards cultural diversity and in so doing instilled a sense of belonging to Europe. The appreciation of cultural diversity is deemed to be pinnacle to combat discrimination and racism.

As a case in point, with respect to volunteering (Annex 3 provides the complete breakdown of number of outgoing volunteers – those from other countries with placements locally) over thirty (30) nationals (from across Europe and beyond) provided volunteering services locally, while another 9 locals undertook volunteering in other countries.

With respect to volunteering, more specifically Action 2 EVS this sub programme was more successful in relation to incoming volunteers rather than outgoing volunteers. The qualitative research highlighted the following factors that could have contributed to this:

- A cultural issue – locally young people tend to travel for shorter periods of time compared to the minimum that was allowed under this programme (particularly for normal mobility). Furthermore, here in Malta young people tend to have a smooth, continuous transition from secondary school to post-secondary, University and subsequently enter the world of work soon after. As a consequence ‘free-time’ is limited.

- Perception – while internationally volunteering is related to solidarity, locally volunteering has had a religious connotation and young people tend to associate voluntary work exclusively with mission work.

**Implementing new approaches and acquisition of new skills**

The predecessor programmes such as Action 2 that related to EVS created opportunities for foreign individuals that acquired experience working overseas. The skills attained through such experience could then be put into practice upon their return to work. This was mentioned/ noted though not easily quantifiable.

**Outreach and integration**

As indicated in Annex 1, the Programme benefited a wide range of Maltese organisations among which: youth, environmental, special needs, cultural, local councils, human rights, unions, philanthropic, band clubs and animal welfare.

Another positive result of the Programme relates to the enhanced integration by organised youth groups reaching out to a diverse population particularly of minorities such as people with special needs and migrants at both a local and international level.
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

Over the course of the programme period EUPA enhanced its outreach to the target audience and create awareness and consequently instigate participation. Furthermore endeavours that revolved around support structures considerably assisted potential beneficiaries in seeking to tap into the Programme’s funding opportunities – these included, Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) and Agenzija Zghazagh. In this respect, the impact study\(^8\) provides evidence of support both at application stage, and also subsequently, in the event of rejection, where applicants had the opportunity to have their application reviewed and subsequently improved on it the second time round.

Success Story

**Aboard the Citizen Ship**

This project rode on the 2013 European Youth Week event, and involved the organisation of activities aimed at reaching out to unorganised young people. This was done via various forms of arts and sports that enabled these young people to air their views concerning the various issues that impacted on their lives.

The outcomes of the project were promoted and advocated with the various ministries, departments and youth services concerned. Moreover, the responses were used to feed into the events of the Lithuanian Presidency. This was in line with the National Youth Policy (2010 – 2013) that recommended that young people should be at the forefront to influence policy and be involved in decision-making, which is also outlines in the renewed framework of European cooperation in the youth field (2010 – 2018)

Cooperation

Another positive impact of the programme relates to the increase in cooperation (through informal entities), both locally and overseas. Such exchange of good practices is definitely commendable and aided the target audience increase their social and networking skills (in addition to the necessary skills to successfully apply for funding through such scheme).

Success Story

**Maltese and French Youths for the restoration of Maltese Heritage**

This project involved collaboration between Maltese and French youths with a shared interest – that of preserving cultural heritage. These individuals were guided by experts and collaborated together
for the restoration of Maltese heritage.

Youth empowerment was promoted through non-formal methods of learning which allowed for skills and knowledge to be shared amongst the group of young people. Besides active citizenship, where young people contributed to the preservation of cultural heritage, the project was an opportunity for the same target group to enhance their skills in project planning, management and team building skills. The project also contributed by instigating each individual to be creative, provide/share his/her personal creative output and ways of talking problems/issues both when being involved in a project and as part of a team.

**Level and nature of awareness of the European priorities promoted through the Programme during the years 2007 – 2013.**

The study conducted by Maria Brown and Anneliese Sammut (2013) specifically pertaining to the impact of this programme highlights that overall the projects reached out to one or more of the overall project priorities and that “all four EU permanent priorities were reflected in the projects accounted for by participants”. That said, the same research evidenced that “participants do not have technical awareness of European permanent and annual priorities”.

Indeed the findings highlight that while projects could be easily identifiable with one or more of the permanent priorities, the same could not apply for the annual priorities with the study highlighting that “the projects’ year might not necessarily match the respective annual priorities”.

The above indicates that a positive impact of the programme related to the attainment of the objectives of the Programme and the European priorities as identified through the Project objectives. Nonetheless, the same research indicates that participants were not necessarily aware of Europe’s annual and specific priorities.

**Awareness and/or learning experiences**

Linked to the above, an important aspect of the Programme relates to how young people are using the awareness and/or learning experiences related to the European priorities within their organisation. Here, the findings are highly positive with the research findings indicating “strong evidence of mentoring by adult organisation members throughout youths’ engagement with YiA, both at the stages of application and project realisation”.

11 Analysis of the Youth in Action Programme (YiA) Results and Evaluation of Programme Impact. Maria Brown and Anneliese Sammut. 2013
The findings indicate that learning experiences definitely fed in the EU permanent priorities of European citizenship, partnership of young people, cultural diversity and inclusion as well as EU 2007 – 2013 annual priorities related to creativity, employability, entrepreneurship, inclusive growth, combating poverty and social exclusion, raising awareness and mobility of young people, intercultural dialogue and opportunities for all.

This has related primarily to informal and non-formal forms of learning and included language learning, “as well as learning in the areas of history and culture and environmental sustainability through the use of alternative and democratic pedagogies and alternative training sites, with untapped potential”\(^\text{12}\). Research findings\(^\text{13}\) further strengthen this finding with organisations of the opinion that their engagement in the programme positively affected members’ sense of active citizenship, sense of solidarity and tolerance.

**Personal and professional development**

Throughout the programme duration there are numerous instances where the personal and professional development of participants was highlighted.

**At organisation level**

Through increased awareness about the programmes, self-assessments and self-monitoring applicants were enticed to take on a more strategic approach towards their organisation particularly in terms of long-term willingness, motivation and capability to fully accomplish the project being applied for. The positive advantages being primarily related to:

- Skills attained to tap into other similar funding opportunities in the future
- Acquisition of skills in strategy formulation and project management (both in relation to other EU funded programmes and others). There was accord among interviewees that “you start reflecting on the project in the process of compiling it”

\(^{12}\) Analysis of the Youth in Action Programme (YiA) Results and Evaluation of Programme Impact. Maria Brown and Anneliese Sammut. 2013

\(^{13}\) Questionnaire distributed to entities that applied for funding – results attained from the study: Analysis of the Youth in Action (YiA) Results and Evaluation of Programme Impact by Maria Brown and Anneliese Sammut (2013). Figure 6: Mean ratings to Likert Scale questionnaire statements (page 44).
Giving youth organisations a greater European dimension and also undertake projects that went beyond their usual level of activities that in the past focused primarily (and in most instances exclusively) on a regional/village level.

At individual level

Provide young persons with the opportunity to implement their own ideas and initiatives and to create networks across Europe.

A survey among participants in the programme further strengthened this finding with results indicating that beneficiaries indicated a number of outcomes resulting from their engagement with the YiA Programme comprising: educational advancement, entrepreneurship, identification as European citizen/s, representative democracy, personal growth, healthy lifestyle, and care for the community.

Such results echoed the EU priorities that, through the programme and resultant projects sought to; care for the community; closer relations with EU institutions; creativity; educational advancement; entrepreneurship; fundraising; healthy lifestyle; identification as European citizen/s; international activism; lobbying; mobility; personal growth; reconciliation of family life; representative democracy; respect for cultural diversity and training.

The above illustrates that the Programme was indeed successful and the results derived thereof are in sync with EU permanent priorities of European citizenship, participation of young people, cultural diversity and inclusion (European Commission, 2013a); as well as EU 2007-2013 annual priorities related to creativity, employment, entrepreneurship, inclusive growth, combating poverty and social exclusion, raising awareness and mobilization of young people, intercultural dialogue and opportunities for all (European commission, 2013b; 2013c).

Success Story

BirdLife Malta – Volunteering for Conservation

This project enabled volunteers to get hands-on experience on how to work in an activist, environmental organisation in the field of bird conservation. Volunteers assisted in the organisation of bird watching camps and were regularly engaged in inshore and offshore field research using sophisticated tools and software as well as media-related work. Through the project a considerable number of young people gained very particular skills thus opening doors for future employment or further studies in the area of conservation and environment, while giving them the opportunity to be more active citizens.
Impact on young people

The research findings indicate that the Programme has positively impacted youth society. While this is difficult to quantify, entities that participated in the programme (across varying evaluations/reports) emphasised the positive impacts the programme had on vulnerable young people and the opportunities it provided for disadvantaged individuals falling within the programme’s catchment (aged between 13 and 30).

Indeed the project has proved to be more relevant to the socio-emotional development of young people than to employment skills, though the latter was undoubtedly positively affected in a more indirect manner. This is particularly relevant to the local context since, unlike European counterparts, unemployment among young people is not an issue locally.

Raising visibility of the youth sector – Aġenzija Żgħażagħ

The setting up of this agency has aided in no small way increase coordination and professionalism in the field of youth and the adoption of a structured approach to policy creation and implementation and better structure and align local policy to the EU. That said, it must be pointed out that the Programme’s specific yearly priorities did not necessarily relate to the local scenario, all the more so since the EU’s common blanket approach does not necessary always match the needs and exigencies at national level. A case in point relates to youth employability – with youth unemployment being a high priority at EU level but not a major issue of concern at local level with low unemployment levels14. Conversely, at a local level the need to promote and instil healthy lifestyle among young people is more of an issue than it is across Europe. The ‘Analysis of the Youth in Action Programme’ (YiA) Results and Evaluation of Programme Impact15 indicates that “there is clear evidence that all EU permanent priorities and most of EU annual priorities feature in the discussed projects. Indeed, there is research evidence that the four EU permanent priorities, namely European citizenship, participation of young people, cultural diversity and inclusion (European Commission, 2013a) are reflected in the projects accounted for by participants. On the other hand, the main EU annual priorities that feature in the projects accounted for by participants are inclusive growth, health, environment, volunteering, un/employment, entrepreneurship and creativity (European Commission 2013b; European Commission, 2013c)”.

14 Malta national Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020. The employment rate for 20 to 64 year-olds (63.1%) is lower than the EU average of (68.5%) as is the NEET rate (11.7% compared to 17.0%). The unemployment rate for 20 to 34 year olds is much lower in Malta (6.3%) than in the EU (14.5%). (page 10)

15 Analysis of the Youth in Action Programme (YiA) Results and Evaluation of Programme Impact. Maria Brown and Anneliese Sammut. (2013)
The fact that the NA worked closely with Aġenzija Żgħażagħ placed the NA in a position to determine areas of work where youth activities could be supported through the YiA Programme, thus ensuring the relevance of the Programme to youth work on a local level.

**Supporting those with limited opportunities**

The Programme managed to extend its reach to the grassroots and support a number of small projects thus successfully targeting those with limited/no opportunities. This resulted in an outreach approach that truly encapsulated the smaller organisations and youth groups. This is clearly quantifiable from the number of entities that benefited from the Programme throughout the programme period as well as the number and variety of projects undertaken. This approach invariably resulted in the Programme supporting a number of small projects as opposed to larger ones especially through National Youth initiatives.

The adverse effect of such an approach was that such small scale projects left an impact on a regional/village level, as opposed to supporting larger projects that could have potentially resulted in a greater impact overall.

Linked to the above, it must be noted that the focus of the majority of youth organisations locally primarily exist at a regional level (village/parish). As a result such entities are generally small (well under 100 youths within each organisation), with their primary aim/strategy and the subsequent project they seek to embark upon generally focused on the regional/parish they operate within. This contrasts to EU organisations that tend to be larger and incorporate larger number of members per organisation also reflective of the more populated towns and cities and indeed the size of the country such overseas organisations generally operate within.

A positive impact of the programme in relation to such local organisations was that, being small in size and operating at parish level, had young people as members that were more directly involved in the running of the organisations they formed an integral part of and were more likely to be involved throughout the whole project from its initiation until its successful completion, thereby enabling young people to have invaluable hands on experience that positively affected their personal development as young people within the community.

Moving forward, there is room for improvement in the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme in comparison to the predecessor programmes with respect to young people with special needs. The general feeling is that programmes and indeed successful projects might not have always been directly focused on the provision of opportunities for this target group and incorporating such cluster in mainstream projects – though they would have been involved in a wider context (particularly in participation) through projects submitted by NGOs that specifically targeted such cluster.
Success Story

New beginning for Homeless Youth

This was a national Youth Initiative which took place at a home in a local village. The promoter (10 participants) worked together to help peers who had lived for a number of years in institutional care and asylum refugees to integrate into society by becoming actively involved in the shaping of their common future. Through this Youth Initiative, the young participants explored new possibilities and created networks and support systems for the homeless youths. The participants aimed to pave the way to peers by exposing themselves to more independent living, employment, and social life outside of an institution.

Moreover, the homeless youths were given life skills in order to be able to survive in society without the support of their immediate families.

Youthpass

To date, the Youthpass has been a successful tool in promoting the informal learning/skills attained by youth work activities is rated as limited, though there is currently an impetus to increase its value as an instrument that truly assists individuals when seeking job opportunities. In this respect, EUPA is seeking avenues such that this certification is truly valued and sought after by employers during their recruitment process.

Programme matching/effecting policy

As indicated earlier on, at local level, youths/youth organisations tend to focus on the regional/local issues and subsequently have projects that directly tackle such realities/requirements. It is evident that in such instances European policies were not a priority, though in many instances they were still tackled/tapped into indirectly.

Dissemination of information

The research indicates that EUPA was effective in the dissemination of information on projects. This can be seen from the awareness of the projects and also participation in same over the programme period (and indeed the various predecessor programmes to Erasmus+). Furthermore, research participants were in accord that the EUPA emphasized the dissemination ingredient in projects proposed for YiA funding.

The positive implications of such dissemination cannot be undermined and highlight how a wide array of entities and individuals from all walks of life got to understand the various programmes and
their respective objectives with the promotion of the various projects/success stories aiding in further disseminating the good practices that derived from such projects (where applicable), and in certain instances enticed individuals to embrace change and challenge current work practices and implement innovative approaches.

Conclusion

An assessment on how young people used the awareness and/or learning experiences related to the European priorities within their organisations pointed to the adoption of practices within youth organisations that resonated with EU permanent and annual priorities (European Commission, 2013a; 2013b; 2013c), namely:

- Informal and non-formal learning outcomes in the areas of English as a foreign language, history, culture and democratic practices achieved through mentoring by adult organisation members throughout young people’s engagement

- Reflexive outcomes comprising organisational self-monitoring and self-evaluation as a by-product of engagement with YiA, particularly at application stage

- Organisational development supported by networking and personal development that yields to personal growth.

A detailed analysis of the above practices revealed that all four EU permanent priorities (European Commission, 2013a) were fostered by youth organisations engaged with YiA. There is also evidence of practice of a significant number of EU 2007-2013 annual priorities, namely: creativity, employment, entrepreneurship, inclusive growth, combating poverty and social exclusion, healthy lifestyle, raising awareness and mobilization of young people, intercultural dialogue and opportunities for all (European Commission, 2013b; 2013c). Nonetheless, there is little or no evidence of practice within Maltese youth organisation of some of the EU 2007-2013 priorities, such as combating violence against women and EU-China Year of Youth. It is therefore inferred that these priorities were less relevant to Maltese youth organisations between 2007 and 2013.

Overall the programme has been highly successful in promoting active citizenship among youths and fostered intercultural exchange through mobility opportunities.
Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)

Overview

Lifelong Learning (as defined by the EC (2001: 33)) is an all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. Lifelong learning encompasses the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The objectives of learning include active citizenship, personal fulfilment and social inclusion, as well as employment related aspects. The principles which underpin Lifelong learning and guide its effective implementation emphasise the centrality of the learner, the importance of equal opportunities and the quality and relevance of learning opportunities (European Commission 2001: 3-4).

In line with the above, the LLP was designed to enable people, at any stage of their life, to take part in stimulating learning experiences, as well as developing education and training across Europe. The programme incorporated four (4) sectoral sub-programmes, namely:

- Comenius - for schools
- Erasmus - for higher education
- Leonardo da Vinci - for vocational education and training
- Grundtvig - for adult education
- Study visits

The programme also included the Transversal Programme and "Jean Monnet" actions that supported transnational mobility, partnerships and other cooperation projects in all educational sectors designed to stimulate teaching, reflection, and debates on European integration.

Action and Priorities

The actions and priorities of the various sub-programmes highlighted above were distinct, yet related:

Comenius

The Comenius sub-programme focused on all levels of school education, as well as the individuals involved, including pupils, teachers, local authorities,

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and education institutions, among others.

It was designed to:

- Improve and increase the mobility of pupils and staff across the EU
- Enhance and increase school partnerships across the EU
- Encourage language learning, ICT for education, and better teaching techniques
- Enhance the quality and European dimension of teacher training
- Improve approaches to teaching and school management

Erasmus

The Erasmus sub-programme was a student exchange programme that also provided opportunities for teachers and staff in higher education. The programme enabled individuals to have experiences of studying abroad.

Leonardo da Vinci

The Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme funded practical projects in the field of vocational education and training such as work-related training for individuals and cooperation efforts.

Grundtvig

The Grundtvig sub-programme focused on the teaching and study needs of adult learners, as well as developing the adult learning sector in general.

Covering teachers, trainers, staff, and adult learners, among others, the programme aimed to:

- increase the number of people in adult education
- improve mobility conditions in adult learning
- improve the quality and cooperation between adult education organisations
- develop innovative educational and management practices
- ensure social inclusion through adult education
- support innovative ICT-based educational content, services, and practices

Study visits

The study visits programme provided grants for education and training of professionals to go to other European countries and meet other
professionals. Study visits sought to provide various opportunities for discussions, exchanges and learning. Consequently, they served the following objectives:

- Improve the understanding of specific aspects of education and vocational training policies and themes of common interest in other countries;
- Continue the exchange of advice, ideas and information between all those participating in the programme, including both visitors and hosts;
- Deepen the flow of information between the participating countries and at European level;
- Promote mutual understanding of vocational training systems and schemes in European countries in order to be aware of subsequent policy decisions.

**Overall results and impact**

**Positive impact on national Priorities**

The programme is viewed to have had a positive impact in successfully tapping national policy priorities as identified in Malta’s National Reform Programme under the subheading of Education and Training. Indeed it was noted that the objectives of the LLP were to a great extent reflected also in the National Reform Programme. The national priorities were developed based on the direction provided by the Programme in order to steer projects and initiatives within LLP to promote and help the achievement of these objectives alongside the work done by the national government.\(^{17}\)

The National Agency’s successful promotion of the Programme also aided in ensuring that projects submitted also included Community horizontal priorities. A case in point relates to 2013, where the provision of school education in Malta continued to undergo considerable changes mainly related to the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework and the launching of the Early School

\(^{17}\) Lifelong Learning Programme Interim Evaluation. Malta Report. Dr Suzanne Gatt. July 2010 (page 4)
Leaving Strategy, with the Comenius programme supporting training initiatives directly related to the national priorities and policy developments.

The MT NA considers evaluation as a very important factor in its process. In 2016 the NA carried out an evidence-based analysis on the programme to measure the impact and effect of the Programme in relation to policies, thus, strengthening strategic planning and alignment of priorities to the business environment. From the evidence-based analysis, it resulted that the funded projects had an impact on both within as well as beyond the organisation benefiting from the programme which was described as being simpler and easier as it is considered as being friendly. Further results show that mobilities still remain concentrated on the United Kingdom and Italy. Results also showed that mobilities in Erasmus+ had a large impact in terms of employability opportunities. This complete evaluation exercise has shown how the Erasmus+ programme has been overall highly successful in promoting a European dimension among those who opt for mobility, as well as supported a European labour force in increasing employability of those participating. It has also, through its projects, supported education actions at national and European level and which served a European purpose. All the different sectors including, school, VET, Higher Education, Adult and Youth have benefited from the programme to different extents. The significant impact achieved by the programme has also helped the NA and the Erasmus+ programme to gain further prominence and play a greater role in the educational field in Malta. It can in fact be stated that many of the entities in the different education sectors are aware of Erasmus+ and the NA which administers it. Erasmus+ has helped many organisations to implement initiatives in their sector as well as at national level. It has so far had a significant impact and will hopefully continue to do so both in this programme cycle as well as in future European education programmes.

**Provision of mobility**

Indeed the figures pertaining to the number of individuals and entities that participated in the LLP (as highlighted throughout this Chapter and in the relevant Annexes) is testimony of the success of the programme in reaching out to the target audience and providing opportunities (primarily mobility related) that would have otherwise remained untapped. The LLP was considered by many as the

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18 Yearly National Agency Report – 2013. “For example, in the third round for In Service Training activities, 5 out of 9 approved applications were for courses entitled “Building Emotional Relationships to prevent early school leaving”. This training was attended by school staff making part of multi-disciplinary teams working directly with students who are at risk of leaving school early, including college social workers, counsellors, college prefect of discipline and a college principal. In addition, the most common topic for approved applications in 2013 was Career Guidance and Counselling, again a topic closely linked to the policy priority of reducing early school leaving. However, since only the results of In Service Training activities appear to be directly related to national policy developments, the MT NA deems this to be a minor positive influence on national priorities in school education”. (page 23)
main funding programme that revolved around mobility in the education sector which promoted projects and initiatives at compulsory education level, vocational education as well as at tertiary level and adult education.

Other funding opportunities were normally related to structural funds that were aimed at specific sectors/clusters and targeted initiatives and training related to employment and did not offer mobility experiences at the level of the learner.

**European dimension**

Through LLP students, learners, educators and administrators in the education sector had the opportunity to meet up and cooperate with other individuals from across all of Europe within the same sector. This has enabled such locals to truly encapsulate the European dimension of the EU and become aware first hand and appreciate the social and cultural diversities that exist across nationals while also instilling a better sense of understanding of their local cultural dimension.

In many instances the positive outcomes of such social interaction have been long-lasting with participants maintaining contact, sharing opinions and experiences even following the completion of their funded activity.

Such endeavours are deemed to be extremely beneficial on many counts and indeed acted as a catalyst that enabled individuals in the education sector to turn ideas, needs and wishes into tangible and effective initiatives with positive outcomes.

**Social inclusion**

The LLP programme placed emphasis on inclusion of people with limited possibilities as well as for those with special needs. From this aspect, it is concluded that overall the programme was effective despite some limitations. The NA efforts, that also targeted disadvantaged groups, included among others: the organisation of information seminars with the aim of encouraging entities to apply for different types of funding schemes available and active participation in a number of job fairs. By way of example, in 2011 the Maltese NA liaised with the Foundation for IT Accessibility (FITA) and the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (KNPD) and explored possibilities to widen access to the LLP.
At a national level efforts were made to include people with special needs in mainstream education though the success of including this cluster in the programme has been limited\textsuperscript{19}. Consequently, the impact of this programme with respect to social inclusion is deemed to be ‘fair–good’.

**Impact on policy makers**

Throughout the programme there are various reports that indicate how the implementation of projects positively impacted policy makers that participated in such projects. The Yearly National Agency Reports highlight a number of instances/ case studies/ success stories were the LLP Programme successfully targeted individuals that were influential in policy making, and that the programme enabled them acquire new skills and / or new methods for carrying out their work. In this respect, the ‘success stories’ box overleaf highlight a few of these cases.

For this reason the programme is deemed to be highly effective as working methods were altered or new procedures/ processes implemented following the acquisition of new/ different skills and the awareness of best practices that could be implemented locally.

\begin{table}
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\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
**Impact on Policy makers**
\hline
\begin{itemize}
\item Following a study visit a participant from the Directorate for Quality Standards in Education (DQSE) organised an internal dissemination meeting at institutional level where the national policy for self-evaluation was examined and compared to that of other countries represented during the visit. Subsequently, the Irish model was identified as the best practice for Malta and subsequently implemented.
\item In another instance a study visit acted as a catalyst for the launch of the Entrepreneurship Education programmes on a national level.
\item In another instance, a beneficiary implemented a specialised education programme aimed at students who have various difficulties in mainstream education.
\end{itemize}
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\end{tabular}
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\textsuperscript{19} More specifically in relation to including people with special needs in mainstream projects, as opposed to projects that related specifically to clusters of disadvantaged groups.
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

**Erasmus**

In line with the Euro 2020 strategy the local higher education scenario continued to build on the current framework that also involved the strengthening of internal structures (primarily through the University of Malta which is the largest Higher Education Institution on the island), in a bid to facilitate the mobility experience of prospective students abroad. Such a stance linked well with the Erasmus sub programme that focused on the mobility of students and staff in education.

The programme reached out to a considerable number of beneficiaries, though, as indicated earlier on, the suspension of funds in 2010 makes comparability of data across the whole programme period inappropriate. Annex 4 provides a data of the various sub programmes over the programme period evidencing how ‘Teaching assignments by HEI teaching staff at enterprises and at HEI – number of mobilities’ experienced a constant gradual increase, while ‘Student mobilities for studies number of mobilities’ experienced the peak number of mobilities in 2011 with just over 300 student mobilities.

**Impact on policy**

The programme’s impact on policy pertaining to the higher education sector in Malta is viewed to positively whereby, as the programme progressed the importance of student and staff mobility among the higher education network was recognised and consequently strengthened. This approach lead to Malta’s three main institutions adopting to the requirements of mobility. A clear example of this was the creation of the ‘mobility semester’ that was adopted by the University of Malta during the implementation of this programme.

In line with the above the implementation of the Erasmus programme invariably had an indirect effect on the national policy developments for higher education. By providing tertiary level students with the opportunity to study abroad, the Erasmus programme contributed to the strengthening of a mobility culture amongst the younger generation. It also contributed to the realisation of the targets set out by the Bologna Process back in 2009 - that of reaching at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area to have completed a study / training period abroad by 2020. An increase in the attainment rate of higher education is considered to be one of the main investments in human capital on the island.

**Cultural and academic experience**

The programme was a unique opportunity whereby students and staff alike could attain a cultural and academic experience. The programme has thus positively affected and altered the insular vision locals had thereby instilling in them a stronger sense of belonging and citizenship with a wider European community.
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

Students

As for the majority of students, the programme was in fact their first experience on their own, enabling them to also grow as individuals.

Teachers/staff

For the teachers/staff the programme presented an opportunity for them to enrich their academic minded-frame. Staff mobility gave academic and administrative staff the chance to work within a ‘European context. Particularly for Malta, this was highly significant and advantageous as it was an opportunity for local HEI staff to work in a larger environment thus helping them widen their horizons.

For institutions

For the institutions, the programme strengthened their internationalisation factor, placing them on the map with the rest of the European Higher Educational Institutions and further strengthened the academic link between one another and the recognition of qualifications.

As highlighted throughout this document, this programme has been described as highly beneficial overall enabling students to truly comprehend the European dimension of the EU and experience first-hand cultural diversities. That said, one of the beneficiaries interviewed remarked that in their view the programme did not fully manage to attract individuals with less opportunities\(^20\) (despite the financial support of the programme). The discussions held with NGOs evidence that such target group did not have the necessary finances to cover the additional expenses needed for the exchange. Furthermore, the fact that the funding was based on a reimbursement system further hindered this target group from applying, as in many instances such individuals did not have the necessary finances to fork out the money in the first place\(^21\).

\(^{20}\) Annex 5 provides the definition of less opportunities –As per SALTO Youth definition https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/atlas-partner-finding/help/young-people-with-fewer-opportunities/ (viewed August 2017)

\(^{21}\) It is to be noted that the Government sought to assist NGOs and Local Councils financially when committing to EU projects (such as the NGO Fund and the Civil Society Fund).
Comenius

Throughout the programme period the education system in Malta underwent significant developments. One such initiative revolved around vesting individual colleges with more autonomy. This positively impacted the implementation of the Comenius sub programme.

The national agency’s endeavours in promoting the programme was fruitful, as a result of which the impact of this programme is deemed to be positive with a high uptake by schools in Malta at both primary and secondary level. Consequently children and young people across the board had the opportunity to experience the European dimension and foster positive attitudes of tolerance and understanding as part of intercultural education. Furthermore, the same sub programme has enabled schools to establish positive international links and networks.

At an individual level the project impact is deemed to have been useful, though uptake was less than anticipated. Discussions with both EUPA and NGOs evidenced the smooth transition from education to employment as a key factor to the low uptake of certain sub programmes comprising that related to outgoing assistantships. As noted also in the YiA Programme (particularly the volunteering overseas sub programme EVS) graduates generally do not have periods of ‘idle’ time where they can invest in the attainment of such experiences as they go straight into work upon successfully completing their studies.

European context

Overall the programme resulted in an increased knowledge among participants (both students and teachers) about other European countries. This was highlighted in the Yearly National Agency Reports and the interim evaluation on the Lifelong Learning Programme. The same interim evaluation also indicates specific instances where students highlighted that it was their first opportunity to become familiar with peers from another European country, thereby further highlighting the positive impact of the programme.

22 “The Comenius projects can be seen and observed in many of the local primary and secondary schools. It has helped to provide a taste of the European dimension to young children and youths at primary and secondary level of education. Lifelong Learning Programme Interim Evaluation. Malta Report. Dr Suzanne Gatt – Gatt & Partners. (July 2010).

**Impact on policy**

Overall it is concluded that there has been a good synergy between the implementation of this programme and the national policy developments and national objectives.

**National level**

A major focus at national level has been to reduce the early school leaving rate. In this respect a good number of beneficiaries under the In Service Training attended a course on career guidance and counselling. This provided them with the skills and competences to better assist in targeting this specific cluster of youths.

**School level**

St Clare College, Girls Secondary School entered a partnership programme entitled “The Women of the World, the Wonders of the World”, where academically challenged students were given the opportunity to participate in informal learning offered through the Comenius sub programme.

**Impact at individual level**

**Pupils**

At an individual level, the programme was deemed highly effective in increasing students’ self-confidence and self-esteem. This was a common impact across students of all ages (from both primary and secondary schools).

**Staff and Teachers**

Apart from the acquisition of new methodologies, techniques and teaching practices, at teacher level the programme aided increase their motivation for teaching along with a sense of pride and value in their work. Furthermore, through the sharing of good practices and by including the project theme in the school curriculum, students were given the opportunity to have a more hands-on learning experience.

**Pupils and teachers**

A number of beneficiaries highlighted how the programme positively impacted the rapport between students and their peers, particularly in those instances where projects involved a clear collaboration relationship between students and teachers in projects.
Building networks and taking on a European dimension

Participation in sub programmes as the Regio Partnership and others that involved networking (both locally and with other European organisations) were deemed to be highly beneficial and have positive impacted participants in that it enabled them to foster strong cooperation between local organisations and with similar regions across the EU with such ties lasting well after the completion of the project/partnership. Furthermore, it allowed beneficiaries to work on themes in a broader manner than school partnerships would allow. The results of such collaborations are deemed to have been highly fruitful to the participants and had a positive ripple effect on the students within such participating schools (where relevant).

Success story - Together against violence

St Michael’s school participated in a multilateral partnership with schools from France and Spain, whereby through this partnership students explored violence as a widespread phenomenon which all partner schools faced (in various forms). Participating students explored the theme of violence in its different forms through a variety of methods including art, drama and music. Students also carried out a questionnaire to assess the level of violence within the school and subsequently put forward recommendations on how violence at school can be tackled.

The positive impact on such students are far reaching, and go beyond their understanding of the European context within which they live. Sharing of ideas and collaborating with other pupils across Europe enabling them to expand their social skills, tolerance towards other nationals and also active involvement at community level. The hands on approach also ensured that they take an active role in solving the issue of violence while also exposing them to the skills necessary to successfully implement a project – benefits that will remain with them all through their college years until adulthood.

Grundtvig

This programme was considered to be opportune considering the aging population as a consequence of which adult learners is gradually increasing and becoming a larger proportion of the population. As indicated in Annex 4, the NA has been particularly effective in its promotion endeavours particularly following the suspension of funds with 2012 figures matching 2008 figures and 2013 figures increasing by 93% (on 2012 figures).
**Policy**

There has been a clear link between initiatives undertaken by local Government and the programme particularly in relation to Malta’s efforts to strengthen the employability of the Maltese worker and increase the volume of participation in adult learning. In one specific instance the Employment and Training Corporation provided measures specifically targeting older people. Furthermore, there were measures that positively contributed to the Grundtvig funding for adult learners aimed at enhancing their education and employability. By way of example, the Directorate of Lifelong Learning and the local Government collaborated together on the scheme called ‘Lifelong Learning in the Community’ through which a number of local councils availed themselves of a number of courses (among which Adult Literacy and Numeracy) for their respective residents.

In line with governmental approach, Grundtvig acted as a supporting tool by encouraging a number of institutional staff to utilise this programme to acquire further skills and opportunities through participation in study visits.

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**Success story**

**Prison Education**

The Grundtvig programme had a positive impact on Prison Education policy in Malta.

An influential local academic expert who heads the Malta Branch of the European Prison Education Association as well as the supervisor of education at Malta’s correctional facilities were funded to attend In-Service training courses and to contribute to a prominent pan-European conference on the topic. Both reported positive outcomes from their training and have provided feedback to the local authorities informing them of new developments in this important area of adult education.

The outcome was positive on two fronts:

Beneficiaries attained an increased knowledge of methodologies, techniques and approaches which could then be utilised by adult educators e.g. the use of Enneagrams, Neuro Linguistic Programming and SMART objective setting.

Beneficiaries received up to date knowledge specifically relating to their field of competence: prison education and the role of art and culture in adult learning.

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24 Yearly National Agency Report for 2013
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

**Acquisition of skills and networking**

**Learners**
Projects have in generally positively impacted the learners through the acquisition of self-confidence, motivation and social skills particularly in those instances where the Programme successfully tapped into individuals coming from rural areas and lived in insular circumstance. Also Grudtvig enabled participants to become more aware of entrepreneurship opportunities and the creation of professional and effective network among learners.

**Adult Educators**
Tangible impacts of the programme included an increased knowledge of methodologies and approaches which may be utilised by adult educators. Increased knowledge was attained through observation, participation and brainstorming in workshops and work-based feedback sessions. In addition, the programme instigated participants to reflect critically on the methods used by their institution as well as on their work duties and modus-operandi. Furthermore there were instances where beneficiaries also received up to date knowledge that directly related to their work area and they were also learned how to apply such knowledge in a confident way.

**Organisations**
The programme positively impacted organisations through the creation of solid links and networks that subsequently resulted in further cooperation following participation in the project.

**Professional Development**
The programme has been successful in the professional development of the beneficiaries by providing them access to a great range of new technologies/ resources/ material and also refreshed participants’ interest in their field of work. Furthermore there has been a positive ripple effect on learners as the introduction of new technologies/ methodologies has helped motivate learners/pupils in the respective institutions.

**Best practice – to integrate individuals with disability in the labour market and make them feel part of and contribute to society**

“Creative, mobile, independent”

This is a project that was implemented in Poland by the Foundation for Innovation, education and development of New Technologies where 40 Polish students under 25 years old with certain disabilities were trained to set up and successfully run their own e-company. In the project, 40
disabled students underwent a holistic training programme which involved 96 hours of training and 50 hours of individual consulting. The training programme covered all the skills necessary for a would-be entrepreneur such as budgeting, marketing and sales policy, promotion and advertisement, along with communication and teamwork skills

Leonardo da Vinci

This programme has had a positive impact and managed to successfully tap many different actors in the vocational sector and in employment. Likewise, the programme fostered and promoted student mobility that in turn enabled such participants to get in touch with different cultures thereby fostering greater tolerance and understanding towards a multi-cultural Europe. Consequently the programme has been effective in contributing towards Malta’s efforts to tackle the issue of early school leavers through the provision of support for VET-mobility, while also contributing to the personal growth of individuals.

Tapping different sectors

Overall the programme is deemed to have been positive, with the Yearly National Agency Reports indicating how the Programme has successfully targeted a wide array of vocational sectors, including: the environment, tourism, social inclusion and support services, health, human resources, civil protection, sports and culture. In 2013 alone the programme had projects that tackled: community work and community social work services; safeguarding the environment, and the ever important issue of family-friendly measures in the private industry.

National policy

Even though it is rather challenging to quantify the direct effect of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, the national reports indicate a number of projects (particularly those closed in 2013) that had tackled salient national policy developments, national priorities or projects that were complimentary to national and/or European initiatives – such examples are highlighted in further depth in the ‘success story’ box overleaf.

"Through the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility projects, six (6) workers have attended job-shadowing placements in an Irish agency providing community work and community social work services’. Malta’s National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy”, April 2013
Another example relates to transnational cooperation with partners from different European countries, whereby the partnership and the experience/knowledge derived thereof could subsequently influence the policies of the institutes and government departments involved in such partnerships by becoming more Europe oriented.

An example that relates to the above is the PLM project of the Maternity department conducted in 2011, where the project was aimed at shifting the national policy and current practice of giving birth to a more baby-friendly one used and practiced regularly in other more advanced European countries.

### Success stories

a) As mentioned in the ‘Malta’s National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy’, April 2013; ‘through the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility projects, six (6) workers attended job-shadowing placements in an Irish agency providing community work and community social work services’. This project contributed towards taking the first step for the introduction of adult protection services in the Maltese islands.

b) The Malta Business Bureau undertook a project (PLM project) that aimed at promoting the implementation of family-friendly measures in the private industry. Moreover, the project contributed to promote a work-life balance culture, which would increase female participation in the labour market, productivity and equal opportunities.

### Collaboration

There are evident and clear signs that one of the results of the programme was increased collaboration with the industry. The research also indicated how projects undertaken improved teamwork and networking of the Maltese participants with their European counterparts.

In certain instances, the transferability of results also enticed other organisations to tap into such funds in the following years.

### Combatting discrimination

Another positive impact of the programme relates to actions undertaken through the programme to combat discrimination. At a local level Malta experienced the effects of the influx of refugees and immigrants way before mainland Europe.

Among the various endeavours undertaken at a local level to integrate such individuals were Leonardo da Vinci projects aimed at integrating immigrants such that they too contribute to the social and economic aspects of demographic aging by providing such target audience (immigrants and refugees) the possibility to access the European employment market. Among others, this
involved the identification of diversity training for SMEs to help employers tackle issues to make them better placed to hire and train immigrants as a useful part of their workforce.

The impact of such projects is deemed to be highly beneficial and the experience learnt from tackling such issues at a national level could now be transposed to other European countries that are today experiencing the same issues faced by Malta a few years back.

**Acquisition of new skills**

At an individual level the programme enabled participants to acquire new skills, touch first hand new approaches/ methodologies with this having a positive ripple effect on their aptitude to change – with the research indicating that such participants were consequently more willing to embrace change and entice others to likewise try new systems.

This is indeed considered to be a primary benefit of the programme as it helped instigate change and challenge the status quo in the search for more efficient and effective methods. Such an approach helps instigate innovation in the quest for continual improvement.

**Study visits**

The study visits programme consisted of a short but highly intensive stay of between 3 to 5 days in a host country, where a group of 10 to 15 education and vocational training specialists and decision-makers met to examine a particular aspect of lifelong learning. This sub programme sought to develop a European dimension in education and training.

As highlighted from the table below, the request for funding under this programme decreased between 2009 and 2010, with 2010 results reflective of the suspension of funds, though increased considerably thereafter. Indeed such substantial increase in the years subsequent to 2010 may be attributed to the National Agency’s extensive efforts to promote this programme, with the Agency also indicating the incremental increase in 2013 to the fact that it was the programme’s last year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applications Submitted</th>
<th>Applications Approved and carried out</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>9</td>
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*Source: Yearly National Agency Report*
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

While there was considerable interest in the attendance of study visits overseas the same cannot be said for the organisation of study visits locally. Indeed, notwithstanding the NAs efforts, the agency was not successful in enticing locals to organise study visits themselves. The NA was of the opinion that a primary deterrent to the organising of study visits related to the fact that there was little to no possibility of acquiring EU funding for organising a study visit. Consequently institutions preferred to focus their energy and resources on a ‘Partnership’ application where funding was involved. This was more evident in 2013 since the cycle of the LLP was drawing to a close.26

Success Stories

“I returned to Malta with long-lasting memories of this unique and beautiful principality of Asturias, which afforded me so many new and interesting experiences." Lawrence Sciberras, Sir M.A. Refalo Centre for Further Studies. Study Visit in Asturias, Spain

“The study visit has given me insight into good practice, experience and success stories to build a safer environment in my school”. Raymond Portelli, St. Clare College Boys Secondary School. Study Visit in Leeuwarden and Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Conclusion

Overall the Programme has left a positive impact on the education and training sector and managed to target and subsequently attain participation from both organisations and individuals. Notwithstanding the suspension of funds in 2010 the managing authority managed to reignite interest among the target audience and re-attain pre 2010 figures (in relation to participation and consequent mobility figures). By the end of the programme a wide array of organisations and individual beneficiaries had successfully been targeted.

The LLP is deemed to have been highly effective in assisting the education and training sector at different levels of the education system, be it at primary school level through Comenius, vocational education institutions thanks to Leonardo da Vinci programme, and University of Malta, Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) with the Erasmus programme. Furthermore, SMEs have also benefited from the programme through the provision of training for their workers.

26 Yearly National Agency Report. PERIOD: 1 January 2013 - 31 December 2013 (Malta)
Directly and/or indirectly the programme is deemed to have been effective in increasing participation in adult learning. Following the implementation of the programme, the percentage of the Maltese population aged 25 to 64 who participated in education and training was on the rise with the ‘Education and Training Monitor Report’ for Malta (2015) indicating that Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64) had increased by 0.7% over the period 2011 – 2014 to 7.1%. Nonetheless this figure was still below the EU average that stood at 10.7%.

Undoubtedly through mobility, the main impact of the programme has been the promotion of the European dimension as well as the exposure to other cultures and traditions within Europe. Furthermore this has in turn instigated participants to better understand and comprehend their national identity and appreciate also local cultures and traditions.

The programme successfully targeted lifelong learning through the provision of opportunities for experiences from early childhood well into adulthood.

In 2009, ET 2020 set four common EU objectives to address challenges in education and training systems by 2020:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

Taking stock of the situation following the completion of the programme, and as presented in this report, the research clearly indicates that there has been a positive impact on all four fronts, with the LLP being a primary impetus and indeed the main source of assistance in enabling locals to travel for educational and training purposes.

This in turn has enabled individuals attain new skills, become acquainted to different/improved modus operandi and build networks that enabled the transfer of good practices that invariably positively impacted on the output of education and training locally when these were subsequently implemented (at a local level). Linked to this, and as indicated throughout the programme period (annual reports), the programme has instilled a sense of innovation and creativity and enticed individuals to think outside the box, or as a minimum question their status quo (current work practices). Such a stance is deemed to be highly beneficial and the results far reaching, not merely in the short-term but equally important in the medium and longer term.

Furthermore, the programme has enabled locals to truly comprehend the European dimension of what it means to form part of the EU, and no longer think in an insular manner. Through mobility, partnerships and building networks beneficiaries have exposed themselves to different cultures and
different realities and take on a more inclusive approach while attaining the impetus to take on a more active approach (both in the workplace and/or community level).
Chapter 3: Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+

Overview

This Chapter focuses more specifically on the main focus of the mid-term evaluation as highlighted in Section 4.2 – Specific Activities of the tender document, that specified the questions to be tackled relating to effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, European added value and internal and external coherence and complementarity.

Under the heading of Effectiveness, the mid-term evaluation sought to examine the degree of effectiveness achieved on the basis of the indicators and offer relevant data collected, and identify if any unexpected or unintended effects have occurred by tackling the following questions:

- To what extent have Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ specific objectives in Malta? Are there differences across fields? This should be supported by an assessment on each of the specific objectives, together with the provision of evidence and examples, where possible.
- To what extent has the progress on the realisation of the specific objectives contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ general objectives in Malta?
- To what extent have Erasmus+ actions influenced policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport in Malta? Which actions were most effective in doing so? Are there marked differences between different fields?
- What specific approaches have you taken in order to try to enhance the effects of Erasmus+ in Malta? To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified?
- Do you consider that certain actions of the programme are more effective than others? Are there differences across fields? What are the determining factors for making these actions of the programme more effective?
- To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ made the programme more effective in Malta? Do you see scope for changes to the structure of Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase effectiveness?
- Is the size of the 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?
- What challenges and difficulties are encountered while implementing the various actions of Erasmus+? What changes would need to be introduced in Erasmus+ or its successor programme to remedy these?
- To what extent are the approaches and tools that are used for disseminating and exploiting the results of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes in Malta effective? Where can you see the possibilities for improvement?
Under **efficiency**, the following questions were tackled:

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<tr>
<td>To what extent is the system of cooperation between the National Authority (FDP), the National Agency (EUPA) and Independent Audit bodies efficient and well-functioning from the point of view of Malta?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the areas for possible improvement or simplification in the implementation of Erasmus+ or a successor programme?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in Malta, both at the level of the National Agency and on the beneficiaries’ and participants’ level? Do you see scope for changes to the structure of the Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase efficiency?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you consider that the implementation of certain actions of the programme is more efficient than others? Are there differences across actions or fields? What good practices of these more efficient actions of the programme could be transferred to others?</td>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent has the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agency and programme beneficiaries and participants? Are there differences across actions or fields? What elements of the Programme could be changed to further reduce the administrative burden, without unduly compromising its results and impact?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are the IT tools provided by the Commission adequate for the efficient management and implementation of the programme in Malta? Do they answer Malta’s 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?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is the level of human and financial resources that is available for the implementation of the programme in Malta adequate? What steps did you take to optimise the efficiency of the resources deployed for the Erasmus+ implementation in Malta?</td>
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</table>

The term **relevance**, in the context of the evaluation, looked at the relationship between the needs and problems in society as a whole and the objectives of the intervention. Consequently, the study sought to assess the validity of the identified “problem drivers” and determine whether incorrect assumptions may have been made about the cause and effect relationships at the time of the intervention design. The evaluation thus addressed the following questions:
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

- To what extent 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 Malta? Have the needs or problems evolved in such a way that the objective of Erasmus+ or its successor programme need to be re-adjusted?

- To what extent are the 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?

The final part of the evaluation sought to tackle two aspects, namely: The internal and external coherence and complementarity of the programme and the European added value and sustainability. With respect to the former, this mid-term evaluation sought to determine the extent to which the intervention does not contradict other interventions with similar objectives. The coherence analysis looked at synergies or inconsistencies between actions in related fields.

- 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 with Erasmus+? Can you identify any inconsistencies or overlaps between actions with Erasmus?

- To what extent does Erasmus+ complement other national and international programmes available in Malta? Can you identify any inconsistencies or overlaps with other programmes?

On the other hand, the reference to “European added value” sought to look for changes for which it can be reasonably argued that they are a result of EU action, rather than the result of other influencing factors.

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

- 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 Malta? 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 in the programme?
Effectiveness

Question 1 & Question 2 – To what extent has Erasmus+ contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ specific objectives? To what extent has the progress on the realisation of the specific objectives contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ general objectives?

Key figures

A review\(^27\) of the project submissions and approvals under Key Actions 1, Key Action 2 and Key Action 3, indicates that overall results are positive and, as highlighted in the National Agency Yearly Reports over the same period, the programme has been effective in enticing new applicants to participate in the Programme. This augurs well as the MTNA continues to strive to increase awareness of the Programme and its various stands of actions.

There have been instances\(^28\) where the number of applications received over the period under review decreased, while the number of applications approved increased. A further analysis of the approved applications indicates the increase to be reflective of the increase in quality of application that has ultimately lead to a more effective result (with more approved applications). Indeed, with respect to quality, across the programming period there has been an overall improvement in the quality of the applications received. There are instances\(^29\) where the number of approved applications decreased (when compared to the previous year), though (in certain instances) this relates to the higher amount of funds distributed to the individual applicants, hence the less funds available for applications/approvals.

The Annual Reports reviewed indicate that in many instances, the lack of approval of applications relates to the limited funds available. This has been particularly evident under Key Action 2 whereby the limited budget has restricted the MTNA from approving more quality projects. By way of example, the 2015 Annual Report indicates that for Key Action 2 (KA202) “the MTNA received a total of nine applications. All applications were deemed eligible, and the budget available under this Action allowed for three projects (33.3%) to be granted\(^30\). This could have a deterring effect on the number of future applications received.

\(^{27}\) Table available in Annex 6

\(^{28}\) Analysis of table present in Annex 6

\(^{29}\) As indicated in further depth in the country annual reports,

Noteworthy is the fact that in 2016 no projects were approved in relation to Adult-education – Key Action 2. This relates to the misunderstanding/misinterpretation of definition by applicants.

**Improvement of key competences and skills**

**Individual level**

The feedback attained from the primary and secondary research\(^{31}\) clearly indicate that participants place value on the programme in terms of its contribution to their skills and professional development. This was also highlighted in the predecessor programmes where the various studies\(^{32}\) undertaken in relation to such predecessor programmes evidence the benefit beneficiaries perceived to attain from the programme/s in relation to the acquisition of interpersonal skills, ‘better understanding of the international dimension of the EU’ and the cultural aspect of travelling to a foreign country and dealing/communicating with people from different cultures. Participants were in agreement that such experience was highly beneficial to their personal development.

The participation of individuals also results in a positive ripple effect on the institutions they work within. This was highlighted by both the NA officials and institutions/organisations\(^{33}\).

**Organisation/ institutions**

The Programme, through the projects it approves is highly beneficial in enabling schools attain opportunities to explore and share different teaching ideas, gain more knowledge and skills whilst also strengthening the teachers’ profession. Participation in the programme had also aided to increase the organisation’s output quality with the research evidencing the introduction of new practices and/or innovative approaches. This is much needed in Malta since Malta is a small country, with the programme highly opportune in giving participating schools a European dimension which ultimately leads to an improvement in the Standards & Quality Assurance and Evidence based change, with such a stance being congruent with the Ministry’s strategies and policies and action plans.

The interviews conducted indicate that, to varying extents, entities participation in the programme had led to an increase in subsequent interaction with European institutions and colleges even after

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\(^{31}\) Annual Yearly Reports over the programme period, face-to-face interviews, questionnaires and other research on the Programme conducted by third parties

\(^{32}\) Research studies, evaluations and similar

\(^{33}\) From the interviews conducted and analysis of the questionnaires distributed to beneficiaries
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

completion of the Project. It is however difficult to quantify the benefit of such networking and close collaboration endeavours. On the other hand, the interviews with the MT NA have evidenced the need for increased awareness of the intrinsic benefits of international collaborations. To date organisations’ participation or otherwise in the programme pretty much rests on the head of school’s appreciation of the benefits derived thereof, and to date it seems that this is not acknowledged across the board.

**Achievement of Programme Objectives**

By focusing on the day-to day requirements that the job entails, it can be difficult to reflect on the overarching objectives of the Programme, though the direction taken and strategy undertaken is drawn up with the Programmes objectives in mind. In line with this, the interviews highlighted that the programme contributes towards the objectives, though it could be hard to measure exactly how much it contributes towards attaining them. This was particularly so for youth.

With respect to education, more specifically adult, there was a slow start that was attributed to the misinterpretation of priorities. This was the result of adult education moving away from lifelong learning and more towards skills for vulnerable groups. That said, as we move towards an aging population, it is felt that the need for lifelong learning will become increasingly important and with it the need for individuals to continue to learn and acquire new skills (both specific skills as well as social skills).

When looking at participant feedback, both the annual country reports and the results from the questionnaire distribution are positive. With respect to the former, in relation to satisfaction, it is noted that the 549 respondents to the Participant Reports had generally positive feedback in relation to the achievement of programme objectives, generally with increases being noted in most programme indicators between Call Years, with the strongest being in relation to the formal recognition of learning outcomes, from 65% to 74% between 2014 to 2015, while 64% of participants note that their participation in KA105 Erasmus+: YiA projects will have a positive impact on their employability in projects granted in 2015 being finalised in 2016, whereas 60% of the participants in projects granted in 2014 reported the same benefit.

As for the latter (responses from the questionnaires), participants felt that their skills to the labour market increased through their participation in the programme (graphs overleaf) with 79% agreeing/strongly agreeing to this statement while 63% indicated that the relevance of their skills to the labour market would not have increased to the same extent if they had not participated in the programme (Annex 9 gives a full analysis of the results).
The relevance of my skills to the labour market increased through my participation in the programme

Strongly disagree  Strongly Agree

The relevance of my skills to the labour market would not have increased to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme

Strongly disagree  Strongly Agree

Programme Impact
During 2016, a study was conducted in relation to non-formal education and learning gained through youth organisations, with the outcomes of this qualitative study clearly highlighting that the experiences of the exchange were very fruitful and enabled participants to broaden their insular views “You learn how others, at the same time and in the same world, think differently than you”.

Understanding and appreciation for different cultures was another aspect that was highlighted from the study. Values, such as respecting diversity was also mentioned.

Another study sought to evaluate the impact of the European Voluntary Service on the organisations that were granted funding in order to carry out projects during the past years. Once again, all respondents that went on a volunteering experience mentioned the positive impacts that EVS left on their personal competences, some highlighting more than one competence, among which increasing their communication in foreign languages, increasing their social and civic competences as well as cultural awareness and expression, and increasing their sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.

The research also assessed whether this experience will leave an impact on future educational and professional perspectives, on the self, on the work of the youth organization as well as on the local community with the results indicating that “The majority of the respondents stated that through the EVS, they now have a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals. Others mentioned that they now have a clearer idea about their future educational paths, stating that they are now planning to engage in further vocational formal and non-formal education opportunities”.

Other competences that improved through the volunteering experience that were mentioned were improved way of thinking, more confidence, experience and independence.

**Lifelong learning and languages**

**Lifelong learning** - The impact of the programme with respect to lifelong learning has been calculated in terms of beneficiaries’ perceptions as to how the Programme influenced/effect ed their continuous professional development. Collectively the responses from both the questionnaire and other data analysed in relation to the mid-term evaluation are very positive with beneficiaries of the opinion that the experience contributed to their professional development.

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34 “Unlocking Doors to Employability: Non Formal Education/Learning gained through Youth Organisations as a Key to Success for Young People by Ms Bridget Mamo

35 “Unlocking Doors to Employability: Non Formal Education/Learning gained through Youth Organisations as a Key to Success for Young People by Ms Bridget Mamo

36 Complete analysis of the questionnaire results are available in Annexes 8 and 9
Both the questionnaire that was distributed to beneficiaries and the Programme Annual Reports determined whether beneficiaries had also participated in the predecessor programme/s. The fact that applications comprised a number of applicants that had participated in the past (under the predecessor programmes and/or Erasmus+ before) as well as beneficiaries that indicated their intent to apply again in the future is another indication of the perceived benefit of the programme output and impact deliverables, and is hence commendable. That said it is important that the MT NA continues to strive to entice new participants in the programme.

Language learning - In line with the EU objectives, Malta’s strategy in relation to languages is:

“While ensuring the promotion of our identity through the mastery of the Maltese language, to be able to navigate successfully in the world at large we need to be fluent and proficient in English, the global language. We would also like our young people to be competent in other languages that have global outreach.”

The interviews conducted throughout this mid-term evaluation highlighted that unlike the predecessor programmes, there is no project-type in Erasmus+ that focuses specifically on language learning and teaching in schools.

On the topic in question, a difficulty identified in relation to the Youth Sector is that participants who are in contact with more than one working language throughout their project are oftentimes constrained with choosing English. That said, and in line with Malta’s strategy, such a stance is viewed to benefit participants more in the long-term, as English provides access to more opportunities for jobs or further studies.

Online linguistic Support (OLS) – Overall this is viewed to positively with interviewees indicating this tool to be beneficial to their needs. To date though, this tool does not encompass an exhaustive list of languages. In this respect, the MT NA believes that when the online service is not available for the given language and for all other types of mobility, HEIs may provide other types of linguistic support to students, to be funded under the ‘organisational support’ grant. There should be the inclusion of a specific grant for ‘linguistic support’ to cover languages not included in the OLS system (over and above using OS funds). This is already done under the VET and YOUTH sectors. Furthermore, the MT NA recommends to make full use of the OLS availability even when the mobility participants attend courses where English is the language of instruction, and therefore in native language, by following an OLS course in the local language of the country of mobility wherever possible. It is recommended to carefully monitor the absorption and utilisation of all OLS licences allocated in these meetings. Beneficiaries are also encouraged to promote OLS using the visibility materials provided by CION to

potential mobility participants. Furthermore, it is being suggested that the OLS license be available to all mobilities and hence include also staff mobilities and those mobilities whose duration is of less than 1 month.

**Non-formal learning/Youthpass**

The contribution of the programme to the recognition of non-formal learning is assessed by looking at the use of the Youthpass.

The MT NA indicated an encouraging interest in the Youthpass process amongst beneficiaries and participants with beneficiary organisations all issuing Youthpass certificates to all participants in the respective projects.

From its end, the MT NA is undergoing various endeavours (such as meetings/information sessions and similar) in order to increase and continue promoting Youthpass as a tool for recognition of non-formal learning amongst employers. Noteworthy is the fact that the MT NA also created a booklet to help youth workers to familiarise themselves better with Youthpass; understanding its purpose, who it is targeted for and why it is valuable. At the end of the booklet one also finds the Youthpass Competence Development Tool, which was launched last year and adapted from the Competence Development Tool for Youthpass Contact Persons, provided by the SALTO Training &Cooperation Resource Centre. The aim of this tool is to help youth workers to understand where they stand with Youthpass; how comfortable they feel using it; how they can improve their skills and transmit their knowledge to young people.

**General Objectives**

**Economic activity and employment** – Malta is in line to meet the pre-set targets with respect to economic activity and employment. In this respect the EC Report highlights that economic activity

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39 In terms of supporting formal and informal learning through certification of the mobility taking place figures extracted from the Youthpass Impact Report for the period 2007–2012 illustrate a constant gradual increase in the number of certifications for Malta from 107 in 2008 up to 582 in 2012 with such trend indicated to continue throughout Erasmus+

has eased somewhat, but remains buoyant. Real GDP growth was among the highest in the EU in 2014-15, reaching 7.9%, driven by strong net service exports, robust private consumption and a surge in investment, partly due to one-off factors. Moreover, employment growth is among the highest in the EU, in particular due to the services sector. The same report indicates that unemployment rate has dropped to a record low of below 5% and net immigration flows helped to offset emerging skill gaps and labour shortages. Strong employment growth reflects the creation of jobs, the take-up of economic opportunities by the growing working age population (partially due to migration inflows) and the rising labour force participation (especially for women, albeit from very low initial levels). However, the labour market is becoming increasingly tight, with rising incidence of both labour and skills shortages. (A more in-depth analysis provided in Annex 7).

**Education and skills** - Despite significant investment in the education system, basic skills attainment among young people remains weak\(^{25}\). The Country Report for Malta (2017) indicates that the performance of 15-year olds in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 tests remained below the EU average, despite an improvement on 2009 levels\(^{41}\). However, since performance also worsened in most EU countries, the gap with the EU average shrank in reading and science. Socio-economic status is found to strongly influence student performance (OECD, 2016; European Commission, 2016a). Performance is also clearly related to the type of school, with ‘independent’ (i.e. private) school students performing the best. They are followed by Church school pupils and then State school pupils. Another 2015 international survey on 13-14-year olds - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) - confirmed these findings (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2016). This may suggest a persistent fragmentation of the education system and a lack of inclusiveness of vulnerable children, in particular from poorer and low-skilled families.

Furthermore, the country report for Malta indicates that notwithstanding the significant progress shown, the qualification level of adults also remains low. The share of low-qualified adults is the highest in the EU - 56.5% in 2015 (25-64)\(^{42}\). Only about 20% of adults have tertiary education attainment and 22.7% are medium skilled. In addition, the share of low-qualified youth (25-34) is among the highest in the EU (37.1 % vs. 16.6%), which is driven by the high rate of early school leavers.

A comparison with the foreign born population\(^{42}\) evidences that (in 2015), 31.3% of foreigners living in Malta had tertiary education (ISCED levels 5-8), compared with 18.5% of the individuals born in

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\(^{41}\) Compared to 2009, performance significantly improved in maths while it remained broadly stable in reading and science

Malta. As a result, foreign born individuals were filling skills shortages by taking up higher-skilled jobs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment rate 20 – 64yr old</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender employment gap</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission

Lifelong learning — The same EC Report\(^{43}\) indicates that some progress has also been made in strengthening labour supply by improving access to and participation in lifelong learning, with a focus on the low-skilled. That said, the skills supply does not yet adequately match labour market needs and labour market participation by the low-skilled remains low.

Although the government is enabling access to lifelong learning and second-chance education programmes, participation remains low. Overall, the low participation rate in further education and training is mainly driven by the very low attendance of the low-skilled. Older cohorts are also characterised by lower participation in comparison to younger ones (European Commission, 2016a). At all ages, the participation of women is slightly higher than that of men. Education and lifelong learning systems are strengthened through the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Strategy. Efforts to improve the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system are complemented by strengthening work-based learning and partnership with employers. Vocational subjects introduced in the national curriculum of secondary schools are now accepted to fulfil the criteria to start a post-secondary course\(^{44}\). Moreover, a harmonised legal framework ‘Work-based Learning and the Apprenticeship Act’ is being finalised, and it will provide a framework for Work-Placements Apprenticeships. In addition, JobsPlus offers trainings for upgrading job-related skills for both the unemployed and employees.

Malta has made particular efforts in building a national framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and a skills forecasting and anticipation system. In addition to significant


\(^{44}\) Agribusiness, engineering/technology, health/social care, hospitality and ITC
institutional changes, there have been major legislative developments related to validation of informal and non-formal learning, such as the set-up of a Sector Skills Council and Sector Skills Units. Moreover, skills profiling is introduced as one of the assessment steps for unemployed people at the JobsPlus. The skills forecasting and anticipation system has not yet been consolidated, but Malta is currently working with the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) on developing a suitable skills forecasting model, including through a comprehensive skills anticipation review. In the meantime, a number of surveys were conducted by different institutions to form the basis of any future framework. In 2016 the National Commission for Further and Higher Education, in collaboration with JobsPlus and Malta Enterprise, conducted an employee skills survey looking at the current and future supply and demand for workers in different sectors. In addition, the National Skills Council was set up in December 2016.45

### EC Key Indicators (November 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malta 2013</th>
<th>Malta 2015</th>
<th>EU 2013</th>
<th>EU 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20–34 having left education 1-3 years before the reference year)</td>
<td>ISCED 2–8 (total)</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood education and care (ECEC) (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory education)</td>
<td>100.0%11</td>
<td>97.7%14</td>
<td>93.2%11</td>
<td>94.3%14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary educational attainment (30-34)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25–64)</td>
<td>ISCED 0-8 (total)</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Eurostat; OECD (PISA). Data refer to weighted EU averages, covering different numbers of Member States depending on the source. 11 = 2011, 14=2014. Further information can be found in the relevant section – ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)

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Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

Early school leaving - While educational attainment is increasing, the rate of early school leaving remains high and basic skills attainment among young people is still weak. Indeed, while some progress has been made in reducing early school leaving, incentivising the professional development of teachers, it remains substantial. Drop-out rates from the education system remain high. The early school leaving rate has fallen significantly in recent years, from 27.2% in 2008 to 19.8% in 2015. However, this remains one of the highest in the EU. The gender gap is more than double the EU average. Moreover, activation for early-school leavers remains a challenge and translates into a high share of inactive young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training. Subsequently, leading to high inactivity rates among adults. Policy actions focus on strengthening basic skills programmes and extending opportunities for a ‘second-chance education’. The ‘Alternative Learning Programme’ and other preventive and compensatory measures aim at addressing early school leaving. The 2014 Early School Leaving Strategy is under revision focusing on new vulnerable groups. Moreover, the updated Youth Guarantee Scheme targets potential school dropouts through a combined programme of mentoring and traineeships. All of these policy measures are welcome.

Poverty and social exclusion risks - Targeting young people with fewer opportunities has long been a pillar of the EU work in the youth field, notably through project funding for organisations working in this area. Between 2007 and 2013, the EU YiA Programme reached successful results as regards social inclusion. The work on social inclusion in the context of the YiA programme was supported by an Inclusion Strategy, launched in 2007.

As a consequence, and in order to achieve even an greater impact in targeting young people with fewer opportunities and to ensure that Erasmus+ responds positively to diversity in the field of youth, a revised Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy was drawn up. As stated in the Erasmus+ legal basis: "when implementing the Programme, inter alia as regards the selection of participants[…], the Commission and the Member States shall ensure that particular efforts are made to promote social inclusion and the participation of people with special needs or with fewer opportunities."

46 Throughout the programme, close to 24% of Youth in Action participants were young people with fewer opportunities.


48 Article 11.1.a of the Erasmus+ legal basis states that the Programme shall pursue the following specific objective: "to improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, as well as to promote participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, in particular through increased learning mobility opportunities for young people, those active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders,"
At a local level, poverty and social exclusion risks are declining but they remain substantial for children, the elderly and the low-skilled. Malta is addressing the social challenges and strengthening policies for active inclusion. Income inequalities are rather stable and below the EU average thanks to low market inequalities and the possible redistributive impact of the tax and benefits system. The latter has improved as a result of recent reforms.

From a programme level, so far Erasmus+ has not managed to meet its targets of attracting individuals with special needs. That said, it is to be noted that in 2016 people with special needs/persons with disabilities were targeted in a focused way also in relation with the Maltese NA active participation to the Erasmus+ Higher Education Working Group on Special Needs /Persons with Disabilities. Such endeavours have been positive as in 2016 under Key Action1, the first declared Erasmus+ student with disabilities was in fact sent abroad from University of Malta. This is a very positive achievement that also provided an inspiring model for the other HEIs to put in place the correct measures to include higher education students and staff with physical, mental or health-related conditions.

With respect to VET, the MT NA registered a higher interest in the inclusion of participants with from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the number of participants from this cluster increasing from forty-four participants in 2015 to nine hundred eighty five in 2016. Although from the applications selected, one application is envisaging to target at least six hundred participants from disadvantaged backgrounds, yet no funding was requested in this respect.

MT NA will continue to foster positive working relationships with NGOs who work in direct contact with disadvantaged target groups and also with the Ministry responsible for developing policy that aims to promote inclusion of these target groups. Moreover, the MT NA is seeking to collaborate with the Migrant Learners Unit within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) to encourage projects and/or initiatives which address the Erasmus+ priorities in relation to this section.

and through strengthened links between the youth field and the labour market;”. In addition, one of the indicators for the evaluation of the programme is the number of participants with special needs or fewer opportunities.

49 Review of the annual reports
The 2015 Erasmus+ "Inclusion and Diversity Strategy" is designed to ensure that the programme works for disadvantaged young people to the greatest extent possible.

The overall aim of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy is to improve the number and quality of inclusion and diversity projects within Erasmus+ in the field of Youth. The Strategy goals are to:

1. Create a common understanding of those who may be considered as young people with fewer opportunities and a coherent framework of support for the Erasmus+ programme feature "Equity and Inclusion".

2. Increase the commitment to inclusion and diversity from different actors in Erasmus+: Youth in Action.

3. Promote Erasmus+: YiA as a tool to work with young people with fewer opportunities and actively reach out to disadvantaged groups.

4. Reduce obstacles for young people with fewer opportunities to participate in the programme and help applicants to overcome obstacles.

5. Support organisers in developing quality projects that involve or benefit young people with fewer opportunities (e.g. provide training, tools, funding, coaching etc.).

6. Link where relevant to other initiatives that benefit young people with fewer opportunities – both cooperation with other sectors (joined-up, cross-sectoral approach) as well as for youth policy and projects at local, national and international levels.

7. Invest in the intercultural and social skills of young people and youth workers as well as their competences to manage and work with diversity in all its forms.

8. Increase the recognition of the experience and skills gained by young people with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+ and by the youth workers working with them.

9. Ensure that the focus on inclusion and diversity is present in all stages of Erasmus+: YiA management, including promotion, support for applicants, selection of projects and evaluation and dissemination of project outcomes.

Q3 - To what extent have Erasmus+ actions influenced policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport in Malta?

Erasmus+ is deemed to have minimal policy impact if any (at least directly) on national level with respect to projects undertaken under Key Action 1 and Key Action 2. This is because such projects are implemented at an institutional/organisation level.

Under Key Action 3, youth organisations do organise debates with policy makers, however it is difficult to quantify at this stage how / to what extent such actions have influenced policy developments. From their end, education and training institutions do not have the opportunity to apply for Key Action 3 projects at a decentralised level, thus limiting collaborations with local authorities.

The Programme is however deemed to be effective in complimenting the objectives of the Maltese Government particularly in the fields of youth, lifelong learning, VET and the enhancement of skills and innovation. By way of example, the National Youth Policy is a clear indication as to how local policy is in line with EU policy and the goals and objectives of Erasmus+. Indeed, following an extensive consultation with all the relevant stakeholders the policy emerged against the background of a new policy initiative at EU level, the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). It was the first policy approach to embed youth policy in the context of the UN Conventions and European policy documents.

Among the principles of this policy are:

- **Access** - Young people should have user-friendly access to quality services and equality of opportunity with the aim of ensuring their active participation in the economy and society.

- **Participation** - Young people should be consulted and be involved in all planning and decision making as active participants in their own development and in that of the wider society.

- **Inclusion** - Barriers and impediments to young people’s active participation in the political, educational, social and economic spheres should be addressed and positive steps taken to help ensure that young people are not directly or indirectly excluded.

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Integration - Key stakeholders such as Government, civil society, religious denominations and the public and private sectors should cooperate and coordinate their efforts to ensure greater impact in supporting the development of young people and in helping them to realise their full potential.

Diversity - The diverse backgrounds and identities of young people should be recognised and respected and the positive role they can play in their emotional, social, cultural and spiritual development acknowledged.

Equality - Every young person is of equal value and should be given equal respect, dignity and opportunity, regardless of age, experience, beliefs, ethnicity, physical and mental capacities, socioeconomic background, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression.

To date throughout the programme duration, there were a number of policies within the education, employment and youth spheres that had a constructive impact on the Erasmus+ programme implementation in Malta. By way of example, in relation to education there was the strategy for the prevention of early school leaving which was launched in June 2014, the national curriculum framework for all (2012) and the framework for the education strategy for Malta (2014 – 2024), along with the lifelong learning strategy 2020, the National Youth Policy Framework 2015 – 2020.

The NA recognises the importance of using the Erasmus+ programme as a tool for Malta to attain the objectives pertaining to education and training, youth and sport; particularly because such policies are identified as a means for the country to reach the EU 2020 objectives and related Country Specific Recommendations. To this end the MT NA also recognises the need to promote the Erasmus+ programme as a tool with all its key stakeholders which are the kingpins to catalyse policy development and attainment of objectives set therein. To this end the NA has established an Erasmus+ Stakeholder Forum which is convened bi-annually during the course of the Erasmus+ Programme implementation and shall be chaired by the Permanent Secretary, MEDE. During such committee meetings the NA will present the development of the Erasmus+ programme and challenges that arise from implementation while establishing a continuous link with the policies highlighted in the Agency’s work-plan along with its needs analysis between the policy highlighted and actions to be taken to attain objectives established therein.

The following boxes are abstracts from the Youth Policy that clearly indicate its complementarity to the Erasmus+ Programme and evidences how the Erasmus+ programme compliments the Government’s impetus to entice institutions to innovate.
### Action Plan - Initiatives for the active engagement, empowerment and participation of young people and youth organisations.

Develop and implement initiatives, programmes and activities that actively involve young people and youth organisations in developing young people’s competences and skills that enhance their future learning and employment prospects.

**Planned Actions**

- The Youth Empowerment Programme (which includes projects in literature, visual arts, media, music, volunteering, specialised study, community activity and empowerment) at both national and local level will be continued, further developed and expanded to include new and innovative projects.

- Youth Inclusion will be further developed and expanded to ensure innovative and smooth transitions from school to further education and training and/or the labour market.

- The Youth Work Profession Act will be implemented, training will be provided for the professional development of youth workers and accreditation of youth work and non-formal learning progressed.

- Initiatives will be undertaken to integrate minorities in schools and the community and campaigns and educational programmes will be conducted to increase integration and raise awareness of diversity.

- Outreach and detached youth work services will be put in place to address, in particular, the needs of socially excluded and at risk young people.

- Youth organisations will be supported to further enhance their capacity, to recognise their contribution to lifelong learning and to increase their visibility.

- In cooperation with Gozo Youth Services, assistance and support will be provided to enhance community based networks and mechanisms to promote youth work, cultural events and other activities.

### Action Plan - Education and training

Develop and implement initiatives that utilise both formal education and non-formal learning, as mutually reinforcing agents, with a view to enhancing young people’s educational attainment levels and progression.

**Planned Actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in education and training**

- Early school leavers and young people not in education, training or employment (NEET) will be supported to develop their skills and enhance their further education and employment
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

prospects.

- E-learning and lifelong learning among young people will be promoted.
- Career guidance and relevant professional advice for young people will be provided.
- The validation of non-formal and informal learning will be pursued.
- Reducing the gaps in educational outcomes between males and females and between students attending different schools will be pursued.
- Decreasing the number of low achievers and raising the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence will be supported.
- Initiatives to improve the educational achievement of young people at risk of poverty will be undertaken.
- Initiatives to raise levels of young people’s retention and attainment in further, post-secondary, vocational, and tertiary education and training will be undertaken.

Action Plan - Employment and entrepreneurship

Develop and implement initiatives with a view to enhancing young people’s participation in the labour market and their future employment, occupational and professional prospects.

Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in employment and entrepreneurship.

- Research on skills forecasting will be promoted and supported.
- Matching of occupations, skills and competences will be pursued.
- Work-experience initiatives for young people will be undertaken.
- Training designed to meet the needs of industry will be promoted and supported.
- Young people will be informed/advised and supported to access training, apprenticeships and other labour market oriented opportunities.
- Entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurial spirit among young people through non-formal education and informal learning opportunities will be promoted.
- Young people interested in self-employment will be encouraged and supported.
- Work exchange opportunities abroad for young people will be promoted.
- The evidence-base of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) will
Initiatives aimed at supporting the integration of young people with disabilities into the labour market will be developed.

**Action Plan - Social Inclusion**

Develop and implement initiatives with a view to enhancing the well-being and active participation of young people with fewer opportunities and those from a migrant background.

Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in social inclusion.

- Young people with disabilities will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.
- Young people with a migrant background will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.
- Young people from families at risk of poverty and social exclusion will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.
- Young people with challenging behaviours will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.
- Gender equality, awareness and mutual respect among young people will be promoted.
- Young people leaving care detention will be encouraged and supported to integrate into community life and the labour market.
- LGBTIQ young people will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.

**Action Plan - Voluntary and Community activities**

Develop and implement initiatives to enable young people to be active members of their local communities and take responsibility for the quality of community life and the local environment.

Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in voluntary and community activities.

- Opportunities for intergenerational awareness and dialogue through the active involvement of young and older people will be created and facilitated.
- Youth Local Councils will be further developed and their numbers expanded.
- Youth environmental projects, activities and events at local community level will be encouraged and facilitated.
- Young people’s awareness and appreciation of their local historical, architectural and cultural heritage will be strengthened.
- Young people’s participation in the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme will be encouraged and facilitated.
- Young people’s take-up of European Voluntary Service (EVS) and other youth exchange opportunities will be encouraged and promoted.

**Question 4. What specific approaches (such as co-financing, promotion and others) have been taken in order to try and enhance the effects of Erasmus+ in Malta? To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified? Differences between KAs?**

The NA is actively involved in the Erasmus+ Programme and on an ongoing basis seeks to address any issues that arise in the programme’s implementation so as to enhance the effects of Erasmus+.

As evidenced extensively both in the predecessor programmes and the current Erasmus+ programme\(^{51}\), the NA has (and continues to) undertake considerable initiatives to enhance and promote the programme. These comprise:

- Numerous one to one meetings:
  - At Ministerial/ public authority level
  - With associations such as the Malta Business Bureau (MBB), and the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise
  - With both potential and current applicants
- The organisation of round tables
- Attendance/ participation in specific events like Fresher’s week at University

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\(^{51}\) National Annual Reports
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

- Training sessions on the programme and utilisation of the IT tools
- Close collaboration by EUPA team members
- The setting up of the communication unit, with this Unit subsequently working a lot with MUESAC
- 3 step approach – that has helped the application stage
- The support of the SALTOs Resource Centres for NAs in Erasmus+ Youth In Action in the implementation of programme specific priorities has been very fruitful
- Over the past year – increase in personnel and one specifically on monitoring (controls and checks). Furthermore, during the project implementation considerable monitoring is carried out that includes quarterly round table meetings for HEI – for the exchange of good practices
- Bi lateral meetings with beneficiaries.
- Continuous monitoring of projects
- Information at educational fairs as well as information sessions
- Workshops
- Activities were held in collaboration with the Agency’s stakeholders. For instance, activities held in collaboration with eTwinning, or supported by the Ministry of Education and Employment,
- Drew up a Handbook for Beneficiaries – this is highly appreciated by the beneficiaries and positively perceived as a support to the interpretation of the programme guide, the grant agreement and its relevant annexes.
- Upgrading of the website and online presence on social media

Such efforts are deemed to be effective with the increased importance given to social media over the past couple of years as this was deemed to be highly effective in successfully targeting the younger generation (those aged under 30)

That said, the NA ought to draw up a strategy to successfully tap the elder generation (those aged 65+) as to date this cluster has not been successfully targeted, especially in terms of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

A positive initiative was the introduction of the ‘Project Implementation Directorate (PID) in 2016 within the Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE). This was viewed to be a very positive
question 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?

it is difficult to determine how or to what extent certain actions of the programme are more effective than others and to compare the different actions and activity types, as they all have their specific, short and long term relevance for the programme. in general, the mid-term evaluation (as presented in this report) notifies that the three key actions contribute to and address the national and erasmus+ priorities and objectives.

the erasmus+ programme followed on the footsteps of the predecessor programmes and contributes to internationalisation and the development of skills. from the discussions carried out with both the na officials and beneficiaries and the secondary research endeavours undertaken, it is clear that mobility is deemed to be of utmost importance and to have an impact at both individual and institutional level, and likely to also positively impact at a societal level in the longer term too. mobility activities contribute to the development of personal and social competencies, especially to reach out for european citizenship and active participation of young people, diversity and tolerance, anti-radicalization, non-violence, and democratic awareness. as also highlighted earlier in this report, malta’s insularity makes the erasmus+ programme all the more relevant, by enabling individuals/ organisations to travel / partner/ collaborate and experience first-hand different cultures/ modus operandi. by way of example, as an activity type which reaches the highest number of young people in the programme, youth exchanges in ka 1 are very important as a first time european learning experience among peers, easy accessible for all young people.

an issue voiced with respect to mobility and higher education in particular related to the current instabilities and the terrorist threats across europe. the mt na indicated a current constraint with respect to key action 107 (partner countries outside the eu are eligible for funded mobilities). furthermore, and linked to the above, the mt na pointed out that national contact points are not always efficient/cooperative with tunisia being mentioned as a case in point. the mt na was seeking to mitigate this issue by attending in a number of contact seminars aimed at building networks and identifying/ strengthening rapport with other countries.

52 interviews with mt na officials and beneficiaries
Specific mention\(^{53}\) was also made to Key Action 2 for capacity building, whereby, through this Action organisations had the opportunity to work in partnership with organisations from other participating countries in order to improve their provision for learners and share innovative practices in education, training and youth provision between participating countries. With respect to Youth and KA2, the Strategic Partnerships are potentially helpful as an instrument to support development on organizational level in youth work and for bringing innovation to youth work and quality enhancing to youth work practice and youth work policy development. The MT NA indicated that there is a need for a more clear description of the Strategic Partnerships in relation to the youth field and the youth work. This is especially relevant with regard to the expected systemic impact and innovation.

Issues voiced by the MT NA pertaining to the youth sector comprised:

- Youth initiatives as initiatives of informal groups of young people that under Erasmus+ are only possible as transnationally, with the complexity of the programme in relation to transnational youth initiative adversely effecting national youth initiatives when compared with the predecessor programmes\(^{54}\).

- KA 2 and especially KA 3 are both aiming at a deeper impact on systemic level. But to reach a systemic impact, on the one hand actions and activity types have to be designed in a way, that they can reach these objectives. On the other hand it is difficult to reach systemic impact if the budget is not big enough. There is a need to foster synergies between KA2 projects and KA3 projects and Strategic Developments.

As a general suggestion, it would be very helpful to have more flexible funding structures and mechanism, which much better allow to develop a project according to the needs of the target group and a combination of different activity types, also across the sectors.

\(^{53}\) Interviews with MT NA officials and beneficiaries

\(^{54}\) This has adversely impacted the competence development of young people and the access for young people with fewer opportunities.
Question 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 programme that could increase effectiveness?

Overall the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ is seen to positively. As documented in the annual reports, the MT NA’s communication and promotional efforts were extensive, aimed at promoting the new brand, and explaining the Erasmus+ programme to past and potential participants. That said, the predecessor programmes were also handled by one NA and communication between the different programmes was often amalgamated. For this reason the Erasmus+ programme did not result in major benefits with respect to increased efficiency and effectiveness with respect to communication and costs reductions pertaining to the administrative aspect of same.

The general view overall was that under the predecessor programmes Erasmus was potentially the most known/ better branded, hence the new programme successfully rode on this.

That said, a major issue of concern among the MT NA official overseeing the Youth sector is that this segment seems to have been shadowed by the Erasmus+ brand. In this respect there was concern that the Erasmus+ was invariably perceived to be similar or an extension of Erasmus. Consequently, those working in the youth field were faced with a major hurdle to overcome such incorrect perceptions. In this respect, though Youth in Action is a separate chapter in the programme, this is not mirrored in the programme guide, where it is very hard to find those funding opportunities, which are relevant for target groups in the youth field. The specific quality of the Youth in Action programme is more difficult to communicate and to understand and is in danger to be dissolved. This also leads to a much bigger difficulty to really implement specific quality aspects in the projects, especially in the mobility activities of young people. Likewise, issues arose when promoting the programme as a whole, as this was rather complex and was not effective in reaching out to specific targets with distinct requirements.

Another issue highlighted in the youth sector was that Erasmus+ presented challenges at a grassroots level, particularly in the context of its less formal operational nature when compared to the education and training sectors.

It is being recommended that more value is placed on sector-specific approaches. Apart from a general document that promotes the Programme in its entirety, it is being recommended that shorter, more concise guidelines are created pertaining to specific areas of the Erasmus+ programme to better target specific segments.

55 From the face-to-face interviews conducted
As indicated earlier on, at the onset the general objectives/definitions were not clear, and thus resulted in a slow start in the uptake of funding.

In terms of the application, there is a clear tendency away from unexperienced and small organizations to bigger institutions with administrative experiences and capacities. Indeed, the application seems to be targeted primarily at large and organised entities that apply for a number of projects in that different activities are governed by the same regulations. In such instances, the current programme enables those that coordinate activities to make one application to cover everything (which they could not do before). Through the integration process different target groups can apply together for funding within KA2. Such a stance has created greater scope for the project instigators to form partnerships with entities/partners both within and outside the sector. Another advantage of Erasmus+ in relation to the application, more specifically in relation to the adjudication of applications is that Erasmus+ projects need to achieve a satisfactory score on all criteria, if not the project fails. The MT NA viewed this positively as it ensures good quality applications that take into consideration (and address) all aspects of the project at application stage with such a stance having a positive ripple effect on the project throughout its implementation. Nonetheless, the integration of the predecessor programmes also brought about issues with respect to the assessment of applications, though to a lesser extent. The MT NA pointed out that whereas under the predecessor programmes assessors were generally experts in their field of competence pertaining to a specific programme, the amalgamation of programmes necessitated assessors to have a broader knowledge on the Erasmus+ programme in its entirety.

Small, regional entities that offer work at the grassroots were not facilitated by this change. In their view the application became far more complex and indeed increased the administrative burden. In their view a one-size fits all approach is not tenable. When compared with the predecessor programmes the NA indicates that particularly with EVS the general feeling is that it is no longer opportune to apply.

In relation to applications, as indicated extensively throughout this report, a one-size fits all approach is not opportune as the needs of the fields are very different, and so too are the beneficiaries, though Erasmus+ as a merged programme does not differentiate. The standardized and unified procedures for all sectors do not take into account the specific features and characteristics of the different sectors. This leads to problems a loss of user-friendliness, of acceptance and a lack of clarity and orientation for potential beneficiaries.

Another point raised from the interviews related to centralised vs decentralised projects. In view of the variance in tapping centralised projects, it would seem that the budget allocation for these distinct projects ought to be reviewed. The centralised projects have large budgets that attract weighty partners, but too often a link to the national context is missing.

With respect to schools - The MT NA noted that in general, school beneficiaries provided quite a positive feedback about the programme and the funding itself and believe that the new programme is more user-friendly and easier than previous programmes with particular reference to the calculation of the budget. Statistics show that more schools are interested in widening and
broadening the project ideas from mobility projects to strategic partnerships projects. Most of the organisations feel confident about the programme rules and procedures and are exploring various possibilities of funding. The feedback received from schools is that the simplification of budget rules has helped schools to explore the Erasmus+ programme better and were very willing to explore different actions for instance schools which have embarked on projects under both KA1 and KA2 actions. Furthermore, the new programme offers the opportunity to make higher demands at application stage which leads to better considered strategic development. A major positive shift in the Erasmus+ programme is the fact that it is now the organisation rather than the individual that decides which are the strategic aspects to work on. Consequently, the projects are able to be better integrated as a natural part of school development work.

That said, the MT NA notes that some teachers/staff in schools taking the role of contact persons in projects do sometimes perceive the coordination requirements as too much of a burden and time consuming since projects are to be managed over and above their normal work duties. In this respect, the MT NA gives extra support to all school beneficiaries in order to ascertain that projects are implemented in a successful way. Furthermore, the introduction of the ‘Project Implementation Directorate (PID)’ in 2016 should aid in this respect by assisting schools to properly manage their projects. In addition, feedback shows that such organisations do appreciate that most of the project reporting is done online and also the fact that participants going on a KA1 school mobility can upload details of activities once they are selected.

**Shorter mobility periods** – Under the predecessor programmes, the opportunity for smaller projects that ran for a week or so, and revolved around a more general issue, including exchanges with groups of pupils was a valuable element. The projects that included students from the higher education preparatory programmes was highlighted as an appreciated element from the LLP. The opportunity for shorter mobility periods that also includes students at compulsory school and on higher education preparatory programmes is therefore something that should be a priority in future programmes. Shorter programmes could also be targeted towards pupils who are at risk of exclusion – an important target group for the EU – who would thus experience a clear sense of participation.

Student teachers find it hard to travel for long periods. Projects allowing teachers and students from several countries to carry out a course together for a shorter period could be an alternative to encourage hesitant students. Shorter mobility periods would also release teachers to supervise student teachers on work experience.

Another positive aspect identified relates to the IT tools. This has been amply elaborated under Question 14. Linked to IT are the positive aspects that the applications are now uploaded online, and

56 Within the Ministry of Education and Employment

57 From the primary research conducted
likewise the final reports. To this end it must be noted that MT NA is working towards having everything online thereby diminishes further paper filing.

With respect to adult education, definitions of the various strands are unclear. This is clearly evident under Key Action 2 where no applications were approved in 2016 specifically for this reason.  

With respect to financing and more specifically to contributions to unit costs, the shift towards contributions to unit costs was viewed to positively by all. It is hereby being recommended that contributions to unit costs and reimbursement of travel expenses be harmonised across the whole programme and all its aspects.

**Sports** - As for sports there are two strands through which organisations actively involved in sport can take part activities, these being either through decentralised activities or centralised activities. With respect to the former projects need to be intended to use sport in the context of education and training or youth activities (this could include, for example, work placements abroad for sport apprentices, staff training for coaches, volunteers or youth workers involved in delivering sports activities in a formal or informal context or partnership projects aimed at improving provision in the teaching of sporting skills). The initial feeling from the interviews conducted is that this is less attractive that under the predecessor programmes. Sports organisations could also tap into centralised funds that are aimed at supporting European partnerships focused on grassroots sport, though the general perception among local organisations is that such funds are far-reaching and difficult to tap into. Consequently, where sports has been used as a method for intercultural learning, it should also be decentralized in order to be better combined with Youth in Action practice.

**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?

A review of the current and forecasted budgets for the Programme period (2014 – 2020) (table below) evidences that over the programme period the budget is anticipated to increase by 45% (from 2014 to 2020). In this respect, the major increase will be experienced in the first 4 years with funding in 2017 to increase by 37% over 2014. Thereafter budget increase is anticipated to be marginal (6% increase between 2017 and 2020).

58 National Erasmus+ Annual Report (2016)
The anticipated increase, while challenging is deemed to be opportune in enabling more enterprises benefit from the Programme. As per Annex 6, the number of applications received for most actions exceeded the available budgets. As a result, good quality projects had to be rejected (or placed on reserve). With respect to KA1 – staff training – it is important that the constant gradual increase in demand is matched by an increase in budget. Furthermore, and more specifically in relation to Key Action 2 for higher education, the research\textsuperscript{59} evidences how the budget was not appropriate in comparison to the demand.

Another point raised by the MT NA related to the need for increased flexibility (with funds). The general feeling was that more flexibility, would benefit the implementation of the Programme and ensure the maximum utilisation of allocated funds. Such a stance would enable the NA to be better placed to respond to the current requirements. Apart from the better utilisation of funds, this approach would also increase the level of management and decrease the administrative burden that is currently being incurred by having to request reallocations of budget and having to return funds to the Commission. Related to the above is the current issue of monies not being spent due to over-estimation. It would seem opportune if there was a provision to carry forward such unutilised funds. That said, it is worthy to note that the MT NA has undertaken measures and placed more onus on the assessors such that due consideration is also given to the project budgets at proposal stage.

The MT NA official responsible for the youth sector was satisfied that the youth chapter had a clearly separated budget with its extra budget line. This guarantees a specific budget for the youth strand.

\textsuperscript{59} Both primary and secondary research. Primary research relates to the interviews conducted and responses attained from the questionnaires distributed (Analysis shown in Annexes 8 and 9), while secondary research pertains to the Annual Reports and other documentation (as highlighted at the end of this report)
and its development for the next years. Nonetheless it is felt that the budget increase or the youth segment of the programme is much smaller than in the other parts of the programme, this notwithstanding that statistics\textsuperscript{60} indicate that the youth strand of the programme has the highest number of applications, the highest number of funded projects the highest number of organisations being active in Erasmus+.

The MT NA highlighted the importance and effectiveness of Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA) as an instrument to support the quality in the implementation of the programme, especially for newcomers and for cross-sectorial cooperation. That said, the MT NA pointed out that it would be opportune to also be able to undertake national TCA activities in order to have an inclusive and effective approach linked with the different national realities.

Question 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 programme to remedy these?

As indicated throughout this report the main challenges and difficulties (particularly at the onset) related to:

- Understanding the objectives and priorities of the Programme
- The promotion of Erasmus+ and altering peoples’ perceptions that Erasmus+ was synonymous exclusively to the previous Erasmus programme;
- Limited flexibility in the distribution of the budget
- Issues in relation to IT

Furthermore, the Erasmus+ programme eligibility criteria invariably eliminated an important segment that was targeted under the predecessor programmes – the grassroots enterprises/NGOs that worked at a local/regional level.

Issues that pertained to the predecessor programmes related also to the human resource component, however these have been solved and the restructuring of the NA over the past year seems to be bearing its fruit with all those interviewed within the NA of the opinion that they are today well geared to successfully tackle the Programme’s implementation. That said, the foreseen

\textsuperscript{60} Annex 6 and the National Annual Reports for 2014, 2015 and 2016 to which the Annex table refers to.
increase in budget over the coming years is likely to necessitate more manpower to successfully reach a wider audience thereby ensuring take-up of the applicable funds.

There exist opportunities for the programme to support lifelong learning, thereby enabling Malta to better tackle this factor where it is still lagging behind EU average. This could possibly be achieved through further collaboration and embedding the programme in organisational strategies.

As indicated earlier on another challenge encountered in the implementation of the Programme Actions related to the quality of applications and the need to ensure that due consideration was also given to the budget during the evaluation stage of projects. The MT NA (following consultations with other countries) adopted a good practice by involving the same assessors in the drawing up of the final report of the same Project they would have assessed at the onset. This places more emphasis on the assessors to truly take into consideration the budget component of the Project (at application stage).

The Preparatory visits that were available under the predecessor programmes were viewed very positively by both beneficiaries and MT NA officials and aided in increasing the quality of project applications. The fact that this was no longer available under the current programme was therefore considered as a regression though through the current programme applicants can avail themselves of TCA as an instrument to support the quality in the implementation of the programme for cross-sectorial cooperation.

While one appreciated the benefits of pupils undertaking long mobility periods, to date these have proved ineffective, with limited participation (if any). Throughout this report the possible reasons for such ineffectiveness are highlighted and comprise among others: cultural issues, young individuals

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61 Adult learning in Malta. Insights into current participation, content and forms of adult learning. University of Malta. Co-investigators (in alphabetical order): Carmel Borg, Peter Mayo, Milosh Raykov (2016). Abstract: Several European (European Commission, 2015a) and international studies (OECD, 2014) demonstrate constantly increasing levels of involvement of adults in various forms of lifelong learning. In Malta, despite the numerous policy measures (e.g. MEDE, 2014), the 26.0% increased financial support to widen participation in tertiary education and increased involvement in lifelong learning, tertiary educational attainment in Malta is significantly below the EU average of 36.9% (European Commission, 2014a). According to a 2011 report, in comparison to the EU member states, Malta had the highest proportion (72.3%) of 25- to 64-year-old adults with educational attainment below the upper secondary level (ISCED 3), as well as a significant proportion (23.6%) of adults with educational attainment below the ISCED 2, lower secondary level (EURLYDICE, 2011, p. 10). Recent reports (e.g. European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice, 2015) show that the number of 25- to 64-year-old adults in Malta with educational attainment below the upper or lower secondary level has declined to 59.4%, but it is still one of the lowest educational attainments in the EU. (page 20)
that are not yet independent (or not deemed to be so by their parents), and fear of safety, and others.

The MT NA highlighted another issue that hindered mobility participation among students that was quite particular for Malta was that education was free and that individuals attained a sustenance amount. In this respect, during a round table meeting\textsuperscript{62}, the University of Malta representatives noted that the possibility of a ‘zero-grant’ mobility to students in Malta is still a challenging factor. In addition, the Malta Youth Ballet Foundation representative noted that Maltese students are used to free education and therefore refrain from going on a ‘zero-grant’ mobility\textsuperscript{63}.

It would seem advisable for future programme that the provision of opportunities for shorter mobility periods could be more enticing for hesitant pupils (and their parents). Offering exploratory trips whereby the pupil and their parent are given the opportunity to travel together to visit the pupil’s placement prior to the mobility period could be another opportunity to increase the intake in future. Alternatively one could seek alternative means for pupils and parents alike to get acquainted to the locality/school/area to increase their confidence in the safety of the placement. Furthermore, the opportunity for a school teacher to travel along with the pupil should be explored further too as this is likely to be perceived to positively by parents of such pupil/s undertaking such mobility opportunities.

The higher complexity and increased administrative burden are making it much more difficult to entice new beneficiaries to the programme. There is a clear tendency of a shift away from unexperienced and small organizations to bigger institutions with administrative experiences and capacities. As a consequence there is the danger of losing grassroots initiatives.

Under Erasmus+, youth initiatives as initiatives of informal groups of young people are only possible as transnationally. Unlike the predecessor programmes, this strand has so far been minimal in view of complexity of the programme. The MT NA argued\textsuperscript{64} that through the current programme the national youth initiatives have been lost. In view of their positive impact on the competence development of young people and the access for young people with fewer opportunities the NA indicated that the introduction of the national youth initiative should once again be considered.

\textsuperscript{62} Information collated from the annual report for Malta 2015

\textsuperscript{63} In this respect, all HEIs were encouraged to continue promoting the qualitative aspects and the added value of a mobility experience through the sharing of success stories and experiences by previous Erasmus+ participants.

\textsuperscript{64} Face-to-face interviews conducted
It was further highlighted\(^{65}\) that while the programme had ambitious aims and objectives, it was not sufficiently designed for their implementation. “\textit{Instruments, actions, and activity types are not always linked to those aims and objectives, rules and procedures often hinder to have a deeper impact on this. Youth in Action needs more instruments to reach those objectives.}”

In relation to Key Action 2 and the involvement of enterprises, so far this has been minimal though there were signs of improvement. A review of the Annual Reports evidences that universities tend to cluster and work only with other universities. That said, interviews with MT NA officials highlighted that this year there was cross sectional collaboration between the University of Malta and industry, with the MT NA receiving applications also from private entities such as the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) and the Malta Business Bureau that were willing to work with the University. Furthermore, with regards to KA 2 Youths, the most prevailing concern of the applicants is that institutions believe that only large well-established youth organisations have the possibility of being selected for funding and that effort to gather a consortium and submit an application would have been futile, as smaller organisations would not have the capacity to invest in creating a good enough project.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Question 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?}
\end{quote}

A review of the dissemination of information may be viewed from two aspects:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textbf{I.} At MT NA level – MT NA has undertaken numerous endeavours to promote the programmes and the results derived thereof with the constant increase in project application submissions is testimony of this, along with considerable evidence\(^{66}\) of the various efforts undertaken over the five year period of the programmes. An effective approach highlighted\(^{67}\) and considered to be highly effective relates to the dissemination and promotion of best practices and success stories.

\item \textbf{II.} At beneficiary level - While a lot of effort has been placed in relation to the dissemination of information from the MT NA, there is still room for improvement when it comes to
\end{enumerate}

\(^{65}\) From the various face to face interviews conducted

\(^{66}\) In the yearly reports

\(^{67}\) From the fact to face interviews conducted by both NA officials and beneficiaries
beneficiaries actions to disseminate the results of their respective projects. Interviews with various NA officials highlighted that “its an ongoing battle to tell beneficiaries to focus on the dissemination of the programme – both during and after (the project).” That said, the small size of organisations (beneficiary entities) does not aid in this respect. Furthermore the small size of the projects that generally related to small regional areas, even within small networks was rather contained even if there is an effort at their level to disseminate information. There was consensus among all MT NA officials interviewed that project applicants/beneficiaries lacked being creative in their approach to disseminate information on the projects they undertook. To address this need ERASMUS+ is assisting entities in such endeavours. A case in point is under Action 2 Projects that obliges beneficiaries to promote their projects and the outcome/s thereof on a public platform. Indeed, there are a number of platforms that are effective and can assist this cluster of beneficiaries. Nonetheless the existing European platforms do not seem to be sufficiently attractive or user-friendly to really reach the very different target groups of the various programme sectors and their purpose to disseminate and exploit results of projects. It would be opportune to determine the extent to which users perceive such platforms to be relevant, user friendly and indeed determine the overall perceived quality of same. At the same time those electronic platforms have their limitations and electronic tools are only one way to support dissemination and exploitation of results. As much important are face to face activities as they are constantly carried out in the TCA, which also allow for a better definition of the scope, purposes and target groups.

The MT NA suggested having a budget that focuses specifically on training applicants/beneficiaries on various approaches that could be adopted, comprising innovative and Avant-garde efforts and best practices undertaken internationally. The aim was to inform and subsequently train beneficiaries how they could be more effective in their dissemination endeavours and carry out innovative activities that created lasting impact with project outcomes and how these were disseminated. Furthermore, experience has shown that there is also a need for a special budget or an increased operational budget for DEOR activities in the project budgets to bring beneficiaries in the position, to take care for dissemination and exploitation within their projects.

There is consensus that social media is the main platform to reach the young people target group, though the general feeling was that there could be an opportunity for beneficiaries to be more

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68 It was common practice for beneficiaries – particularly teachers and staff to disseminate information though meetings or workshops

69 In the Netherlands beneficiaries indicated to be working on videos where experiences and results are shared to inform (new) students of the benefits of participation in Erasmus+
creative and innovative in their approach to increase awareness and dissemination of information of their funded projects.

At school level, a popular platform is the school education gateway – e-twinning\textsuperscript{70}. This platform was indicated by both beneficiaries interviewed and NA officials to be effective and an ideal starting point when seeking to embark on a project.

Overall, the mid-term evaluation evidences that programme awareness is satisfactory with the MT NA endeavours in targeting the various target audiences bearing its fruit as evidenced by the number of applications submitted across the different Actions over the Programme period to date. The main entities responsible for vocational training – the University of Malta and MCAST are very knowledgeable of the programme and submit a number of applications each year. In relation to school education and mobility there is good participation and a good spread of applications from public, private, and church schools. There is room for improvement with respect to the involvement of the private sector in partnership projects. Furthermore, with respect to partnership projects, so far the MT NA has comprised organisations applying primarily as partners rather than coordinators, with the latter perceived to be far more complex and time consuming.

**Efficiency**

**Question 10: To what extent is the system of cooperation and division of tasks between the Commission, Executive Agency, NA’s, NAU’s, Independent Audit Bodies and Erasmus+ Committee efficient and well-functioning from the point of view in your country? What are the areas for possible improvement or simplification in the implementation of Erasmus+ or a successor programme?**

Overall there is good cooperation between the various bodies, with the MT NA indicating that communication and cooperation at a local level (NA, NAU, Audit body and Ministry) has improved since the predecessor programmes. This was made possible with the introduction of monthly meetings during which issues of concern, and challenges are discussed as are the current modus operandi to determine whether/in what way these may be improved. Indeed these meetings have enabled the strengthening of cooperation and collaboration between the various entities concerned (as opposed to one where the NAU merely monitors/checks the NA). The fact that the Ministry is

\textsuperscript{70} https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/about.htm
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also present for such meetings is viewed to positively\(^{71}\), strengthening the rapport between the Programme and local policy.

Following the success of such monthly meetings, the MT NA opted to adopt a similar approach with the beneficiary institutions. The primary research\(^{72}\) evidences good communication (both formal and informal) and cooperation between the MT NA, stakeholders and the beneficiaries.

The MT NA also collaborates with NAs from other countries.

The MT NA is also of the view that with the introduction of Erasmus + Programme communication with the Commission has improved (when compared with the communication during the predecessor programmes) with the NA finding support when required. That said, the MT NA official responsible for the youth sector commented that the general feeling among other international NAs\(^{73}\) responsible for the youth sector of the programme was that the system of cooperation and division of tasks between the Commission, Executive Agency, NA’s, NAU’s, Independent Audit Bodies and Erasmus+ Committee is complex and not aided by having an integrated programme, which contains five different sectors all with their distinct specificities. The MT NA indicated that the general view\(^{74}\) was that a common understanding of all the partners involved on administrative-financial management and political approaches to understand the developments, anticipate the challenges and steer the implementation of the programme into the common direction needs to be sought. The short term planning of the programme and its actors and the frequent changes of responsible people and bodies of the different partners made it even more difficult to find that necessary common ground. The necessary coordination procedures among the different actors are time consuming and have created extra workload for the people involved.

The MT NA is of the opinion that it has the possibility to support national youth work policy and quality of youth work practice at local, national and international level, and thus, the link between NA’s work and the youth policy developments should be strengthened.

\(^{71}\) Interviews conducted with MT NA officials

\(^{72}\) Face-to-face interviews and questionnaires distributed to beneficiaries

\(^{73}\) Across Europe and more specifically NA officials involved in the youth sector of the Programme

\(^{74}\) Among NA officials involved in the youth sector of the programme
Question 11: To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in your country, both at the level of the NA 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?

The Maltese situation is probably distinct in that, prior to 2014, the same NA was responsible for the handing of the distinct programmes, hence this has not altered with the integration of the programmes into Erasmus+. Likewise, in the predecessor programmes, communication efforts were often integrated. Hence, the integration of the programmes into the Erasmus+ programme did not result in tangible gains in this respect either.

That said, a positive that was highlighted during the interviews undertaken with NA officials is that the integration of the predecessor programmes has resulted in increased knowledge of the programme in its entirety by the varying NA officials.

For applicants and beneficiaries active in different sectors of Erasmus+, the programme integration offers the potential to build synergies and integrated approaches between the different projects of a beneficiary.

As for the administrative burden, views varied between the different heads of operations. Overall, the NA has evidenced an improvement with respect to the overall coordination of the programme, though the official responsible for the youth sector indicated that since the introduction of Erasmus+ the administrative burden has increased. As for participants, the administrative burden (particularly in relation to the application procedure) has remained unaltered at best, and in several instances increased considerably, thereby off-putting some potential participants from applying. It was pointed that a one-size fits all approach is not appropriate and indeed counterproductive. Indeed comments voiced throughout the study highlighted the fact that the Programme seems to be more apt for larger, well established organisations rather than for the smaller organisations and those at the grassroots of the community. The streamlining of applications was a suggestion voiced by many. Furthermore, amendments to the application and criteria for first timers could possibly encourage more small organisations to participate. From their end entities that regarded themselves as ‘regular’, having successfully applied for a number of Projects felt that their ‘success’ should be taken into consideration when requesting certain information (at application stage).

With respect to the application process both NA officials and beneficiaries indicated challenges with the IT tools. Consequently, NA had to allocate considerable time to train applicants to successful utilise the IT tools.
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?

As indicated earlier on, it is difficult to determine how or to what extent certain actions of the programme are more efficient than others and to compare the different actions and activity types, as they all have their specific, short and long term relevance for the programme. In general, the mid-term evaluation (as presented in this report) notifies that the three Key Actions contribute to and address the National and Erasmus + priorities and objectives.

That said, the Erasmus+ programme’s integrated approach has resulted in the exclusion of specific groups of participants, thereby losing the emphasis on the inclusion perspective. Rather than fitting projects to specifically target a need, the project is designed to fit in the framework. As a result, the integration has adversely effected the programme’s efficiency. Furthermore, the programme does not offer enough specific funding mechanism for projects, which are specifically dedicated to young people with special needs and fewer opportunities.

Feedback attained from organisations is that the organisational budget for beneficiaries is very low, making it difficult at times to cover the real costs to organise such projects. This in turn places more pressure on the NA in its endeavours to motivate organisations to participate in the Programme.

A drawback that was evidenced from this study relates to preparatory visits that were available under the predecessor programmes. These were viewed to very positively by both the MT NA and the beneficiaries and positively affected the quality of the applications. These are no longer available under the current programme. TCA is now the only way applicants can meet up. At the start of Erasmus+ this was a major issue, though it is noted that now people seem to be are getting used to the new system with TCA is picking up as more applicants are going up for contact seminars. This is helping to make good quality projects.

An element of flexibility with managing project funding ought to be increased. This is deemed important to allow the MT NA to adjust projects to the needs of the target group.

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75 Feedback attained from face-to-face interviews
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?

Overall, as indicated earlier on (Question 11), the promised simplifications for applicants through the introduction of 3 standardized key actions was not realized in practice. On the contrary, the primary research\(^{76}\) has evidenced that in comparison to the predecessor programmes there is additional administrative burden for all partners involved.

A common application for all, has proven to be inopportune, viewed to be too complex, complicated to complete and could be deterring smaller (often voluntary run) entities from applying.

The MT NA appreciated that standardised procedures were helpful and necessary, though it was felt that an effective simplification of project life cycle for all actions was necessary to ease the administrative burden on all sides. As in other parts of the programme (e.g. Erasmus Charter) a fast EVS track procedure for organisations having a long lasting and good experience in the EVS should enable an easier and quicker application process, while at the same time keeping the existing and necessary quality standards.

Beneficiaries welcomed the introduction of lump sums and unit costs under Erasmus+ as opposed to the tedious system that prevailed under the predecessor programmes, with such introductions relieving the administrative burden on both applicants and the MT NA. That said, it was equally important to ensure that creativity in Project design was not lost, and a system was in place whereby it was possible for entities to apply for lessor amounts (than the standardised lump sums).

Nonetheless, applicants and participants alike have voiced their concern that unit costs are often insufficient, especially in relation to grants allocated for travel, with particular mention to the Distance Calculator. The options for trans-national mobility for participants travelling to and from Malta are restricted to using air transport, and further limited given that this is often includes connection flights through hub airports in the EU. This makes it all the more difficult in managing the grant awarded for travel as calculations are made in a straight line from the point of departure to arrival and do not cater for split travel which is often the case for Maltese participants. This becomes even more prominent when considering project activities involving Partner countries, where there is often no alternative to this arrangement. It is also noted that Key Action 2 applicants tend to misinterpret the mechanism of the multiplier events budget heading and most often have the

\(^{76}\) Face to face interviews and results from questionnaires distributed
misconception that travelling and individual support for other members of the consortium can be attributed with this heading.\textsuperscript{77}

With respect to Key Action 2 Projects, it would be opportune for applicants to send in pre-proposals. This would enable such applicants to attain valuable guidance and assistance, avoid extra work and frustration whilst also increasing the quality in these projects.

As indicated earlier on, the MT NA is of the opinion that increased flexibility with budget proportion and distribution could aid in no small way to increase both the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Question 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?}
\end{quote}

While at the onset of the programme there were a number of issues relating to the IT tools, the MT NA was glad to see that the EC took action, and that today, these have improved considerably and are considered to be of benefit to the NA. All MT NA officials interviewed clearly expressed their content with the ‘dashboard’ and how this tool provided easy access to programme data (as opposed to the predecessor programmes).

That said, it was pointed out that there ought to be more cohesion and uniformity between the various IT tools. The multiple tools (eight different tools) makes it by nature difficult to deal with it. It would thus be opportune for such tools to be connected to an integrated administrative management system.

As indicated earlier on, the IT tools were not always viewed to be user friendly, particularly for participants/beneficiaries that were not too IT literate. Consequently the NA invested (time and resources) to train such individuals in the proper utilisation of the IT tools. To minimise the adversities that arouse with the launch of the IT tools, it is being suggested that a more systematic approach is adopted whereby the tools are introduced in phases, following an extensive pilot project that ensures focus on the user experience.

Another aspect tackled related to IT tools and reporting. Under the current programme most of the project reporting is done online. This was viewed to positively. Nonetheless, the MT NA responsible

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for the youth sector indicated that the reporting with the Mobility Tool in Erasmus+ is in general less user-friendly and more complicated (in comparison with in the predecessor YiA Programme).

Another aspect linked to reporting, is the challenge that the MT NA are being faced relates to time-frame stipulated for the assessment of final reports and balance payments. The time window is deemed to be quite short. Additionally, the MT NA suggests that the IT tools should include a function that would allow the submission of final reports from beneficiaries to be better notified to the NA staff and enable the latter to start off the evaluation process.

**Question 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?**

By virtue of the integration of the various programmes, the NA officials need to be more informed and competent to tackle the programme in its entirety.

The MT NA organisation restructuring that was carried out in 2016 with the aim of improving focus on the five sectors and to strengthen the checks and controls function across the sectors. is deemed to have been highly effective in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the MT NA. The five sectors within the Programme Management Unit were distributed amongst 3 Programme Managers (formerly 2 managers) to increase the level of focus on the monitoring of projects. Additionally, the MT NA set up a new unit - Checks and Control Unit to further strengthen the four-eye principle of the managerial supervisory function and of the status of the supervision and control across the lifecycle of projects. Nonetheless, it was pointed out that the new programme had resulted in additional administrative procedures, coupled with new tasks and expectations. This has resulted in a need to invest more in capacity building for staff in relevant areas, such as IT.

With respect to budgets/allocation of funds, increased flexibility is required to facilitate reallocation of funds, both between items within the programme and within projects.

As indicated earlier (Question 8) the preparatory visits that were available under the predecessor programmes were viewed to very positively by MT NA and applicants alike. That said, the MT NA officials positively noted how the TCA supported the quality in the implementation of the programme, and opened perspectives especially for newcomers and for cross-sectorial cooperation. In line with the above, the MT NA indicated that national TCA activities should be possible in order to have an inclusive and effective approach linked with the different national realities.

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78 From the one-to-one interviews conducted
Relevance

Question 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 Malta? Have the needs or problems evolved in such a way that the objectives of Erasmus + or its successor programme need to be adjusted?

The objectives are very relevant to the national circumstances, enabling the development of skills for teachers and pupils alike, and the provision of the International dimension of Europe through which participants interact with different nationalities, thereby experiencing first hand different cultures. Working together increases problem solving, tolerance and counters xenophobia. Participants/beneficiaries of both the predecessor programmes and the current programme have highlighted the benefits mobility brings about with both teachers and pupils indicating the increased sense of belonging to their native country following their participation in one or more programmes.

There has been a positive impetus to make Erasmus+ relevant to today’s realities and it is imperative that such a stance is maintained and that the programme is sufficiently flexible to be able to adapt to new challenges that arise during the programme period.

There is also the social aspect and the need to integrate more vulnerable sectors of society that is equally important and the need for all to appreciate and accept different realities. This is all the more valid nowadays with the influx of migrants. Indeed the MT NA welcomed the flexibility and adoptability of the programme and the greater emphasis place on migrant issues, an issue that Malta has faced during the predecessor programmes, Malta being among the first to have to cope with a considerable influx of migrants.

In general, interviews with participant institutions indicated that the objectives of Erasmus+ were aligned with the national objectives. This is indicated extensively earlier on (Questions 1 & 2) where the relevance of the programme is highlighted and indeed works in hand with national policies in relation to youth and education. By way of example a major issue of concern at a national level relates to number of early school leaving students, with the Programme comprising measures to tap this ‘weakness’. Ensuring that the same objectives formed an integral part of the same institutions was equally important. That said, in line with government policies, the educational and training institutions are particularly focused on reducing the percentage of early school leavers and on increasing vocational training.

Another aspect relates to the inclusion of VET subjects at school level. As a national policy, secondary schooling is addressing this need by offering opportunities for students to undertake VET subjects through a mainstream schooling setting.

The greater focus on building connections and the pre-requisite to form partnerships has adversely effected the smaller organisations that are primarily focused at regional/village level. This is considered to be a major drawback of the current Programme in comparison to the predecessor
programmes, particularly when one considers the importance/relevance of such small grassroots entities to assisting in the attainment of a number of goals and objectives of Erasmus+.

The University of Malta along with educational institutions are well aware of the Erasmus+ programme and subsequently assist in the promotion of the programme with their students. Placements overseas is another aspect that is deemed beneficial by all concerned (stakeholders and institutions). Nonetheless and as highlighted amply throughout this mid-term evaluation, the number of students travelling for placements abroad remains minimal. While the programme seeks to target individuals with special needs, it is only in 2016 that one student from this cluster travelled for a placement abroad. The MT NA is committed to ride on this ‘achievement’ to entice others to follow suit over the coming years.

It is being suggested to include the possibility for students to travel for shorter periods and that individual placements have the possibility to be accompanied by a teacher. This could aid increase the child’s parents willingness to allow/entice such pupils to travel and in so doing aid increase numbers.

Another sector that is currently not being targeted, though remains extremely relevant relates to the older generation segment – more specifically those aged 65 and over. In view of the aging population across Europe, with Malta being no exception, this target group remains a relevant segment to tackle through the programme.

With specific reference to KA 3, the launch of the National Youth Policy last year triggered further interest in KA 3 projects. The MT NA received positive feedback from beneficiaries and young people involved in the projects; projects under this Key Action are seen as giving participants the possibility to express their opinions and discuss concerns related to policy matters with different stakeholders. The involvement of young people throughout all stages of the project encourages the latter to be more actively involved and improve their social and communication skills.

**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 with 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?

The goals and objects of the Erasmus+ programme are far reaching and encompass relevant issues at a local level. As indicated extensively throughout this report, the insularity of Malta makes mobility highly relevant, with the benefits derived thereof far reaching for both educational institutions, entities, teachers and pupils.
Furthermore, the programme objectives are rather flexible thus attracting and reaching target audiences and groups with different fields of the programme’s scope. This has been aided by the MT NA’s efforts to successfully promote\textsuperscript{79} the Programme across different stakeholders and sectors.

The work programme had highlighted the main policies for school education; the bottom-up development of schools, the flexible curriculum and assessment process, leadership for all school staff including teachers, the school community including local councils and NGOs. Moreover, the strategies and policies that the Ministry is working on, feed into the Framework for Education. Furthermore, the Ministry is currently working on a process which is known as Education for All which is made up of action plans that address key areas within Education being Good Governance & Leadership, Organisation of Provision which includes Curriculum, Assessment & Pedagogy, Identification of needs and School Support Services, Communication & Synergy, Initial Training & CPD, Positive Learning Communities, Standards & Quality Assurance and Evidence Based Change.

Since Malta is a small insular country, the need to give schools a European dimension which ultimately leads to an improvement in the Standards & Quality Assurance and Evidence Based Change is further amplified. Through the Programme school staff are exposed to different schools, trainings and methodologies hence giving them opportunities to explore and share different teaching ideas to gain more knowledge and skills whilst strengthen their profession.

All of this contributes to the reaching of targets listed in line with the framework towards European and international benchmarks namely:

- To reduce the gaps in educational outcomes, decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in students’ literacy, numeracy, and science and technology achievement;
- To support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers;
- To raise levels of student retention and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training;
- To increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning.

As for reaching out to the educational sector, the MT NA has successfully tapped into the educational sector at large, and overall, today this industry is well aware of the Programme and the opportunities it provides for the sector. That said, the success or otherwise of the programme in

\textsuperscript{79} Question 4 indicates a number of endeavours undertaken by the MT NA in this respect with the country yearly reports giving further in-depth insight into the various activities undertaken to successfully promote the programme.
terms of application submissions by such different entities/institutions very much depends on the head of such school and his/her management team.80

In the field of VET, the relevance of the Programme is further amplified by the fact that the National Vocational Education Training Policy which is the main policy document in the field of VET makes direct reference to the importance of the pro-active use of the Erasmus+ programme and other forms of EU funding in the VET sector. As for the students VET seeks to target, the majority of them favourably commented on the programme highlighting how the traineeship experience offered a unique experience to have placements in foreign companies in their field of studies. In addition, comments were made on the responsibility and network building opportunities this experience provided.81

Indeed, overall, both Erasmus+ and the predecessor programmes successfully reached out to students, young people in general and educational institutions and enterprise (the latter though, to a lesser extent). That said, there remain gaps to better target certain distinct segments. Two specific clusters relate to attracting mobility among individuals with special needs and successfully targeting the elder generation (those aged 65 and older). With respect to the former, the MT NA has been working relentlessly to better tap this segment (as evidenced extensively through the annual reports). One such target effort related to the MT NA meeting up with the Kunsill Nazzjonali ghall-persuni b’dizabilità (National Commission Persons with Disability) along with the Communications Officer and the Inclusion Officer in the field of Higher Education where this issue was specifically discussed.82 As for the latter (targeting the over 65), the MT NA is aware of this and will be placing greater effort to better tap such segment too over the coming years.

With specific reference to the national context, a positive impact is foreseen on the Erasmus+ programme in Malta, with the launch of the National Youth Policy Framework (2015 - 2020) in 2015 - a policy which is envisaged to gradually have an impact on democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all and inclusive change. On a National level, the MT NA collaborates closely with the Agenzija Zghazagh (which was also involved in the development of National Youth Policy) and the Maltese Association of Youth Workers which gives support to the NA and vice-versa in promoting the Youth sector under Erasmus+.

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80 With some perceiving the programme as a burden – “added work that goes over and above their already very busy daily chores” – interviews conducted.

81 Interviews conducted and also data extracted from the Annual Reports

82 Such meeting was held in 2015 and the following year the University of Malta had one person with special needs that underwent a mobility exchange. This augurs well for the coming years, as the MT NA seeks to ride on this ‘success’ to increase numbers throughout the rest of the programme period.
Furthermore, while overall the outreach is viewed to positively, there are still segments of the programme that are currently not being fully maximised. More specifically this relates to the participation of enterprises in KA203 projects. To this end the MT NA indicated that measures are being developed to increase enterprises participation and high quality collaborations specifically by the communication and outreach unit within the agency while also in collaboration with the MEUSAC in order to attract participation of enterprises while also further encouraging HEIs to collaborate and initiate cooperation accordingly.

The minimal budget available under certain actions is another deterrent. In this respect one interviewee commented that the limited funds available coupled with the complex application did not entice entities to participate. On the contrary, some felt that it was not worth the stress to go through the whole application process and compilation of a very arduous application, if the opportunities for funding were minimal (this comment related particularly to KA2).

Interviews and questionnaire responses highlight the complexity of the application as a major barrier to participation. As indicated earlier on, a one size fits all approach is not deemed appropriate, notwithstanding the good intentions to simplify matters. With respect to the application, another adverse factor of the current programme, as opposed to the predecessor programmes relates to the spirit of the programme that seeks to involve young people on the one hand, and the complexity of the application that hinders participation among NGOs that rely on volunteers. Furthermore, linked to the involvement of young people, the complexity of the applications seems to entice entities that wish to apply to seek assistance/outsource the compilation of the application to have any chance of succeeding. This is counterproductive to the goals and objectives of the programme that instigates young people to be involved from the onset on the project (though the designing of the Project and at application stage), through its execution and until its completion.

Mobility for young people (under the age of 18) has been a weakness under the predecessor programmes and has persisted under this Programme too, though this does not relate to unawareness of the programme among the said target group, but to willingness of such segment to uptake individual mobility experiences. In this report we have indicated a few potential issues/concerns. It would be opportune to further delve into endeavours undertaken by other NAs to tackle this issue and also seek innovative ways to entice both beneficiaries while placing their parents’ minds at rest. The possibility for a teacher to travel along with such student (highlighted earlier in this report) is deemed to go a long way to increasing mobility numbers.

As for awareness, the fact that the two main educational institutions, these being MCAST and the University of Malta, are well aware of the Programme, ensures that Erasmus+ reaches out to the vast majority of the target audience. That said, it must be pointed out that the current programme has not proved successful for certain entities that sought to tap funding for lifelong learning and VET under the predecessor programmes. The fact that under the current programme the type of skills that are eligible for funding are quite specific eliminates a number of institutions (that successfully applied under the predecessor programme) to apply this time round. In this respect applicants expressed their disappointment that certain aspects that were eligible for funding under the previous programmes are no longer accessible for under the current programme.
Furthermore, the current programme does not reach out to individuals not affiliated with a group.

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+?**

In principle, the division logic between the Key Actions – KA 1 for individuals, KA2 for organizations, KA3 for systems makes sense. But for the youth sector this logic is not kept. By way of example, the transnational youth initiatives for young people are part of KA2, while the Structured Dialogue between young people and politicians are part of KA 3.

In certain instances differences between the different Actions are not clear and seem to overlap. Key Action 2 and especially Key Action 3 are both aiming at a deeper impact on a systemic level. But to reach a systemic impact, on the one hand actions and activity types have to be designed in a way, that they can reach these objectives. On the other hand it is difficult to reach systemic impact if the budget is not big enough. There is a need to foster synergies between KA2 projects and KA3 projects and Strategic Developments.

The evaluation has highlighted the need for greater flexibility. This issue is further strengthened to reach inclusion targets. It would be very helpful to have more flexible funding structures and mechanisms, which enable the better development of projects according to the needs of the specific target group and a combination of different activity types, also across the sectors.

It is important that the distinct culture of the youth field receives ongoing acknowledgement to ensure that its less formalised nature is equally facilitated to the more formalised structures that tend to characterise education and training.

**Question 19: To what extent does Erasmus+ complement other national and international programmes available in Malta? Can you identify any inconsistencies or overlaps with other programmes?**

Erasmus+ is viewed to positively and viewed to be distinct from other programmes available in Malta. The interviews with the organisations has evidenced that they are not aware of alternative programmes that offer similar possibilities to the Erasmus + programme. The possibility to travel overseas and form strategic international collaborations and partnerships distinguishes Erasmus + from other Programmes. Indeed the mobility offered by this programme is rather distinct and indeed perceived to be highly relevant to the local context.
European Added value and sustainability

Question 20: To what extent Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes produce effects that are additional to the effects that would have resulted from similar actions initiated only at regional or national levels in Malta? What possibilities do you see to adjust Erasmus+ or its successor programme in order to increase its European value added?

In line with the added value of the predecessor programmes, the Erasmus+ programme assists in the individual’s personal development, cultural and social aspects and interpersonal skills. These highly significant factors are less tangible and not easy to calculate/quantify though their benefit cannot be undermined. Erasmus+ is often the only opportunity for pupils to experience travels overseas.

In terms of mobility, the Erasmus+ programme is the only international funding opportunity of its magnitude. The report makes extensive reference to the importance of mobility, particularly in view of Malta’s geographical considerations and insularity. From this aspect Erasmus+ is highly opportune and relevant contributing to internationalisation of institutions and organisations. The research clearly evidences how, through mobility participants gained higher intercultural competence and a better understanding of different cultures and different ways of life, whilst also increasing their self of belonging to Malta and great appreciation of their culture and heritage.

Indeed today (more than before) as a result of the major influx of immigrants across all of Europe, Europe is facing great challenges, particularly with respect to cultural diversity, integration and acceptance. Consequently the Erasmus+ programme is all the more relevant today than ever before. The importance of students, pupils, teachers and young people meeting across borders and enabling them to experience different cultures and acknowledge and appreciate the value of different cultures cannot be undermined.

At school level – The programme gives educators an opportunity to interact with other organisations and, through partnerships develop their operations through the acquisition of innovative processes and teaching practices. Learning from others’ best practices stimulates innovation and quality improvements. The ability to interact with international entities and acquire new still holds also for youth organisations.

Also, networks that are formed through international partnerships/projects are often maintained even after the completion of the projects. This too is highly beneficial and strengthens the sustainability of the impact of the programme.

From an educational perspective - The programme allows institutions to offer courses at their partner universities in other countries. This broadens the opportunities for students to attend other courses that their current establishment is unable to offer. Partnerships across boarders also increase understanding of different educational systems, content and methods.

Erasmus+ also means that seats of learning in different countries can have the same educational frames of reference when they work together, a factor that is clearly promoted through the
programme. Indeed Erasmus+ offers a great opportunity for cooperation that is highly beneficial when opportunities at a local level are limited.

Linked to the above, is the opportunity the Programme offers organisations that would otherwise not be possible, enabling such entities to be creative and undertake Projects that can then carry on even after the Project completion date. By way of example, in 2014 Aġenzija Żgħażagħ (National Youth Agency) underwent a project related to detached youth work. Following the effectiveness of such programme, Aġenzija Żgħażagħ has continued this service following funding from local Government.

Question 21: To what extent will Erasmus+ be able to absorb in an effective way the sharp increase in the budget that is foreseen in the coming years up to 2020 in your country? Could the programme use even higher budgets in an effective way? Do you see challenges to effectively use more money for particular actions of fields in the programme?

An increase in budget will enable the MT NA approve a larger number of quality applications that are today being placed on the reserve list due to current fund restrictions. The Annual Reports have evidenced that as of 2016 a number of good quality applications have been set on the reserve list due to fund limitations. It is thus not anticipated that the increase in funds will result in the approval of lower quality applications overall. By way of example, and more specifically in relation to Key Action 2 (higher education), a current limitation seems to be the budget that is currently limited and acting as a deterrent for entities to participate with the primary research conducted highlighting how this factor, coupled with the highly complex application (that involves an element of research to be carried out at application stage) was adversely affecting the number of applications received. Consequently MT NA officials welcomed such increase though anticipating that this would also represent a challenge.

The fact that the budget will increase ‘suddenly’ implies that NAs need to embark on specific promotional endeavours so as to ensure that applications follow suit. The MT NA’s endeavours that continually seeks to entice newcomers to participate in the Programme is a step in the right direction and augurs well to ensure maximum utilisation of available funds as such funding increases. Other activities that relate to more stringent monitoring, promotion, communication, and investment in research are all efforts that are viewed to positively and deemed to assist the MT NA to successfully handle such increase (in funds).

83 Interviews with NA officials and beneficiaries and responses from questionnaire distribution
From a human resource perspective, the MT NA will need to ensure that the increase in funding does not result in increased workload on available manpower. It is imperative that budget increase does not result in an increase in workload as a result of which less time is spent on supportive measures and policy reform.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The methodology adopted for the here presented mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Malta sought to attain an in-depth understanding of the Programme and assess the views and opinions of the individuals responsible for the programme and the institutions and beneficiaries the Programme targets (notwithstanding the stringent timeframes available for such mid-term evaluation. This all-inclusive approach has enabled us to draw up the here presented conclusions and recommendations that are to assist in improving the Programme and its output and impact over the remaining of the programme period as well as future programming period/s.

In line with the tender requirements, we have evaluated the following aspects of the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation:

- Effectiveness;
- Efficiency;
- Relevance;
- Internal and External coherence and complementarity; and
- European Added value and sustainability.

Below are the conclusions for the various factors analysed:

Effectiveness – The Programme is effective in meeting its overall objectives as well as its specific objective and is likewise an important medium that assists the attainment of national policy.

The Programme is highly effective in enabling participants innovate and internationalise, with the mobility of the programme deemed to be highly effective for Malta and the insular reality evidenced from its geographical position. Indeed, this factor is particularly relevant to educational institutions, enterprises and non-governmental organisations.

From an individual level, the programme is highly effective in enabling participants/beneficiaries increase their personal as well as professional development skills, and internationalisation. The mobility aspect is also highly effective in enabling beneficiaries enhance their social skills, understand and appreciate different cultures while also appreciating all the more their culture, though the extent of such effectiveness is difficult to quantify. In this respect, overall participants believe the programme to enhance their overall skills and career prospects.
The increase in focus on the institution as opposed to the individual, is deemed to be a positive alteration when compared to the predecessor programmes and deemed to aid the sustainability of the impact of the project output.

The MT NA has been effective in its endeavours to increase the number of applicants, and increase the quality of the applications received. Likewise, the increase in applications from new organisations is proof of the MT NA’s endeavours in successfully promoting the Programme among a wide spectrum of potential participants.

**Efficiency** – In theory the integration of the programme made sense. Erasmus+ was deemed to be effective in increasing awareness of the whole programme and increase collaboration both between NA officials and between stakeholders. The major focus on collaborations also has its advantages in increasing internationalisation and innovation. Nonetheless, the amalgamation of the programmes was not without its issues. The integration of the programmes was meant to decrease the administrative burden, though in practice this has not been the case, for both applicants and the MT NA this hinders potential target audience from participating in the programme. Furthermore, the current programme, and a ‘one-size fits all’ application for all is hindering small NGOs that comprise limited human resources and generally relies on voluntaries. While on the one hand the programme seeks to involve young people from the project’s inception, the complexity of the application process is hindering this. Likewise, the need to form partnerships with international entities is eliminating certain entities that are primarily focused at the grassroots and regional/village level to participate in the programme and avail themselves of the potential benefits of Erasmus+ (such entities actively participated under the predecessor programmes).

The IT tools have improved and are, overall viewed to positively. Nonetheless this places a strain on applicants that are not IT savvy, and on the NA in assisting/training such entities to successfully apply for funding. The lump sum funding has increased the efficiency of the programme and viewed to positively by both the NA and the beneficiaries.

**Relevance** - The Programme is deemed to be highly relevant for Malta particularly with respect to the mobility aspect of the programme, internationalisation and skills attainment. Furthermore, the objectives of the Programme are highly relevant to Malta and deemed to complement Malta’s policies that relate to education and training and youth. That said, so far the programme has been ineffective in targeting the mobility of people with special needs and higher education for the 65+ age bracket. Nonetheless, it is believed that Erasmus+ is highly relevant to these segments too.

**Internal and external coherence and complementarity** – The interviews with the organisations has evidenced that they are not aware of alternative programmes that offer similar possibilities to the Erasmus+ programme. The possibility to travel overseas and form strategic international collaborations and partnerships distinguishes Erasmus+ from other Programmes.

In principle, the division logic between the Key Actions – KA 1 for individuals, KA2 for organizations, KA3 for systems makes sense. But for the youth sector this logic is not kept. By way of example, the
transnational youth initiatives for young people are part of KA 2, while the Structured Dialogue between young people and politicians are part of KA 3

**European added value and sustainability** - In line with the added value of the predecessor programmes, the Erasmus+ programme assists in the individual’s personal development, cultural and social aspects and interpersonal skills. These highly significant factors are less tangible and not easy to calculate/quantify though their benefit cannot be undermined. Erasmus plus is often the only opportunity for pupils to experience travels overseas.

At school level – The programme gives educators an opportunity to interact with other organisations and, through partnerships develop their operations through the acquisition of innovative processes and teaching practices.

Also, networks that are formed through international partnerships/projects are often maintained even after the completion of the projects. This too is highly beneficial and strengthens the sustainability of the impact of the programme

**Recommendations**

- The awareness of the importance of lifelong learning seems to be hardly influenced by Erasmus+ at the moment. It would be opportune for lifelong learning to gain more collaboration with the private sector.

- It is clear that the Programme is currently not reaching its target of successfully enticing people with special needs to undertake mobility placements. The NA needs to strengthen its endeavours and maximise the exposure of the first University individual with special needs that has undertaken such an experience. It would also be opportune to attain a better insight of what enticed such individual and subsequently utilise the point/s mentioned to better target this specific cluster.

- The application process needs to be reviewed as a one size fits all is not appropriate and had not achieved its intent of decreasing the administrative burden (on both NA officials and applicants). It is being suggested that the application is simplified for first timers.

- The Erasmus+ guidebook is deemed to be far too complex and ineffective in enticing entities to apply for specific actions. Just as an insurance enterprise has distinct and specific promotional material for its distinct products/services, likewise the Programme needs to have distinct promotional material to successfully target the distinct target audiences.

- As for the dissemination of information, it is felt that overall, beneficiaries are struggling to draw up innovative and highly effective dissemination of information plans for the projects they undertake. It would seem opportune for the MT NA to have a budget specifically to be able to train applicants how to draw up innovative and more effective dissemination plans
that comprise best practices undertaken by other beneficiaries internationally. Likewise, institutions and organisations as well as local authorities and businesses, should be encouraged more to share their project results internally. It would also be opportune to increase the networks between beneficiaries such that they share experiences/good practices.

- With respect to mobility and more specifically in relation to youth mobility – it is recommended that more resources are made available to enable the MT NA to make follow-ups following the participants’ mobility travels. Through such activity the MT NA would be able to assess how/to what extent the Project was truly effective by seeing to what extent such individuals are working in the youth sector and utilising/maximising the skills attained. Through the project. This activity could also be conducted in conjunction with Agenzija Zghazagh.

- In relation to youth participation in Key Action 2 – there is the need for more examples such that youths can attain a better understanding of what they could do/apply for under this action.

- There is the need for the inclusion of a specific grant for 'linguistic support' to cover languages not included in the OLS system (over and above using OS funds). This is already done under the VET and Youth sectors. Furthermore, it would be opportune for MT NA to make full use of the OLS availability even when the mobility participants attend courses where English is the language of instruction, and therefore in native language, by following an OLS course in the local language of the country of mobility wherever possible. Furthermore, it is being suggested that the OLS license be available to all mobilities and hence include also staff mobilities and those mobilities whose duration is of less than 1 month.

- It would be very helpful to have more flexible funding structures and mechanism, which much better allow to develop a project according to the needs of the target group and a combination of different activity types, also across the sectors

- In relation to the sports sector, where sports has been used as a method for intercultural learning, it should also be decentralized in order to be better combined with Youth in Action practice.

- The shift towards contributions to unit costs was viewed to positively by all. It is hereby being recommended that contributions to unit costs and reimbursement of travel expenses be harmonised across the whole programme and all its aspects. Furthermore, the distance calculator ought to be altered to take into consideration the limitations it currently presents for an insular country like Malta that often necessitates one to catch connecting flights.
The Erasmus+ programme eligibility criteria eliminated an important segment that was targeted under the predecessor programmes – the grassroots enterprises/NGOs that worked at a local/regional level. This needs to be reviewed.

Opportunities exist for the programme to support lifelong learning, thereby enabling Malta to better tackle this factor that has been pointed (by the Commission) to lack behind EU average. This could possibly be achieved through further collaboration and embedding the programme in organisational strategies.

It would seem advisable for future programmes to provide opportunities for shorter mobility periods that could be more enticing for hesitant pupils (and their parents). Offering exploratory trips whereby the pupil and their parent are given the opportunity to travel together to visit the pupil’s placement prior to the mobility period could be another opportunity to increase the intake in future. Alternatively, one could seek alternative means for pupils and parents alike to get acquainted to the locality/school/area to increase their confidence in the safety of the placement. Furthermore, the opportunity for a school teacher to travel along with the pupil should be explored further too as this is likely to be perceived to positively by parents of such pupil/s undertaking such mobility opportunities.

The higher complexity and increased administrative burden are making it much more difficult to entice new beneficiaries to the programme. There is a clear tendency away from unexperienced and small organizations to bigger institutions with administrative experiences and capacities. As a consequence there is the danger of losing grassroots initiatives.

It would seem advisable to have a budget that focuses specifically on training applicants/beneficiaries on various approaches that could be adopted, comprising innovative and Avant guard efforts and best practices undertaken internationally. The aim is to inform and subsequently train beneficiaries how they could be more effective in their dissemination endeavours and carry out innovative activities that created lasting impact with project outcomes and how these were disseminated.

The streamlining of applications was a suggestion voiced by many. Furthermore, amendments to the application and criteria for first timers could possibly encourage more small organisations to participate. With respect to Key Action 2 Projects, it would be opportune for applicants to send in pre-proposals. This would enable such applicants to attain valuable guidance and assistance, avoid extra work and frustration whilst also increasing the quality in these projects.

With respect to budgets/allocation of funds, increased flexibility is required to facilitate reallocation of funds, both between items within the programme and within projects.

It is important that the distinct culture of the youth field receives ongoing acknowledgement to ensure that its less formalised nature is equally facilitated to the more formalised structures that tend to characterise education and training.
## ANNEX 1 - NATURE OF ORGANISATION AND YIA ACTIONS APPLIED BETWEEN 2007 AND 2013

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| Number of Projects | 14 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 20 | 44 | 44 |
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<td>Ms Marvic Debono – Head of Youth Sector EUPA</td>
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<td>Ms Nathalie Muscat – Head School and Higher Sector EUPA</td>
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## Annex 3: Number of Volunteers by Country of Origin

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Outgoing from Malta

Over the duration of the YiA Programme a total of 9 individuals residing in Malta undertook volunteering with the main countries visited being: Egypt, Hungary, Iceland the countries visited.
ANNEX 4: SUB PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION

Erasmus

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ANNEX 5 - DEFINITION OF FEWER OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout this report when making reference to young people with fewer opportunities, the authors are utilising the EU’s definition as per YiA Programme - https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/atlas-partner-finding/help/young-people-with-fewer-opportunities/ abstract of which is provided here below.

Young people with fewer opportunities

An important priority for the EU is that the YiA Programme should be accessible to everyone, including young people with fewer opportunities.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the situations and obstacles mentioned in the non-exhaustive list below. In certain contexts, these situations or obstacles prevent young people from having effective access to formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility and participation, active citizenship, empowerment and inclusion in society at large.

Social obstacles

- Young people facing discrimination because of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- Young people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky sexual behaviours
- Young people in a precarious situation
- (Ex)offenders, (ex)drug or alcohol abusers
- Young and/or single parents; orphans
- Young people from broken families

Economic obstacles

- Young people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system in long-term unemployment or poverty;

- Young people who are homeless, young people in debt or with financial problems.
Disability
  - Mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning)
  - Physical, sensory
  - Other disabilities

Educational difficulties
  - Young people with learning difficulties
  - Early school-leavers and school dropouts
  - Lower qualified persons
  - Young people with poor school performance

Cultural differences
  - Young immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families
  - Young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority
  - Young people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion problems

Health problems
  - Young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions
  - Young people with mental health problems

Geographical obstacles
  - Young people from remote or rural areas
  - Young people living on small islands or peripheral regions
  - Young people from urban problem zones
Youth people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities, abandoned villages)
## Annex 6 – Erasmus+ Project Applications and Approvals

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LABOUR SUPPLY

Labour market participation continues to improve. Malta is approaching its national Europe 2020 target employment rate of 70%, largely driven by increases in female labour market participation and employment. This is a result of a long-term structural trend following changes in the societal structure and progress in female educational attainment. The latter have been reinforced by recent make-workpay policies focused on activation (including the free child care scheme, tapering of benefits when taking up a job, and in-work benefits. Impact estimates by the authorities show that free childcare can be effective in facilitating a more rapid return to the labour market for mothers within the first three years of childbirth (see also European Commission, 2015b and European Commission, 2016a). Although the historically strong impact of motherhood on female employment is fading over time, stakeholders still report labour market obstacles for women with young children, resulting from a weak work-life balance. A pronounced gender gap in employment persists, mostly driven by low-skilled and older women. Notwithstanding significant improvement in recent years, the gender employment gap (20-64) is the largest in the EU and stood at 27.8% in 2015. While employment of women with medium to high skills attainment exceeds EU averages, for the low-skilled employment remains low. Employment rates of older and low-skilled women have improved notably in recent years, but they remain considerably below the EU average (see section on Labour and skills shortages). These groups make up a substantial share of the working age population (respectively 25% and 17% of age group 20-64) and could thus strengthen labour supply. The share of low-skilled single-earner households is high and these households experience a higher risk of poverty. In addition, low female employment restricts women's access to pension entitlements (see


85 Insufficient flexible working arrangements in the private sector, parental leave design, incompatibility of working hours with school opening, etc.

86 Defined as a gap in employment rates between men and women
Section 3.1.3 and European Commission, 2016a) may constrain further progress in lowering the poverty risk.

LABOUR AND SKILLS SHORTAGES

There are increasing signs of tightening in the labour market. In 2016, almost one fourth of all companies in the industry sector report that the low availability of labour is constraining their business. This is one of the highest shares in the EU, and it has increased significantly in recent years. At the same time, the number of new job openings is high (the vacancy rate was 3.1% in the first quarter of 2016, the highest in the EU)\(^{87}\).

The Government is taking measures to address growing labour shortages. Efforts are being undertaken to strengthen initial education, including by reducing dropouts (see Section 3.3.4) and on the upskilling and reskilling systems for adults. This is expected to help the unemployed find a job more easily, but also to support those who are currently inactive and would like to reintegrate into the labour market. The challenge of (re)activating is exacerbated by the strong gender, skills and age bias in the composition of the unemployed population: 36% of all the unemployed in the age group 20-64 are women, 22% are above 50 and 72% have no upper secondary school qualification.

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\(^{87}\) See Eurostat variable jvs_q_nace2
ANNEX 8 – QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: ORGANISATIONS

The questionnaires were distributed to all organisations that participated in Erasmus+. A total of 25 responses were collated. The stringent deadlines given for organisations to respond did not aid the response rate, nor did the timing of the distribution, particular schools that are in full swing in preparations for the new scholastic year. While this is not scientifically representative, the common responses enable one to attain an understanding of the common views and opinions on the programme.

Why did you decide to participate in the programme?

- To build networks with partner... 80%
- Experience different working... 52%
- For the benefit of staff 56%
- For the benefit of students and youths 84%
- For the benefit of the organisation 68%
- To share good practice 56%
- To learn good practices 52%
- To learn new skills 76%
- To broaden experiences 80%

Did you experience any barriers to participate in the programme?

- Yes 84%
- No 16%
Participation in Erasmus+ lead to quality improvements in our organisation

- Strongly disagree: 4%
- Agree: 52%
- Strongly agree: 44%

Participation in Erasmus+ lead to the introduction of new practices in our organisation

- Strongly disagree: 13%
- Agree: 58%
- Strongly agree: 29%

Participation in Erasmus+ lead to an increase of innovation in the organisation

- Strongly disagree: 43%
- Agree: 57%
Participation in Erasmus+ increased the subsequent internationalisation of our activities

- Strongly disagree: 12%
- Agree: 40%
- Strongly agree: 48%

Participation in Erasmus+ lead to increased motivation of staff

- Strongly disagree: 9%
- Agree: 39%
- Strongly agree: 52%

Participation in Erasmus+ provided an opportunity to discuss problems with similar organisations

- Strongly disagree: 16%
- Agree: 56%
- Strongly agree: 28%
In your opinion organisations in your sector are familiar with the Erasmus+ programme in general

- **Strongly disagree**
- **Neither agree nor disagree**
- **Agree**
- **Strongly agree**

Have you also applied for funding under the Lifelong Learning Programme and/or Youth in Action Programme

- **“Yes”**
- **“No”**
Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

Overall how would you rate the Erasmus+ Programme in relation to the previous Programme/s (2007-2013)

- Neither better nor worse
- Better
- Much better

= Much worse

= Much better

Overall how would you rate the Erasmus+ Programme-

- Terrible
- Excellent

- 60%
- 10%
- 30%

- 64%
- 36%

Neither better nor worse  Better  Much better

Much worse  Much better
Open-ended Questions

In your opinion, how could the profile of Erasmus+ be increased?

- The main replies revolved around:
  - Marketing – with particular mention to the use of social media and “short video clips” that were deemed to be highly effective;
  - Make the system less bureaucratic and the application form less complex;
  - Through the provision of assistance in the actual filling of the application with a comment voiced often being “Having officials in the sector (e.g. a clerk in every College) to take charge of application.”

As for teachers, it was pointed out that “There should be shorter courses that are available during holidays etc” under the current system, as teachers are busy during the scholastic year “… it is very difficult for me to attend projects. This is very unfortunate and cannot be helped.”

In your opinion, how could one increase participation of organisations in Erasmus+?

Once again, the need for a more simplified application process was highlighted with respondents indicating that the application was far too complex, involved a lot of paperwork, repetitive and also that certain sections were not always applicable to them. In this respect, the main comments were:
Greater support at application stage;

More resources in schools to assist in filling in the application “more support with the paperwork;”

I think the procedure of applying should be easier. “Sometimes organisations are sceptic to participate due to the tedious paperwork involved;”

Today small NGos simply give up due to the red tape and conditions imposed by the local agency;

Making simpler applications (long and repetitive in many paragraphs) and especially making easier asking partners participations as PIC number and URF procedures which are not for all kind of partners, i.e. host companies and so on.

A couple of participants also indicated “assistance also during implementation phase” indicating that this would entice organisations to re-apply. Furthermore, one respondent suggested having financial assistance to disseminate outcomes of the project “I would also suggest that organizations who are currently coordinating projects are given even minimal funding to disseminate their activities and so encourage interest”

Are there any developments you would like to see in the Erasmus+ programme?

Apart from the simplification of the application that was once again a common theme voiced by respondents “Given that persons in the NGO’s area mainly work on a voluntary basis, we believe that a more simple application form would make it easier and encourage more NGO’s to apply” and being more practical” and “Become more user friendly so as to reap as many benefits that it offers especially to youths and employment opportunities” other suggestions related to:

Budgets and funding

“Ideally the per diems are increased, and the subcontracting fund percentage should be increased as well to lessen the financial burden from the organisation”.

Improved and more flexible funding rules. With specific mention to:

Multiplier events: Participants from the same institution or department who are not participating in the project should be eligible for funding. In niche areas, these are the ones who would benefit mostly from the dissemination.

Increased rates for travel and subsistence (especially transnational projects meetings). Frequently, the amounts are not sufficient to cover the cost for the flight.
“I would like to have the funding programme linked to the increase in cost of living.” As it stands the daily rate remains the same over the whole period of the programme while costs of accommodation and subsistence continue to increase. Funding should be more flexible and allow applicants to implement different ideas. The programme needs to be more in touch with the needs of the school. We were informed that KA 2 funds cannot be used to procure off the shelf courses.

- A comment voiced in relation to Key Action 2 was that “KA 2 is quite restrictive. There are a lot of ideas that can be developed if parameters were changed. Although partnership is beneficial it is also limiting and involves a lot more work. There was also a suggestion that including the opportunity for applicants to apply as individuals should be reinstated.

Open-ended questions

In your opinion, how could the profile of Erasmus+ be increased among students/young people?

Apart from the simplification of the application itself, by far and large respondents were of the opinion that more advertising/promotional material would aid. In this respect, the use of social media was mentioned by many. Likewise people indicated that short videos were effective in reaching out the targeted audience. Other points voiced by many related to:

- Having ambassadors of the programme and have people that benefited from the programme to speak about their personal experiences and how the Project proved beneficial to them.

- The provision of more information in the schools. It was also suggested that lecturers/teachers should be engaged such that they too explain the importance of exchanges.

- The provision of permanent placements for Erasmus+ knowledgeable personnel in the school/college. These knowledgeable people can also indicate the best way to fill in application forms.

- Better dissemination of information from educational institutions to students. Highlighting the benefits attained by students/beneficiaries that actually participated in the programme. Having students who have already participated talk about their experience was also highlighted.

- Erasmus+ involving itself further with main events which attract a large number of students, as to increase exposure with the general public and instil further interest.
In your opinion, how could one increase participation of students/young people in Erasmus+ programme?

Apart from the comments highlighted above that were once again mentioned above, common comments raised related to:

- **Being closer to the target audience** – having an office or a representative in the educational institution was a comment voiced by many. “Having designated members of staff in different educational settings who actively inform and recruit young people into Erasmus+.”

- Making participation in the program **part of the curriculum** “Integration in the educational journey of the students”. Not only mobility, but also youth and part of individuals’ continuous professional development and assessment programmes.

- “**Targeting the teachers** and lecturers in the schools because I feel that they do not talk about it enough for it to be encouraged”.

- Making **partnerships** with universities with synchronized semester start/end date.

- **More opportunities** can be introduced where students can choose how long they want to stay in an international internship. Linked to this, more opportunities ought to be offered during different times of the year not just having one specific semester of the 3 year course. Linked to this was the common comment of “by having mobility placements of various weeks since different people will want to go for different time periods.”

- Linked to the above, it was also suggested that the Programme could encourage student participation further if it enabled students to travel as a class possibly with their teachers.

- **Increasing the flexibility and possibilities for funding**. In this respect it was pointed out that funding needs to be improved “expand financial support, particularly for young people with fewer opportunities”. Linked to funding “Ensuring that there are no financial barriers to participation. The current funding system means that a degree of co-financing is still required.” Increased financial support, depending on individual financial situation of student applying. Many students still don't go because of financial difficulties. It was also suggested that funds be available to support applicants at application phase.

- **Being closer to the industry** and more harmonization between the universities and companies. Linked to this it was suggested having courses that are more job oriented.

- By doing more after project activities on the local level.
The questionnaires were distributed to all learners that participated in Erasmus+ over the four-year period 2014 - 2017. A total of 438 responses were collated equivalent to just under 10% of total learners. The stringent deadlines given for learners to respond did not aid the response rate. While this is not scientifically representative, the common responses enable one to attain an understanding of the common views and opinions on the programme.

Why did you decide to participate in the programme?

- To build networks: 41%
- Experience different working...: 68%
- Experience different culture: 68%
- To help others: 25%
- To learn new skills: 58%
- Improve other skills: 9%
- Improve soft skills: 25%
- Improve language skills: 35%

Did you experience any barriers to participate in the programme?

- Yes: 16%
- No: 84%
The relevance of my skills to the labour market increased through my participation in the programme

- Strongly disagree: 3%
- Disagree: 16%
- Neutral: 29%
- Agree: 50%
- Strongly agree: 2%

The relevance of my skills to the labour market would not have increased to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme

- Strongly disagree: 3%
- Disagree: 7%
- Neutral: 19%
- Agree: 44%
- Strongly agree: 27%
Participation in the programme had an impact on my subsequent employment opportunities

- Strongly disagree: 8%
- Strongly agree: 30%
- Agree: 20%
- Neutral: 37%
- Strongly disagree: 5%

I became a more active member of society following my experience on the programme

- Strongly disagree: 4%
- Strongly agree: 23%
- Agree: 28%
- Neutral: 38%
- Strongly disagree: 7%
I am more appreciative of other cultures increased as a result of my participation

- Strongly disagree: 3%
- Strongly agree: 6%
- Agree: 51%
- Disagree: 38%

I am of the opinion that the Erasmus+ programme is well known amongst students

- Strongly disagree: 5%
- Strongly agree: 35%
- Agree: 14%
- Disagree: 32%
I am of the opinion that the Erasmus+ programme is well known amongst young people

- Strongly disagree: 5%
- Strongly Agree: 21%

The IT tools I used when submitting information to the national agency were easy to understand and use (not applicable to the youth sector)

- Strongly disagree: 4%
- Strongly Agree: 16%
I have applied for funds under the predecessor programmes (Lifelong Learning Programme)

- Yes: 31%
- No: 69%

Overall how would you rate the Erasmus+ Programme?

- “Very poor”: 1%
- “Poor”: 3%
- “Neutral”: 46%
- “Good”: 50%
- “Excellent”:

Very poor: 
Excellent: 

Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)

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## ANNEX 10 - LIST OF KEY DOCUMENTS

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<td>Analysis of the Youth in Action Programme (YiA) Results and Evaluation of Programme Impact (2013). Maria Brown and Anneliese Sammut</td>
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<td>Erasmus+ Programme Guide. 2017</td>
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Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020)


Malta’s National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy’, April 2013


Unlocking Doors to Employability: Non Formal Education/Learning gained through Youth Organisations as a Key to Success for Young People by Ms Bridget Mamo

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<th>Agency (EUPA)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Youthpass Impact Study. Young people’s personal development and employability and the recognition of youth work. European Commission. Marti Taru and Paul Kloosterman</td>
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