

Impact of Erasmus+ on the Adult Education Sector

National report AUSTRIA
RIA-AE network

September / 2024

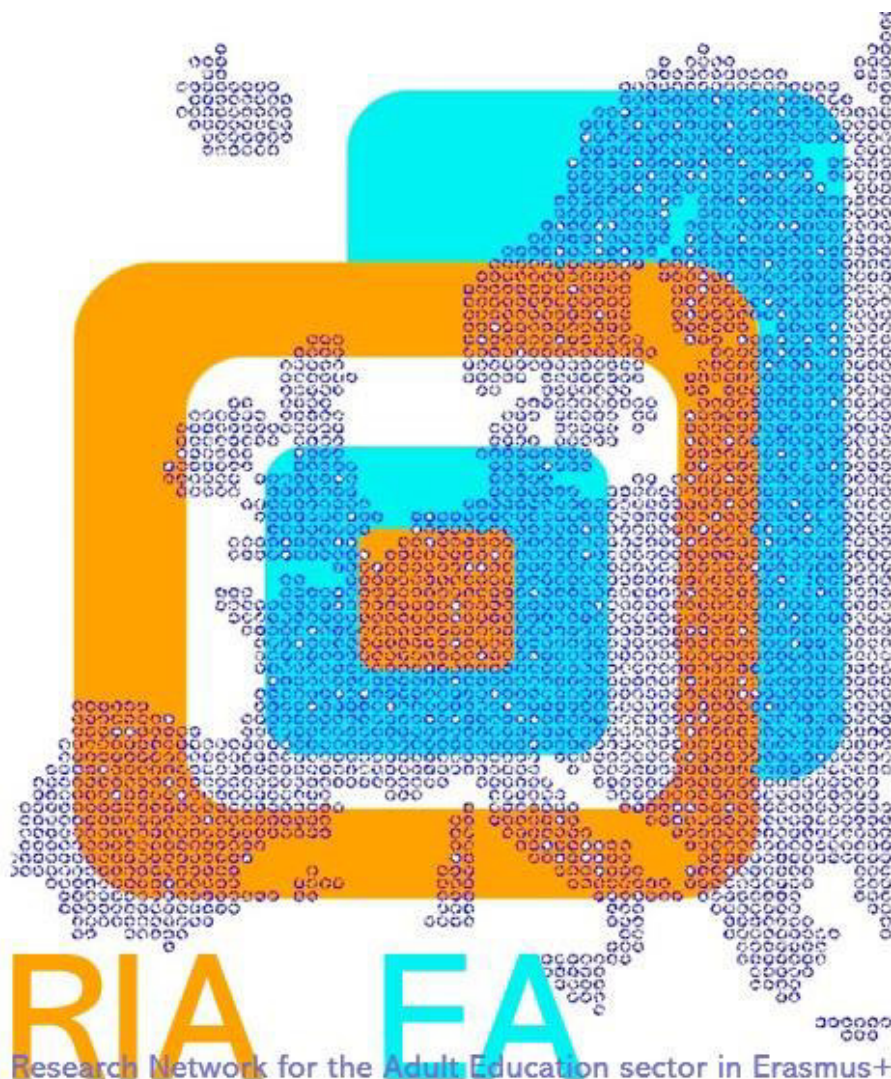


Table of content

Abbreviations	3
List of figures.....	3
PART A – SHORT SUMMARY REPORT.....	6
Summary of result	7
Background of the monitoring study	7
Key findings.....	7
Part B – MAIN REPORT	10
Part B.I – INTRODUCTION	11
1 Introduction.....	12
1.1 Erasmus+	12
1.2 The importance of impact monitoring.....	13
1.3 Multi-level framework	14
1.4 Purpose of the study and research questions.....	16
2 Research design.....	20
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Module 1: Analysis of existing impact studies and project documentation	20
2.3 Module 2: Survey among participating AE organisations.....	20
2.4 Module 3: Case studies	21
2.5 Module 4: Interviews with non-participating organisations	21
2.6 Module 5: Interviews adult learners (individual and group mobility)	22
B.II KEY FINDINGS.....	23
3 Short portrait of the adult learning sector in Austria.....	24
3.1 Introduction.....	24
3.2 Adult Education Policies in Austria.....	24
3.3 Existing studies on the impact of Erasmus+ on the adult education sector.....	27
3.4 Conclusions.....	28
4 The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+	29
4.1 Introduction.....	29
4.2 Participating organisations in Erasmus+	29
4.3 Adult learners' participation	34
4.4 Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+	35
4.5 Conclusions on accessibility and inclusiveness.....	37

5	Impact of Erasmus+ at meso level.....	38
5.1	Introduction.....	38
5.2	Type of products developed and topics addressed	38
5.3	Impact at organisation level.....	39
5.4	Factors hampering or stimulating impact.....	46
5.5	Conclusion	47
6	Impact of Erasmus+ at micro level	48
6.1	Introduction.....	48
6.2	Impact on staff	48
6.3	Impact on adult learners.....	50
6.4	Conclusions	51
7	Impact of Erasmus+ at macro level.....	53
7.1	Introduction.....	53
7.2	Impact on other organisations	53
7.3	Impact on national, regional and sectoral policies	54
7.4	Conclusions.....	54
	B.III CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY POINTERS	55
8	Support of NA: strengths and challenges	56
8.1	Key findings.....	56
8.2	Policy pointers.....	57

Abbreviations

AE	Adult Education
AES	Adult Education Survey
BIFEB	Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EU	European Union
KA1	Key Action 1
KA2	Key Action 2
KEBÖ	Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreich
NA	National Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OeAD	Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung (Austrian National Agency)
OER	Open educational resource
RIA-AE	Network for research-based impact analysis of the Erasmus+ programme in adult education
VAT	Value Added Tax
WAFF	Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds

List of figures

Figure 1: Intervention logic Erasmus+ impact on the adult education sector	13
Figure 2: Interplay of key factors at macro, meso and micro levels	16
Figure 3: Modules of the National Monitoring Study	20
Figure 4: Type of organisation that participated in KA104 (2018-2020)	29
Figure 5: Type of Organisations participated in KA204 (2018-2020)	30
Figure 5: Type of organisations participated in KA120, KA121, and KA122 (2021-2023)	31
Figure 7: Type of organisations participated in KA210 (2021-2023)	31
Figure 8: Type of organisations participated in KA220 (2021-2023)	32
Figure 9: What group of adult learners did your Erasmus+ project(s) target since 2018?	34
Figure 10: Based on your experience with the Erasmus+ programme, will your organization apply to the programme again in the future?	35
Figure 11: Do you plan to organise mobility activities for adult learners in the framework of a future KA1-Project ("Learning mobility of individuals")?	36
Figure 12: What outputs or products have been developed within your organisation as part of participation in KA 2 in Erasmus+ (from 2018 onwards till the end of 2022)?	38
Figure 13: Erasmus+ impact on participating organisations	41
Figure 14: Topics with higher attention in the future within your organisation based on Erasmus+ participation	42
Figure 15: Conditions in place in organisation facilitating inclusion and diversity	43
Figure 16: Conditions in place in organisations facilitating digital transformation	44
Figure 17: Conditions within organisations to facilitate a green transition	45



Figure 18: Conditions within organisations to facilitate participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement	46
Figure 19: Impact on staff in participating organisations	48
Figure 20: Impact from Erasmus+ on learners in organisations	50
Figure 21: Organisational adjustments to policies by participating in Erasmus+	53





PART A – SHORT SUMMARY REPORT

Summary of result

Background of the monitoring study

This report presents the outcomes of the first survey round of the Austrian monitoring project of the Erasmus+ programme in adult education and informs the European Research-based Impact Analysis in Adult Education (RIA-AE) Network. It will also feed into a transnational study with the aim of highlighting the effects of the programme at European level and providing impetus for its further development.

The monitoring focuses on the impact of two of the three Key Actions (KA) of the Erasmus+ programme: KA1 (learning mobility of individuals) and KA2 (cooperation of organisations and institutions). The impact is examined on funded organisations and their staff, the learners and the adult education sector in the respective country. Particular attention is paid to the impact on internationalisation in adult education, but also on the horizontal priorities set by the European Union: inclusion and diversity, environment and fight against climate change, digital transformation and participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement.

The monitoring design agreed within the network is based on a mixed methods approach. It consists of a document analysis including project documents and data from databases from the National Agency, an online survey and case studies among funded organisations, as well as interviews with adult learners. Non-participating organisations would also be a target group, but will only be approached in the upcoming survey rounds (2025 and 2027). The data collection took place between September 2023 and March 2024.

Key findings

The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

- **Participation of NGOs and associations:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations were prevalent actors in Erasmus+ programs, with over 70% of participating institutions employing 50 or fewer staff members.
- **Involvement of larger organizations:** Despite the majority being smaller institutions, larger organizations with over 250 employees were also represented in Erasmus+ projects.
- **Engagement of Adult education entities:** Larger adult education entities were actively engaged in Erasmus+ initiatives, with over 40% hosting over 250 participants in their learning activities.
- **Experience with Erasmus+:** Several institutions had prior experience with Erasmus+, with the majority indicating involvement in 5 or more programs since 2014.
- **Target demographics:** Women, migrants, and adults with limited educational backgrounds were frequently cited as target demographics for Erasmus+ projects.
- **Challenges:** Bureaucratic and administrative burdens posed significant challenges for participating organizations, particularly smaller ones, during the application phase, requiring substantial financial and human resources.

- **Access and inclusion:** Access to Erasmus+ programs in Austria appeared relatively inclusive, as even smaller organizations participate. However, smaller organizations faced greater challenges due to the significant time, financial, and personnel investments required for the application process.

Impact at meso level

- **Strengthened organizational internationalization:** Participation in Erasmus+ projects significantly enhanced institutions' international networks, raised awareness of international project value, and improved management of international collaboration and strategies for internationalization.
- **Impact on learning offers:** Erasmus+ projects led to observable improvements in learning offers, with organizations integrating project outcomes into ongoing or new initiatives. Digital devices and competencies played a crucial role in enhancing accessibility.
- **Influence on horizontal priorities:** Participation in Erasmus+ programs resulted in notable improvements across all themes, particularly in Digital Transformation and Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values, and Civic Engagement.
- **Factors affecting adoption of outputs:** The inception process significantly influenced the adoption and utilization of outputs and products developed from KA2 projects, ensuring alignment with user needs and enhancing utility.

Impact at micro level

- **Positive impact on staff:** Participants acknowledged significant improvements in international competences, pedagogical skills, language skills, and commitment to innovation, broadening professional horizons.
- **Transformational impact:** Increased use of digital learning technologies and collaboration led to transformative changes in staff practices.
- **Areas for improvement:** Identified areas included intercultural competences, digital skills, and project management.
- **Focus on sustainability and Inclusion:** Emphasizing sustainable practices and knowledge sharing raised awareness of societal issues and promotes inclusivity.
- **Benefits for adult learners:** Erasmus+ contributed to personal growth, empowerment, confidence building, and community integration, particularly for marginalized groups.
- **Enhancing educational services:** Erasmus+ initiatives focused on inclusion, sustainability, and best practice exchange to enhance educational services.
- **Promotion of European values:** Benefits included international exchange, language skills, and mutual development opportunities aligned with European values.
- **Facilitating transformative innovations:** Enriching staff professionally and culturally while promoting European values enabled meaningful contributions to education locally and internationally.
- **Cornerstone of educational advancement:** Erasmus+ fostered diversity and cross-border cooperation, positioning it as a cornerstone of educational advancement for adult learners.

Impact at macro level

- **Significant impact on organizations:** 67% of surveyed organizations reported making adjustments to their offerings as a result of Erasmus+ program outcomes.



- **Limited perception of “No Impact”:** Only 3% of organizations perceived no influence from the program, while 27% were uncertain about its impact.
- **Minimal national policy adjustments:** Only 10% of surveyed organizations noted policy adjustments at the national level in response to the program.
- **Stronger influence locally and regionally:** 30% of respondents witnessed policy adaptations at the local and regional levels.
- **Variation in effects:** Despite some influence, 24% reported no alterations in policy measures, indicating variability in the program's effects.
- **Need for further examination:** The findings suggest the need for further examination and improvement to better understand and enhance the program's impact.



Part B – MAIN REPORT



Part B.I – INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

1.1 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU flagship mobility programme for **education, training, youth, and sport in Europe**. The programme offers mobility and cooperation opportunities in the following **six main areas**: higher education (HE); vocational education and training (VET); school education (including early childhood education and care - ECEC); adult education; youth; and sport. It aims to reach out to a wider range of groups such as younger students, disadvantaged individuals, and smaller grassroots organisations.

The **general objective** of Erasmus+ emphasises **lifelong learning** as underpinning the educational, professional, and personal development of people in education, training, youth, and sport, both in Europe and beyond. The programme Actions aim to contribute to sustainable growth, ensuring that citizens have quality jobs, building social cohesion, facilitating innovation, and strengthening European identity and active citizenship.

In 2021-2027, as with the previous programme, Erasmus+ comprises three **Key Actions**. Some Actions are managed at the **centralised** Commission level, either directly or through the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (**EACEA**). Other Actions are managed at the **decentralised** level through the network of **Erasmus+ National Agencies (NAs)**¹ whose role is to promote the programme, disseminate information nationally, support applicants and beneficiaries, assist the Commission in the selection process for funding, monitoring and evaluating projects, and work with other NAs and the Commission, for example sharing high quality practice and project achievements. These include:

- **KEY ACTION 1: Learning mobility of individuals (staff and learners)**: aiming to influence education, training, and youth systems, result in positive long-term effects on individuals, ultimately inspiring policy reforms and drawing new resources for mobility opportunities throughout Europe and beyond.
- **KEY ACTION 2: Cooperation among organisations and individuals (Previous: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices)**: aiming to develop, transfer, and/or implementation of innovative practices at the organisational, local, regional, national, and European levels, with beneficial long-term consequences on the participating organisations and policy systems.

For the Adult Education Sector, the Erasmus+ programme aims to strengthen the socio-economic resilience of adults whose conditions for changing their personal situation through educational opportunities are difficult. Adult learning under Erasmus+ should lead to greater ownership and autonomy through improved language, numeracy, digital and other skills for vulnerable adults. The figure below provides the reconstructed Theory of change (ToC) of Erasmus+ for the adult education sector.

In Austria, the support for adult education from the OeAD is connected to general education. CVET (continuous vocational education and training) is explicitly excluded from the adult education supporting programmes at OeAD, but specifically included into supporting

¹ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/national-agencies>

programmes for Vocational Education and Training (VET). Therefore, the projects funded and supported influencing this analysis are limited to general adult education.

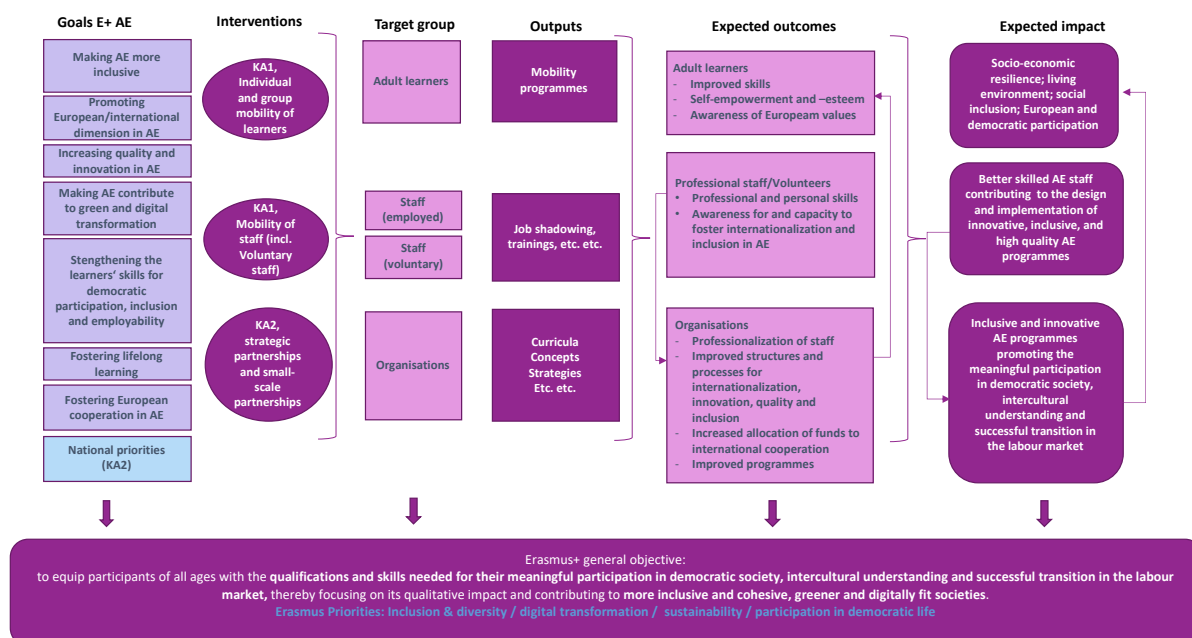


FIGURE 1: INTERVENTION LOGIC ERASMUS+ IMPACT ON THE ADULT EDUCATION SECTOR

1.2 The importance of impact monitoring

Till now, less is known about the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners, staff, volunteers and organisations in the field of adult learning. To better coordinate research activities on strengthening the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education and to enable the further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ programme, a transnational research network has been established, funded by Erasmus+ (see box below with the mission statement of the RIA-AE network).

Mission Statement RIA-AE Network

'Adult education matters' AND 'To explore the unexplored'

Adult education provides skills development opportunities to help EU citizens find better jobs and improve well-being. Yet it remains a "poor cousin" of compulsory and higher education, often disconnected from social policy and the education system at large, receiving limited budgets and policy attention compared to other sectors. Nevertheless, research shows that adult education matters and that adult education plays a significant role in promoting personal, social and economic well-being.

The impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners has been less researched so far and little is known about the impact of the Erasmus+ programme on the environment and socio-economic resilience of adult learners. To better coordinate research activities on the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education and to enable the further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ programme, a

transnational research network is to be established named: The Research-based Impact Analysis of Erasmus+ Adult Education Programme Network (RIA-AE Network)

The objectives of the RIA-AE network

The RIA-AE Network has various objectives:

- 1) to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education within the Erasmus+ programme;
- 2) to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between research, policy and practice;
- 3) to contribute to further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ Programme by enabling high-quality and practice-oriented evaluation and impact research.
- 4) to enlarge the visibility of the benefits of adult education in the EU and Member States and the role of Erasmus+ (advocacy).

Means

In order to achieve these objectives, the RIA-AE network aims to establish cooperation between National Agencies of the Erasmus+ from different European countries interested in developing a new approach to programme evaluation and impact assessment in the field of adult education within the Erasmus+ framework.

This framework opens the possibility to take stock of existing research and knowledge on the benefits and impact of adult education (repository), curate this knowledge and update knowledge by implementing different research projects to evaluate the impact of mobility projects and partnerships. Research designs can focus on impact at individual, organisational or systemic level, and can explore core thematic areas such as the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme. One such research project is an impact study of Erasmus+ on adult education organisations, staff and adult learners in Europe.

Cooperation framework

Cooperation within the Network is based on shared responsibility and is always open to new members. The cooperation framework includes a number of national agencies and external research partner institutions (e.g. universities, research institutes). Each NA involved in the network can decide whether to carry out the research projects itself (depending on resources and staff expertise) or to commission a partner.

Values

To achieve the goal of high-quality research, network partners adhere to common standards of social and educational research that meet internationally recognised ethical standards. The methods used for the research activities may include all methods commonly used in sociology, political science and education - quantitative, qualitative or a mixture of different methods.

BOX 1: Mission statement RIA-AE network

1.3 Multi-level framework

The RIA-AE network works on the development of a transnational monitoring study for programme evaluation and impact analysis in the field of adult learning. The monitoring focuses on the question of the benefits of participating in Erasmus+ adult education projects, i.e. the identification of factors that have contributed to positive or negative, short-term or lasting changes, e.g. in the personal, organisational and professional spheres. In addition, it

will be determined to what extent the objectives set by the EU in this framework (inclusion and diversity; digitisation; sustainability/climate; participation in democratic life) could be realized. Based on this information, recommendations can be made for improving the programme.

To be able to address the effects of Erasmus+ on the different programme levels (organisation, staff, learners), we propose to locate the monitoring study in a multi-level model of adult education. The model distinguishes between the micro, meso and macro levels, which can be decisive for access and take-up, but also for the effects of international projects in individual, organisational or systemic terms (Brüning and Kuwan, 2002).²³ Brüning and Kuwan, (2002) notably stress that the answer to the challenge of widening participation of learners lies in the alignment of activity structures at the macro, meso and micro level. To provide a basis for interdependence of these levels 'mobilisation strategies' and 'clusters of instruments, to increase the participation in learning or to mobilize specific target groups into learning' (Broek and Hake, 2012, p. 400), are necessary. The framework connects the following factors (cf. Brüning and Kuwan, 2002):

- the subjective and social barriers of the individual (micro level);
- the provision of educational services by educators, educational institutions and other organizations (meso level), taking into account the above-mentioned barriers at the micro level;
- the framework conditions and development opportunities of adult education organisations through participation in mobility programmes (meso level);
- and political decision-making (macro level) to create the necessary conditions for the meso level.

Figure 1 shows the interplay of these three levels influencing the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education within the Erasmus+ programme. For each of these levels key factors can be identified to describe and analyse the specific

² Schrader, J. (2011): Struktur und Wandel der Weiterbildung. Bielefeld: wbv.

³ Brüning, G. & Kuwan, H. (2002): Benachteiligte und Bildungsferne - Empfehlungen für die Weiterbildung. Bielfeld: wbv.

influences of the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education within the Erasmus+ programme.

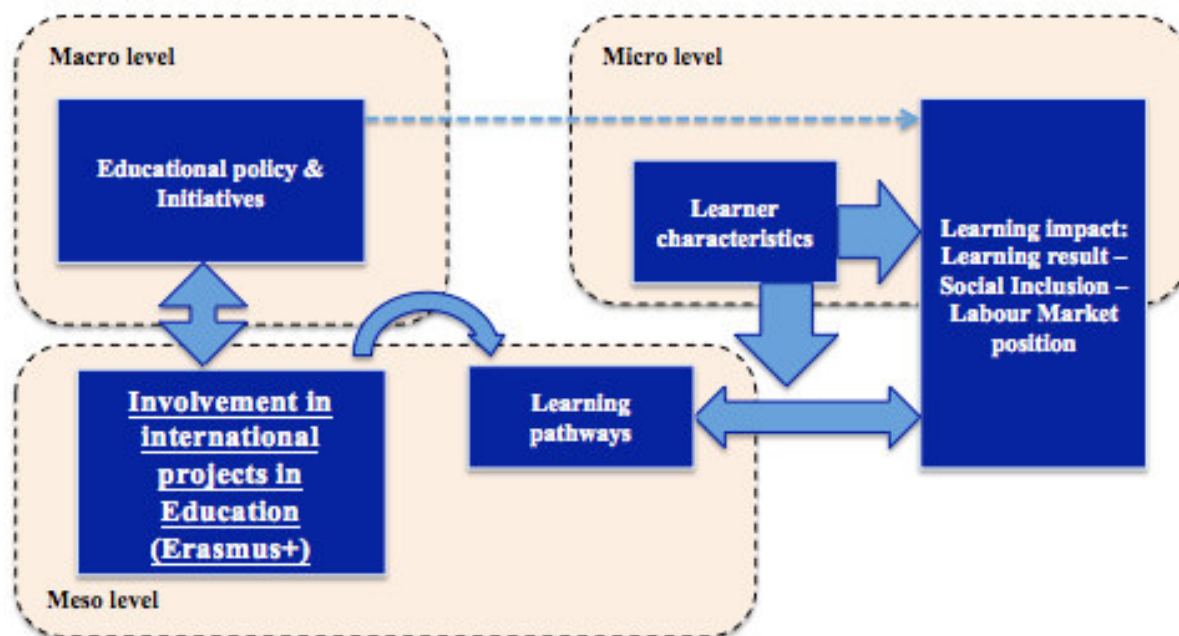


FIGURE 2: INTERPLAY OF KEY FACTORS AT MACRO, MESO AND MICRO LEVELS

1.4 Purpose of the study and research questions

The main objective of the transnational monitoring study is to provide the National Agencies with information on the impact of the Programme on (1) participating institutions, (2) staff and (3) adult learners who have participated in a mobility activity individually or in groups, as well as on the benefits for their living environment and socio-economic resilience.

Although the monitoring study aims to determine the impact of individual actions at micro, meso and macro levels differentiated according to the guiding principles KA1 and KA2, in practice the beneficiary organisations often participate in several parts of the programme and projects (KA1 and KA2) and in different roles (e.g. as coordinators and partners). Such "double" participation has a cumulative effect on the organisation, staff and learners, making it difficult to attribute the impact to individual parts of the programme or projects. Rather, a link between effects can be assumed. In this way, KA2 projects can directly strengthen the educational offer of organisations. However, this provision also has an impact on adult education staff and individual learners. Staff and learner mobility could also have an indirect impact on organisations. Therefore, we jointly present the research questions to be addressed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research
How accessible/inclusive is the programme for the target groups? (chapter 4)
– What are the specificities and characteristics of the adult education organisations participating in the Erasmus+ programme?
– What are the specificities and characteristics of participants, staff, volunteers and adult learners who, individually or in groups, participate or have participated in an Erasmus+ project?
– What does this information say about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ internationalisation projects in the network countries (Erasmus+ priority inclusion and diversity)? Are there any 'Mobstacles' for organisations, professionals and learners to participate?
What is the impact of participation in KA1 and KA2 projects at the AE institution on the following areas... (chapter 5)
– The quality of the organisation and in particular the organizational embedding of internationalisation in the organisations (strategy, finances, project management, networks, validation of international competences)?
– Policies for the professional development of their staff in relation to individual needs and organisational objectives?
– The introduction of new or adaptation of existing offers (programmes, activities, modules or new/adapted pedagogical, didactic and validation activities)?
– The adaptation of (educational) activities and programmes to the needs of learners?
– The involvement of learners in programme design?
– Improving accessibility for adult learners (inclusion)?
– Quality assurance policies?
– The use of information and communication technologies and the digitisation of programmes (Erasmus+ priority digital transformation)?
– The promotion of the teaching of international competences and common values (inclusion and diversity; tolerance; sustainability/ environment/ fight against climate change, digitisation, global citizenship, equal opportunities, anti-discrimination, etc.) in the offers (see Erasmus+ priorities: Inclusion & diversity / digital transformation / sustainability / participation in democratic life)?
– Sustainable cooperation and synergies between adult education institutions, charities, cultural institutions, labour market actors and civil society to promote the independence of adult learners?
– The dissemination, exchange of knowledge and experience within the organisation and with other (more or less experienced) organisations?
– The establishment and development of an international network?
– How do the impacts differ between the different types of adult education institutions (formal, non-formal, governmental, civil society, private)?
What impact does participation in KA1 and KA2 projects have on staff in the areas of ... (chapter 6.2)
– Skills, knowledge, attitudes, competences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Foreign language and intercultural awareness

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital competences, including to allow a shift towards digital education - Competences linked to occupational profiles - Understanding of practices, policies and systems across countries - Understanding for and ability to address issues of social inclusion and diversity - Capacity to trigger changes in terms of modernisation and international opening within their educational organisations - Organising mobility projects - Managing cooperation with European partners - Management skills (mentioned only in KA2) - Sustainability competences (mentioned only in KA2)
- Self-confidence, adaptability and perseverance?
- The application and exchange of the international experience gained among the employees?
- Identification with European society and the values associated with it (integration, diversity, tolerance, anti-discrimination, etc.)?
- Professional development and career?
- Motivation and satisfaction in daily work?
What impact do KA1 and KA2 projects have on adult learners in the areas of ... (chapter 6.3)
<p>Skills, knowledge, attitudes, competences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foreign language and intercultural awareness - Awareness and understanding of the European Union and common European values (e.g. respect for democratic principles, human dignity, unity and diversity, intercultural dialogue, as well as European social, cultural and historical heritage) - Key competences - Digital skills and media literacy - Sustainability-related skills and awareness for green transformation - Self-empowerment and self-esteem - Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
<p>Labour market outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced employability, improved career prospects and economic independence
<p>Lifelong learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved learning performance and motivation for taking part in education and training - Enable learners to participate in training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Inclusion? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More active participation in society and enhanced positive interactions with people from different backgrounds - Socio-economic resilience
- Is there a difference in impact between participation in group and individual mobility?
What impact do KA1 and KA2 projects have on other organisations and policy developments? (Chapter 7)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will the experiences from the KA1 and KA2 projects be taken over by other organisations that have not participated in Erasmus+ (dissemination of results)? - Do the results of the KA1 and KA2 projects contribute to policy developments at local, regional, national and European level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy reforms - Attracting new resources for mobility opportunities - Raising participation of adult of all ages and socio-economic background in adult education
<p>Lessons to support the effectiveness and efficiency of future Erasmus+ programmes (Chapter 8)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can the accessibility of the Erasmus+ programme to the target group adult learning be improved? - Which AE organisations are pioneers and why (with which institutional peculiarities including special features of the offers)? - What are the opportunities and challenges for the participation of target groups? - What are the first experiences with the KA1 individual or group mobility of adult learners and what are the opportunities and risks? - What monitoring information is needed annually in addition to the "participation reports" in order to monitor the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ programme on the target group of adult learners? Can research provide a frame of reference that enables a sustainable improvement in effectiveness? - How can the NAs support the AE institutions even more strongly in reaching impact?

Table 1: Research questions

2 Research design

2.1 Introduction

The methodological approach of the national monitoring study includes five modules, which are repeated over the three waves 2023, 2025 and 2027 and thus enable an update of the impact monitoring:

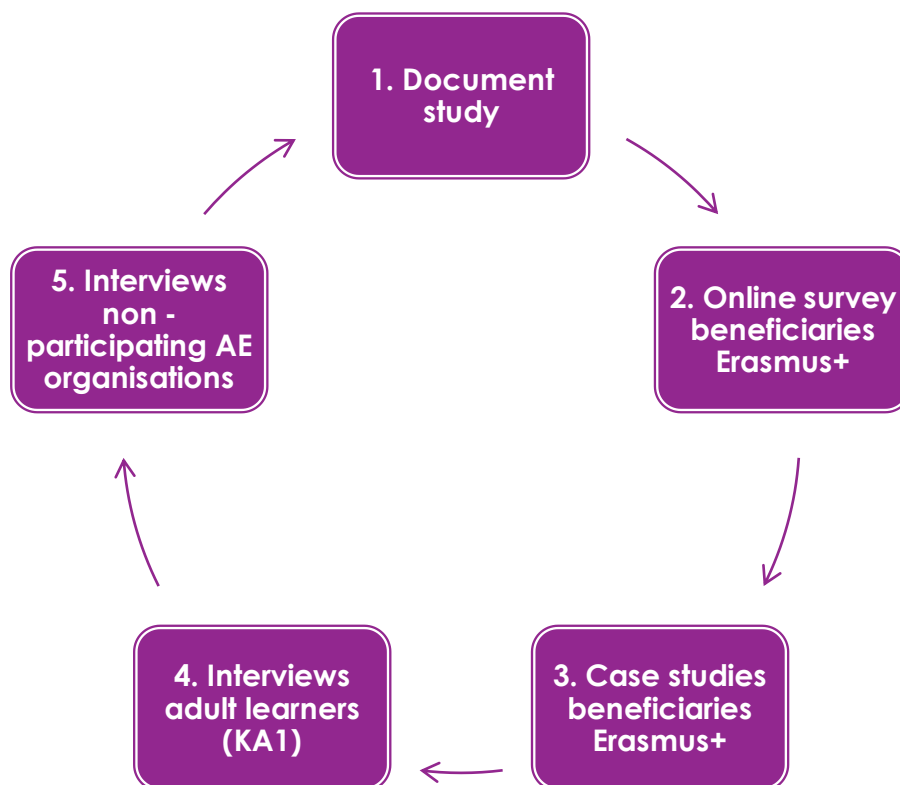


FIGURE 3: MODULES OF THE NATIONAL MONITORING STUDY

2.2 Module 1: Analysis of existing impact studies and project documentation

Available existing impact research was considered that has been carried out in the last decade on the impact of Erasmus on the adult education sector at national level. Moreover, programme data were analysed on type of beneficiaries that participated in Erasmus+, topics addressed in Erasmus+ projects and impact data based on participant reports.

2.3 Module 2: Survey among participating AE organisations

To get a good picture of the impact of Erasmus+ on AE institutions in Austria, all AE institutions, which participated as coordinator in a KA1 and KA2 project in the previous (from 2018 onward) and current programming period (till the end of 2022), were invited to participate in

an online survey.⁴ The number of responses among coordinators of KA1 and KA2 projects is 41.

2.4 Module 3: Case studies

In addition to the analysis of existing information at the NA and the survey, three case studies were conducted at AE institutions about their individual experiences of participating in Erasmus+. Geographical diversity was covered by their location in different federal provinces: Vienna, Salzburg and Carinthia.

CS1 acts as a private research institute since 2004, working on social participation of older people, but also the participation of broader target groups, e.g. children and young people in the field of health promotion and people with disabilities. 10 people, mainly sociologists, urban planners, educators, psychologists, are working at the organization on EU and national level as well as smaller, local projects. CS1 is based in Vienna, with small branches in Carinthia and Salzburg.

The educational center **CS2** is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. It was a pioneering project in the 1990s, aimed at combining the public library and adult education in one location. CS2 comprises three areas of work: an Adult Education Centre, a public library (owned by the city), and the Education Centre (which serves as both the umbrella for the entire organization and a self-implementing project sponsor). The main focus is on general adult education, rather than vocational training.

CS3 was established in 1947. As a certified adult education institution, the CS3 organises approximately 2 500 educational events annually, both in-person and online, with the help of 18 full-time staff and numerous dedicated volunteers.

2.5 Module 4: Interviews with non-participating organisations

Phone Interviews were implemented with AE institutions with no experience of Erasmus+ about why they have not (yet) applied, and the obstacles experienced for their organisation and target groups.

Comment: This part was not fulfilled for the Austrian Report 2024. It will be followed up in the next reports.

⁴ Contact persons of beneficiary organisations of projects were selected whose start date according to the grant agreement is no earlier than 1st of January 2018 and whose end date is no later than 31st of December 2022.



2.6 Module 5: Interviews adult learners (individual and group mobility)

The participants interviewed are memory trainers and adult educators who specialize in memory training for senior citizens. As part of KA1, they participated in a four-day digital skills course in Cordoba, Spain, in March 2024. Further participants were active trainers in adult training organisations, sharing their experiences in focus groups about their trainings in a public library in Norway and a specific train the trainer seminar in Greece. Also included was the experience of accompanying a group of adult learners in basic general education on their mobility to Germany. These experiences are referenced in the course of the key findings in Chapter 3/C.



B.II KEY FINDINGS

3 Short portrait of the adult learning sector in Austria

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the governance of the adult education sector in Austria, the Adult Education infrastructure, type of stakeholders involved and main policy priorities. It also provides an overview of existing impact research on the adult education sector, and Erasmus+ more specific.

3.2 Adult Education Policies in Austria

In Austria, the concept of adult education is broadly defined, encompassing all structured learning activities undertaken by individuals who have completed their initial education. This expansive definition presents challenges in delineating boundaries with other segments of the Austrian education system. Generally, adult education can be categorized into the non-formal and formal sector. Non-formal education is typically divided into general adult education (in German *Allgemeine Erwachsenenbildung*) and continuing vocational education and training (CVET) (*Berufliche Weiterbildung*), while formal adult education is typically considered as part of the formal education system, such as secondary schools for adults with tuition in the evening hours (*Schulen für Berufstätige*).

In general, the Austrian adult education sector can be characterized as heterogeneous. This arises from the diverse range of actors operating at various fields (areas of policy making) levels (national versus regional) within the sector. Additionally, it is influenced by the diversity of policies concerning adult education, which extend across different areas and levels. The state assumes only a weak and indirect role in steering the adult education sector by establishing legal frameworks, supporting the introduction of minimum standards, promoting strategic policy making, and providing financial support, as elaborated below. Only with the massive expansion of active labour market policies from the later 1990s onwards, the state became a key funding source for adult learning.

At the national level, several ministries are responsible for adult learning, with two dominant positions in the sector. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Research manages schools and universities, overseeing the larger parts of formal education for adults. Its role in shaping adult education policy expanded after becoming a key role in using funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) from 2007 onwards, particularly in financing basic education offerings for adults and lifelong counselling for workers (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, p. 45). Additionally, it oversees the “Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung” (bifeb), a (however by comparison small) institution in the adult education landscape, with a range of activities including ‘train the trainer’ activities for adult basic education, counselling services, and professionalization of the adult education sector (*Bifeb, n.d.*).

Similarly, the Ministry of Labour and Economic Affairs (currently split up into two Ministries) plays a significant role, primarily focused on apprenticeship training, although not considered part of the adult education sector per se. However, the current Ministry of Labour is responsible for the Public Employment Service (AMS), speaking of funding, Austria's main actors in adult learning. The AMS operates as a semi-autonomous agency whose influence has grown due to the expansion of active labour market policies. It plays a primary role in financially supporting adult learning for both the unemployed and employees and, managing programs

that provide access to vocational education for adults as well as non-formal CVET. It is anchored both nationally and regionally, with measures and procedures differing between the regional offices (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, p. 41).

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, also have responsibilities for adult education in their respective areas. Given Austria's pronounced corporatist system, interest groups influence the formulation of active labour market policies and therefore indirectly impact the adult education sector (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, p. 45). They also play a key role in apprenticeship training and a minor role in validation of non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, the Chamber of Commerce (Wirtschaftskammer), through the Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut (WIFI), as well as the Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer), through the Berufsförderungsinstitut (BFI), are the two largest providers of continuing vocational education and training in Austria (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, pp. 56–57).

At the regional level, the federal states are legally responsible for financially supporting dependent employees in CVET (employee promotion - *Arbeitnehmerförderung*). With EU accession, their activities expanded, leading to the establishment of various co-funding schemes for adult learning and autonomous agencies in some federal states (e.g. WAFF in Vienna) for this area of responsibility. At the municipal level, competencies are limited and consist of various measures (Hefler et al., 2013).

In Austria, over the past decade, various dynamics in terms of specific policies have emerged, which need to be considered against the backdrop of current crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion.

In 2011, the national lifelong learning strategy (LLL:2020) was published, involving a range of stakeholders and experts in its development (Bundesregierung, 2011). This strategy outlined goals and actions to be pursued until 2020, impacting the adult education sector, such as providing free opportunities for obtaining basic school leaving certificate and ensuring basic skills in adulthood. While a follow-up strategy was originally planned for 2020, given the context of current crises, a much smaller-scale strategy was in preparation under the leadership of the Ministry of Education by Spring 2024.

Between 2019 and 2023, with the involvement of experts from relevant ministries, a strategy focusing on expanding digital competencies (Digitalkompetenzoffensive) was developed. This initiative led to specific projects and the updating of the framework for digital skills, as well as its integration into the information systems managed by AMS (Bundesministerium für Finanzen, 2022; Strategie Digitale Kompetenzen Österreichs, 2023). Subsequently, an office for digital competencies was established, tasked with coordinating, and providing operational support for activities aimed at promoting digital skills in the future (Geschäftsstelle Digitale Kompetenzen, n.d.).

Additionally, there is an observable shift in policies concerning skilled labour shortages (Fachkräftemangel), particularly evident in the education and healthcare sectors, as well as in areas affected by environmental changes or heavily impacted by the pandemic (e.g. tourism). So far, strategies addressing this issue have only been developed at the level of the federal states and by social partners, but not at the national level (Cedefop).

When considering the financing of the adult education sector, a fragmented picture emerges. Due to the diverse nature of funding sources and the heterogeneous field of adult

education in general, obtaining precise figures presents a challenge. Nevertheless, a survey indicates that public expenditures totalled €276 million in 2018 (Vogtenhuber et al., 2021). The contribution from the federal states amounted to €90 million, while municipalities contributed around €61 million. Expenditures at the national level consisted of various components (lifelong learning, measures for integration agreements, teacher training, and partial funding for the University for Continuing Education Krems) totalling approximately €125 million. As a dominant player in the adult education sector, AMS incurred expenses of €740 million in 2018 for the qualification of individuals, with €324 million allocated for those over 25 years old. Additionally, there were indirect financial contributions of €825 million for individuals in training, including both job seekers and employed individuals (unemployment benefits, emergency assistance, education leave, skilled worker scholarships).

The financial support occurs both via a supply side strategy (funding providers) and via a demand side strategy (providing support at participants). The former is more pronounced in Austria and affects both formal and non-formal adult education. This includes basic funding, which is paid out based on the fulfilment of quality criteria for the ten organizations that are part of the umbrella organization “Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreich” (KEBÖ) (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, p. 46). This encompasses actors with a vocational focus such as the aforementioned BFI or WIFI, as well as providers of general adult education such as the Association of Educational Centres in Austria (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Bildungshäuser Österreichs, ARGE) or the Library Association of Austria (Büchereiverband Österreichs, BVÖ). In general, the members of KEBÖ are dominant players in the Austrian adult education sector (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, pp. 51–57). Additionally, courses in adult education financed and coordinated by the AMS represent the key element of supply-side funding (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, p. 66). Furthermore, providers offering basic education for adults, as well as formal institutions (schools, universities) where adults are educated, are state funded.

On the demand-side financial support, payments from the AMS to individuals in training for their cost of living make up a significant portion (unemployment benefits, emergency assistance, educational leave, skilled worker grants) (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, p. 66). Additionally, there is the possibility to partially deduct the costs of continuing vocational education and training (CVET) from individual income taxes. CVET courses provided by KEBÖ Members are exempted from VAT. For There is a broad variety of demand-side funding schemes, presented in a central data base. For example, the regional Chambers of Labour provide education vouchers (Bildungsgutscheine), mainly between €120 and 240. Various federal states (Bundesländer) offer contributions to the costs of individual CVET, with more generous schemes restricting eligibility to particular target groups. (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, p. 65). Moreover, new instruments are emerging in this area, for example, a specific premium paid to participants of course work longer than four months in addition to their basic grant for covering the subsistence costs (*Bildungsprämie*)

The direct costs spent by businesses on CVET reached approximately €703 million in 2015. This significant involvement indicates a high level of engagement in continuing vocational education and training in Austria. Private expenditures on adult education represent the largest source of funding and are estimated at around €960 million (valued at 2018 price levels) for the year 2016 (Vogtenhuber et al., 2021, pp. 56–58).

Adult learning in Austria is quantitatively the largest, most diverse, and most rapidly changing educational sector. There is a multitude of organizations, institutions, and providers active in the continuing education market. In addition to public and non-public, non-profit entities

(e.g. members of KEBÖ) and Universities, there are many non-profit and for-profit providers. There are no exact data on the number or types of adult learning providers, leading to heterogeneity and difficulty in delineating from other educational sectors (estimated number between 1,800 and 3,000). (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, pp. 48–50).

3.3 Existing studies on the impact of Erasmus+ on the adult education sector

Before delving into the influence of Erasmus+ on the Austrian adult education sector, a brief overview of the extent of Erasmus+ on adult education in Austria is provided.

In the Strategic Program Monitoring Report for the years 2021 to 2027 by the national Agency for Education and Internationalisation in Austria (OeAD), an average of 200 mobilities and 35 projects per year for Erasmus+ in adult education are expected. The target groups are defined as adult education institutions, educators in this sector, and adult learners with fewer opportunities. Current data shows that the expected average values were exceeded in 2023, with 43 projects and 929 mobilities in adult education under Erasmus+. In both cases, there is an increase compared to the years 2022 and 2021. In 2023, funding totalling over 3.2 million euros was disbursed for this purpose (OeAD, 2023).

The OeAD's annual report for 2019 provides more precise records for the adult education sector. In that year, there were 554 mobilities, of which 498 took place under KA1 and 56 under KA2. Additionally, there were 43 projects, with 28 falling under KA1 and 15 under KA2 (OeAD, 2020).

Analyzing the characteristics of participating organizations since 2021 reveals the following: In small partnerships as part of KA2 projects, both large and small players of the adult education sector in Austria participate. Especially (smaller) associations are strongly represented in this group in comparison with the other Programs. It is noteworthy that associations in Austria play a significant role in societal tasks. By contrast, larger cooperation partnerships (KA2) see greater participation from private organizations or companies. Social enterprises that operate in adult or continuing education are particularly well represented. Both accreditation and projects under KA1 are more sought after by large/traditional players in the Austrian adult education sector (e.g., members of KEBÖ) compared to other projects. While universities are present in all three programs, the majority of the participating organisations are providers of non-formal adult education. Additionally, there is an overrepresentation of organizations from Vienna or other state capitals among the participants. Approved projects (KA1 and KA2) are mostly located in the areas of inclusion and diversity, as well as environmental sustainability, both in the field of basic education and specific education.

Regarding the impact of Erasmus+ on adult education, there is a qualitative interview study conducted by the University of Innsbruck that specifically focuses on the influence of Erasmus+ partnerships in various areas, including adult education (Gadinger & Berger, 2023). Due to the methodology and sample size of the study, no representative, universally applicable results can be obtained. However, it provides a broad insight into the systemic effects of partnership projects within Erasmus+, as elaborated below.

According to the statements of the interviewees, the innovation-promoting and Europe-wide collaboration within Erasmus+ partnership projects led to systemic influences. Specifically in

the adult education sector, these partnership projects are used to influence the sector. This trend is reinforced, among other factors, by the professionalization of project stakeholders. These organizations now think more strategically and aim to sharpen the profile of their organization. Additionally, concrete effects on the systemic level are reported, such as the promotion of women in the field of vocational education.

Various aspects of systemic impact of partnership projects within Erasmus+ are mentioned by the interviewees. It is crucial that systemic impact is established as a goal from the beginning of the project. The chosen project theme is also mentioned as a crucial element that can enhance systemic impact, particularly if it addresses urgent issues (such as crisis management or curriculum gaps).

Furthermore, the selection of project partners is an important factor. On one hand, involving dominant actors is advantageous as they suggest stability and can have a greater impact on the system. On the other hand, it is important that the selected partners or their perspectives are known, facilitating collaboration, for example, by using the same terminology.

Finally, the communication of project results is a significant factor influencing the systemic impact. Involving experts from the fields of marketing, social entrepreneurship, and/or project management is considered advantageous. Additionally, communicating project results in understandable language for the target audience is beneficial.

The interviewees value the consultancy work on partnership projects within Erasmus+ provided by the OeAD and especially for the adult education sector the work of the EPALE Network.

3.4 Conclusions

The overview has illustrated the extensive diversity within Austria's adult education sector. Key stakeholders in the sector's governance and financing are the national government, the federal states, and municipalities, as well as the Public Employment Service (AMS). Additionally, the impact of the Chamber of Labour and Chamber of Commerce should also not be underestimated. The array of adult education providers can also be characterized as highly diverse. Besides dominant and traditionally anchored (public) organizations (e.g. members of KEBÖ), an increasing number of private companies are also operating in this field.

In general, the state plays an indirect role in governing the adult education sector, setting the framework through legal regulations, financial support, and strategic documents. National priorities regarding adult education manifest in measures addressing digitalization and skill shortages. In principle, the strategy for lifelong learning (LLL:2020) serves as a fundamental basis for policies in this area.

Research on the impact of Erasmus+ on the Austrian adult education landscape is still in its early stages/still underway. An initial study from the University of Innsbruck provides insight into potential systemic effects but leaves specific influences undiscovered. Thus, questions arise about the participation and influence of Erasmus+ projects on continuing vocational education and training (CVET), which constitutes a significant portion of the Austrian adult education landscape, but is not connected to the OeAD Further Education projects (as this is part of the OeAD VET projects). Furthermore, the interplay between national measures and Erasmus+ projects in the field of adult education remains unexplored.

4 The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

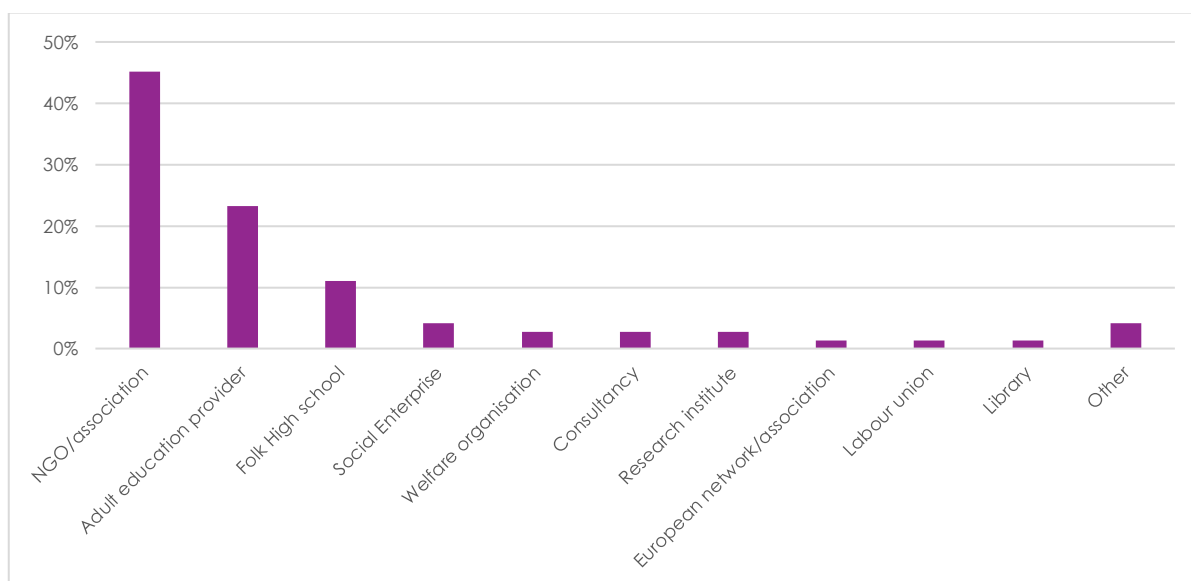
4.1 Introduction

Inclusion is one of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme and it is therefore important that the programme is attractive to organisations that have not previously benefited from Erasmus+, as well as to vulnerable participants who would otherwise be less likely to participate in internationalisation activities. This chapter discusses the characteristics of AE institutions that participated in Erasmus+ in the previous and current programme period, but also the characteristics of adult learners who benefit from the developed outputs (KA2) and/or mobility (KA1). On this basis, statements can be made about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ within the AE sector in Austria (but not the CVET sector, as this is included in the VET programme support from Erasmus+ in Austria).

4.2 Participating organisations in Erasmus+

4.2.1 2018-2020 period

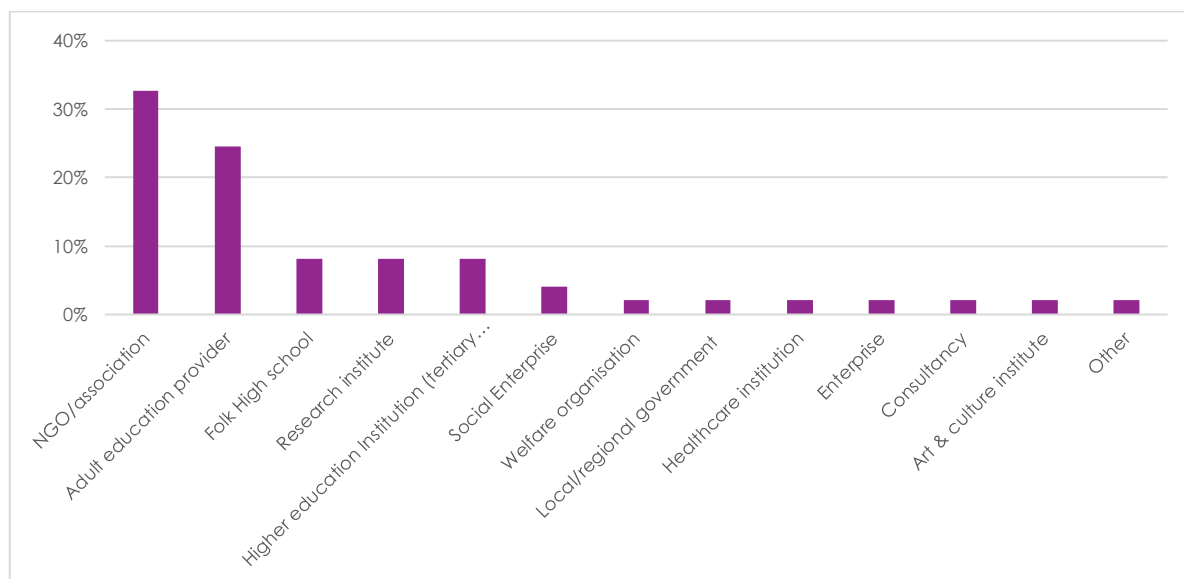
FIGURE 4: TYPE OF ORGANISATION THAT PARTICIPATED IN KA104 (2018-2020)



Source: Data from OeAD

During the period from 2018 to 2020, 73 individual learning mobilities (KA104) in the field of adult education were approved in Austria. Nearly half of these projects (45%) were undertaken by **associations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs)**, with nearly a quarter being orchestrated by **providers of adult education**. Another organizational type that was prominently represented during this period was that of **Folk High schools** (Volkshochschulen), accounting for 11%.

FIGURE 5: TYPE OF ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATED IN KA204 (2018-2020)



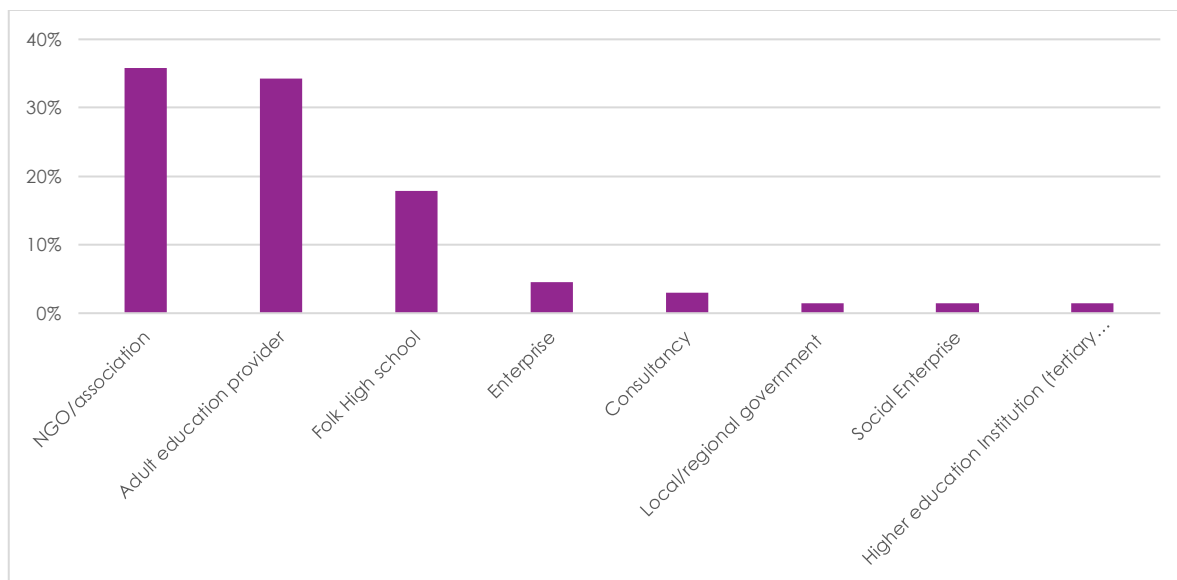
Source: Data from OeAD

In the same time span, 49 strategic partnerships (KA204) were approved. A similar pattern emerged, with a third of all projects being conducted by **associations or NGOs**. Similarly to KA1, a quarter of participating organizations could be classified as **adult education providers**. **Folk High schools, research institutions, and higher education institutions** each accounted for 8% of the total.

Also, among the surveyed organizations nearly half (49%) categorize themselves as **non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or associations**. Over one-third self-identify as **providers of adult education**, while 10% primarily perceive themselves as **enterprises**. (Note: Multiple responses were possible.)

4.2.2 2021 – 2027 period

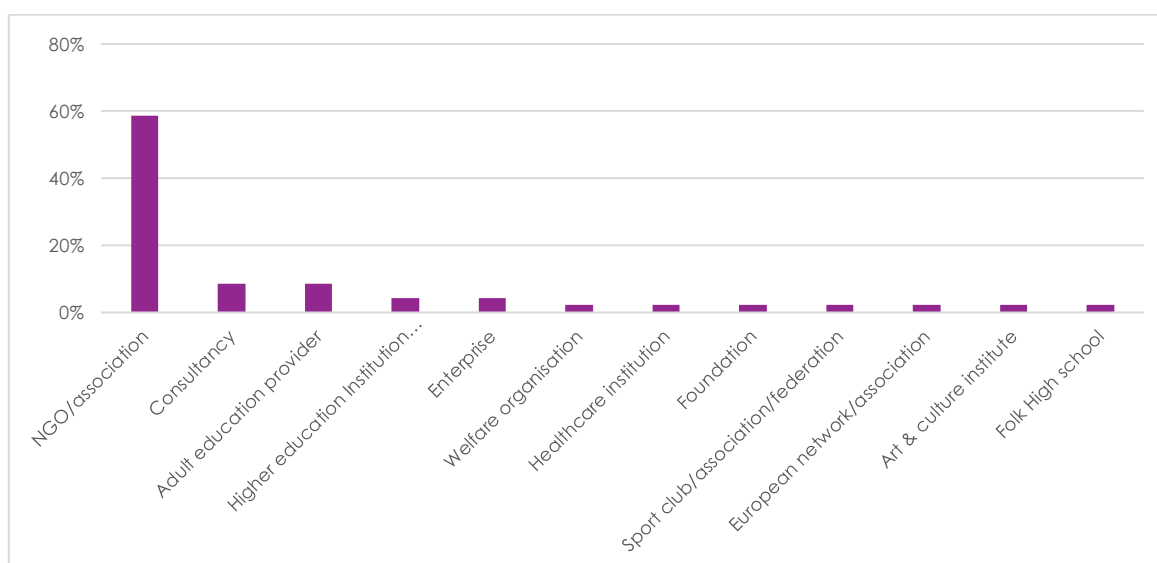
FIGURE 6: TYPE OF ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATED IN KA120, KA121, AND KA122 (2021-2023)



Source: Data from OeAD

Examining the period from 2021 to 2023, 67 mobility projects (KA120, 121, and 122) took place. Again, **associations and NGOs** were most prevalent, representing 36%, followed by **adult education providers** at 34%. **Folk High schools handled** 18% of the projects.

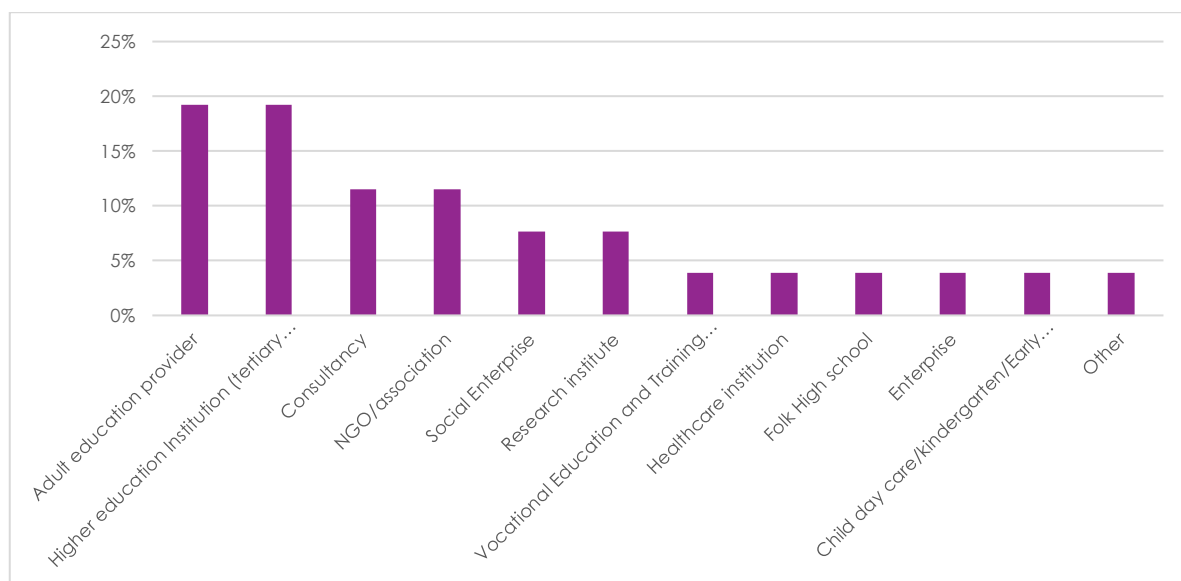
FIGURE 7: TYPE OF ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATED IN KA210 (2021-2023)



Source: Data from OeAD

During the same timeframe, 46 small-scale partnerships (KA210) in adult education were approved, with **associations and NGOs** comprising the largest group of organizers at 59%, followed by **adult education providers** and **consultancies** at 9% each.

FIGURE 8: TYPE OF ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATED IN KA220 (2021 -2023)



Source: Data from OeAD

Between 2021 and 2023, 26 cooperation partnerships (KA220) were permitted. In these projects, **adult education providers** and **higher education institutions** each constituted the most common organizational forms at 19%. Additionally, **associations and NGOs**, as well as **social enterprises**, each accounted for 12% of the participating cooperation partnerships.

4.2.3 Size of participating organisations

Upon analysis of the survey data, it is evident that a significant majority, exceeding 70%, of institutions within the adult education sector had 50 or fewer employees by the conclusion of 2022. Among the survey participants, entities with a workforce ranging from six to ten individuals emerged as the most prevalent, constituting 27%. Subsequently, organizations with one to five staff members represented the second most common group, accounting for 24%. Institutions with personnel numbering between eleven and 50 occupied the third position at 22%. Larger establishments, encompassing those with 101 to 250 staff members and those exceeding 250 employees, each comprised 10% of the surveyed entities. The smallest category, comprising 7%, comprised institutions with 51 to 100 workers. Upon further examination of the findings, a diverse spectrum of institution sizes is apparent, with small and medium-sized organizations employing 50 or fewer individuals being predominant, followed by larger institutions employing over 100 staff members.

Concerning adult learners participating in educational activities within the surveyed institutions in 2022, regardless of direct involvement in Erasmus+ programs, distinct trends

emerge. In 41% of the surveyed organizations, more than 250 adult learners engaged in learning opportunities. Between 51 and 100 adult learners, as well as between 101 and 250, were active in 15% of the institutions each. Merely 5% of the surveyed institutions reported having between 1 and 10 adult learners as participants. However, an equal proportion of 5% of the institutions indicated having no adult learners participating in their programs.

4.2.4 Newcomers to the programme

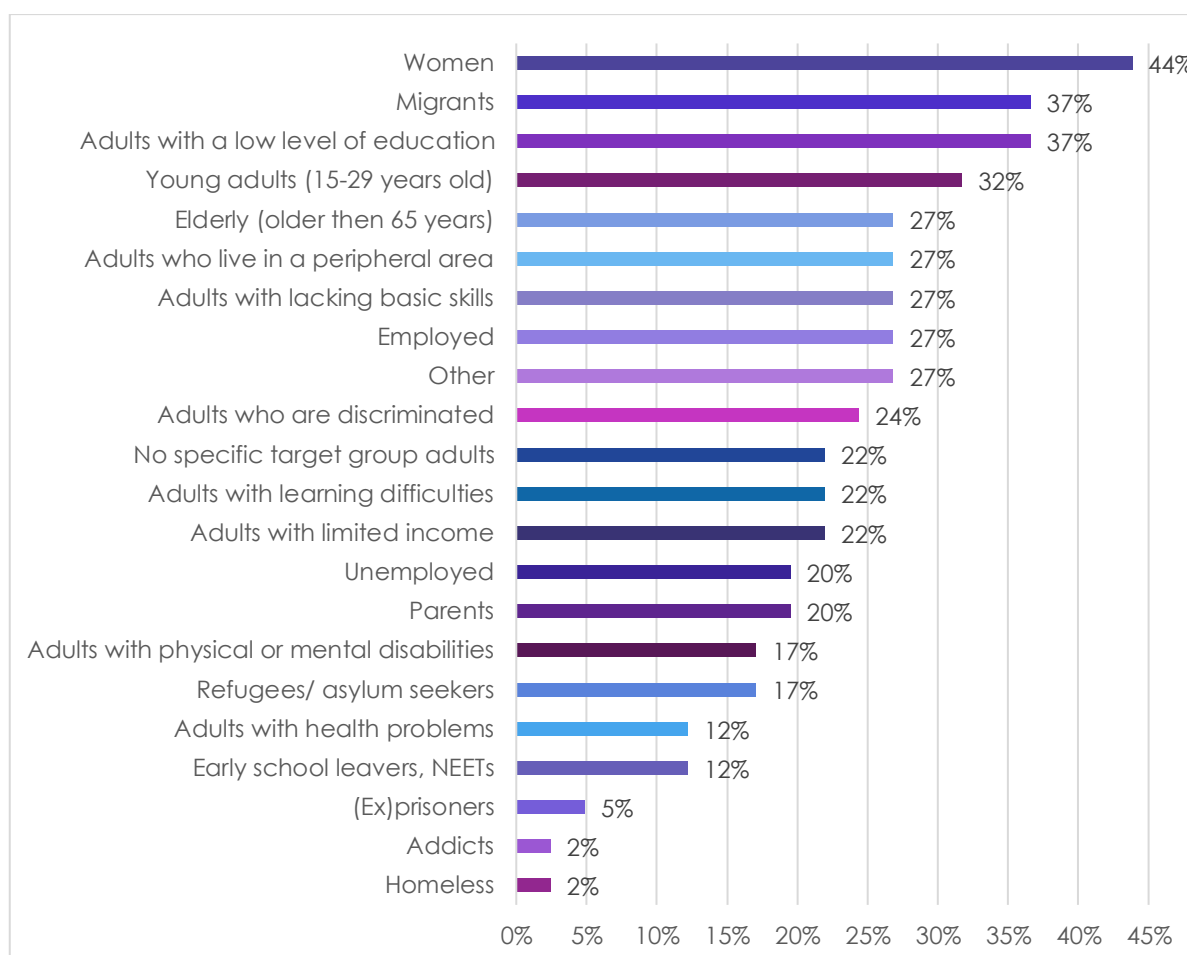
The analysis of the survey results reveals that 39% of the surveyed institutions operating in the adult education sector have participated in **five or more Erasmus+ programmes** since 2014, either as partners or coordinators. Conversely, 24% of the organizations were only involved in **one Erasmus+ programme** during the same period. 12% of the surveyed institutions participated in **two programmes**, while another 12% were involved in **three Erasmus+ programmes**, and 10% engaged in four programs.

Regarding the roles assumed by organizations in KA2 Erasmus projects since 2014, it is evident that 39% of the surveyed institutions served both as **coordinators and partners**. In contrast, 20% solely undertook the role of **coordinators**, while 10% exclusively acted as **partners** in their KA2 Erasmus+ projects. None of the surveyed organizations operated solely as **associate partners**. 10% of the institutions assumed all three roles in their projects, while 2% were involved as **partners and associate partners**.

When examining the count of institutions endowed with **Erasmus+ accreditations for mobility** in adult education, it emerges that only 31% of the surveyed organizations possess this accreditation. Conversely, 56% of the institutions reported not currently holding any accreditation.

4.3 Adult learners' participation

FIGURE 9: WHAT GROUP OF ADULT LEARNERS DID YOUR ERASMUS+ PROJECT(S) TARGET SINCE 2018?



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 12

As can be seen in the figure, the most frequently mentioned target group for the surveyed organizations' Erasmus+ projects are **women**, constituting 44%. Following, **migrants** and **adults with low educational attainment** are both cited as target groups by 37% of the organizations. **Young adults** (aged 15-29 years) rank third among the target groups. Additionally, **older adults** (over 65 years), **employed individuals**, **adults with lacking basic skills**, and **adults who live in a peripheral area** each constitute the target group for 27% of the surveyed organizations. A commonly cited response in the comments was that **adult educators** themselves are also considered a target group for the respective Erasmus+ projects.

Specific findings from case studies:

CS1 focuses on providing education to older learners and seniors in non-vocational adult education. At **CS2**, the learning mobility was carried out with a group from basic education from Germany, which was visited in the course of a basic education class. The organization

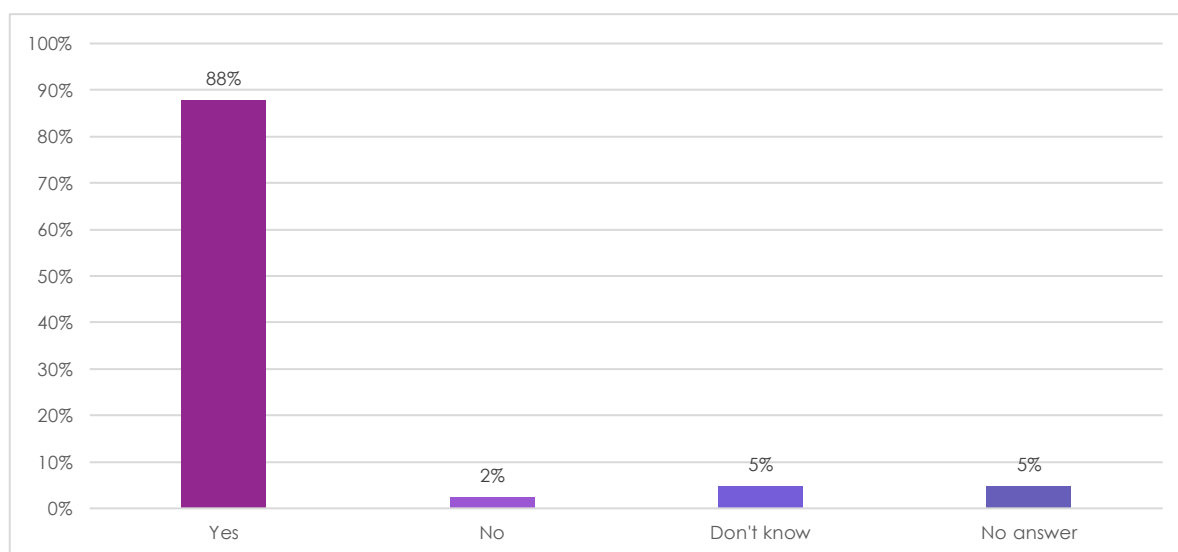
values the exchange of knowledge with trainers and educational staff, which is facilitated by dedicated employees.

4.4 Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+

4.4.1 General mobility obstacles

In the course of the interviews, CS2 reported that exchange within the basic education framework can be challenging due to varying terminology and rules. The main challenge lies in navigating the various options available, such as accreditation for mobilities, implementation of individual mobilities, webinars, and partnerships, to determine the best program line. They stressed the importance to ensure clear and concise communication to avoid confusion. CS1 also refers to creating conditions for making applications as necessary due to the amount of work involved especially in application work. Despite the funding pots not increasing in size, competition is on the rise and the quality of applications is improving. This leads to increasing corresponding challenges, making it important to search for opportunities with less competition.

FIGURE 10: BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME, WILL YOUR ORGANIZATION APPLY TO THE PROGRAMME AGAIN IN THE FUTURE?



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 29

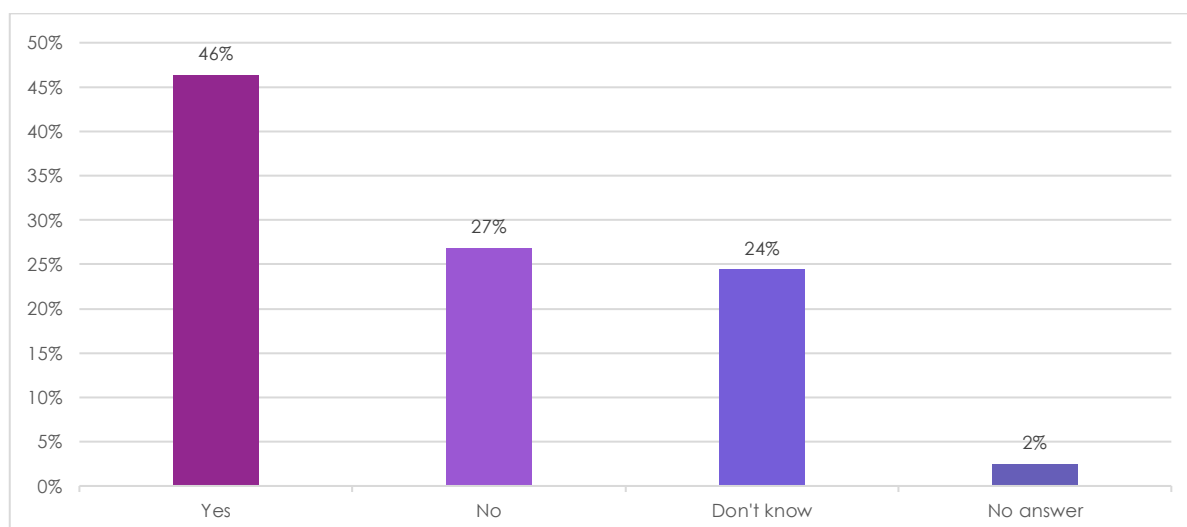
Regarding the survey, 88% of the surveyed organizations indicated their intention to reapply for a programme in the future, based on their experience with Erasmus+ programmes. The primary challenges encountered in participating in Erasmus+ programmes revolve around the **substantial bureaucratic and administrative burdens**. Criticism is particularly directed towards the online interfaces provided by the Commission for application and reporting purposes, as well as the evaluation process for proposals. Additionally, the significant **time investment** required is highlighted as a major obstacle. Particularly for small organizations, the lack of sufficient **financial and human resources** for application submission is cited, especially

given the **uncertainty surrounding the approval of submitted proposals**. Furthermore, difficulties in **identifying suitable partners** for collaboration are also described as a challenge.

Further, obstacles regarding international partnerships were referred to in the interviews. Although experienced with ESF, it was stressed to be challenging to access Erasmus+. The programme's logic and wording are entirely different and cannot be compared. Particularly with KA2, a more strategic approach is required due to the varying likelihood of project approval (chances in Austria are lower than in other countries). Adequate partnership preparation is also necessary. The application reflects the respective ideas and plans, but collaboration with partners (including changes in partners) always brings changes, which may arise due to the time gap between applications and the start of the project. The project partnership may also be partially influenced by setting up co-financing at the national level. However, projects completed in 2018 by CS1 will continue nationally with national co-financing, which includes to uncertainty of whether changes will be successful.

4.4.2 Specific obstacles for KA1 mobility for adult learners

FIGURE 11: DO YOU PLAN TO ORGANISE MOBILITY ACTIVITIES FOR ADULT LEARNERS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A FUTURE KA1-PROJECT (“LEARNING MOBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS”)?



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 31

In relation to KA1 Erasmus+ projects, only 46% of the surveyed institutions in the adult education sector indicate plans to undertake such projects in the future. Particularly, the **effort** associated with **KA1 Erasmus projects** or with **accreditation** is cited as a reason for not planning mobility activities in the future. For other organizations, KA1 projects are **not a priority**, and they conduct mobilities as part of KA2 projects instead. Occasionally, doubts regarding the **utility of mobility activities** in the context of KA1 projects, as well as their **suitability for the respective target audience** (e.g., due to uncertain residency status), are also mentioned.

Although the organisation of mobility activities for adult learners in the framework of future KA1-Projects is planned, CS2 reported various obstacles. Submitting an application for KA1 was challenging as it required pre-existing knowledge of potential partners. Although it was

initially thought that finding suitable partners would be easier through methods such as matching via EPALE, it proved to be significantly more difficult in practice. However, the exchange of ideas was facilitated by the participants' own motivation.

4.5 Conclusions on accessibility and inclusiveness

Concluding statements on the following questions:

- What are the specificities and characteristics of the adult education organisations participating in the Erasmus+ programme?
- What are the specificities and characteristics of participants, staff, volunteers and adult learners who, individually or in groups, participate or have participated in an Erasmus+ project?
- What are obstacles for participating in Erasmus+ (general and more specific for KA1 mobility for adult learners)
- What does this information say about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ in the country?

The survey findings offer insights into the diverse landscape of Austria's adult education sector. While a range of organizations participate in Erasmus+ programmes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations emerge as the most prevalent actors. Despite this diversity, a notable majority – exceeding 70% – of these institutions employ 50 or fewer staff members. Nevertheless, larger organizations boasting over 250 employees are also represented in the Erasmus+ projects.

When evaluating institution size based on participant numbers, it becomes apparent that larger adult education entities are actively engaged in Erasmus+ initiatives. Notably, more than 40% of surveyed organizations report hosting over 250 participants in their learning activities. Additionally, a significant portion of these institutions claim prior experience with Erasmus+, with the majority indicating involvement in 5 or more programmes since 2014. Regarding target demographics, women, migrants, and adults with limited educational backgrounds are the most frequently cited groups.

Challenges for organizations participating in Erasmus+ projects primarily include bureaucratic and administrative burdens. This burden demands considerable financial and human resources, posing particular uncertainties for smaller institutions during the application phase.

In general, the survey results indicate that various types of institutions, varying in size, are involved in Erasmus+ programmes in the adult education sector. Thus, access in Austria appears to be relatively low threshold/inclusive, as even smaller organizations participate in Erasmus+ programmes. Nevertheless, these small organizations face greater challenges, as the application process consumes considerable time, financial, and personnel investments and is associated with many uncertainties.

5 Impact of Erasmus+ at meso level

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we look at the impact of Erasmus+ on the organization. This includes the impact of Erasmus+ on how internationalisation and other Erasmus+ priorities are embedded in participating organisations, but also the quality of staff and the learning offer of participating organisations. As organisations could carry out various activities and projects with Erasmus+ funding, we first looked at the different types of products developed. We then asked what sustainable impact Erasmus+ participation had, including on the organization and the learning.

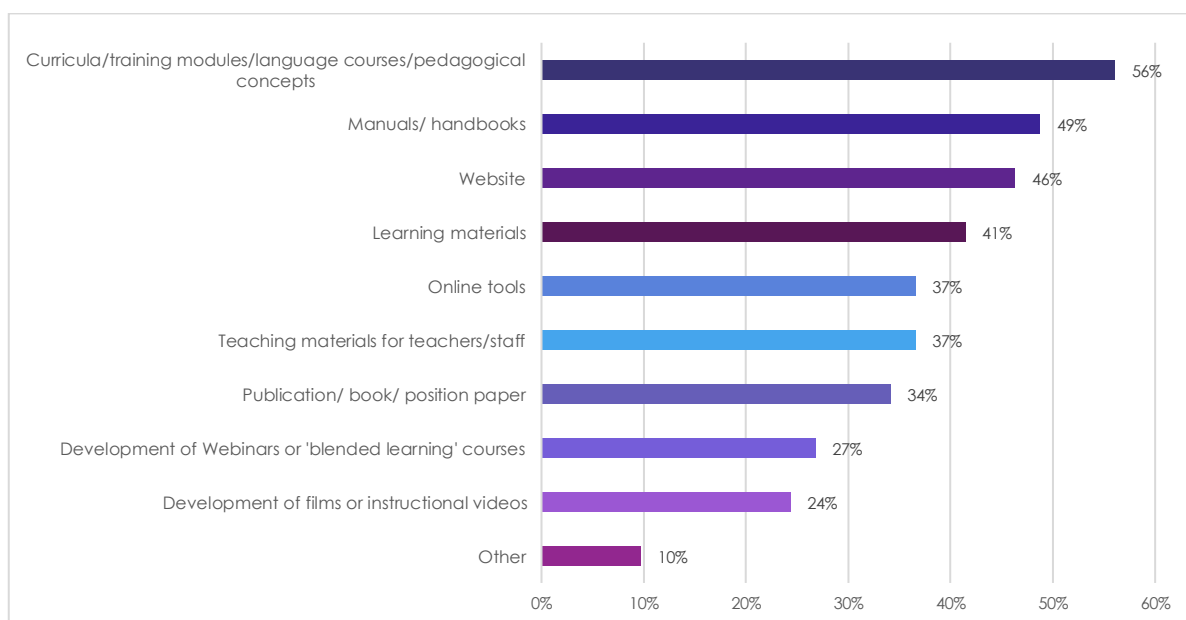
5.2 Type of products developed and topics addressed

5.2.1 Type of topics addressed

The topics questions will be answered in the following national reports. For this report the topics questions resulted in too few useful information for further proceeding.

5.2.2 Type of products developed

FIGURE 12: WHAT OUTPUTS OR PRODUCTS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION AS PART OF PARTICIPATION IN KEY ACTION 2 IN ERASMUS+ (FROM 2018 ONWARDS TILL THE END OF 2022)?



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 8

Between 2018 and 2022, 56% of the organizations participating in KA2 projects indicated that they had developed **curricula, training modules, language courses, or pedagogical concepts**. The second most frequently mentioned outputs, with each exceeding 40% of

responses, were **handbooks, websites, and learning materials**. **Teaching materials for educators/staff and publications** fell within the middle range of outputs. Approximately a quarter of the institutions reported creating **webinars or blended learning courses**, as well as producing **films or instructional videos** as part of their KA2 projects.

In the course of the participation in Erasmus+, CS1 reported the development of all types of products except for books and teaching videos. An unexpected outcome is represented through the video "Dream like Neighborhood", which resulted through the establishment of a neighborhood group by the pensioners' club in Vienna. Although there was initially resentment, it was ultimately overcome in a positive manner. CS2 mentioned that through KA2, similar offers in the area of sustainability, such as urban art and waste separation, have been launched in France and Austria. Valuable event products have been created that should also be included in the regular program in the future. KA1 involved job shadowing and participation in specific courses abroad. This led to new event ideas and a separate work area.

5.2.3 Added value of Erasmus+ support

54% of the surveyed organizations state that they would not have implemented the measures supported by Erasmus+ had they not participated in Erasmus+ programmes. 20% believe that the **implementations would have been carried out in a reduced capacity**, while 17% are of the opinion that the **implementations would have taken a different form**. None of them believe that the implementation would have been exactly the same without their involvement in Erasmus+.⁵

Regarding the case studies, both CS2 and CS1 reported the **added value of Erasmus+ for an increased international perspective**. The exchange with speakers from other countries had a strong impact on generating ideas and thinking outside the box, and it led to motivating employees to increase their mobility.

5.3 Impact at organisation level

5.3.1 Impact on internationalisation

The impact of Erasmus+ on organizations' internationalization efforts can be considered notably pronounced. The surveyed institutions largely demonstrate existing structures to facilitate internal internationalization processes. It is evident that 80% of the organizations **systematically participate in international networks and internationalization activities**. Moreover, 37% have **guidelines/strategies for internationalization**, while another 37% have **guidelines/agreed-upon processes for managing international projects**. One-fifth report having a **dedicated budget for internationalization activities**, and 17% indicate addressing the **development of international competencies in performance evaluations and career discussions**.

Overall, 69% of respondents state that the **conditions within the organization for internationalization** processes have improved since 2018, with 37% of them considering the

⁵ Survey, Question 9

development as a significant improvement. Only 2% perceive the change of internal conditions as decline.

Specifically considering the impacts of participating in Erasmus+ programs on the organizational integration of internationalization within the surveyed institutions, 88% stated that **international networks of the organization were strengthened**. Over 70% agree that participation in Erasmus+ projects has **increased awareness of the added value created by international projects**. Over two-thirds of respondents recognize an **improvement in the management of international processes** within their institution, as well as **increased support for internationalization activities for the organization's professionals**. More than half also see active **improvement in the strategy for internationalization** within the organizations through participation in Erasmus+.⁶

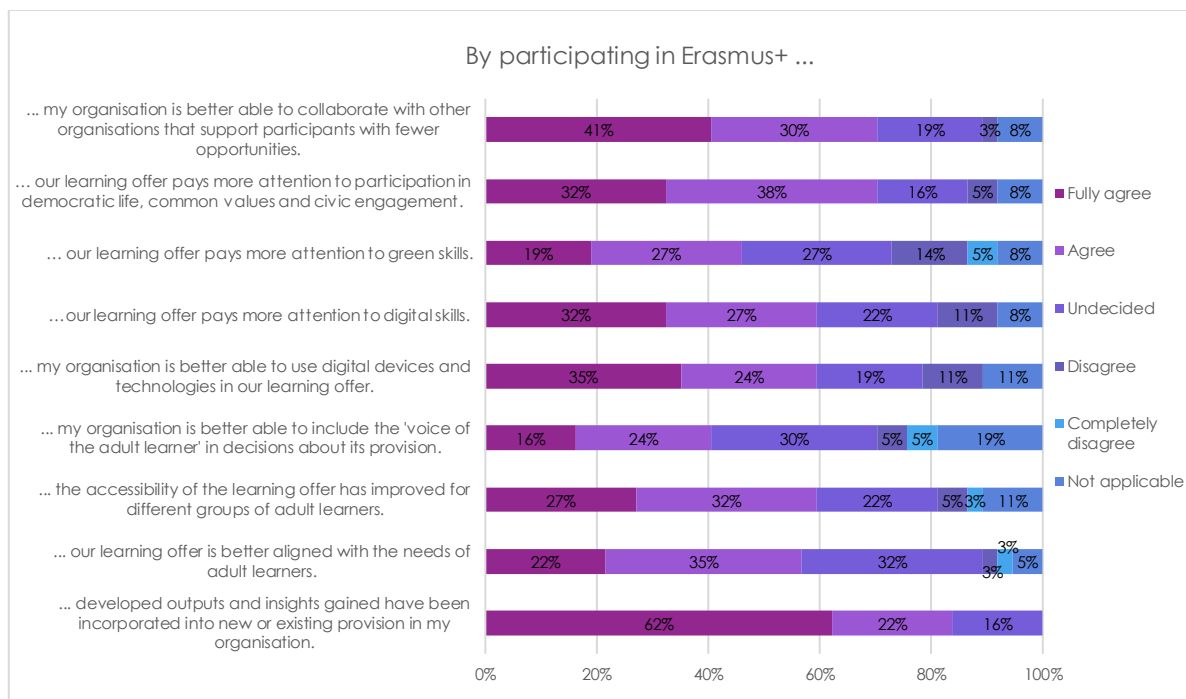
Regarding the primary benefit of participating in Erasmus+, the majority of participants identified **inter- and transnational collaboration and networking as crucial**. While 10 participants did not respond to this question, more than 60% emphasized the significance of internationalization, particularly through the exchange of innovative approaches within educational institutions and organizations.

In the case of CS1, internationalization occurred through projects and resources for applications. Further it was stressed that European topics that are relevant at the national level should be interlocked. For example, the topic of age-friendly cities is supported at the EU level with partners, which is also relevant at the national level.

⁶ Survey, Questions 13, 14, 15, 33

5.3.2 Impact on learning offer

FIGURE 13: ERASMUS+ IMPACT ON PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 21

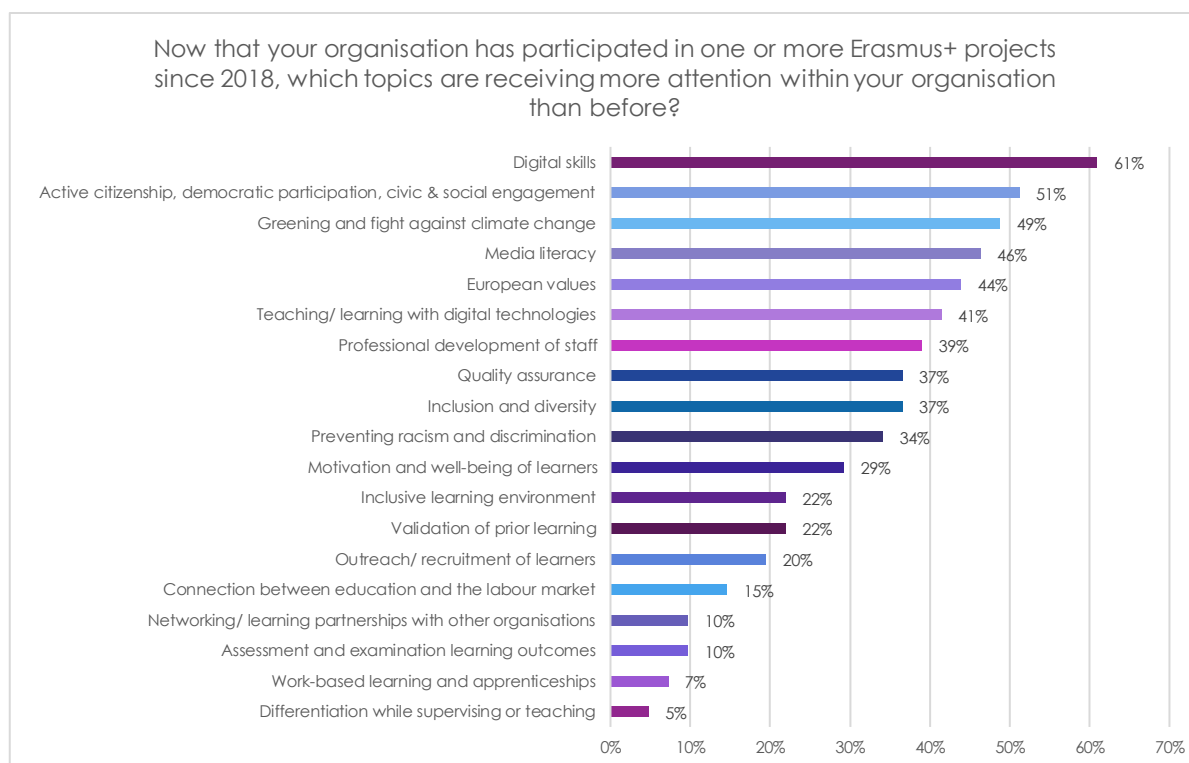
As depicted in the figure, agreement regarding the impact of participation in Erasmus+ since 2018 on the development of the learning offerings is very high. 84% of respondents report **incorporating the developed outcomes and acquired insights into the learning offerings**, with more than half of them even observing a significant impact. Over 70% perceive improvements in **collaboration with other organizations supporting participants with fewer opportunities** through participation in Erasmus+. Additionally, more than half of the surveyed institutions also noted an **enhancement in the accessibility of their learning offerings** for diverse adult groups, as well as in **aligning the offerings with the needs of adult learners**. Particularly in the realm of digital transformation, effects are frequently observed. More than half of the respondents agree with the statement that participation in Erasmus+ brings **progress in integrating digital devices and technologies** into the learning offerings, as well as in considering **digital competencies in teaching**.⁷

The development of new thematic foci and topics within the own organisation was also mentioned by CS1, which now integrate Virtual Reality for the support of teaching and organisation. Further, the central awareness of a participatory approach, especially in the context of senior citizens, was stressed. Seniors are thus being included more by inviting them

⁷ Survey, Question 23

to project meetings, presenting with them, and featuring them in presentations and discussion groups.

FIGURE 14: TOPICS WITH HIGHER ATTENTION IN THE FUTURE WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION BASED ON ERASMUS+ PARTICIPATION



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 22

This trend is also reflected in the topics that, according to respondents, have received more attention since their participation in Erasmus+ projects since 2018. For instance, 61% of institutions indicate that the area of **digital skills** is now more prominently focused. Similarly, **media literacy** is considered by 46%, and **teaching and learning with digital technologies** by 41%, to have gained importance. Other topics that have gathered more attention through participation in Erasmus+ include the **promotion of active citizenship, democratic participation, civic and social engagement**, with 51%, and **greening and measures to combat climate change**, with 49%.⁸

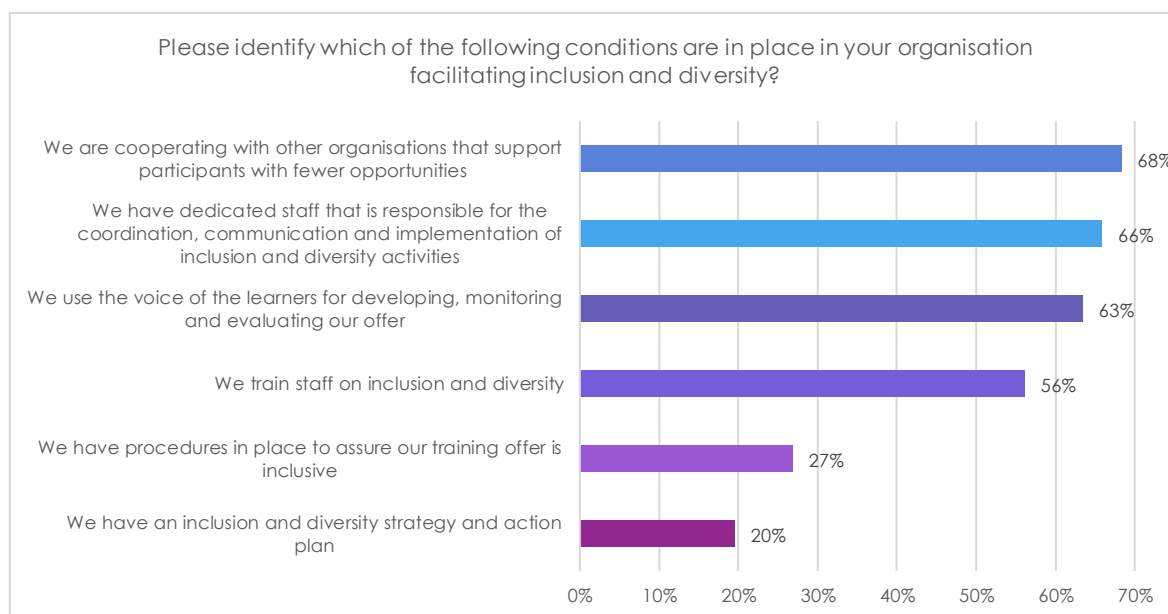
Concrete examples of the impact of participation in Erasmus+ projects on the learning offerings often include the **development of digital content or resources**. The integration of these elements was frequently regarded as a result of perceived internationalization, which facilitated innovative collaboration in the development of learning materials and resources.

⁸ Survey, Question 33

Furthermore, repeated mention is made of the **implementation of democratic or participatory instruments** in the learning offerings.

5.3.3 Impact on horizontal priorities

FIGURE 15: CONDITIONS IN PLACE IN ORGANISATION FACILITATING INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 16

Regarding the promotion of inclusion and diversity within organizations, 68% of respondents indicate **collaborating with organizations supporting participants with limited opportunities**. One-third of the surveyed institutions have dedicated **staff responsible for coordinating, communicating, and implementing inclusion and diversity activities**, while 56% actively **train their staff in relation to inclusion and diversity**. In contrast, 63% utilize the **voice of learners to develop, monitor, and evaluate offerings**, thereby solidifying internal structures for inclusion and diversity.⁹

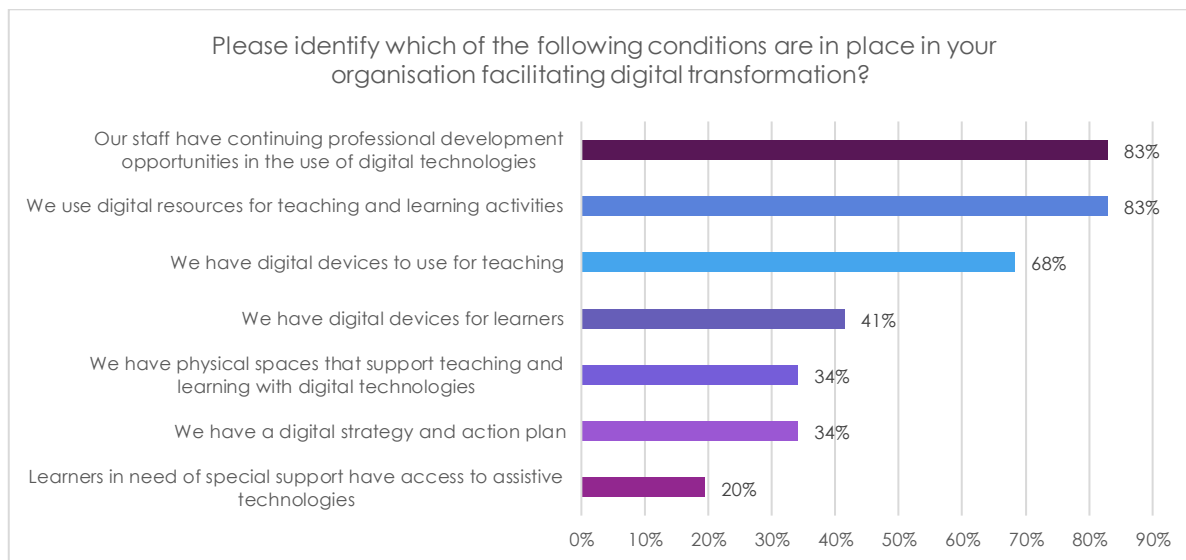
Compared to other horizontal priorities of Erasmus+, the influence on the domain of inclusion and diversity is less pronounced. While approximately 95% perceive an **improvement in awareness of inclusion and diversity** through participation in Erasmus+ projects, only 18% perceive the impact as significant, while 38% recognize the influence only to some extent. Nevertheless, for two organizations, the promotion of inclusion and diversity is seen as the **greatest benefit of participating in Erasmus+**, particularly in terms of creating opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in the program.¹⁰

⁹ Survey, Question 20

¹⁰ Survey, Question 33

Digital transformation

FIGURE 16: CONDITIONS IN PLACE IN ORGANISATIONS FACILITATING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 17

As discussed in Section 5.3.2, the impact of Erasmus+ on the role of digital transformation within the organization is particularly emphasized. This is also evident in the existing organizational structures aimed at promoting digital transformation. 83% of respondents indicate **providing continuing professional development opportunities to their staff in the use of digital technologies**. Similarly, 83% **utilize digital resources for teaching and learning activities**. Furthermore, over two-thirds of the respondents report having **digital devices available for teaching purposes**.¹¹

In the realm of digitalization, 95% of surveyed institutions believe that participation in Erasmus+ **strengthens awareness of this topic**. However, overall agreement is more pronounced, as approximately one-third strongly or somewhat agree with this statement, while only 23% perceive the influence as partial.¹²

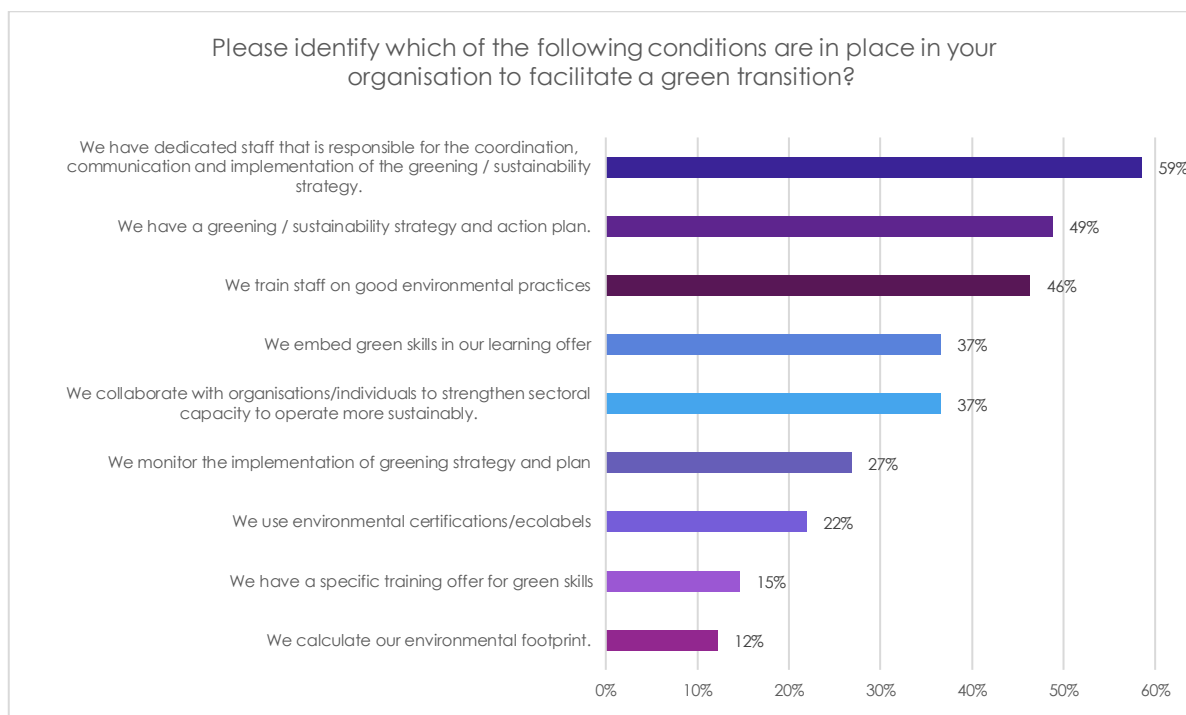
In the context of CS1, COVID-19 has accelerated digitalisation on various levels. Online meetings now take place more frequently, with regular Zoom meetings allowing for increased exchange and updates. This positive change may not have occurred without the pandemic. There is even a certain amount of momentum and willingness to use these online tools more effectively. However, the topic of digitalisation and older people has also become more prominent.

¹¹ Survey, Question 20

¹² Survey, Question 33

Green transition

FIGURE 17: CONDITIONS WITHIN ORGANISATIONS TO FACILITATE A GREEN TRANSITION



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 18

Compared to the other thematic areas, the institutional framework for promoting green transformation within organizations is the least developed. Among respondents, 59% indicate the presence of **dedicated staff responsible for coordinating, communicating, and implementing environmental and sustainability strategies**. Nearly half of the institutions have an **environmental or sustainability strategy along with an action plan**. Moreover, 46% provide **training to their employees in environmentally friendly practices**.¹³

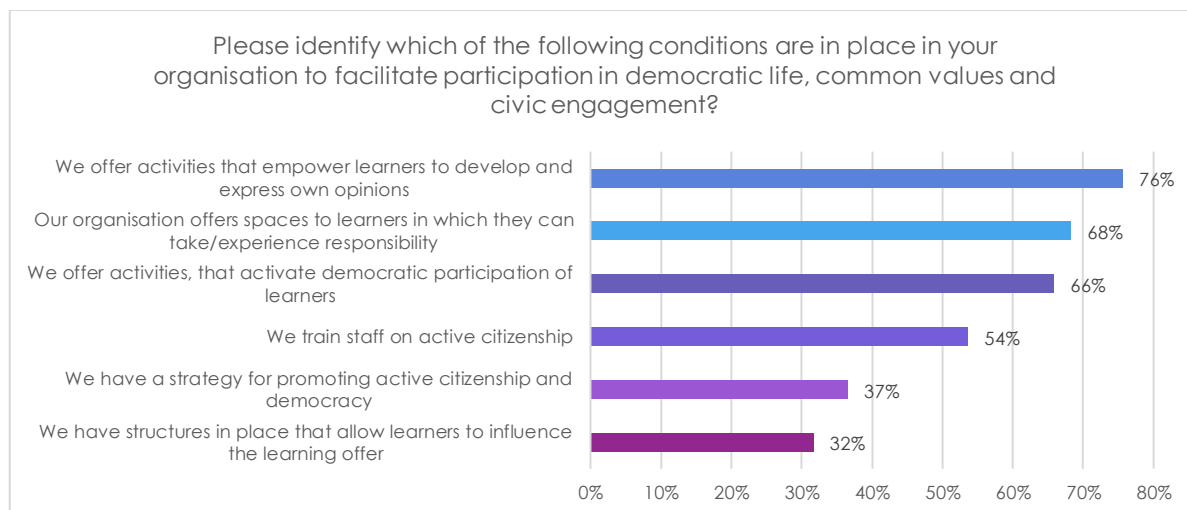
Nevertheless, 97% of respondents believe that participation in Erasmus+ enhances **awareness of environmental protection and the fight against climate change**. One-third strongly agree with this statement, while 28% moderately agree. However, 23% indicate perceiving the influence only partially, and 13% report only marginal improvements.¹⁴

¹³ Survey, Question 20

¹⁴ Survey, Question 33

Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement

FIGURE 18: CONDITIONS WITHIN ORGANISATIONS TO FACILITATE PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 19

Regarding the structures within the surveyed institutions facilitating participation in democratic life, shared values, and civic engagement, over three quarters reported offering **activities enabling learners to develop and articulate their own opinions**. Over one third allocate **spaces for learners to assume responsibility and gain practical experience**. Another third provides **activities fostering learners' active democratic participation**.¹⁵

Overall, the perception of Erasmus+' impact on **awareness of participation in democratic life, shared values, and civic engagement** is most pronounced in comparison. 36% of the institutions perceive a significant improvement, a quarter acknowledge a substantial enhancement. For 31%, the improvement in awareness of participation in democratic life, shared values, and civic engagement within their organization is only partially evident.¹⁶

5.4 Factors hampering or stimulating impact

In total, close to 80% of organizations report **ongoing use of outputs and products stemming from KA2** projects initiated since 2018. While more than half of the respondents continue to actively integrate these outputs and products into their operations, 22% of organizations utilize them infrequently.¹⁷

A pivotal determinant affecting the adoption and utilization of these outputs and products is primarily the **creation process**. As per experience, the incorporation of both **international**

¹⁵ Survey, Question 20

¹⁶ Survey, Question 33

¹⁷ Survey, Question 10

exchange and the **engagement of pertinent stakeholders**, alongside a **participatory approach**, enhances the efficacy of the resulting outputs. Conversely, inadequate alignment of the products and outputs with the needs of organizations or users during the genesis process, thereby falling short of quality standards, is perceived as inhibitory to adoption and utilization. The availability of **temporal, financial, and personnel resources** is also cited as a significant influencing factor, the extent of which can have a sustainable impact on adoption and utilization. Moreover, **the COVID-19 pandemic** is considered another obstructive factor for the uptake and use of the developed outputs and products within the realm of KA2.¹⁸

5.5 Conclusion

In terms of the impact of Erasmus+ on organizational internationalization, it can be asserted that this influence is notably significant. Specifically, participation in Erasmus+ projects has strengthened the international networks of the institutions, raised awareness regarding the value of international projects within organizations, and enhanced the management of international collaboration and strategies for internationalization.

Similarly, an impact on learning offers resulting from participation in Erasmus+ projects is observable. The majority of organizations continue to integrate the outcomes developed in these projects into ongoing or new initiatives. Significantly, improvements in the accessibility of the learning offers are evident, with digital devices and competencies playing a crucial role.

Regarding the influence on horizontal priorities, although improvements or increases in significance due to participation in Erasmus+ programs are noted across all themes, they are particularly pronounced in the domains of Digital Transformation and Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values, and Civic Engagement.

When examining the factors cited by organizations that affect the adoption and utilization of outputs and products developed from KA2 projects, particular emphasis is placed on the inception process, which subsequently influences their utility and alignment with user needs.

¹⁸ Survey, Question 11

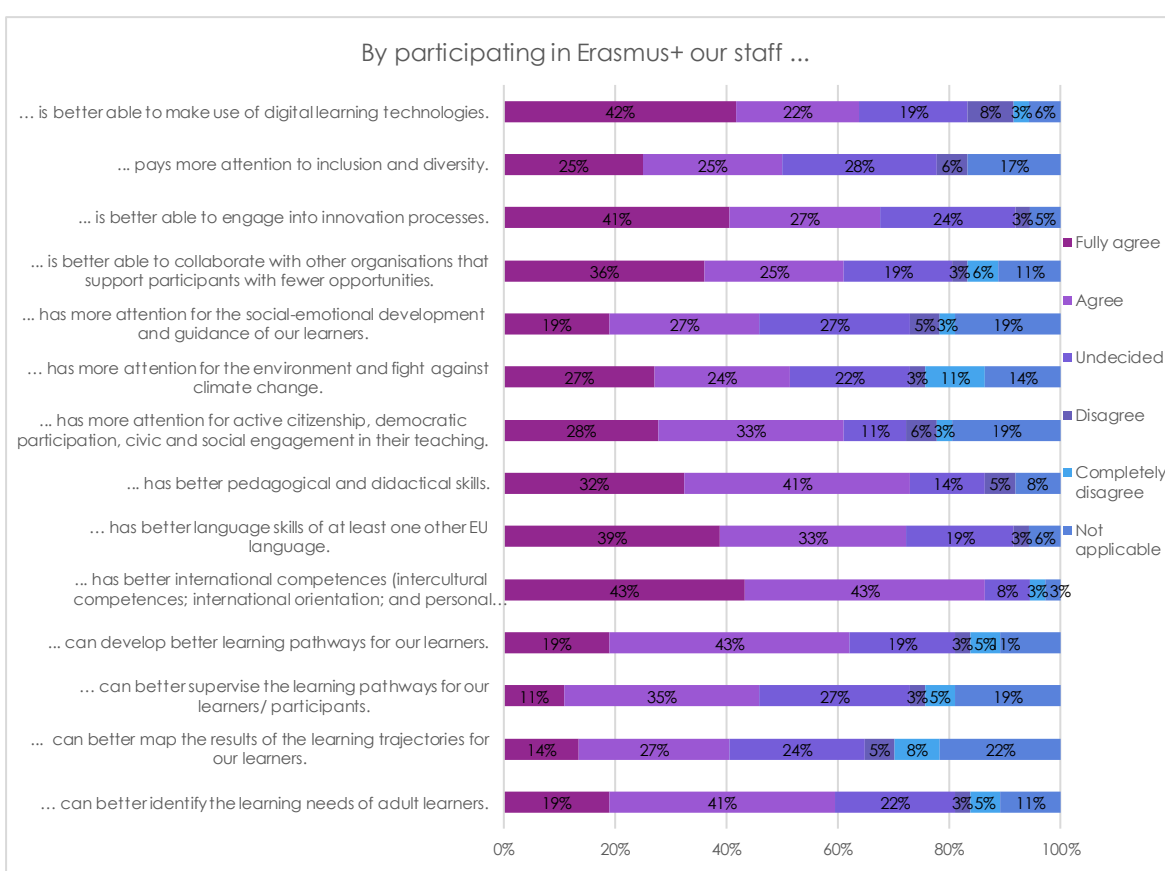
6 Impact of Erasmus+ at micro level

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we look at the impact of Erasmus+ on staff and adult learners within participating organisations. Aspects of professionalisation includes the guidance of learners, the mapping of learning outcomes and the focus on inclusion and diversity.

6.2 Impact on staff

FIGURE 19: IMPACT ON STAFF IN PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 24

The survey results indicate that a high percentage of participants fully agreed or agreed with the following: the **improvement of international competences** (43 % fully agreed, 43% agreed), **increase in the pedagogical and didactic skills of staff**, with 32% fully agreeing and 41% agreeing, **increased language skills** in at least one other EU language (39% fully agreeing and 33% agreeing) and the **ability to engage in innovation processes** (41% fully agreed, 27% agreed). The percentage of participants who **did not find these aspects applicable** was around 3-8%, and those who **did not agree** was equal or less than 5%. 8-24% of participants were undecided. These high levels of agreement were accompanied by an assessment of improved **ability to make use of digital learning technologies** (42% fully agreeing and 22% agreeing), **better collaboration between staff and other organizations** supporting participants

with fewer opportunities, with 36% fully agreeing and 25% agreeing and staff paying more **attention for active citizenship, democratic participation, civic and social engagement in their teaching** (28% fully agree, 33% agree). The disagreement stayed below 10%, while between 6-19% did not find it applicable for themselves, 11-19% answered undecided.

Around 50% fully agreed or agreed on **better identification of the learning needs** of adult learners (19% fully agreed, 41% agreed), staff paying **more attention for the environment and fight against climate change** with 27% full agreement and 24% agreement, as well as **increased attention on inclusion and diversity** (25% both fully agree and agree). In these cases, between 11-14% answered not applicable, 22-28% were undecided and 3-11% disagreed or completely disagreed on the statements. Less concern was expressed regarding **better supervision of the learning pathways for learners/participants**, which was only 11% fully agreed, 35% agreed, while 27% were undecided, 19% did not find it applicable and 8% did not agree. Further, an improved **ability of staff to map the results of their learners' learning trajectories**, was agreed upon by 41% of respondents, while 24% remained undecided, 22% answered 'not applicable', and 13% disagreed. Another aspect that did not receive the same level of approval was **staff paying more attention to the social-emotional development and guidance of learners**.¹⁹

Organisations participating in Erasmus+ particularly mentioned the **improvement of quality of work and strengthening intercultural competences** through **collaboration on international level**. This was emphasised through the exchange in intercultural teams, e.g. on innovative teaching methods. Another aspect was seen in the **improvement in the use of digital skills** regarding project management flows, didactic competences in online teaching and learning activities as well as on the level of outreach by increased knowledge in the handling of social media. The increase in digitalisation simultaneously had a positive effect in terms of project management skills, e.g. working on larger project scales, using different tools for the preparation and implementation. Further, an **impact on sustainable travels**, such as switching to train journeys or using online meetings instead of face-to-face meetings whenever possible was also highlighted. The importance of sharing experiences and knowledge to **raise awareness on different issues** was also seen through the intercultural exchange on topics such as gender, migration and LGBTWI+ or inclusive and participatory research with international partners and target groups. Another positive aspect was stressed in the **improvement of intercultural competences**, foreign language skills and increased inclusion of European perspectives and international orientation of staff members, e.g. through research on international platforms and websites.²⁰

Regarding the main benefit of participating in Erasmus+, the majority of participants identified **inter- and transnational cooperation and networking as crucial**, particularly highlighted through **personal exchange of innovative approaches** within educational institutions and organisations. This was followed by responses related to **capacity building** at both personal and organisational level. The importance of know-how and experience gained through stays and personal exchanges abroad was emphasised, which could be further integrated into organisational structures to enrich personal and institutional capacities and efficiency. In

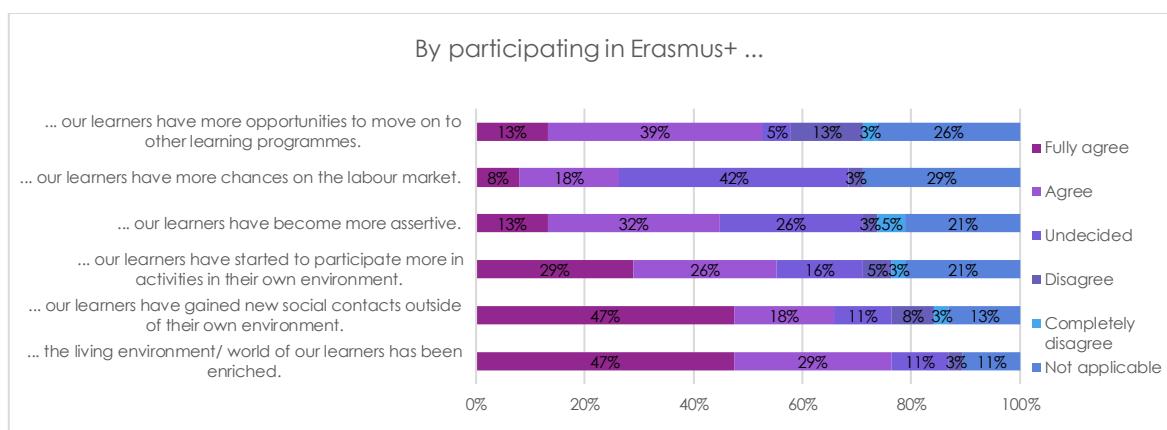
¹⁹ Statistics participant reports: Learning outcomes of staff that participated in mobility exchange (several years)

²⁰ Survey, Question 25

addition, the benefits of financial support were highlighted, as well as the expansion of the implementation of innovative educational projects due to limited possibilities at national level. The interview partners highlighted the **increased motivation of employees taking part at further mobility activities**.²¹

6.3 Impact on adult learners

FIGURE 20: IMPACT FROM ERASMUS+ ON LEARNERS IN ORGANISATIONS



Source: Statistics participant reports: Learning outcomes of staff that participated in mobility exchange (several years)

The survey participants had been asked on their perceptions and assessment of outcomes for learners, with multiple responses possible (see figure above). The statement for selection that received the **most approval was related to the personal growth of the learners**. 47% fully agreed and 18% agreed on learners having **gained new social contacts** outside of their own environment as well as the **enrichment of their living environment and/or world of the learners** (47% fully agreed, 29% agreed). Some 52% agreed (13% fully agreed, 39% agreed) with the statement, that a participation in Erasmus offers learners **more opportunities to move on to other learning programmes**. Regarding **more opportunities of learners on the labour market**, almost half of the participants (42%) were undecided, 29% answered the question with not applicable and 3% disagreed. For **increased assertiveness of the learners** a quarter (21%) of the participants find it not applicable, 26% answered undecided, while 8% disagreed/completely disagreed on this. However, there was more agreement with the statement that the participation in Erasmus+ had **increased the participation of learners in activities in their own environment**. Here, nearly half of the participants answered agreed (29% fully agreed, 26% agreed), while only 8% disagreed (5% disagreed, 3% completely disagreed).

The survey participants' responses on the impact on learners focused strongly on individual and personal growth, in particular self-empowerment, confidence, and independence. Erasmus+ activities **compensated for limited opportunities at national level, as illustrated** by an example of a project focusing on women with refugee experience, providing access to training opportunities and **improving their chances in the job market**, thus **developing their**

²¹ Survey, Question 33

personal strengths and skills. The integration project, among other, highlighted the importance of forming new networks. Another project, which focused on integrating young autistic learners into the labour market, emphasized the **significance of community building**. During the final event abroad, one of the young learners was invited to speak, which led to **personal growth through increased self-confidence and opened up new possibilities for the future**. A programme for senior citizens with a focus on self-empowerment and community building led to **higher self-confidence and openness**, new friendships and exchange e beyond the everyday spaces and neighbourhoods of senior citizens. Participants of the survey also emphasised the **importance of expanding the network on a European level**. For example, young people with learning disabilities participated in a LTTA in Bucharest on the topic of inclusion and sustainability, which led to international friendships, new insights, and high engagement in campaigns. Another example of Erasmus+ underlining the relevance for improving the quality of services provided was given by the **implementation of best practices learned during stays abroad** into national or local structures, such as a cooperative library based on a Swedish library role model system. In addition, a **learning platform strengthened inclusion** by offering online/hybrid courses and learning materials in digital form.

In terms of the greatest benefit, the survey respondents mentioned **international exchange** with colleagues across Europe, leading to the in strengthening of European values and international thinking and improvement of language skills, as well as enrichment on a personal level through new perspectives. Some participants further mentioned the **approaches in inclusion and diversity**, specifically in terms of creating opportunities for people with disabilities to join the programme. Another benefit which played a (minor) role for the participants, was the **mutual development of educational programs and teaching materials**, as well as tools and products that could be used to further develop the educational offer. **Financial support** for training measures, benefiting not only the company, but also the adult learners, also played a significant role. *(It must be noted that 10 participants did not respond on the survey questions.)*

Regarding the impact on adult learners, information can also be gained from **interviews conducted with 2 adult learners** participating at a “Digital Skills for teachers” course in Cordoba, Spain. The interviewees are memory trainers for the project “Mitten im Leben”, at the KWB targeting senior citizens. The learners especially highlighted the **positive personal effect** through the exchange with other countries and get to know new cultures and people. Both interviewees assured that they are implementing the experiences and knowledge gained in their classes as well as in private life and **spread knowledge** within other national colleagues, that could not take part at education. A **positive experience** had come up through **international exchange**, among other with a student from the Netherlands. The “Mitten im Leben” project was considered outstanding and will be mentioned as best practice example in other countries to try to implement the same structure.

6.4 Conclusions

Survey and case study results underline that participants agree on the positive impact of Erasmus+ participation for staff in educational institutions and organizations. Notable improvements in international competences, pedagogical skills, language skills, and commitment to innovation were recognized, highlighting the program's effectiveness in



broadening professional horizons. Additionally, the increased use of digital learning technologies and collaboration further reinforced a transformative impact on staff practices. Key areas for improvement included intercultural competences, digital skills, and project management. Emphasising sustainable practices and knowledge sharing fosters awareness of societal issues and promotes inclusivity. The programme's benefits, such as opportunities for cooperation, capacity building, and valuable international experience, enhanced both individual and organisational capacities.

Regarding the impact on adult learners, the feedback underscores significant contributions of Erasmus+ to personal growth and empowerment. The programme enabled individual development, confidence building, and community integration, particularly for marginalized groups. Erasmus+ initiatives in inclusion, sustainability, and best practice exchange aimed to enhance educational services. Notable benefits of Erasmus+ included international exchange, language skills, and mutual development opportunities that align with European values.

Erasmus+ facilitated transformative innovations by enriching staff professionally and culturally, while promoting European values. It enabled meaningful contributions to education locally and internationally by fostering diversity and bolstering cross-border cooperation, positioning it as a cornerstone of educational advancement for adult learners.

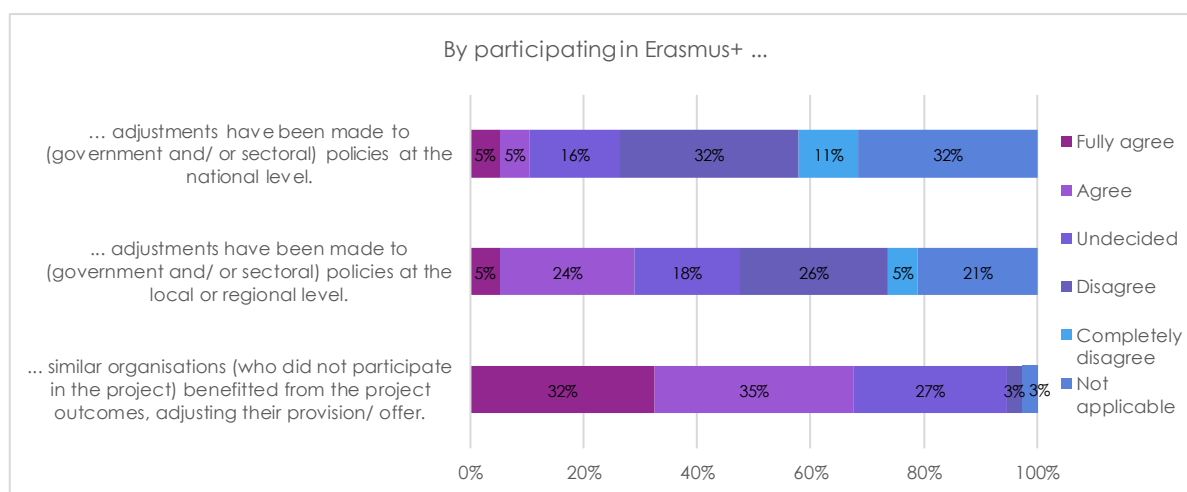
7 Impact of Erasmus+ at macro level

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we look at the impact of Erasmus+ beyond participating organisations. It addresses aspects such as how other organisations benefitted from the project outcomes, adjusting their provision/ offer, but also whether adjustments have been made to (government and/ or sectoral) policies at the national and regional level due to Erasmus+ projects.

7.2 Impact on other organisations

FIGURE 21: ORGANISATIONAL ADJUSTMENTS TO POLICIES BY PARTICIPATING IN ERASMUS+



Source: Questionnaire for participating institutions, question 28

67% of the surveyed institutions reported that **similar organizations**, which did not partake in the program, **benefited from the Erasmus+ project outcomes by adjusting their offerings**. 27% are uncertain about this matter, and merely 3% perceive no such influence on other organizations.

7.3 Impact on national, regional and sectoral policies

When examining the impact of participation in Erasmus+ programs **on governmental and/or educational policy measures**, minimal changes are observed at the national level. Just 10% of the surveyed organizations noted **adjustments at the national level**, with nearly a third detecting no alterations. However, the influence appears somewhat stronger at the **local and regional levels**. In this context, 30% of respondents witnessed adaptations. Nevertheless, even at this level, 24% reported no alterations in governmental and/or educational policy measures.

7.4 Conclusions

The results indicate that the Erasmus+ program has a significant impact on similar organizations. 67% of organizations reported making adjustments to their offerings based on program outcomes. Only 3% of organizations perceived no impact, while 27% were uncertain. At the national level, only 10% noted policy adjustments in response to the program. However, at the local and regional levels, 30% witnessed adaptations. 24% reported no alterations. Overall, the Erasmus+ program appears to have a significant influence on organizations and some impact on policy measures, particularly at the local and regional levels. However, there is still variability in its effects, suggesting the need for further examination and improvement.



B.III CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY POINTERS

8 Support of NA: strengths and challenges

8.1 Key findings

The interview partners (representatives of beneficiary organisations) identified the application process as a significant challenge, in particular due to the bureaucratic and administrative work load. One interviewee pointed out that despite the experience with ESF, it was difficult to get a foot in the door with Erasmus+. The logic and wording were completely different and not comparable. Furthermore, KA2 in particular required a more strategic way of thinking, as the probability of getting a project varied greatly (the chances in Austria were lower than in other countries²²) and partnerships had to be prepared accordingly, as there were often unplanned effects. The application reflected the respective ideas and plans, but the cooperation within the partnership (including changes of partners, etc.) always brought changes, especially due to the time gap between application and project start.

In the case of KA2, there was limited personnel stability among partners according to the interviewee, which led to challenges in the case of budget redistributions that had to be coordinated with partners. If a problem in cooperation with a partner arose, it was challenging to resolve, and the Austrian National Agency could not always provide assistance. This was especially the case, when changes in the partnership were necessary (e.g. due to problems with one of the partners), where the Austria National Agency was not able to provide assistance in finding new partners (which is not foreseen to do for a National Agency).

In addition, the exchange of information with other countries in the field of basic education was perceived as a challenge due to the use of different terminology and regulations. Therefore, assistance in communicating with NAs in other countries was requested, especially in the communication of the concrete forms of education in the different countries or how to deal with specific requests from National Agencies in partner countries (which seem to be different from the requests from the Austrian National Agency).

The threshold was seen as relatively high for organisations with no experience of the programme. In particular, it was observed that although practitioners had innovative ideas, they often needed professional support for the application process itself. This included the challenge of finding their way around the possibilities, e.g. which program line suited best for them at the specific moment, among other including aspects such as accreditation for mobilities, implementation of individual mobilities, webinars, small and large partnerships.

This raised the question of how to better bring together people with innovative ideas with people that are good at writing and coordinating applications.

Regarding the direct communication with the National Agency, the interviewees mentioned that in several cases, only specific areas of the project structure were well explained while in

²² Main reasons for a higher competition were mentioned in the interviews: An improving overall quality of proposals from different institutions, more institutions bidding for the same pots, and some countries have a different structure of institutions with the ability to bid for one of the pots, which makes the chances in these countries higher than in Austria.

others support from the National Agency was less well explained. The main challenge was not the project itself, but it was the proposal writing, where the information of the National Agency is more informative about the programmes and less concrete about which specific programme would especially fit to the institutions' needs. However, in general the communication with the National Agency was perceived as personal and uncomplicated, thus the concrete support of the people in the National Agency has always worked well, with prompt feedback and information. In this respect it was argued that communication channels with the National Agency were very short and unbureaucratic, although there was a large apparatus in the background. According to the interviewees the contact persons were always available and found solutions where the Commission itself was still lagging behind.

Another effect observed in relation to competition is that the quality of applications has improved without the funding pots getting bigger to the same extent, so the challenges in this respect were also described as significant. This led to a reduction in the number of applications, as people were always looking for areas with less competition.

Unexpected effects related to the mobility of the learners, which proved to be more effective and seamless than anticipated. The diverse needs of the participants did not affect the positive implementation of mobility.

Concluding statements:

In conclusion, the Erasmus+ application process presents significant bureaucratic challenges according to the interviewees, particularly for those new to the process. However, the support from National Agencies was perceived as consistently helpful and responsive. Despite initial challenges, the programme's positive impact on participant mobility and the quality of applications demonstrates its overall success and potential for further improvement through better matching innovative ideas with experienced applicants.

8.2 Policy pointers

Recommendations, if needed, related to:

- **Simplification of application procedures:** Streamline the Erasmus+ application process to reduce bureaucratic and administrative burdens, create lower barriers and make it more accessible, especially for newcomers and smaller organisations.
- **Enhancement of strategic support:** Provide targeted support and training on strategic planning for KA2 projects to help applicants understand and navigate the specific requirements and improve their chances of success.
- **Strengthening partner stability:** Develop measures to ensure greater staff stability between project partners, in order to facilitate smoother budget co-ordination and project implementation.
- **Facilitating cross-national communication:** Improve mechanisms for communication and information exchange between national agencies in different countries, taking



into account differences in terminology and regulations

- **Increasing outreach and assistance:** Expand support services for organisations with innovative ideas but limited application experience, e.g. by including workshops, webinars and one-to-one mentoring programmes.
- **Promotion of local engagement:** Encourage a more active involvement of local (hosts and) participants in Erasmus+ projects in order to enhance cultural exchange and integration and to ensure that participants have meaningful interactions with the host community.
- **Addressing language barriers:** Ensure effective communication and inclusiveness by providing resources and support, such as interpreters, to overcome language barriers during Erasmus stays.



The national report was commissioned within the framework of the RIA-AE network by the OeAD-GmbH, Austrian National Agency for Erasmus+ and ESK. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or OeAD-GmbH. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

@3s research laboratory –
Forschungsverein
Stefan Humpl
Im Auftrag des OeAD