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ADULT EDUCATION

Country research report Austria 2026

Impact of Erasmus+ on the Adult Education Sector in Austria (second survey round)

National report RIA-AE Network

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Abbreviations

AE	Adult Education
AES	Adult Education Survey
AMS	Public Employment Service
BASGPK	Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection
BFI	Vocational Training Institute
BIFEB	Federal Institute of Adult Education
BMFWF	Federal Ministry Women, Science and Research
BMLUK	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Foresty, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management
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	Conference of Adult Education Austria
NA	National Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OER	Open educational resource
RIA-AE	Network for research-based impact analysis of the Erasmus+ programme in adult education
WIFI	Institute for Economic Protection

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PART A – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summary

Background of the study

This study is part of a transnational monitoring project of the Erasmus+ programme in adult education conducted by the Research-based Impact Analysis in Adult Education (RIA-AE) Network. Within this project, national monitoring studies are implemented in parallel with the same methodology in the member countries of the network. They inform the National Agencies in charge of Erasmus+ about the implementation and impact of the programme in their respective country. These national studies 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: KA 1 (learning mobility of individuals) and KA 2 (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 in this report is given to the priority theme 'participation in democratic life 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 EU databases, an online survey and case studies among funded organisations, as well as interviews with adult learners and non-participating organisations. The data collection for Austria took place between September 2025 and May 2026 and was carried out by 3s Research & Consulting with the technical support of Ockham IPS.

Main results

Erasmus+ has become a key driver of internationalisation, innovation and organisational development in Austrian adult education. Across organisations, staff and learners, the programme generates lasting benefits by strengthening inclusion, professional competences, lifelong learning and democratic participation.

The accessibility and inclusiveness of the programme

Erasmus+ reaches an increasingly diverse range of adult education organisations, including smaller providers. At the same time, administrative burden, limited resources and barriers faced by learners with fewer opportunities continue to constrain equal access and participation.

Impact at organisation level

Erasmus+ supports long-term organisational development by strengthening international cooperation, innovation and the integration of horizontal priorities into everyday practice. Sustainable impact depends on successfully embedding project results into organisational structures beyond the project lifetime.

Impact of staff level

Participation in Erasmus+ enhances staff competences in pedagogy, international cooperation, digital learning and inclusion. Beyond professional development, staff report greater motivation, confidence and commitment to European cooperation and democratic values.

Impact learners' level

Erasmus+ fosters learners' self-confidence, intercultural competences and engagement in lifelong learning. Mobility experiences also strengthen European awareness, democratic participation and a stronger sense of belonging, particularly among learners with fewer opportunities.

Characteristics of Erasmus+ project(s) addressing "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" in adult education

Projects addressing democratic participation are increasingly embedded across adult education and approach the priority through inclusive, learner-centred and practice-oriented activities. Rather than focusing solely on civic education, they combine democratic participation with critical thinking, media literacy, inclusion and community engagement.

Impact of Erasmus+ addressing "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement"

Projects addressing democratic participation strengthen organisations, staff and learners by embedding participatory and community-oriented approaches into adult education. They promote civic engagement, empowerment and European values while creating meaningful opportunities for active participation, particularly for underrepresented groups.

TABLE 1: CONCLUDING TABLE WITH ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Achievements	Challenges
• Erasmus+ has become an established driver of internationalisation and organisational development within Austrian adult education. • The programme successfully empowers adult learners by strengthening self-confidence, independence and active participation in society. • Erasmus+ projects increasingly translate European priorities, such as democratic participation,	• Administrative workload and complex application procedures continue to discourage some organisations from participating. • Organisations with limited staff and financial resources face difficulties in initiating and sustaining Erasmus+ activities. • Participation opportunities for adults with fewer opportunities still require additional support, preparation and flexible mobility formats.

inclusion and sustainability, into concrete educational practice. • International cooperation broadens perspectives, strengthens European identity and promotes the exchange of innovative educational approaches. • Participatory and learner-centred approaches enable adult learners to experience democratic participation rather than only learning about it.	• Maintaining project results, partnerships and newly developed learning offers beyond the funding period remains challenging. • The transfer of project results beyond participating organisations could be further strengthened to increase sector-wide impact. • Awareness of Erasmus+ opportunities among some adult education providers and potential learners remains limited, particularly outside established networks.

Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2026)

Policy pointers

Strengthening inclusive and supported mobility formats

Expand support for group mobility and participation-oriented mobility formats that are particularly accessible for adult learners with fewer opportunities, limited prior international experience or low confidence in formal learning settings.

Reducing administrative burden and resource pressure

Continue efforts to simplify application, reporting and financial management procedures, particularly for smaller organisations and organisations working with vulnerable target groups.

Enhancing support for newcomers and smaller organisations

Expand mentoring, peer-learning and matchmaking opportunities for organisations with limited Erasmus+ experience.

Supporting long-term sustainability and transfer of results

Encourage stronger follow-up structures and opportunities for the continuation of successful project approaches beyond individual funding periods.

Reducing linguistic and communicative barriers

Language barriers continue to influence participation possibilities, particularly for learners with limited prior international experience. Accessible communication formats, multilingual materials and language-sensitive support structures could help broaden participation and improve inclusion.

Making participation opportunities more visible for adult learners

Increased visibility, targeted information activities and learner-friendly communication could support broader participation, particularly among adults with limited prior educational participation.

PART B – INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

1.1 The Erasmus+ programme and the RIA-AE network

With Erasmus+, the European Union supports the educational, professional and personal development of participants in adult learning in Europe and beyond. To this end, several international lines of action have been established within the programme. These concern the learning mobility of individuals (KA1), cooperation between organisations and institutions (KA2) and support for policy development and political cooperation (KA3). In Key Actions 1 and 2, funding measures are implemented in a decentralised manner by Erasmus+ National Agencies (NA). The impact of Erasmus+ on adult education learners, staff, teachers, volunteers and organisations in the field of adult education has not been so far for the object of many research activities in Austria and Europe.

A transnational research network (RIA-AE Network: *Research-based Impact Assessment in Erasmus+ Adult Education Programmes*), funded by Erasmus+, has therefore been set up in 2022 to initiate and coordinate research and monitoring activities. Its aim is to foster transnational comparative research and thus provide evidence to strengthen the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education while also contributing to the further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ programme (see mission statement in Annex 1). The network is open to new members and counts NAs from 20 member states and Türkiye at the beginning of 2026.[1] In 2023/2024, the RIA-AE network implemented for the first time a coordinated transnational monitoring study on the impact of Erasmus+ in the field of adult education, leading to a bundle of national reports and EU synthesis report (first survey round)[2].

1.2 Aims and objectives of the second survey round (2025-2026)

The second survey round, implemented in 2025-2026, in addition has a specific **thematic focus on the programmes' horizontal priority "participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement'**. European policy frames adult learning as a catalyst for active citizenship, particularly for those underrepresented in democratic processes or disconnected from formal education systems. Focussing on this theme affirms the broader RIA-AE goal of enlarging the visibility of adult education's benefits and Erasmus+'s contribution to building democratic, socially cohesive societies. In this way, the project not only supports the policy relevance of civic engagement as a horizontal priority but also enables tangible improvements in programme quality and equity across Europe. Key questions that are guiding this thematic focus are:

[1] Austria; Belgium (Wallonia); Croatia; Cyprus; Czechia; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Türkiye.

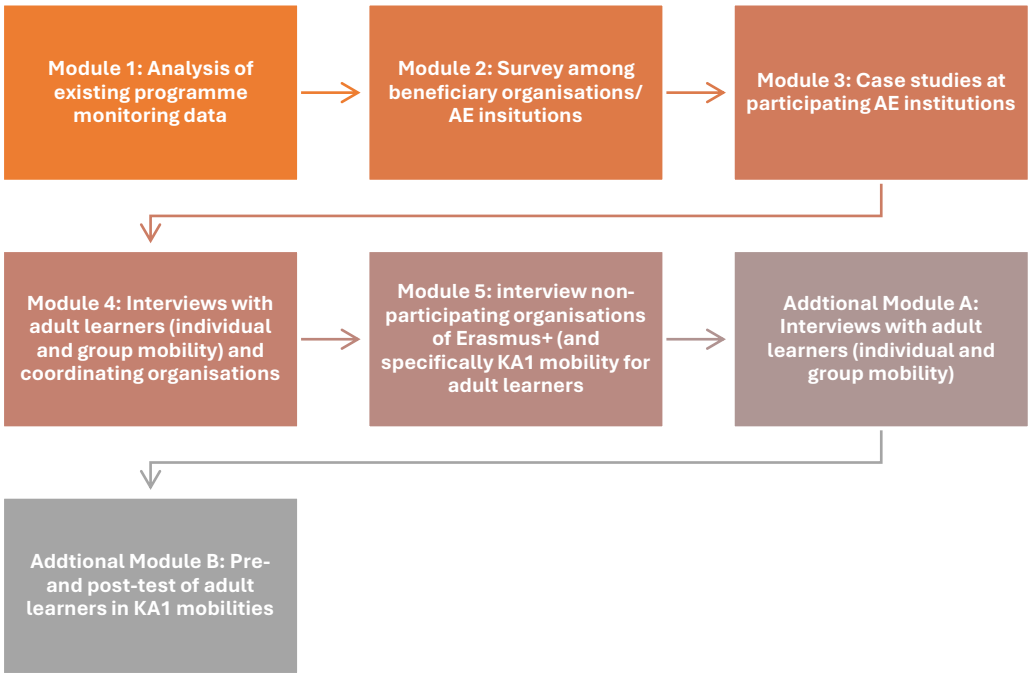
[2] Buiskool, B., Krichewsky-Wegener, L., & Erckrath, M. (2024). *Transnational analysis of the impact of Erasmus+ on the Adult Education Sector: Comparative research report, first survey round 2024*. https://epale.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2025-08/EU%20synthesis%20report%20RIA-AE%20network_first%20survey%20round%202024_final.pdf#

- To what extent do Erasmus+ projects address the priority 'participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement'?
- Which type of organisations implement projects directly addressing this priority?
- What type of activities are implemented within this thematic area?
- What goals are set for projects within this thematic area?
- What groups of adult learners are addressed by projects within this thematic area?
- What is the added value of Erasmus+ for the projects within this thematic area?
- What is the impact of Erasmus+ projects in this thematic area on the learning offer in adult education?
- What is the impact of Erasmus+ projects in this thematic area on staff and on learners?

1.3 Methodological approach

The methodological approach of the monitoring study includes five standardised research modules, which are implemented every two years over the three monitoring rounds 2023, 2025 and 2027 and thus enable an update of the impact monitoring. For the second monitoring round, a thematic focus with specific questions was added to the recurring questions. In addition, two optional research modules (module A and B) were conducted in order to explore more in-depth the impact of KA1 mobility on learners in adult education.

Figure 1.1. Overview research modules SR2



In practical terms, the inclusion of this thematic focus in the second RIA-AE research round required tailored research tools and analytical frameworks. Surveys,

interviews, and case studies were designed to capture learners' development in civic values, engagement behaviours, and perceived social inclusion. In addition, basic questions from SR1 are repeated to ensure comparability across the three monitoring rounds.

It was decided not to repeat all questions from the SR1 survey—mainly those related to the progress markers—because there was limited time after the first survey round to identify major developments. These questions will be included again in the third survey, scheduled for 2027/2028, to more effectively measure progress over time.

In Austria we implemented the following research activities (see box below):

- **Module 1 (Document analysis)**. This module comprises an analysis of existing national research on Erasmus+ in the field of adult education, as well as of data collected by the European Commission and the National Agency as part of the funding processes and for monitoring purposes. It mainly seeks to answer questions about the inclusiveness of the programme, map beneficiary organisations, and assess the extent to which these organisations represent the diversity of the adult education sector.
- **Module 2 (Online survey among beneficiary organisations)**. This module consists of an online survey of all organisations that implemented and completed at least one project in KA1 or KA2 under the current programme between 2021 and the end of 2024. It serves as the central survey instrument for assessing the impact of Erasmus+. For organisations that participated in more than one project, only one person—usually the project coordinator of the most recent project—received an invitation to take part in the survey. In Austria the invitation to participate in the survey was sent to a total of 112 organisations. 73% (n=82) of them took part in the survey, and 64% (n=72) completed the questionnaire. Of the responding organisations (n=82), 51% carried out at least one project in KA1, and 79% carried out at least one project in KA2. A further 33% of the organisations were active in both key actions. Almost 42% of the organisations are accredited in KA1.
- **Module 3 (Case studies)**. This module consisted of three case studies in organisations having coordinated at least one Erasmus+ project in the current programme. The case studies focused on projects within the thematic area *"Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement."* They included desk research of project documentation, as well as interviews with project managers and staff, leading to a case study report (see Annex 4).
- **Module 4 (Interviews with KA1 participants)**. This module included nine interviews with adult learners who participated in a KA1 mobility, as well as with their project coordinators. The interviews with adult learners provide deeper insight into the impact of mobility on participants. They also help to reflect on the experience of organising KA1 mobility for different target groups and to identify possible obstacles encountered during mobility. This, in turn, supports better organisation of KA1 mobility for learners in the future.
- **Module 5 (Interviews with non-participating organisations)**. This module included a short questionnaire and interviews with two organisations that did not participate in Erasmus+. The questionnaire was used to identify potential interview partners and obtain a first impression of organisations' awareness for

Erasmus+ and perceived barriers. The interviews aim to better understand the obstacles preventing participation in the programme. During the interviews, we explored their potential interest in applying for Erasmus+ and their experiences with barriers for their organisations as well as for their target groups, to derive recommendations for future Erasmus+ funding.

In addition, Austria participated in additional modules (module A and B) to better understand the impact of KA1 mobility on adult learners. This included a qualitative research module involving interviews with adult learners (like Module 4), as well as a quantitative module with a pre- and post-test among adult learners to measure the effectiveness of the mobility. The results of these modules are presented in a dedicated chapter of the EU synthesis report for the second survey round, as well as in separate research articles to be found on the website of the RIA-AE (https://www.ria-ae.eu).

PART C – General impact of Erasmus+

2 Short portrait of the adult education sector in Austria

This chapter provides an overview of the institutional framework conditions for adult education in Austria, the provider structure, participation in adult education and policy priorities in this area. It also provides an overview of the existing research on the impact of Erasmus+ in the field of adult education in Austria.

2.1 Institutional framework conditions and providers' structure

Adult education in Austria is shaped by a diverse and decentralised structure, reflecting a wide range of educational purposes, target groups and learning formats. The concept of adult education is broadly defined and refers to organised learning activities undertaken after the completion of an initial education. As a result, adult education overlaps with other areas of the education system and comprises both non-formal and formal learning pathways. Non-formal adult education includes general adult education (*Allgemeine Erwachsenenbildung*) and continuing vocational education and training (CVET) (*Berufliche Weiterbildung*), while formal adult education is largely embedded in the formal education system, such as schools for adults offering programmes alongside employment (*Schulen für Berufstätige*).

Overall, the adult education sector in Austria is highly heterogeneous, involving a wide range of public and private actors across different policy fields and governance levels. Public steering has traditionally been limited, focusing mainly on legal frameworks, quality development and financial support. However, since the expansion of active labour market policies in the late 1990s, the state has assumed a more prominent role as a funding actor in adult education.

Following the formation of the new government and the reorganisation of ministerial portfolios, responsibility for general adult education has been consolidated within the Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF) (*Bundesministerium Frauen, Wissenschaft und Forschung*), which is therefore responsible for managing schools for adults and universities and for overseeing the main segments of formal adult education. Furthermore, the BMFWF oversees the Federal Institute of Adult Education (bifeb), which has developed scientifically based training and further education programmes for adult educators as a centre of excellence for adult education (BMFWF, n.d.).

In addition, other federal ministries are responsible for specific adult education agendas within their respective policy fields. For example, senior education and volunteering are located within the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BASGPK) (*Bundesministerium Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz)*. Beyond these areas, the BASGPK plays a significant role in adult learning primarily through its responsibility for apprenticeship training, which, although not considered part of the adult education sector per se, constitutes an important component of lifelong learning policy. Most importantly, the Ministry of Labour is responsible for the Public Employment Service (AMS), which is one of the central funding actors in adult learning in Austria. The AMS operates as a semi-autonomous public agency and plays a key role in the financial support of adult learning for both unemployed persons and employees, managing programmes that provide access to vocational education and training for adults, as well as non-formal continuing vocational education and training (CVET). The AMS is anchored at both the national and regional levels, with concrete measures, funding

instruments and implementation procedures differing across regional offices (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, p.41).

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management (BMLUK) (*Bundesministerium Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Klima- und Umweltschutz, Regionen und Wasserwirtschaft)* is currently responsible for education for sustainable development and environmental education. Additionally, the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (*Wirtschaftskammer*) and the Chamber of Labour (*Arbeiterkammer*) play a central role in continuing vocational education and training through their respective training institutions, the *Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut* (WIFI) and the *Berufsförderungsinstitut* (BFI), which together constitute the two largest CVET providers in Austria (Gruber & Lenz, 2023, pp. 56-57).

Consideration of various dynamics in Austria, concerning specific policies, is necessary. A new program cycle of *Level Up – Adult Education*, the successor to the former *Initiative Adult Education*, has been launched beginning in 2024. The program continues to support adults lacking basic skills or who did not complete lower secondary education by providing free access to basic education and compulsory school completion. As in previous cycles, the program is jointly funded and implemented at the federal and regional levels. It aims to expand and improve the provision of basic skills education and compulsory school-leaving certificates (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, n. d.).

A key coordinating role at the sectoral level is played by the Conference of Adult Education Austria (KEBÖ), which brings together the ten largest adult education umbrella organisations in the country. KEBÖ represents the interests of the sector, contributes to policy dialogue and supports coordination and quality development across providers. Beyond these umbrella structures, the adult education landscape includes a large number of non-governmental organisations, associations and private enterprises, operating in both non-profit and commercial segments of adult education.

Regarding the financing of adult education, a fragmented picture emerges. Due to the diversity of funding sources and the heterogeneous nature of the sector, obtaining precise and comprehensive financial data remains challenging. According to the Federal Financial Statement (*Bundesrechnungsabschluss*) 2024, federal cash outflows under the budget line *Lebenslanges Lernen* (Lifelong Learning) totalled approximately €39.2 million. This amount includes around €1.59 million allocated to the bifeb (Rechnungshof Österreich, 2024). The federal states and municipalities play a major role in financing the adult education sector. However, due to the complex and diverse funding sources, it is difficult to aggregate the expenditures into a nationwide figure. In 2018, Vogtenhuber et al. (2021) estimated the total expenditure at around €90 million, with municipalities contributing around €61 million. As a central actor in the field of adult education, the AMS spent approximately €789 million in 2024 on qualification and training measures for adults (Arbeitsmarktservice, 2024).

2.2 Adult education policies

A notable policy development in the Austrian adult education landscape concerns the reform of educational leave arrangements. The long-standing scheme of *Bildungskarenz* (educational leave), which allowed employees to take unpaid leave for further education while receiving income-related support from unemployment insurance, has been formally phased out and replaced by a new model designated

as *Weiterbildungszeit* (continuing training leave), effective January 1, 2026. The implementation of the associated support mechanisms and administrative procedures is expected to require additional time before the scheme becomes fully operational.

A central change concerns the nature of financial entitlement. Under the former *Bildungskarenz*, employees held a legal entitlement to *Weiterbildungsgeld* from unemployment insurance upon meeting the eligibility criteria. Under the new *Weiterbildungszeit*, financial support takes the form of a *Weiterbildungsbeihilfe* (continuing training allowance) administered by the AMS, to which no legal entitlement exists. This implies that applications may be rejected even where all formal requirements are fulfilled, for instance if the available annual budget has already been exhausted.

The new scheme is specifically targeted at individuals with limited formal education, as well as employees seeking to develop their careers, reorient professionally, or enhance their employability. Accordingly, eligibility conditions have become stricter and more selective. Participants must have been employed with their current employer for at least 12 months prior to accessing the *Weiterbildungszeit*, compared to six months under the former scheme. A mandatory educational counselling session with the AMS must be completed before applying, and a waiting period of at least 26 weeks of employment is required between the end of parental leave and the commencement of further education leave. These conditions reflect a stronger orientation towards workforce planning and labour market relevance.

The financial implications of the reform are substantial. The reform represents a general shift in policy priorities and conditions for adult education leave. Whereas actual expenditure on the former *Bildungskarenz* amounted to approximately €377 million in 2025 (excluding social insurance contributions), the planned annual budget for the *Weiterbildungszeit* from 2026 onwards is capped at €150 million, reflecting tighter fiscal constraints and a more selective funding approach. Financial support under the new model is provided through a *Weiterbildungsbeihilfe*. The amount of the subsidy is based on your income before you receive it. The minimum amount is €1,212 per month, which is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. This amount applies to low-income earners who are above the marginal earnings threshold

The transition from *Bildungskarenz* to *Weiterbildungszeit* reflects a policy reform that narrows the scope and conditions of education leave in Austria, combining stronger eligibility requirements and narrower financial support with a focus on labour market relevance.

3 The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

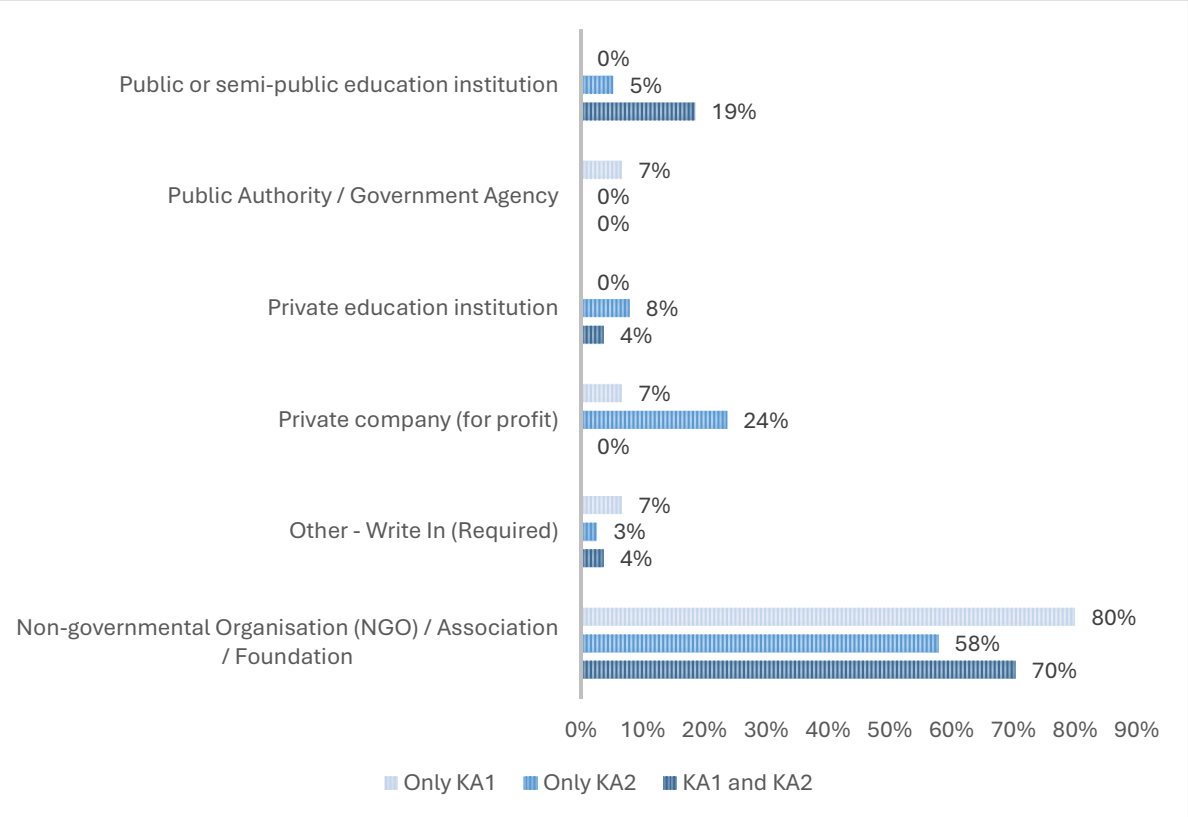
3.1 Introduction

Inclusion and diversity are one of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme. Equal opportunities and equal access, inclusion, diversity and fairness should be promoted in all programme actions.[3] The focus of funding is therefore on organisations as well as disadvantaged learners who would otherwise not be likely to participate in internationalisation activities. This chapter discusses the characteristics of the organisations that participated in Erasmus+ between 2021 and 2024, but also the characteristics of the adult learners who benefit from the outcomes developed in KA2 and/or who take part in mobility activities in KA1. On this basis, statements can be made about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ in adult education in Austria.

3.2 Participating organisations in Erasmus+

3.2.1 Type of organisations

FIGURE 1: LEGAL STATUS OF BENEFICIARY ORGANISATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED IN ERASMUS+ (2021-2024) (N=82)



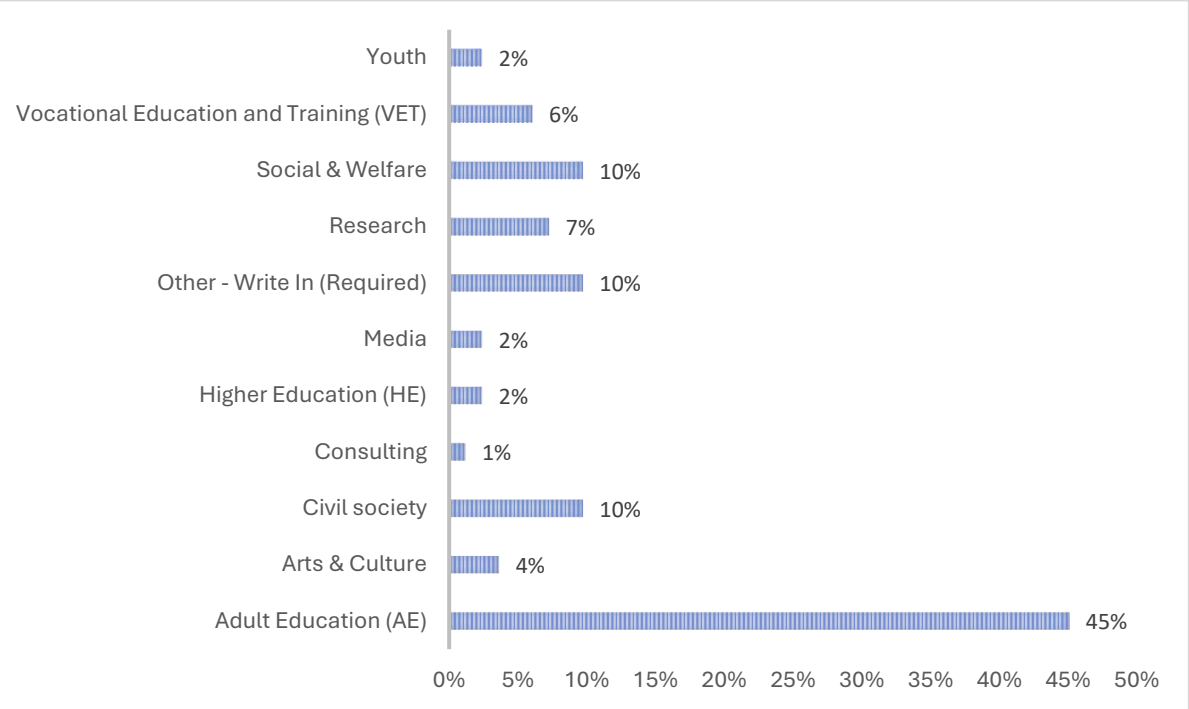
Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

[3] EU Commission (2023). Erasmus+ programme guide. p.7

During the period from 2021 to 2024, 78 mobility projects (KA121 and KA122) in the field of adult education were approved in Austria. In terms of the legal status of organisations involved in Erasmus+ projects, KA1 activities are predominantly implemented by **non-governmental organisations, associations and foundations**. It is estimated that approximately 80% of organisations participating exclusively in KA1 fall into this category.

During the same interval, a total of 60 smaller collaborative initiatives (KA210) and 36 cooperative partnerships (KA220) were established between 2021 and 2024. Similarly to KA1 **non-governmental organisations, associations and foundations** represent the dominant group within KA2 projects, accounting for approximately 58% of organisations involved exclusively in KA2 and around 70% of organisations implementing both KA1 and KA2 activities. **Private companies (for profit)** represent a further relevant group in KA2 (approximately 24%), while **private education institutions** play a comparatively smaller role with 8%.

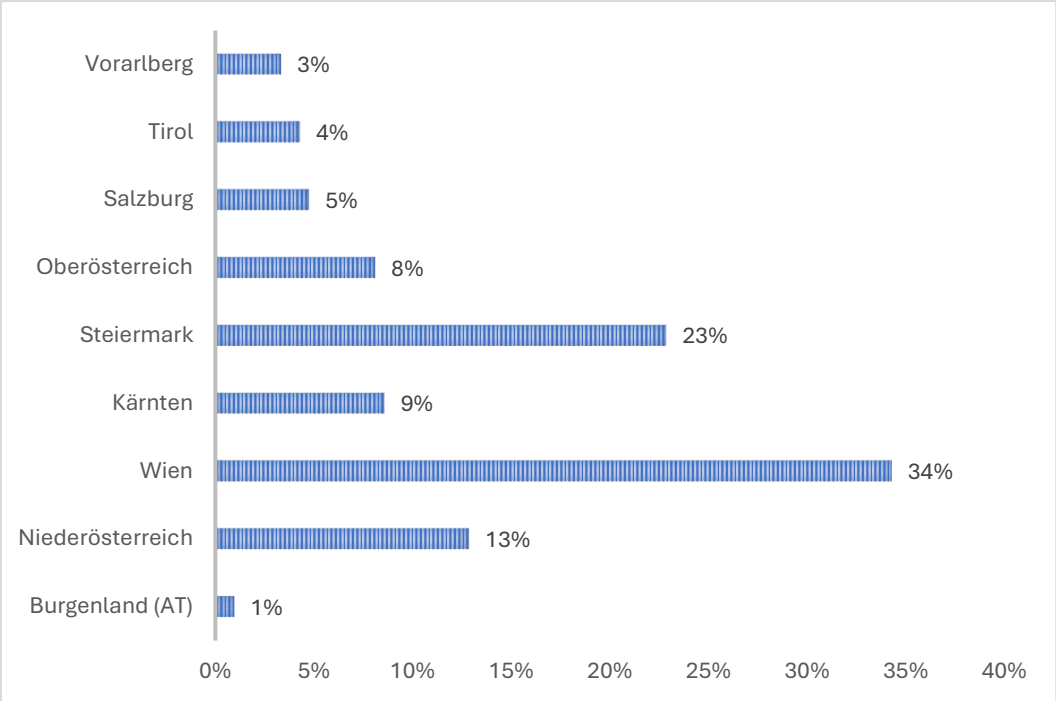
FIGURE 2: SECTORS IN WHICH BENEFICIARY ORGANISATIONS PRIMARILY OPERATE IN THE PERIOD OF 2021-2024 (N=82)



The majority of organisations engaged in KA1 and KA2 projects are rooted in the **adult education sector**, with 45% identifying this as their primary field of activity. Beyond this dominant group, the sectoral distribution appears more diverse. **Civil society organisations**, **social and welfare services**, as well as **organisations classified under "other"**, each account for around 10% of participating institutions. **Research organisations** represent a smaller but still notable share at 7%, followed by **vocational education and training** at 6%. All remaining sectors contribute only marginally.

3.2.2 Geographical distribution

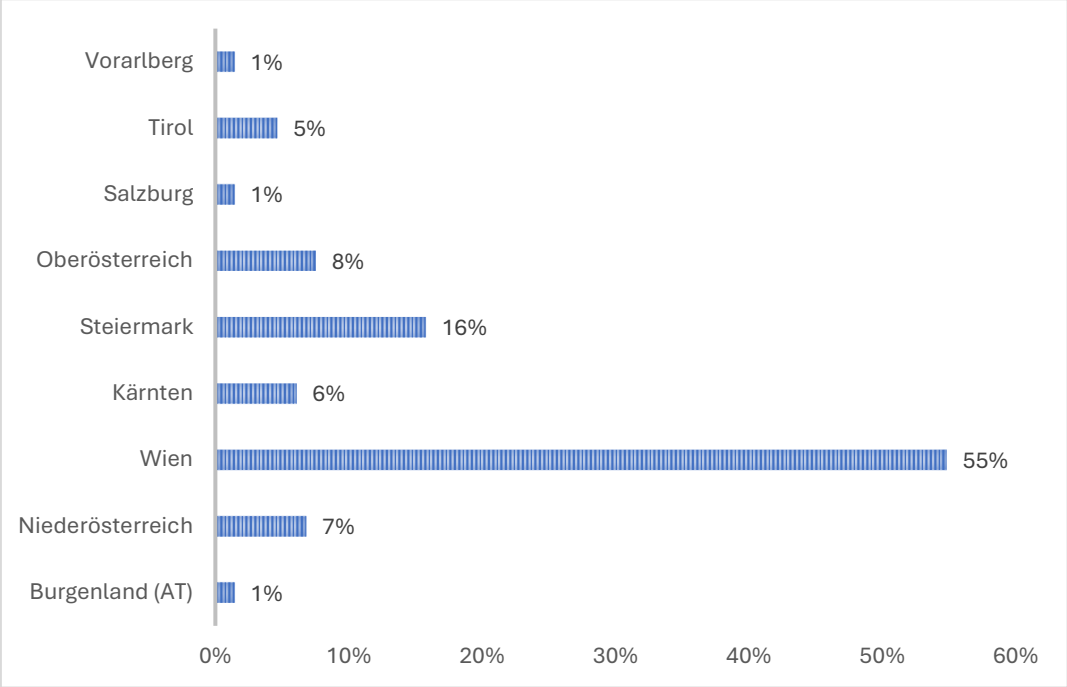
FIGURE 3: REGIONS WHERE KA1 PROJECTS TAKE PLACE IN THE PERIOD OF 2021 TO 2025 - BASED ON LOCATION OF ORGANISATION (N= 210)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

The regional distribution of KA1 projects, based on the location of beneficiary organisations, points to a **concentration in a limited number of federal states**, particularly in **urban and structurally prominent regions**. **Vienna represents the largest share**, accounting for 34% of all organisations involved in KA1 projects, highlighting its central role as a hub for adult education providers and internationally active institutions. **Styria emerges as the second most significant region**, with 23% of organisations, indicating a comparatively strong engagement in Erasmus+ mobility activities. A second group of regions shows moderate participation, with Lower Austria accounting for 13% and Carinthia for 9%. Upper Austria follows with a share of 8%, while Salzburg and Tyrol contribute smaller proportions, at 5% and 4% respectively. All remaining regions are only marginally represented.

FIGURE 4: REGIONS WHERE KA2 PROJECTS TAKE PLACE IN THE PERIOD OF 2021 TO 2025 - BASED ON LOCATION OF ORGANISATION (N=279)

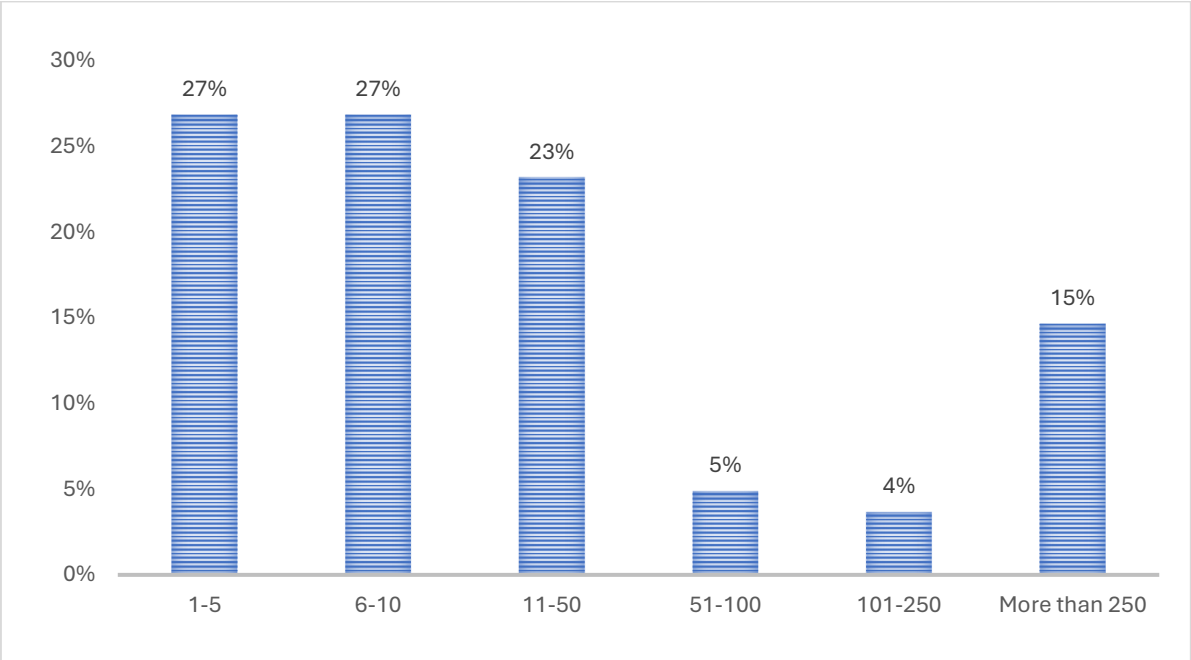


Source: Commission data

In contrast to KA1, the regional distribution of KA2 projects is characterised by a **stronger centralisation, with a clear dominance of the capital**. More than half of all beneficiary organisations, **accounting for 55%, are located in Vienna**, underlining its role as the central site for cooperation partnerships. A similar pattern to KA1 can be observed for **Styria, which represents the second most important region** with a share of 16%, albeit at a noticeably lower level. Other federal states contribute only modestly, with Upper Austria accounting for 8%, Lower Austria for 7%, and Carinthia for 6% of organisations. All remaining regions are represented only marginally.

3.2.3 Size of the participating organisations (KA1 and KA2)

FIGURE 5: NUMBER OF STAFF WORKING IN THE ORGANISATION (N=82)



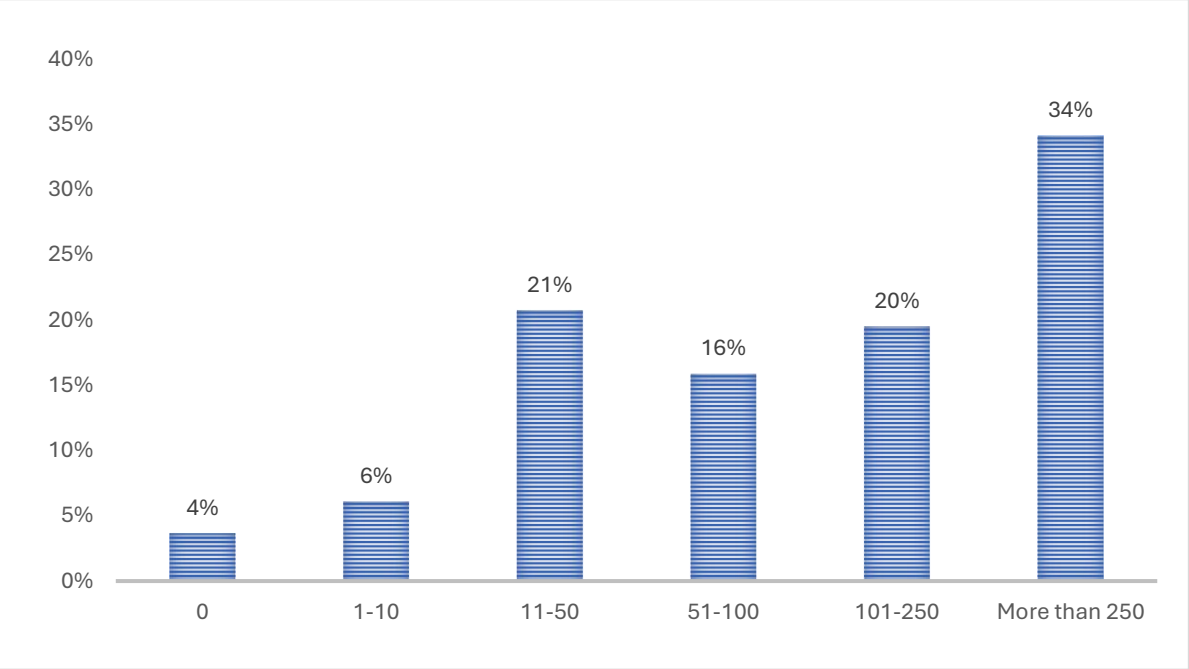
Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

The analysis of the survey data shows that beneficiary organisations involved in KA1 and KA2 projects are predominantly **small to medium-sized**. Almost 80% of institutions within the adult education sector had 50 or fewer employees. From the survey participants, organisations with a workforce ranging from one to five and six to ten staff members represented the largest shares with 27%, followed by organisations with 11 to 50 employees, accounting for 23%.

Larger organisations are comparatively less common. While establishments with more than 250 employees account for a somewhat higher proportion of 15%. Only 5% of institutions have between 51 and 100 staff, and an even smaller share with 4% falls into the 101 to 250 category.

A comparison between the SR1 and the more recent data suggests a **continued and potentially growing prominence of smaller organisations within Erasmus+ activities**. While SR1 indicates that over 70% of institutions had 50 or fewer employees, the newer data reinforces this pattern even more clearly.

FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF ADULT LEARNERS THAT PARTICIPATED IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN 2024 (N=82)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

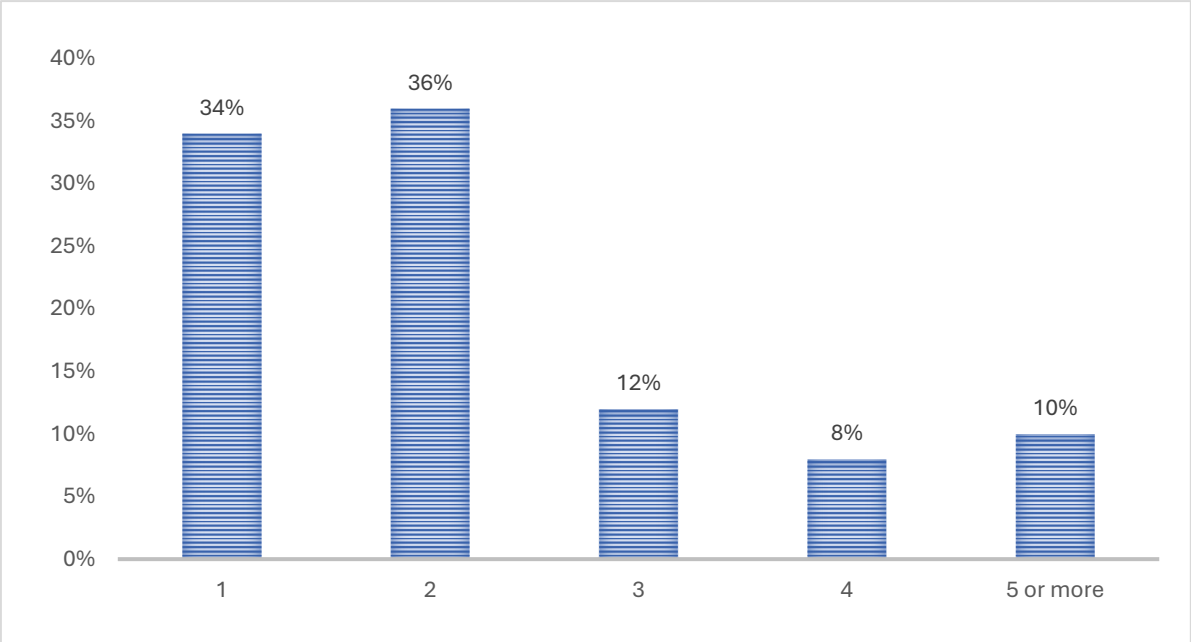
Concerning adult learners participating in learning activities in 2024, the analysis reveals a clear tendency towards comparatively large outreach among beneficiary organisations. A substantial proportion of institutions report engaging more than 250 learners, making this the most common category, accounting for 34%. At the same time, a substantial share of organisations reaches medium-sized groups, with 21% working with between 11 and 50 learners and a further 20% engaging between 101 and 250 learners. Another 16% of institutions fall into the range of 51 to 100 learners.

By contrast, only a small minority of organisations report very low participation levels, as 6% engage between one and ten learners and 4% report no learners at all. Taken together, these findings point to a sector in which organisations, despite often being small in terms of staff size, are able to engage with a broad audience, underlining the **strong outreach capacity of adult education providers** within the Erasmus+ context.

This trend is also visible in the SR1 results, where relatively small organisations were already reaching large numbers of learners. In SR1, 41% of organisations reported engaging more than 250 learners. While this pattern persists in the more recent data, it appears somewhat less pronounced, with 34% of organisations falling into this category. At the same time, the newer data suggests **a more even distribution across medium-sized learner groups**, indicating a slight broadening in outreach.

3.2.4 Number of projects involved and variety of roles

FIGURE 7: NUMBER OF KA1 PROJECTS ORGANISATIONS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN (AS COORDINATOR OR PARTNER) SINCE 2021 (N=50)

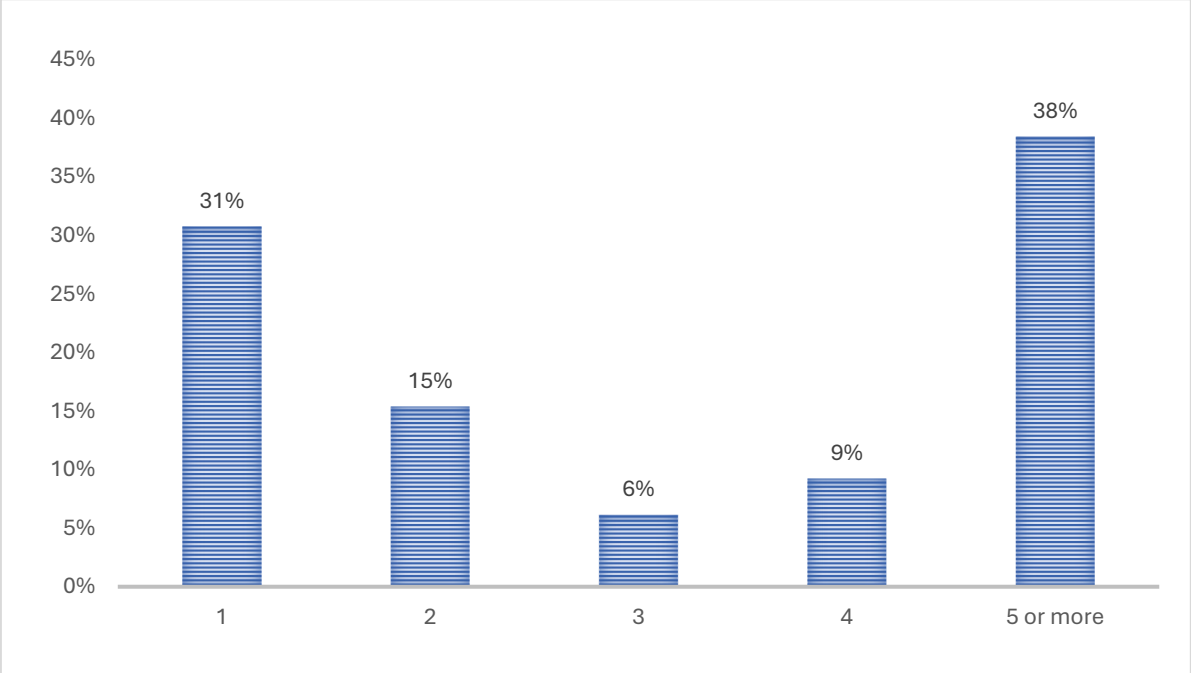


Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Regarding participation in KA1 projects since 2021, the data shows that most organisations have been involved in a **limited number of projects**. The largest share of organisations, accounting for 36%, report having participated in two KA1 projects, closely followed by 34% that have been involved in one project.

A smaller proportion of organisations demonstrates more extensive participation. Around 12% report involvement in three projects, while 8% have participated in four. A further 10% of organisations indicate experience with five or more projects. These findings suggest that while repeated participation in KA1 projects does occur, the **majority of organisations have relatively limited experience**, typically engaging in one or two projects since 2021.

FIGURE 8: NUMBER OF KA2 PROJECTS ORGANISATIONS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN (AS COORDINATOR OR PARTNER) SINCE 2021 (N=65)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

In contrast to KA1, participation in KA2 projects reveals a more differentiated and polarised pattern, with a stronger presence of highly experienced organisations. While around one third of organisations report having participated in only one KA2 project, an even larger share of 38% indicate involvement in five or more projects, pointing to a **substantial group of very experienced actors within this action**.

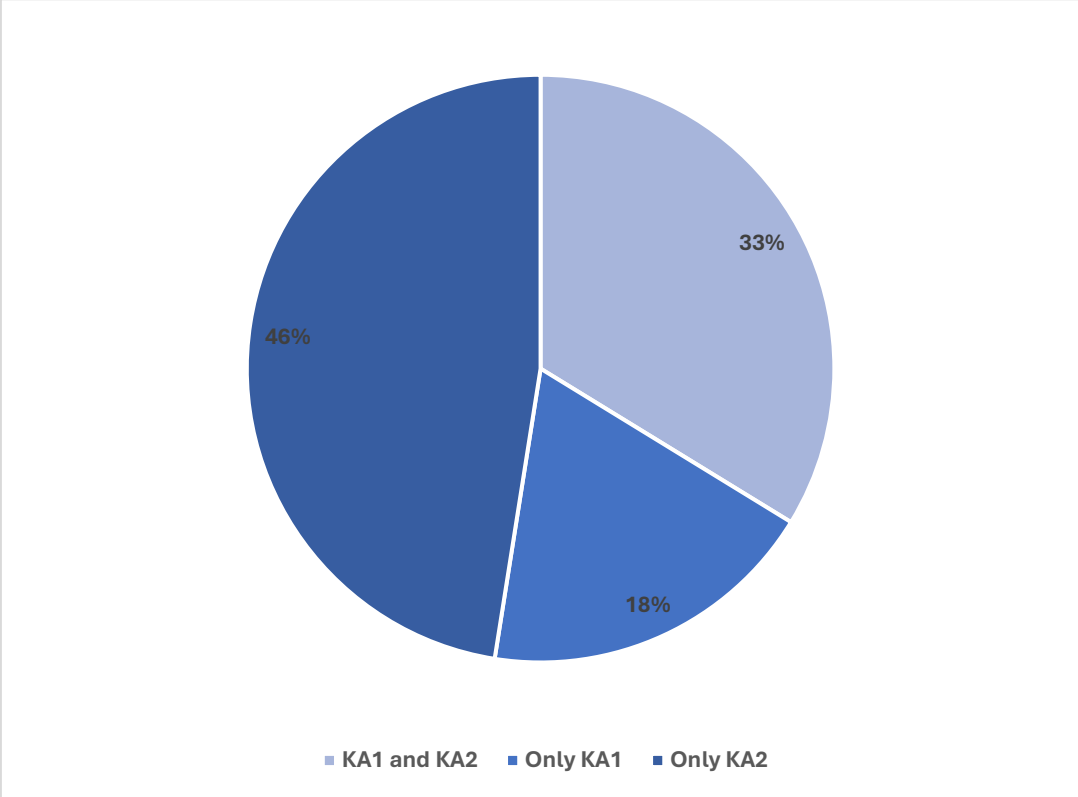
At the same time, organisations with moderate levels of experience are less prominently represented. Only 15% of organisations report participation in two projects, while comparatively small shares of 6% and 9% have been involved in three and four projects respectively.

Compared to KA1, where participation is more concentrated among organisations with one or two projects, **KA2 is characterised by a stronger accumulation of experience among a smaller group of organisations**. This suggests that cooperation partnerships are more frequently implemented by actors with extensive prior involvement, likely reflecting the higher complexity and resource requirements associated with KA2 projects.

In line with the strong presence of experienced organisations in KA2 projects, the data on organisational roles highlights the **prominent importance of the coordinator function**. A substantial majority of organisations, accounting for 75%, report having taken on the role of coordinator, underlining their active responsibility in leading and managing cooperation partnerships.

At the same time, a similarly high share of 78% of organisations have participated as partners. The close alignment of these figures suggests that **many organisations do not remain in a purely supporting role but also assume coordinating responsibilities**.

FIGURE 9: TYPE OF INTERNATIONALISATION ACTIVITIES THE ORGANISATION HAS PARTICIPATED IN SINCE 2021 (N=82)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

When examining the data on types of internationalisation activities organisations have participated in since 2021, it is evident that nearly half of all organisations, accounting for 46%, report having participated exclusively in KA2 activities, making this the most common pathway of engagement.

While there is a **clear predominance of involvement in KA2 projects** visible, around one third of organisations with 33% have been active in both KA1 and KA2, indicating a **considerable degree of combined participation across both action types**. In contrast, a smaller share of 18% report involvement exclusively in KA1 projects.

These findings suggest that **KA2 plays a particularly prominent role in the internationalisation strategies of organisations**, while a substantial proportion also combines mobility and cooperation activities. Exclusive participation in KA1 appears less common, pointing to a stronger emphasis on partnership-based approaches within the sector.

3.3 Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+

3.3.1 General obstacles in KA1 and KA2

The responses from the online survey, including both coordinating beneficiaries and partner organisations, point to a set of shared structural barriers, while also revealing some differences in emphasis between the two groups.

Across both groups, **limited resources, particularly in terms of time and personnel, emerge as a central constraint**. Both coordinating and partner

organisations report that existing staff capacities are often insufficient to manage the demands of Erasmus+ projects, especially given competing professional and organisational responsibilities. This challenge is particularly pronounced among coordinating organisations, especially smaller ones and teams with limited flexibility.

A second common obstacle relates to the **high administrative burden of the programme**. Both groups refer to complex application procedures, extensive reporting requirements, and increasing bureaucratic demands. Partner organisations, in particular, emphasise the growing complexity of application forms and requirements, as well as the lack of clarity around eligibility procedures. Coordinating organisations similarly highlight the overall organisational effort and administrative workload associated with project implementation.

At the same time, some differences between the two groups can be observed. **Coordinating organisations place stronger emphasis on programme-related and structural challenges**, such as the limited flexibility of KA1 mobility formats, difficulties in integrating activities into existing structures, and concerns about the suitability of mobility formats for their target groups. **Partner organisations, in contrast, more frequently stress barriers related to the application process and participation conditions**. These include the high effort required to prepare proposals with uncertain chances of success, low success rates leading to reduced motivation to apply, and restrictions such as limits on the number of KA2 applications.

Specific findings from case studies:

Similar to the most prominent barriers, from the online survey, the **most significant constraint from the case studies across all organisations is limited staff and time resources**.

CS1 emphasises that, despite a high level of motivation and many project ideas, **implementation is constrained by limited capacities and the need to prioritise** ongoing activities. Similarly, CS2 identifies **personnel and time constraints as the primary reason why project participation is limited**, noting that organisations often lack the capacity to integrate project work into their daily operations.

Financial aspects also play a role, particularly with regard to sustainability beyond the project lifetime. CS2 clearly emphasises that **project results often depend on follow-up funding to be continued or further developed**, especially in contexts where partner organisations or target groups have limited financial means. CS1 similarly highlights resource constraints as a limiting factor, although less explicitly linked to post-project sustainability

In addition, organisations highlight **challenges related to the overall scope and complexity of projects**. CS2 explicitly states a preference for smaller-scale projects, as larger projects are more difficult to manage within existing capacities. This aligns with the experience of CS1, where multiple parallel projects require careful coordination, and with CS3, where even a single additional project may exceed available resources.

The interviews also point to **structural and institutional constraints that shape participation**. CS2 highlights dependencies on overarching governance structures, which can limit the implementation of project outcomes even when there is internal motivation for change. CS1 refers to organisational dynamics such as staff turnover and coordination challenges, which can affect continuity. CS3, in turn, illustrates how

small organisational size and reliance on a few individuals increase vulnerability and limit strategic flexibility.

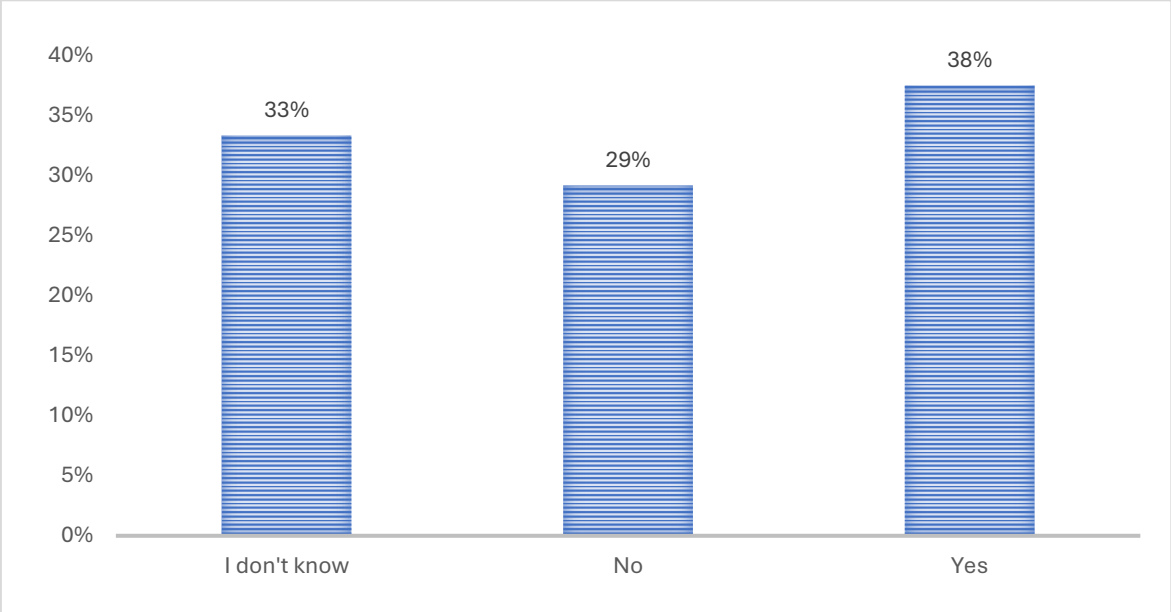
Specific findings from non-participating organisations:

Organisations that are currently not, or no longer, participating in Erasmus+ report barriers that are largely similar to those identified by participating organisations. The most significant challenges relate to limited human resources, insufficient information or knowledge about the programme, and the perceived administrative effort, suggesting that **participation is primarily constrained by capacity-related and informational factors rather than by a lack of interest**.

The qualitative interviews further underline that the **main challenge lies less in the administrative system itself and more in the overall organisational effort associated with participation**. In particular, organisations highlighted the substantial **time and personnel resources required for proposal preparation, project coordination and mobility participation**. In addition, difficulties in identifying suitable partner organisations, uncertainty regarding the practical added value of European cooperation, as well as structural barriers such as language barriers, travel distances and accreditation requirements were identified as further obstacles to participation.

3.3.2 Specific obstacles for KA1 mobility for adult education learners

FIGURE 10: INTENTION OF BENEFICIARY ORGANISATIONS TO APPLY TO KA1 MOBILITY FOR ADULT LEARNERS IN THE FUTURE (N=72)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Based on the survey data the intention of beneficiary organisations to apply for KA1 mobility for adult learners in the future shows a generally positive outlook, although some uncertainty remains. A total of 38% of organisations indicate that they plan to apply again, suggesting a **strong level of continued interest in this action**. At the same time, 29% report that they do not intend to apply, pointing to **a notable share**

of organisations that may face barriers or lack sufficient motivation to engage further.

The responses from both partner and coordinating organisations regarding barriers to planning KA1 mobility activities for adult learners provide further insight into the reasons behind organisations' willingness or hesitation to engage in KA1 mobility for adult learners. Across both groups, **limited time and personnel resources emerge as the most frequently mentioned obstacles**. Many organisations report that existing workloads and competing responsibilities leave little capacity to develop new mobility activities. This is particularly evident among coordinating organisations, where structural constraints such as small teams, ongoing projects, or organisational changes further limit the ability to plan additional activities.

Administrative burden is another central issue raised by both groups. Respondents frequently refer to the complexity of application procedures and the high level of bureaucracy, which is often perceived as disproportionate to the expected benefits. In this context, partner organisations more strongly emphasise the uncertainty of success in the application process, noting that considerable effort is required despite relatively low approval rates. Partner organisations also more frequently refer to limited thematic relevance, lack of expertise, or the fact that mobility activities are not part of their core mandate.

At the same time, several barriers are more specific to coordinating organisations. These include **challenges related to the practical implementation of learner mobility**, such as **difficulties in integrating mobility formats into existing structures, identifying suitable participants, or ensuring their reliability**. Some organisations also highlight that KA1 mobility formats are not always well suited to their target groups.

Specific findings from beneficiary coordinators:

A central barrier repeatedly highlighted across organisations concerns the **high administrative burden associated with KA1 projects**. Interviewees describe bureaucratic requirements, complex reporting procedures, and difficulties navigating digital platforms as time-consuming and, at times, discouraging. The use of multiple IT systems, technical malfunctions, and unclear processes further exacerbate this challenge.

In this context, the **effort required to manage mobility projects is often perceived as disproportionate**, especially when Erasmus+ activities are implemented alongside core organisational tasks rather than as a dedicated function. In addition to the bureaucratic burden the **complexity and density of programme information emerge as an additional barrier**. The abundance of guidelines and requirements can make it difficult, especially for first-time applicants, to identify relevant information and navigate the application process.

This is closely linked to **limited human and time resources, which emerge as one of the most decisive constraints**. In many cases, organisations lack the capacity to plan, implement, and follow up learner mobility projects. Where staff cannot be spared, Erasmus+ is deprioritised despite general interest in participation. Resource demands are further intensified in projects involving learners with specific needs, requiring additional organisational effort and support structures.

A **further challenge concerns planning uncertainty**, particularly in relation to participant recruitment and budgeting. Organisations must commit to participant numbers and financial planning long in advance, while actual participation remains volatile. Dropouts and fluctuating group sizes make it difficult to plan reliably and increases the risk of either overestimating or underutilising allocated budgets.

Specific findings from non-participating organisations:

A central concern expressed by non-participating organisations relates to the **reliability and participation conditions of adult learners**. Interviewees highlighted uncertainties regarding whether participants would ultimately be able or willing to take part in international mobilities. Particular barriers were identified for learners with migrant or refugee backgrounds, especially regarding formal travel restrictions and uncertainties related to mobility participation. Organisations also highlighted the logistical and financial risks associated with cancellations or unreliable participation among vulnerable target groups.

In addition, **learner mobility was described as requiring substantial motivational and preparatory efforts**, particularly in non-formal adult education contexts where participation is often driven more by social exchange than by formal educational progression. Organisations further reported **difficulties in identifying suitable host organisations and learning opportunities** abroad that match the specific needs of adult learners, with partner identification and preparation requiring considerable time and resources.

3.4 Conclusion

The findings illustrate a diverse but unevenly distributed landscape of participation in Erasmus+ within the Austrian adult education sector. **Across both KA1 and KA2, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), associations and adult education providers emerge as the central actors**, while participation is largely characterised by small and medium-sized organisations with limited personnel capacities.

Differences between KA1 and KA2 are nevertheless visible. While KA1 involves a broader range of organisations, KA2 participation appears more concentrated among experienced organisations with established international networks and stronger organisational capacities. **A similar concentration can be observed geographically, particularly in Vienna and Styria**.

The findings further suggest that **Erasmus+ activities frequently involve learners with fewer opportunities, including migrants and socially disadvantaged groups**. At the same time, organisations report particular challenges related to inclusive learner mobility, including care responsibilities, formal restrictions and the substantial organisational support required for vulnerable target groups.

Across all data sources, **limited time and personnel resources emerge as the most significant barriers to participation**. Administrative workload, project complexity and the effort required for coordination and reporting are described as particularly challenging for smaller organisations. The findings therefore suggest that participation is less constrained by a lack of interest than by organisational capacities and available resources.

Overall, Erasmus+ in **adult education in Austria can be considered comparatively accessible and inclusive**, as participation also involves smaller organisations and disadvantaged target groups. Nevertheless, **access remains strongly dependent on organisational resources, networks and institutional capacities**, meaning that structural barriers continue to influence who can participate sustainably and under which conditions.

4 Impact of Erasmus+ at organisation and staff level

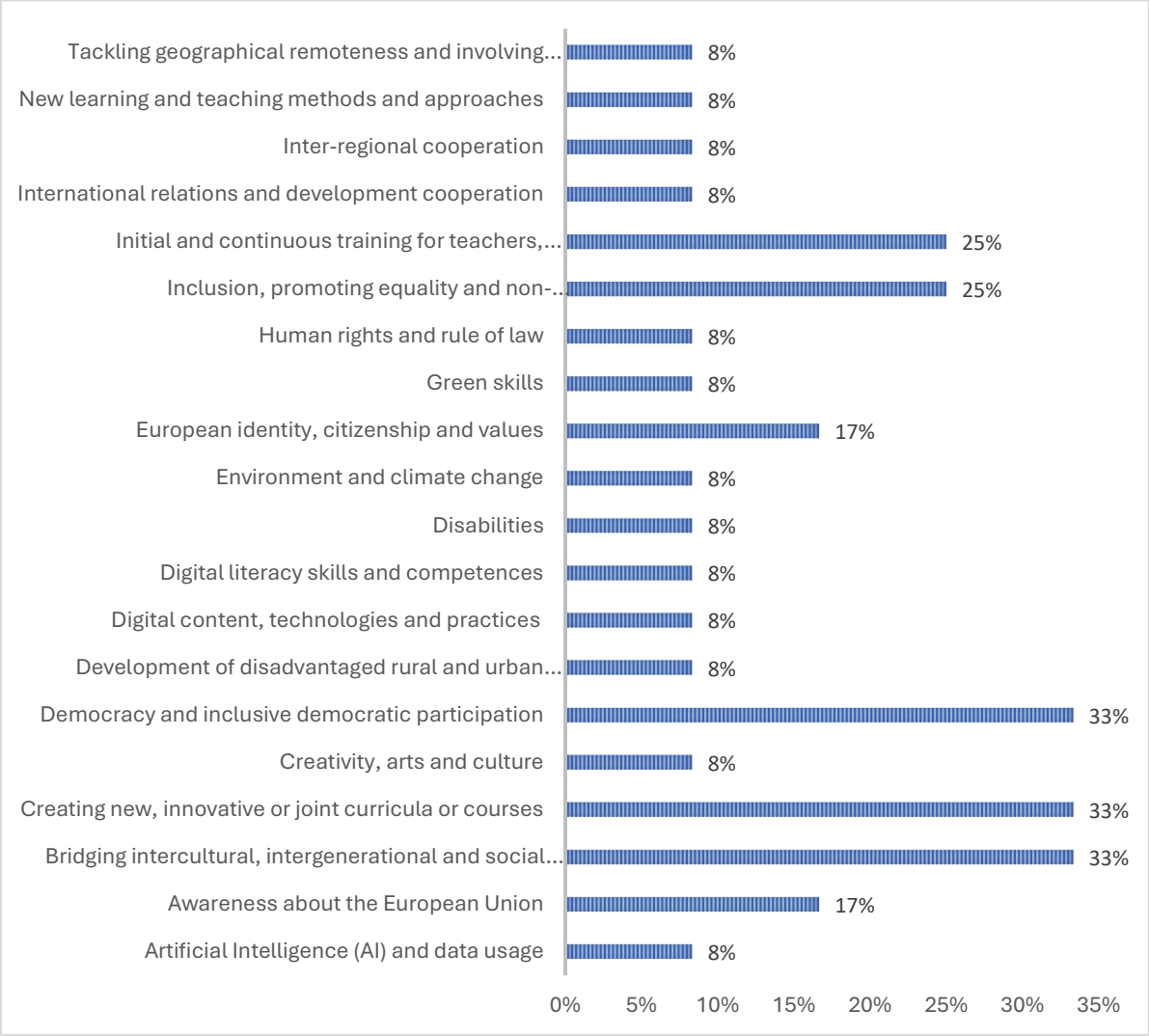
4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the outcomes and expected impacts of Erasmus+ on the organisations. This includes the impact of Erasmus+ on the development and improvement of the quality of learning opportunities offered by the participating organisations. It begins by presenting the concrete project results and products as well as the topics prioritised because of participation. Subsequently, findings on the effects of Erasmus+ participation on staff are reported.

4.2 Topics and products of Erasmus+ projects

4.2.1 Topics of the projects

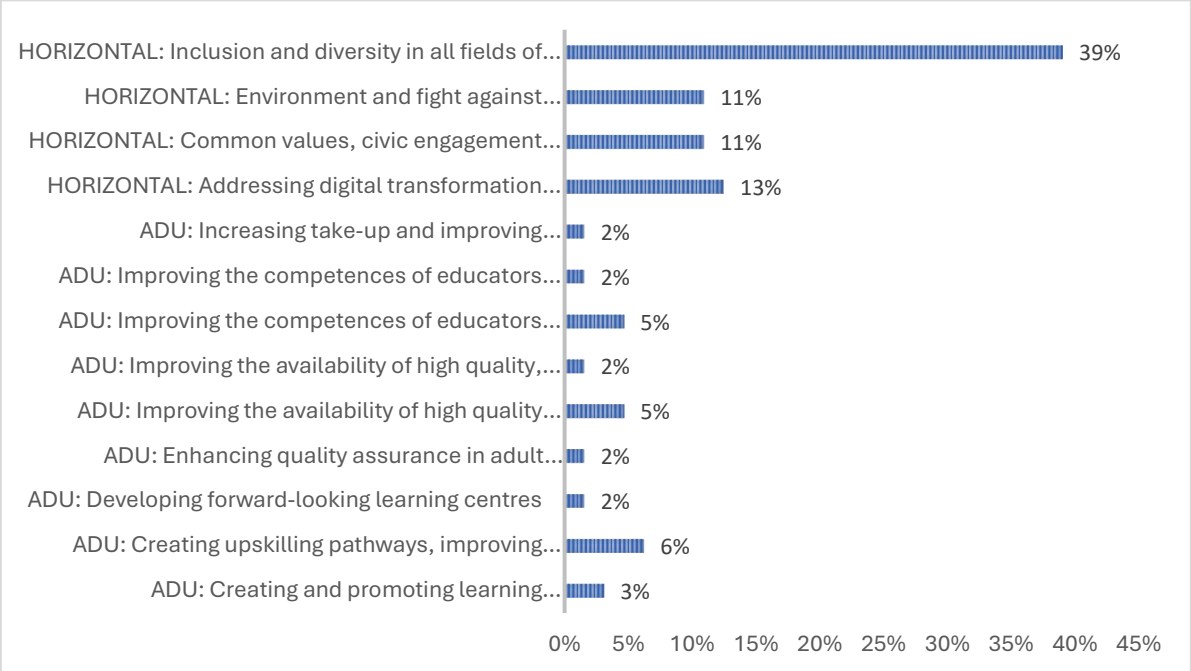
FIGURE 11: TOPICS OF KA1 PROJECTS - 3 TOPICS PER PROJECT POSSIBLE (N=12)



Source: Commission data

The most frequently addressed themes of KA1 projects are **democracy and inclusive democratic participation, creating new or joint curricula or courses, and bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divides**, each selected by 33% of organisations. A second group of topics includes **inclusion and promoting equality as well as initial and continuous training for teachers**, both mentioned by 25%. **European identity and awareness about the European Union** are also relevant, each accounting for 17% of responses. All other topics are less prominent, with individual shares of around 8%. Therefore, KA1 projects mainly focus on participation, inclusion, and collaboration, complemented by a wide range of additional thematic areas.

FIGURE 12: PRIMARY HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVE OF KA2 PROJECTS (N=64)

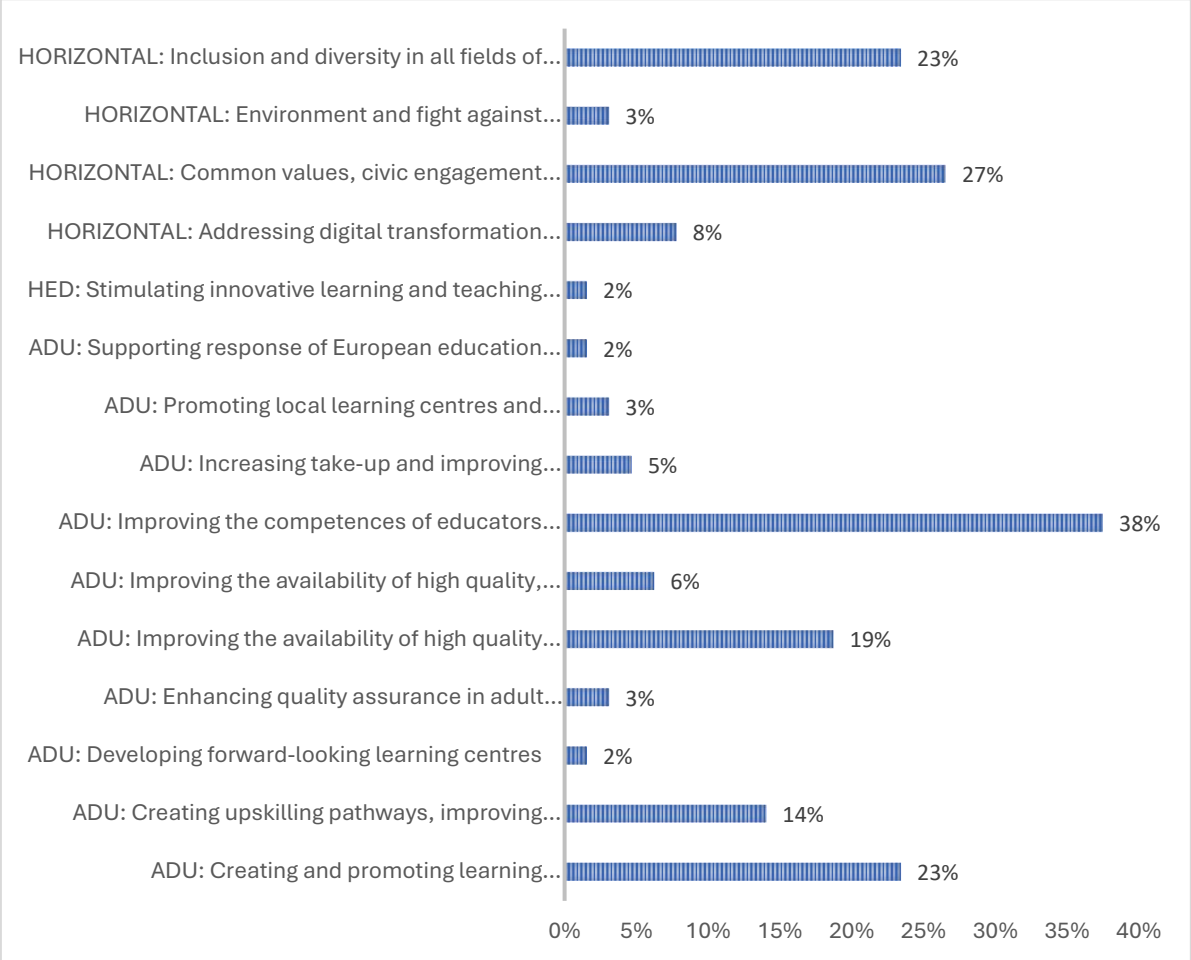


Source: Commission data

The data on primary and additional horizontal objectives of KA2 projects highlights a strong alignment with both overarching Erasmus+ priorities and sector-specific goals. **Inclusion and diversity emerge as the most prominent primary objective**, selected by 39% of organisations, while other horizontal priorities such as **digital transformation**, accounting for 13% and **environmental sustainability and civic engagement** (each 11%) also play a relevant role.

At the same time, the additional objectives reveal a stronger focus on capacity-building within adult education. In particular, **improving the competences of educators** stands out, with 38% of organisations selecting this objective. This is complemented by priorities such as **common values and civic engagement** with 27%, as well as **inclusion and diversity and creating and promoting learning opportunities** (each 23%).

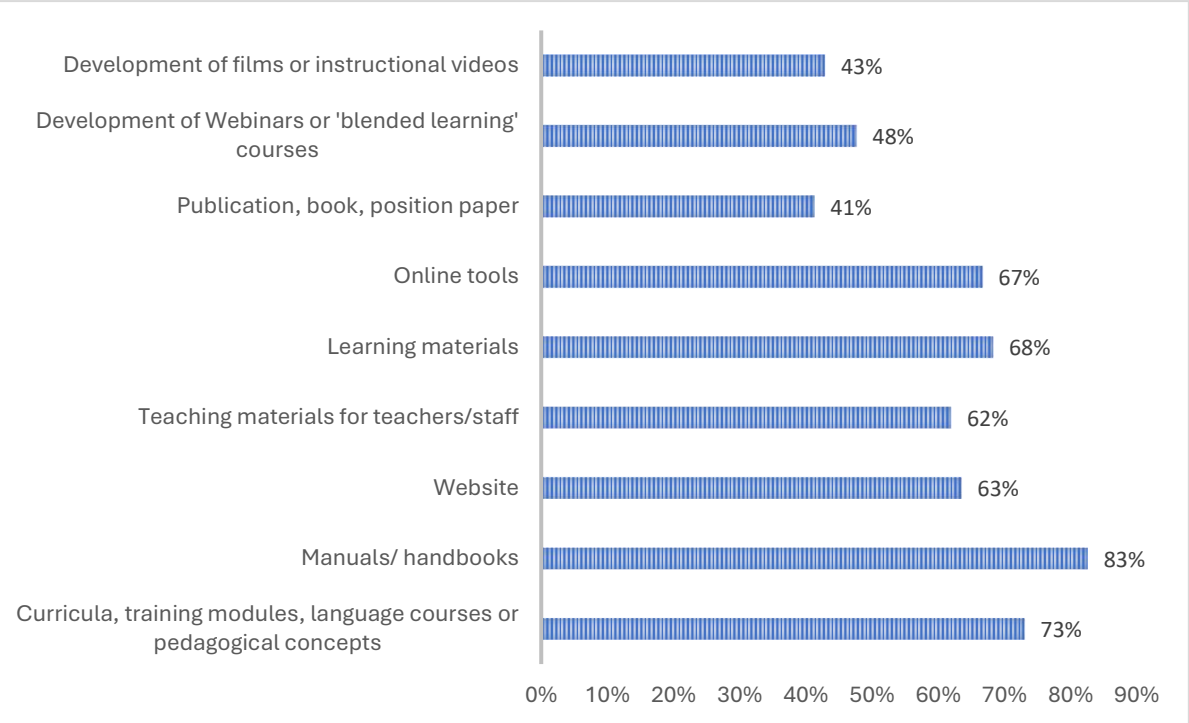
FIGURE 13: OTHER HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES OF KA2 PROJECTS - TWO 'OTHER' HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES PER PROJECT POSSIBLE (N=64)



Source: Commission data

4.2.2 Type of KA2 products developed

FIGURE 14: TYPE OF OUTPUTS OR PRODUCTS DEVELOPED AS PART OF PARTICIPATION IN KA2 IN ERASMUS+ (2021–2024) (N=63)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Looking at the types of outputs developed within KA2 projects, a clear emphasis on practical and reusable learning resources becomes apparent. **Manuals and handbooks are the most common products**, created by 83% of organisations, followed by **curricula, training modules or pedagogical concepts** at 73%, pointing to a strong focus on structured content that can be directly applied in educational practice.

At the same time, **digital formats form an integral part of project outputs**. Learning materials account for 68% of organisations, closely followed by online tools at 67% and project websites comprising 63%. Teaching materials for educators are similarly widespread, representing 62%, while webinars and blended learning approaches, accounting for 48%, further underline the importance of flexible and digitally supported learning formats.

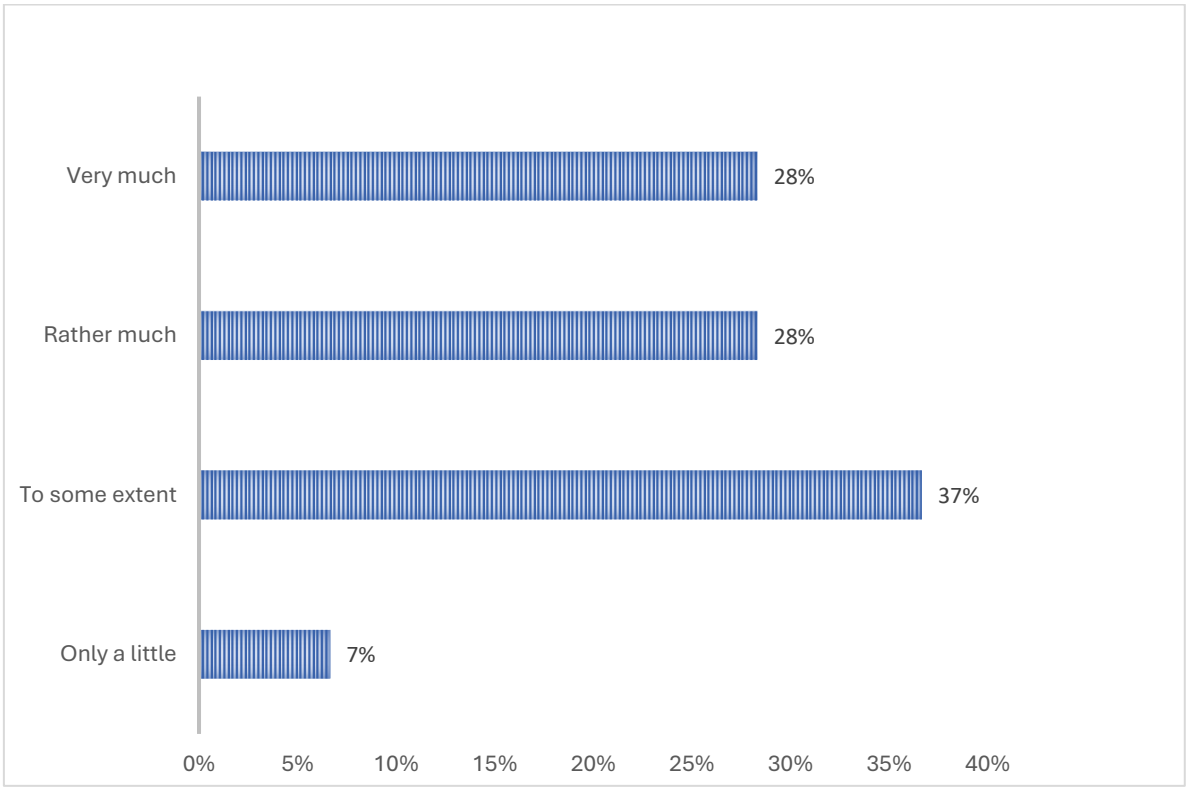
More traditional formats, such as instructional videos (43%) and publications (41%), appear somewhat less frequently, suggesting that while dissemination remains important, the primary emphasis lies on creating tools and materials that can be actively used in teaching and learning contexts. Altogether, **the distribution of outputs reflects a strong orientation towards usability and sustainability**, with KA2 projects predominantly generating resources that support practical implementation and can be adapted and reused across different educational settings.

Compared to SR1 findings, the new data reveals a **notable increase across almost all output types.** Manuals and handbooks (from 49% to 83%) as well as curricula and training modules (56% to 73%) saw particularly strong growth, consolidating their position as the most prevalent outputs. Digital formats equally gained considerable ground, with online tools and webinars becoming substantially more widespread. Altogether, the comparison points not only to a shift in emphasis but also to a broader

and more diversified output portfolio, reflecting a stronger orientation towards practical, reusable and digitally accessible resources.

4.2.3 KA2 output used

FIGURE 15: EXTENT TO WHICH KA2 OUTPUTS AND PRODUCTS ARE STILL USED AFTER PARTICIPATION IN ERASMUS+ (N=60)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

A closer look at the extent to which KA2 outputs continue to be used after project completion indicates a **generally sustained level of utilisation**. The largest share of organisations, accounting for 37%, report that outputs are used "to some extent", while both "very much" and "rather much" each comprise 28%. Only a small minority of 7% indicate that outputs are used only to a limited degree, suggesting that most organisations maintain at least some level of engagement with project results beyond the funding period.

Insights from the qualitative responses shed further light on what drives this continued use. In many cases, **outputs are more likely to be taken up when they are closely aligned with organisational needs and target groups**. Embedding results into existing structures, such as training programmes, platforms, or internal processes, also appears to support their longer-term relevance and usability. When project content aligns strongly with an organisation's mission and addresses concrete needs, the resulting tools are more likely to become integral to everyday practice and are further refined over time. **The active involvement of learners and staff in the development process also plays a key role**, as it increases both the applicability of the results in real learning contexts and the identification of staff with the outputs. In addition, international cooperation and the associated exchange of knowledge

contribute to strengthening organisational capacities, further supporting the long-term use and adaptation of project results.

At the same time, several limiting factors emerge. A **lack of follow-up funding and insufficient resources for continued implementation** are frequently mentioned, especially once project funding has ended. **Time constraints, administrative workload, and challenges related to dissemination** particularly in larger organisations further hinder sustained use. In some cases, outputs are not fully transferable due to differences in target groups or organisational contexts or must be adjusted for internal use.

Specific findings from case studies:

Across all three organisations, the **sustained use of Erasmus+ outputs appears to depend particularly on accessibility, practical relevance and their integration into existing organisational structures and routines**. In CS2 and CS3, outputs are deliberately made accessible through multilingual formats, online platforms and integration into existing repositories and educational formats. CS3 further highlights the importance of structured internal dissemination through staff trainings and workshops, where outputs are actively tested, discussed and adapted for continued use in practice.

The case studies also indicate that **long-term use is strengthened when outputs are embedded into existing teaching practices and continuously developed through participatory and practice-oriented approaches**. CS2 particularly emphasises the importance of involving target groups directly during project implementation in order to ensure relevance and applicability. Similarly, CS3 highlights co-creation and iterative development processes, where materials are revised based on feedback and practical experience and subsequently reused in follow-up activities. CS1, in turn, underlines the importance of adaptability and organisational mindset, describing outputs as resources that must continuously evolve in response to changing needs and developments.

Accessibility and digital inclusion (CS1)

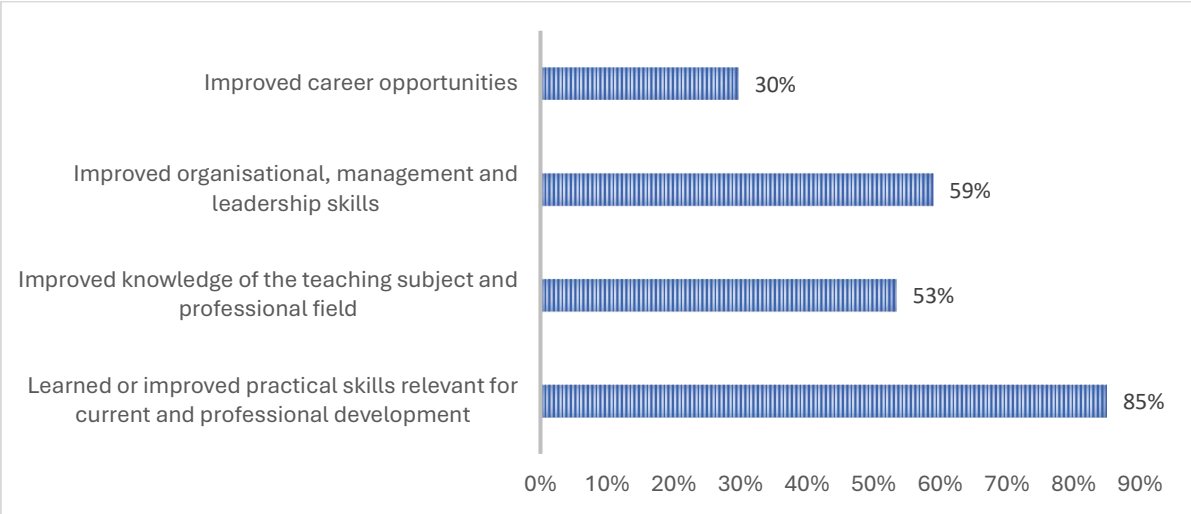
Through Erasmus+ projects, CS1 was able to further develop and expand accessible learning opportunities for visually impaired adult learners, particularly in relation to emerging digital technologies. As accessibility is a central requirement for the organisation's target group, the projects created valuable opportunities to remain "at the cutting edge" and explore how new technological developments can be adapted and made usable in inclusive learning settings.

A particular focus was placed on AI-supported tools and digital applications, which are often not designed with visual impairments in mind but nevertheless offer considerable potential for learners when adapted appropriately. Erasmus+ projects supported the development of accessible digital learning formats, specialised training offers and practical solutions tailored to learners' everyday needs, including 3D-printed assistive tools.

Beyond improving access to digital learning, the projects strengthened learners' independence, confidence and ability to participate more actively in digital and social life. The case illustrates how Erasmus+ can support both innovation and inclusion by helping ensure that technological developments become accessible and meaningful for adult learners with disabilities.

4.3 Impact at organisation and staff level

FIGURE 16: WAYS IN WHICH PARTICIPANT BENEFITTED FROM PARTICIPATION – STAFF (N=834)



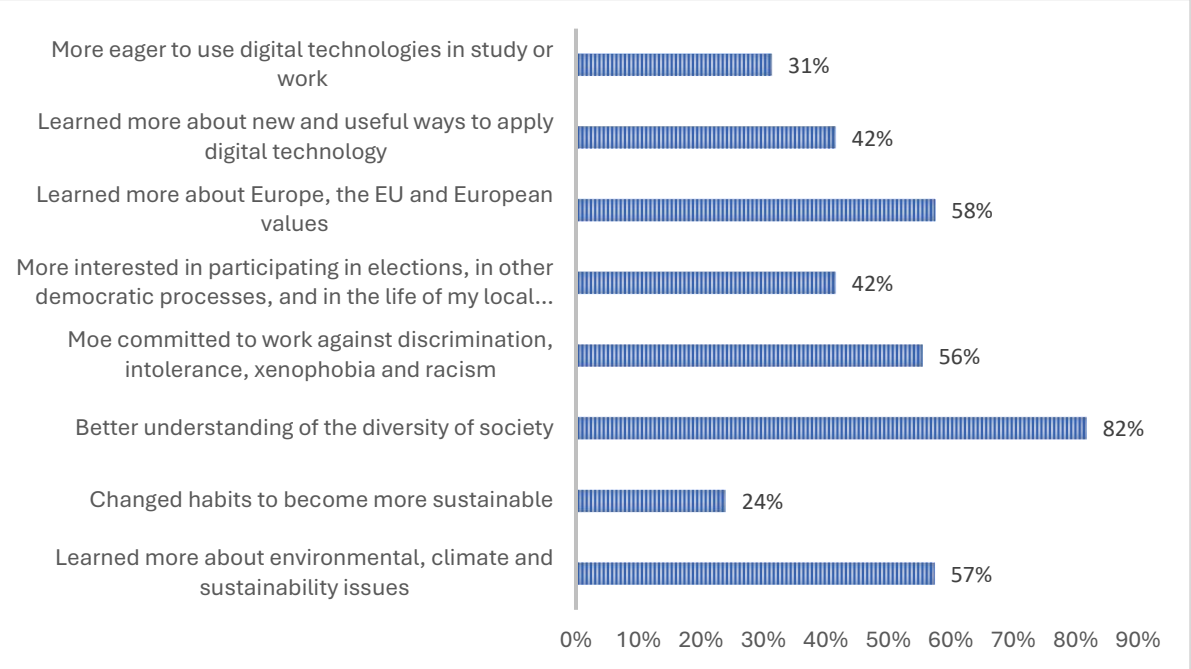
Source: Commission data

A clear pattern emerges when looking at how staff benefited from participation in Erasmus+ activities, with a strong emphasis on skill development. The vast majority of participants report **having learned or improved practical skills relevant to their current work and professional development**, accounting for 85%.

In addition, 59% of respondents indicate **improvements in organisational, management and leadership skills**, while 53% report **enhanced knowledge of their teaching subject and professional field**. This suggests that participation not only strengthens individual competences but also contributes to broader professional and organisational development.

Improved career opportunities are mentioned less frequently, though still by 30% of participants, indicating that while career progression is a relevant outcome, the primary impact lies in skills acquisition and professional growth within existing roles.

FIGURE 17: WAYS IN WHICH PARTICIPANT GAINED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES – STAFF (N=834)

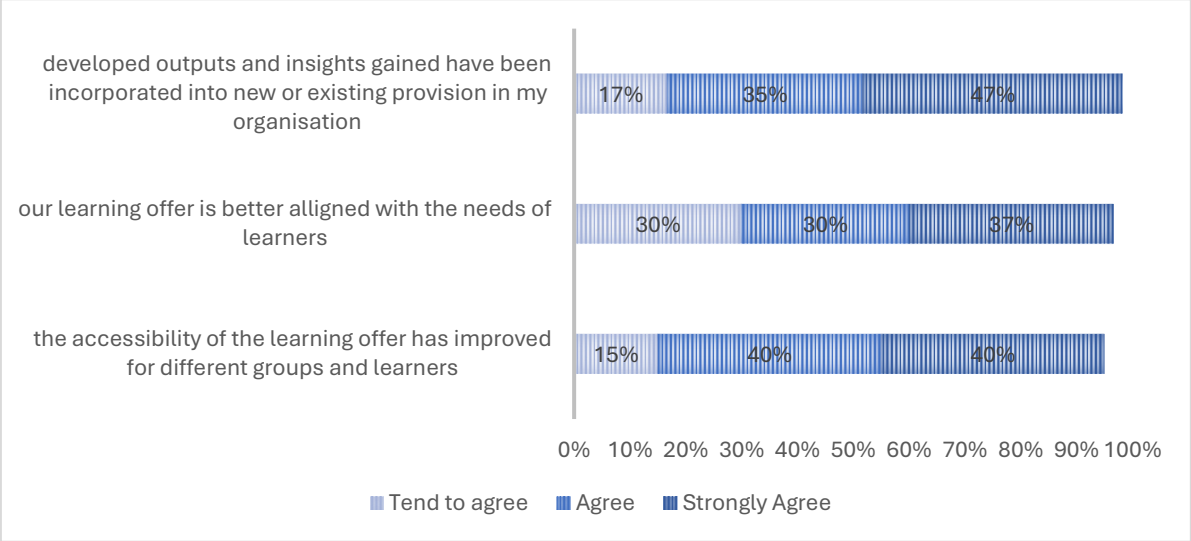


Source: Commission data

Turning to the extent to which staff gained knowledge related to horizontal priorities, the commission data highlights a particularly **strong impact in the area of social awareness**. The most prominent outcome is a **better understanding of the diversity of society**, reported by 82% of participants. This is complemented by **increased awareness of European values and contexts**, with 58% of participants stating that they learned more about Europe, the EU and its values. Similarly, 56% report **a stronger commitment to combating discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia and racism**, while 57% **indicate improved knowledge of environmental and sustainability issues**.

Moderate effects can be observed in areas such as **democratic participation and digital competences**. Around 42% of participants report increased interest in democratic processes as well as improved understanding of how to apply digital technologies, while 31% feel more inclined to use digital tools in their work or studies. By contrast, changes in personal behaviour appear less pronounced, with 24% indicating more sustainable habits.

FIGURE 18: THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN ERASMUS+ ON THE LEARNING OFFER (N=60)

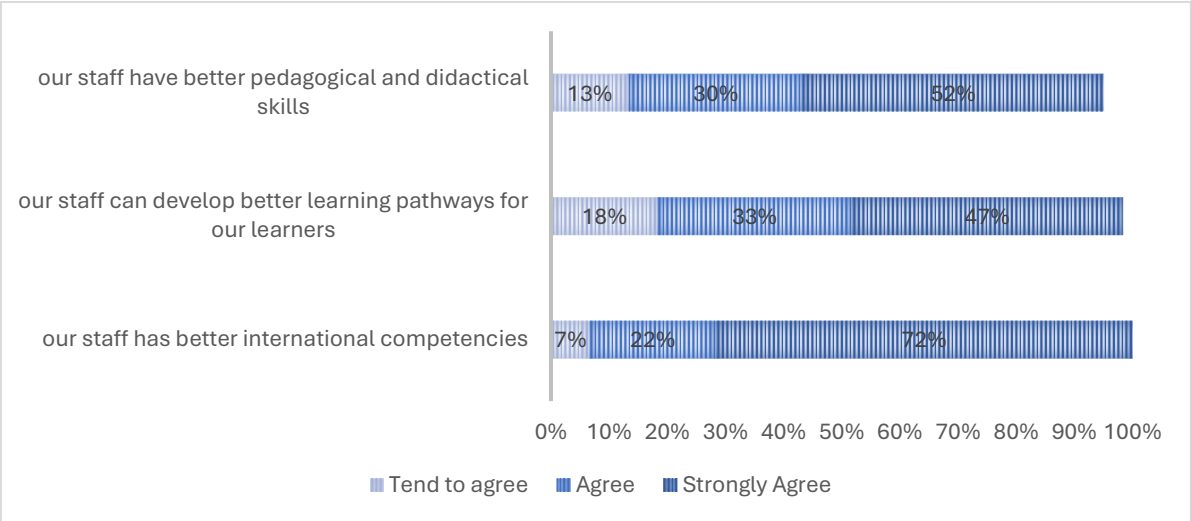


Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Building on these findings from the commission data, the results from the online survey also provide insight into how participation in Erasmus+ has influenced organisations' learning offers. The data suggests a consistently positive impact across several dimensions.

A large majority of organisations report that **developed outputs and insights have been incorporated into new or existing provision**, with 47% strongly agreeing and a further 35% agreeing, while only 17% tend to agree. Similarly, **improvements in the accessibility of learning offers** are widely recognised, with 40% of organisations strongly agreeing and another 40% agreeing that access has improved for different groups of learners. A comparable pattern can be observed with regard to the **alignment of learning offers with learners' needs**. Here, 37% strongly agree and 30% agree that their provision is now better tailored, while 30% tend to agree.

FIGURE 19: THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN ERASMUS+ ON WORKING STAFF (N=60)

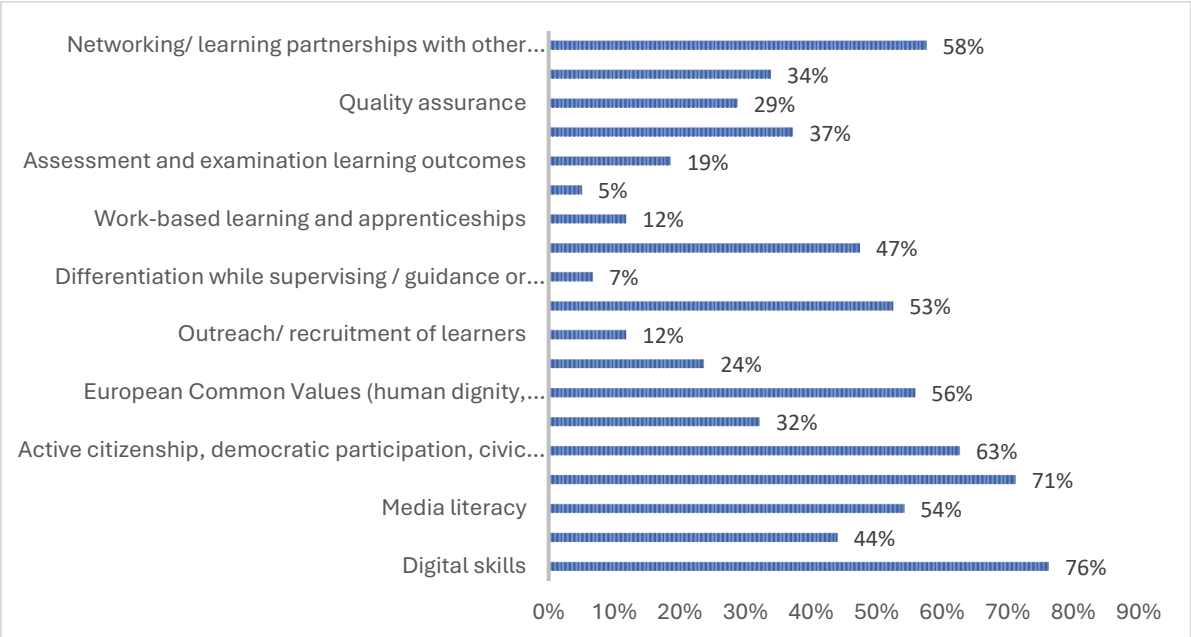


Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Turning back to the impact on staff, the results from the online survey point to particularly **strong effects on competences and professional practice**. A clear majority of organisations report **improvements in pedagogical and didactical skills**, with 52% strongly agreeing and a further 30% agreeing, while only 13% tend to agree. A similarly positive pattern can be observed regarding the **ability of staff to develop learning pathways for learners**. Here, 47% strongly agree and 35% agree that this capacity has improved, with 18% tending to agree. The strongest effect, however, is visible in the **development of international competences**. A substantial 72% of organisations strongly agree that their staff have strengthened these skills, complemented by 22% who agree and only 7% who tend to agree.

These findings are broadly in line with the Commission data, which likewise highlights **skill development, especially in terms of practical and professional competences**, as a key outcome of participation. At the same time, the online survey places an even stronger emphasis on organisational and international dimensions, suggesting that, beyond individual skill gains, **Erasmus+ also contributes significantly to strengthening staff capacity in terms of internationalisation and the development of learning pathways**.

FIGURE 20: TOPICS RECEIVING MORE ATTENTION AFTER PARTICIPATING IN ERASMUS+ IN THE PERIOD 2021-2024 (N=59)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Shifting the focus to the thematic areas that received more attention after participation in Erasmus+, a clear **emphasis on digitalisation and civic engagement** becomes visible. Digital skills stand out as the most prominent area, with 76% of organisations reporting increased attention, followed by media literacy at 71%.

At the same time, topics related to **participation and European values** also feature strongly. Active citizenship and democratic participation account for 63%, while European common values are cited by 56% of organisations. Networking and cooperation with partners are likewise important, comprising 58%, indicating that participation continues to strengthen collaborative approaches.

A second group of topics shows more moderate increases in attention, including **outreach and recruitment of learners** (53%), **differentiation in teaching and guidance** (47%), and **digital-related quality aspects such as media literacy** (54%) and **broader digital skills development**. Quality assurance (29%) and assessment of learning outcomes (37%) are mentioned less frequently, while work-based learning (12%) plays a comparatively minor role.

Also considering the online survey responses, participation in Erasmus+ projects appears to generate lasting impact at both organisational and staff level. **Project outputs are frequently integrated into regular activities, continuously adapted and reused in teaching and learning contexts**, contributing to the expansion and improvement of learning offers, particularly in areas such as digitalisation, inclusion and sustainability.

At organisational level, **Erasmus+ strengthens international networks, long-term cooperation and, in some cases, broader structural developments** such as new formats, follow-up projects and the integration of results into institutional strategies.

For staff, **participation contributes to the development of pedagogical, organisational and international competences**, while also strengthening confidence, motivation and the ability to work within European networks and collaborative settings. Overall, the findings suggest that Erasmus+ participation becomes embedded in everyday organisational practice, supporting continuous learning and development beyond individual project outcomes.

4.4 Conclusion

Participation in **Erasmus+ generates substantial impact at both organisational and staff level, particularly in relation to internationalisation, innovation and capacity-building.** Across KA1 and KA2 projects, organisations report that participation contributes not only to the development of concrete outputs and learning materials, but also to broader processes of internationalisation, innovation and capacity-building.

With regard to project themes and outputs, **Erasmus+ projects show a strong orientation towards inclusion, democratic participation, digitalisation and the professional development of educators**. KA2 projects in particular generate a wide range of practical and reusable outputs, including manuals, curricula, digital tools and learning materials, that frequently continue to be used beyond the project duration and contribute to the long-term development of organisations and learning provision.

At organisational level, **Erasmus+ strengthens international cooperation, networking and long-term strategic development**, while at staff level participation particularly enhances **pedagogical, organisational and international competences**, alongside greater confidence in working within European contexts. The findings further suggest that participation often becomes embedded in everyday organisational practice, **supporting continuous professional learning and the ongoing adaptation of educational approaches and formats**.

5 Impact of KA1 mobility on learners

5.1 Introduction

Learners in adult education are reached in Erasmus+ projects in different ways. On the one hand, they can participate directly in project activities, for example in mobility measures in KA1 projects or in events that are designed and implemented in their own country by KA2 projects. On the other hand, they can benefit indirectly from the results of the projects, especially in Key Action 2, where courses and teaching/learning materials are often developed. In this chapter we solely focus on the impact of KA1 mobility, based on the interviews with adult learners that recently participated in KA1 mobility and their coordinating organisation.

5.2 Number and type of adult learners participating – individual and group mobility

KA1 mobility activities are clearly **dominated by short-term formats**, with individual mobility accounting for 92% short-term activities, indicating a strong preference for shorter and more flexible mobility experiences among adult learners.

Across both mobility formats, participation remains clearly gendered, with **women forming the majority of participants**. This is particularly pronounced in individual mobility (83%), while group mobility shows a somewhat more balanced distribution, with women accounting for 60% of participants. The qualitative interviews, which all relate to short-term group mobility activities, similarly reflect **strong participation among female adult learners**.

Inclusion patterns differ substantially between the two formats. While **individual mobility reaches a considerable share of participants with fewer opportunities** (50%), this group is less represented in group mobility (11%). At the same time, the interviews illustrate that **group mobility activities are also taken up by learners** with fewer opportunities and can provide meaningful and accessible participation experiences for these target groups.

Age patterns further suggest that **individual mobility is more strongly taken up by younger adults** with participants aged 18-29 and 30-44 each comprising 33%. **Group mobility, by contrast, involves a comparatively older cohort**, with the largest share of participants aged 45–59, comprising 39%. The interviews strongly reflect this pattern, as the majority of interviewed learners also belong to the 45+ age group, indicating a comparatively strong participation of older adult learners in short-term group mobility activities.

Geographical patterns show a strong concentration on a **limited number of destination countries in both mobility formats**. Individual mobility activities are primarily directed towards Germany and France, while group mobility is mainly concentrated on Germany, Belgium and Slovenia. This pattern is also reflected in the interviews, where most interviewed learners participated in short-term group mobilities to Belgium and Germany.

5.3 Experiences with KA1 mobility

Individual and group mobility

Across both individual and group mobility, participants report overwhelmingly positive experiences with KA1 mobility, pointing to a **consistently high level of satisfaction with both organisational arrangements and learning environments**. Satisfaction levels are particularly high in group mobility, where all participants report being very satisfied, while individual mobility also shows very positive results overall, albeit with slightly greater variation in experiences.

Looking at specific **organisational aspects**, both mobility formats **are assessed very positively**, especially regarding overall organisation, accommodation and the handling of questions or support requests.

Positive mobility experience

The qualitative interviews strongly reinforce these findings. Learners repeatedly describe the mobilities as "**perfectly organised**" and highly supportive experiences. Several participants particularly emphasise the positive atmosphere within the groups and the opportunity to engage in direct intercultural exchange in a safe and welcoming environment.

For many participants, the combination of intercultural exchange, shared activities and direct encounters created a welcoming learning environment that reduced insecurities and encouraged active participation.

Preparation and support provided by sending organisations also appear to play an important role in shaping participant experiences. Almost all participants report having received preparation, information or training in advance and **generally felt well prepared for their mobility activities**. Clarity regarding expectations and organisational procedures similarly appears to be a strong feature across both mobility formats.

Experiences with **hosting organisations are consistently described very positively**. Participants report feeling welcomed and well-integrated, while the quality of teaching, learning and group activities is assessed highly across both formats. The interviews additionally indicate that **group mobility settings can create particularly strong experiences of social belonging, mutual support and inclusion**, especially for participants with limited prior mobility experience or fewer opportunities.

Inclusion and group mobility experience

It was also emphasised the inclusive character of the group mobility experience. The supportive group atmosphere contributed to a strong sense of belonging and equal participation.

One participant with physical disability particularly emphasised the inclusive character of the group mobility experience:

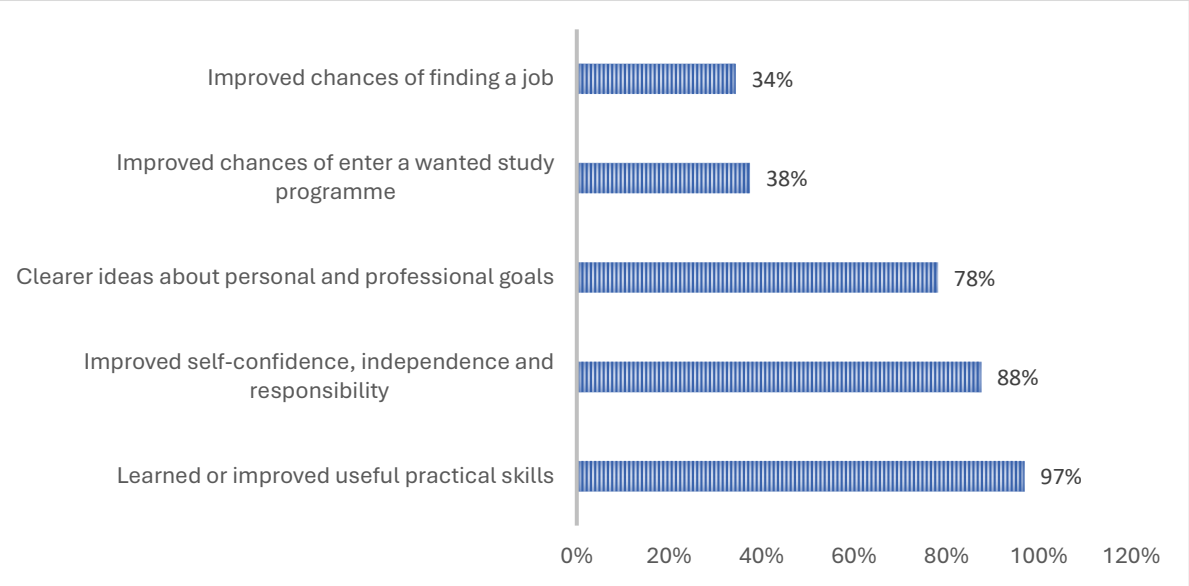
"**I felt like part of the whole group, and, during that time, I did not feel like a person with a disability. That was really wonderful.**"

5.3.1 Impact of mobility on persons attitudes and behaviour

Individual mobility and group mobility

Focusing on the impact of mobility on participants' attitudes and behaviour, the data points to consistently strong and transformative effects across both individual and group mobility, while also revealing differences in intensity and scope.

FIGURE 21: WAYS IN WHICH PARTICIPANT BENEFITTED FROM PARTICIPATION – GROUP MOBILITY (N=1765)

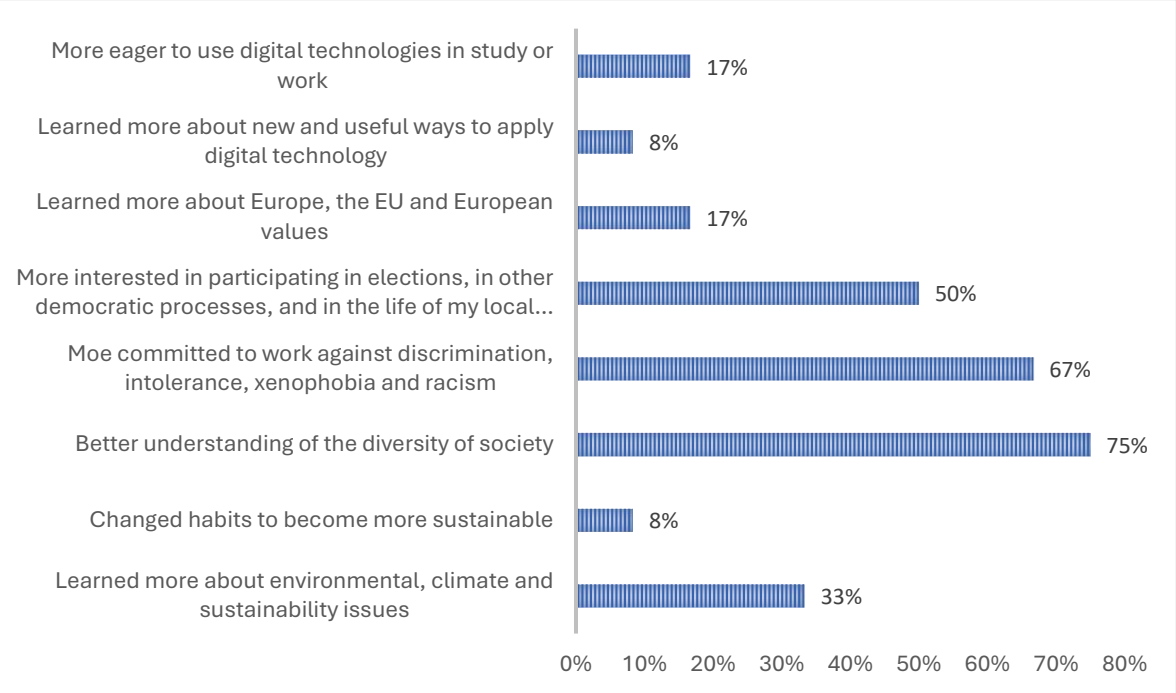


Source: Commission data

Participation is universally perceived as beneficial, with positive effects reported by all respondents in both formats. Looking more closely at the nature of these benefits, individual mobility primarily contributes to the **development of practical skills**, accounting for 83% of responses, while **clearer personal and professional goals** as well **as increased self-confidence** each comprise 58%. In group mobility, these effects appear even more pronounced, with **improved practical skills comprising** 97% of responses, followed by **enhanced self-confidence** at 88% and **clearer goal orientation** at 78%. The qualitative interviews strongly reinforce these findings. **Participants in group mobility activities particularly emphasise increased self-confidence, greater independence and stronger openness** towards unfamiliar people and situations as key outcomes of the mobility experience. Several learners describe feeling more confident in communicating with others, travelling independently and engaging in new social and intercultural environments.

Similarly, strong effects can be observed regarding European priorities and civic attitudes. Across both formats, **participants report increased understanding of social diversity, stronger awareness of European values and greater interest in democratic participation**. In individual mobility, a better **understanding of the diversity of society stands out**, accounting for 75% of responses.

FIGURE 22: WAYS IN WHICH PARTICIPANT GAINED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES – INDIVIDUAL MOBILITY (N=834)



Source: Commission data

In group mobility, these dimensions are even more strongly represented: understanding diversity accounts for 84%, **awareness of European values comprises** 78%, and **interest in democratic engagement** 72%. This is further supported by the interviews, which suggest particularly strong effects regarding **European awareness and democratic understanding**. Learners who participated in mobilities to Belgium repeatedly emphasise that direct encounters with European institutions and political actors helped them **develop a more differentiated understanding of the EU**, democracy and European cooperation. In several cases, **participants describe a noticeable shift from rather distant or sceptical attitudes towards a more positive** and reflective perception of European cooperation.

European awareness through mobility

Several learners describe the mobility experience as changing how they perceive Europe and European cooperation. Particularly through visits to European institutions and direct encounters with political actors in Brussels, participants report gaining a more concrete understanding of how the EU functions and how European cooperation affects everyday life. One participant explained that the mobility experience changed previously sceptical attitudes towards the EU:

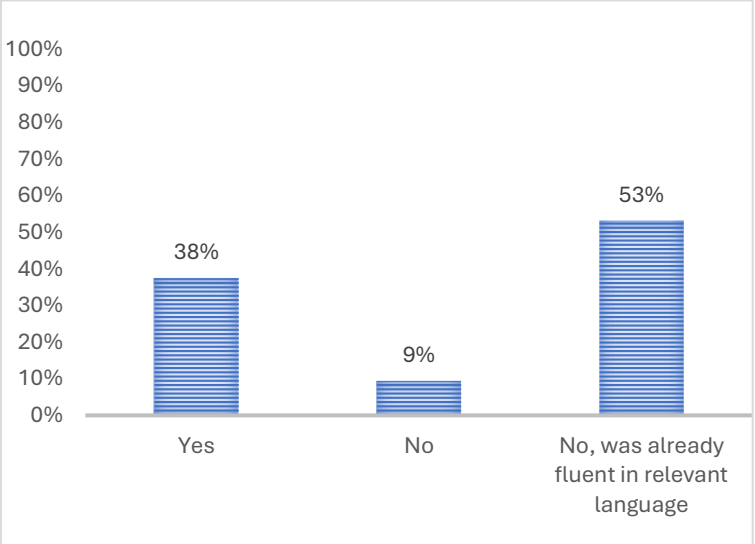
"**Almost the entire group was rather sceptical about the EU at first. After the study visit, however, participants became much more open towards Europe and gained a broader perspective**."

Other learners similarly emphasised that direct insight into EU institutions helped them better understand European decision-making processes and the importance of European cooperation.

"**I see the EU differently now [...] Before, I thought people there just sat around and raised their hands, but now I understand much better how these processes actually work.**"

In terms of identity-related outcomes, increases in **European sense of belonging are evident in both formats**, though more pronounced in group mobility. While this effect accounts for 75% among individual participants, it comprises the entirety of responses in group mobility, suggesting that **shared experiences in a group context may reinforce collective identification more strongly**. This is also reflected in the interviews, where several learners describe developing a more personal and differentiated understanding of Europe and European cooperation through direct encounters, intercultural exchange and visits to European institutions.

FIGURE 23: PARTICIPANT IMPROVED SKILLS IN MAIN LANGUAGE USED DURING MOBILITY – GROUP MOBILITY (N=32)



Source: Commission data

Language-related outcomes, by contrast, display a more differentiated picture. In individual mobility, improvements in language skills account for 17% of responses, while a large majority, comprising 83%, report that they were already fluent prior to participation. In group mobility, the share of participants reporting improvement rises to 38%, whereas 53% indicate prior fluency and 9% report no improvement.

5.4 Conclusion

In terms of the impact of KA1 mobility on adult learners the findings illustrate that the programme reaches a diverse range of learners and generates consistently positive experiences and outcomes across both individual and group mobility formats. Participation is particularly characterised by the strong involvement of women and a predominance of short-term mobility activities. While individual mobility more frequently reaches younger learners and participants with fewer opportunities, group mobility appears especially relevant for older adult learners, many of whom are represented in the qualitative interviews.

Across both formats, participants report very high levels of satisfaction with organisational arrangements, preparation and learning environments. The interviews further suggest that group mobility settings can create particularly supportive and inclusive experiences, especially for learners with limited prior mobility experience or fewer opportunities.

Beyond organisational satisfaction, the findings point to substantial impacts on learners' attitudes and behaviour. Mobility experiences contribute particularly strongly to increased self-confidence, greater independence, intercultural openness and broader social participation. At the same time, participation appears to strengthen awareness of European values, democratic processes and societal diversity. This is especially visible in mobilities involving direct encounters with European institutions and intercultural exchange, where several learners describe developing a more differentiated and positive understanding of European cooperation and citizenship.

PART D – Impact of Erasmus+ on "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement"

6 Characteristics of Erasmus+ project(s) addressing "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement"

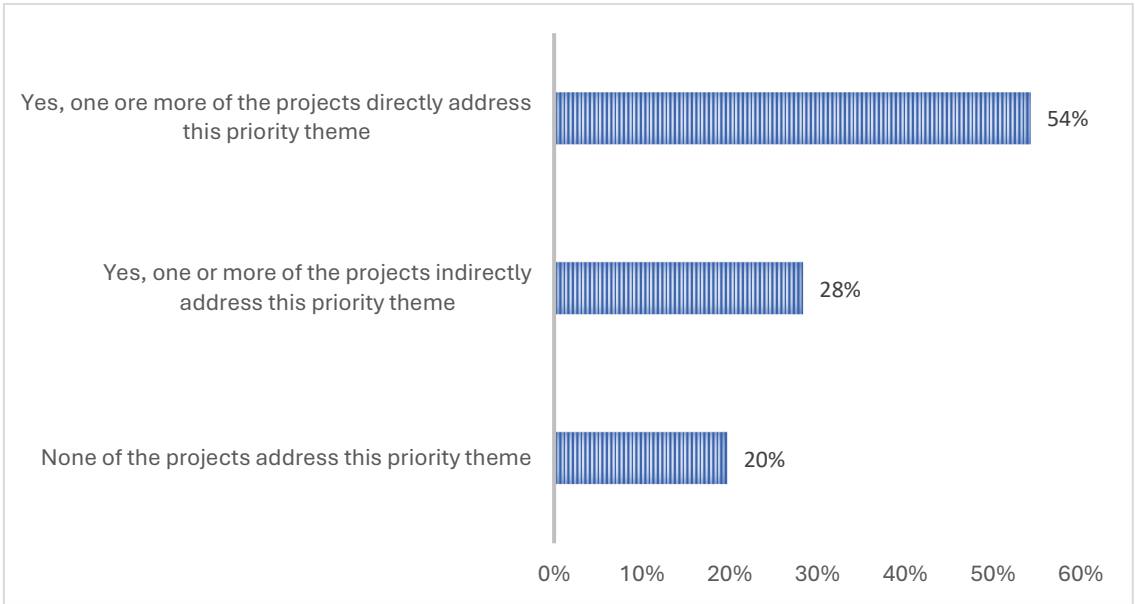
6.1 Introduction

Erasmus+ states that one of its key goals is to "promote citizens' right to take part in democratic life, and encourage active involvement at all levels – local, national and European. For adult learners reinforcing their ability to engage in democratic life is particularly important, as well the development of European common values, supporting civic engagement and developing critical skills and literacy. This chapter address the question to what extent Erasmus+ projects address the Erasmus+ priority "Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement" and by which organisation. It also addresses the characteristics of these projects in term of objectives set and activities implemented.

6.2 Type of organisations

A **majority of Erasmus+ projects engage with the priority of participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement**, though to varying degrees. Direct engagement with the theme accounts for 54% of responses, indicating that it is a **central focus in over half of the projects**. A further 28% comprise projects that address the priority indirectly, suggesting a broader, though less explicit, integration across activities. At the same time, 20% report no engagement with this theme. This distribution shows that while the priority is widely embedded, its implementation ranges from core focus to more peripheral inclusion, with some projects not addressing it at all.

FIGURE 24: THE EXTENT PROJECTS (KA1 AND KA2) ARE ADDRESSING THE PRIORITY THEME "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N=81)



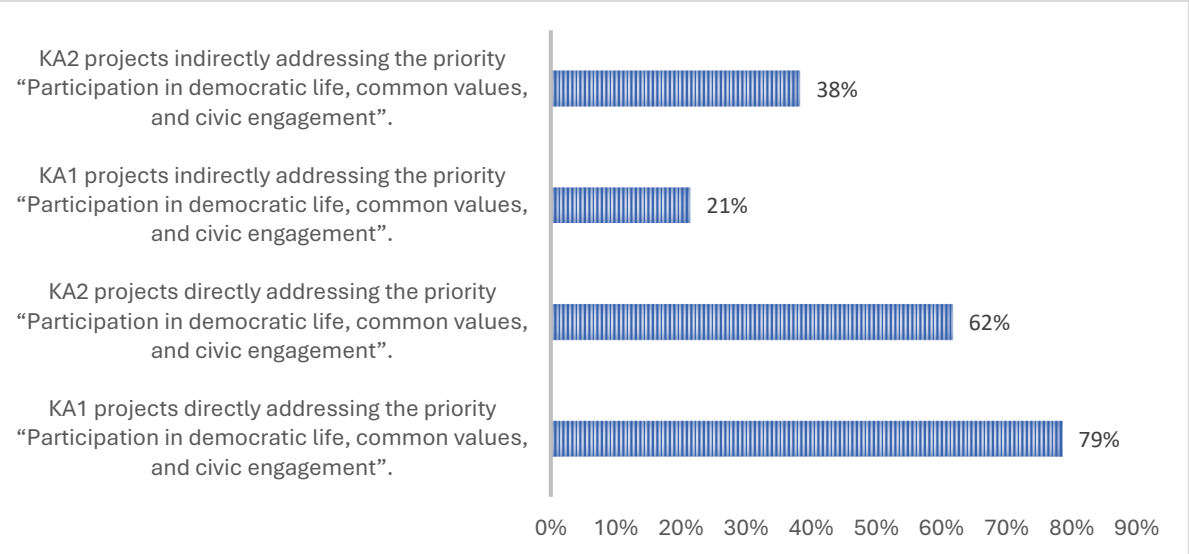
Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

A closer look at KA1 and KA2 projects reveals that the priority of participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement is embedded in different ways across the two actions. In **KA1 projects, the theme is most often taken up directly**, accounting for 79% of responses, whereas indirect engagement plays a more limited role, comprising 21%. This points to a tendency to translate the priority into clearly defined and explicit project activities.

In KA2 projects, the picture is slightly more mixed. While direct engagement still represents the majority, comprising 62%, a substantial share of projects integrates the priority more indirectly, accounting for 38%. Rather than positioning it as the sole focus, **the theme is often woven into broader cooperation or innovation objectives**.

This contrast subtly reflects the different logics of the two actions: KA1, with its focus on mobility, appears to lend itself to more targeted thematic implementation, whereas KA2 projects, by their nature, more frequently embed such priorities within wider, multi-layered project frameworks.

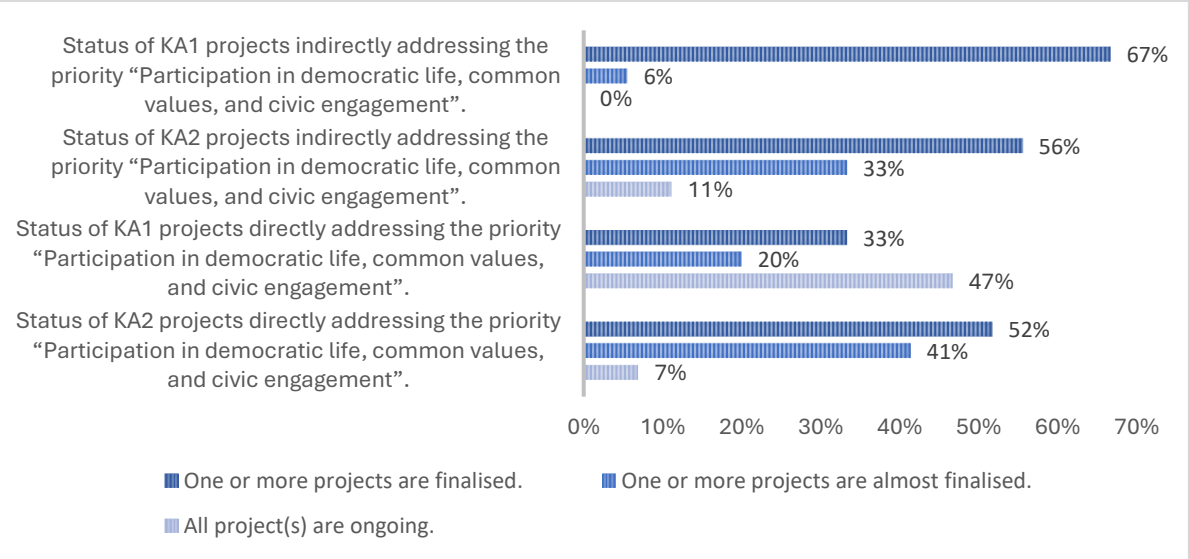
FIGURE 25: THE EXTENT KA1 AND KA2 PROJECTS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY ADDRESSING THE PRIORITY "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N= 28, 47)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

The status of projects addressing the horizontal priority provides additional **insight into how firmly this theme is embedded across ongoing and completed activities**. A large share of these projects are already completed, accounting for 47%, while another 36% are currently ongoing. This indicates that **engagement with the priority is not only a recent development but has been consistently integrated over time and continues to be actively pursued**. At the same time, a smaller proportion of projects remains in earlier stages, with 11% having been selected but not yet started and 6% still at the application stage.

FIGURE 26: STATUS OF KA1/KA2 PROJECTS THAT ARE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY ADDRESSING THE PRIORITY "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N=29, 15, 18, 3)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

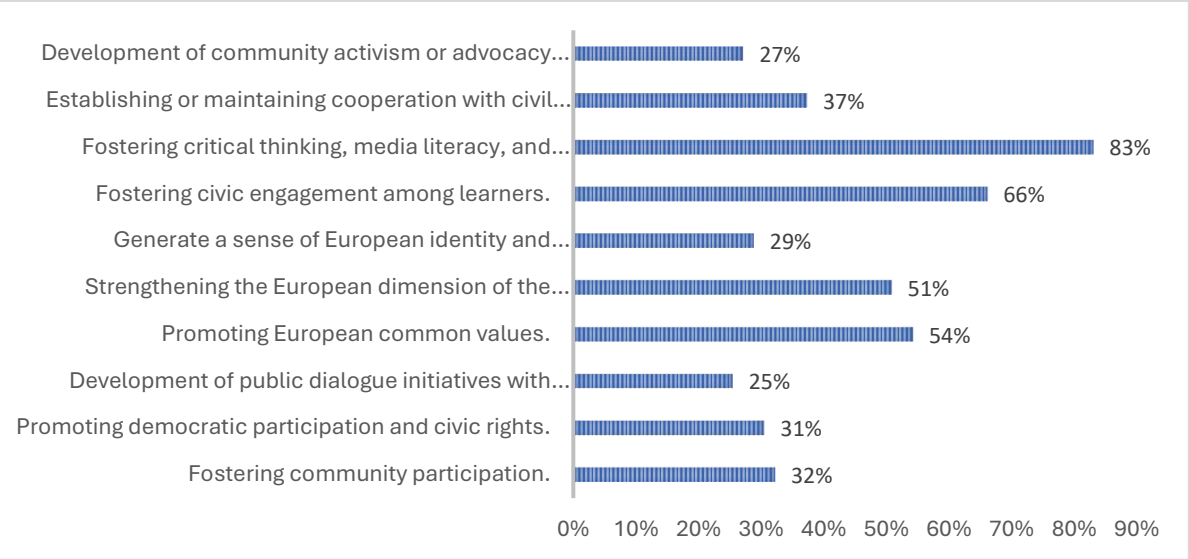
Rather than being confined to a particular phase of the project cycle, **the priority appears across all stages from design to implementation and completion** suggesting that it is both well-established and still evolving within Erasmus+ activities.

At the same time, this distribution indicates that the **priority is addressed in a wide range of projects, regardless of their stage of development**. It is therefore not limited to newly emerging initiatives but is also reflected in ongoing and already completed projects, pointing to a continuous presence of the theme across different cohorts of Erasmus+ activities.

6.3 Objectives and activities supported

Focusing on the objectives and activities supported, projects addressing the priority of participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement place a strong emphasis on awareness-building and learner engagement.

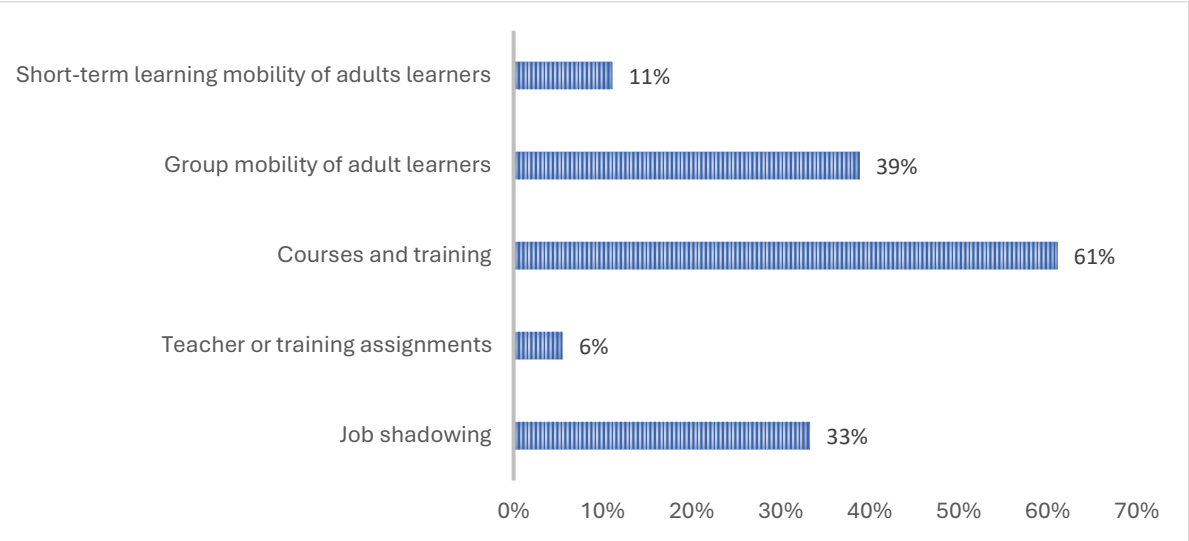
FIGURE 27: GOALS OF PROJECTS (KA1 AND KA2) THAT ADDRESSED ONE OR MORE ELEMENTS OF THE PRIORITY "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N=59)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Fostering critical thinking, media literacy, and socio-political understanding stands out most clearly, accounting for 83% of responses, followed by **fostering civic engagement among learners**, comprising 66%. In addition, promoting European common values (54%) and strengthening the European dimension of organisations (51%) are also frequently addressed, indicating that both individual learning outcomes and organisational perspectives are taken into account. More specific or action-oriented activities appear somewhat less frequently. Cooperation with civil society organisations accounts for 37%, while fostering community participation (32%) and promoting democratic participation and civic rights (31%) also play a role. Activities such as community activism or advocacy (27%) and public dialogue initiatives (25%) are less prominent, suggesting that projects more often focus on building foundations for participation rather than directly engaging in it.

FIGURE 28: ACTIVITIES OF KA1 PROJECTS THAT ADDRESSED ONE OR MORE ELEMENTS OF THE PRIORITY "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N=18)

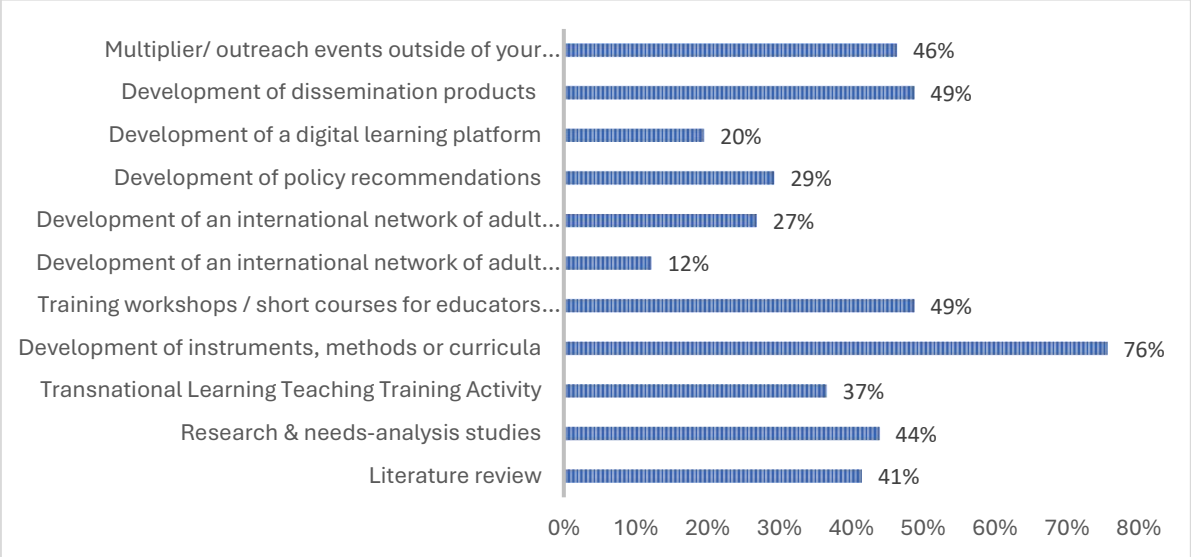


Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Turning to the activities implemented within KA1 projects addressing this priority, a clear focus on structured learning formats becomes apparent. **Courses and training represent the most common activity**, accounting for 61% of responses, indicating that formalised learning settings play a central role in promoting democratic participation and civic engagement. **Group mobility of adult learners also features prominently**, comprising 39%, suggesting that collective learning experiences are frequently used to support these themes.

Less frequently, projects rely on more practice-oriented or observational formats. Job shadowing accounts for 33%, while teaching or training assignments comprise only 6%, pointing to a more limited use of these approaches within KA1.This distribution highlights how KA1 projects tend to operationalise the priority primarily through organised learning activities, while more immersive or staff-focused formats are used more selectively.

FIGURE 29: ACTIVITIES OF KA2 PROJECTS THAT ADDRESSED ONE OR MORE ELEMENTS OF THE PRIORITY "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N=41)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

In **KA2 projects**, activities addressing the priority are **clearly centred on the development of instruments, methods or curricula**, accounting for 76% of responses. This strong focus on creating tangible outputs contrasts with KA1, where structured learning formats such as courses and training dominate.

Alongside this, **dissemination and capacity-building activities play a key role** in KA2. Training workshops and dissemination products each comprise 49%, while outreach events account for 46%, indicating that projects not only develop tools but also actively aim to spread and embed them. Research-related activities, including needs analyses (44%) and literature reviews (41%), further underline this more analytical and development-oriented approach.

Compared to KA1's emphasis on direct learning experiences, KA2 projects thus appear to engage with the priority primarily through the creation, refinement, and dissemination of resources that can be applied more broadly across contexts.

Specific findings from case studies:

CS1's Erasmus+ projects are strongly centred on **inclusion, accessibility and civic participation for visually impaired learners**. Through workshops, tutorials, accessible learning materials and innovative digital tools, the projects aim to strengthen independent access to information and enable learners to participate more actively in social and democratic life. Particular emphasis is placed on fostering critical engagement with media and digital environments, while practical solutions such as accessible applications and assistive technologies further support participation in everyday life.

Projects implemented within CS2 address the priority primarily through **activities aimed at strengthening active citizenship, democratic participation and community involvement in adult education.** A particular emphasis is placed on supporting pedagogical staff and adult education institutions in integrating participatory approaches more systematically into educational practice. The supported activities mainly include workshops, training activities, pilot formats and multiplier events that actively involve learners and local actors in participation processes. In addition, the projects develop practical methods, educational materials, curricula and dissemination products aimed at supporting the wider transfer and long-term use of participatory approaches. International exchange and cooperation further contribute to exploring and comparing different approaches to democratic participation across European contexts.

CS3 demonstrates a particularly integrated and **practice-oriented approach to the priority**. At the centre of the projects lies a **strong focus on empowerment, political participation and participatory learning processes**. Learners are not only introduced to democratic concepts theoretically, but are actively involved in co-creative activities, local participation processes and exchanges with public institutions and political actors. The projects combine workshops, research activities, educational materials and policy-oriented outputs, thereby connecting learning, civic participation and structural change. A particular strength of CS3 lies in embedding democratic engagement directly into practical experiences, enabling learners to develop agency, contribute their own ideas and experience participation in real-life contexts.

From participation to real-life action (CS3)

CS3 demonstrates a particularly **practice-oriented and participatory approach to the priority** "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement." Rather than addressing democracy only at a theoretical level, the **projects actively involve learners in co-creative and local participation processes**.

A defining feature is the collaboration with local initiatives such as the *Wiener Klimateam*, where learners develop, discuss and refine their own ideas for their communities and engage directly with local actors and decision-makers. In this way, **democratic participation becomes a lived and concrete experience rather than an abstract concept discussed only in the classroom**. The projects particularly **aim to strengthen learners' sense of agency, empowerment and civic awareness**. Participants are encouraged not only to express opinions, but to actively contribute ideas, discuss societal challenges and experience that their perspectives can have relevance within public and political contexts.

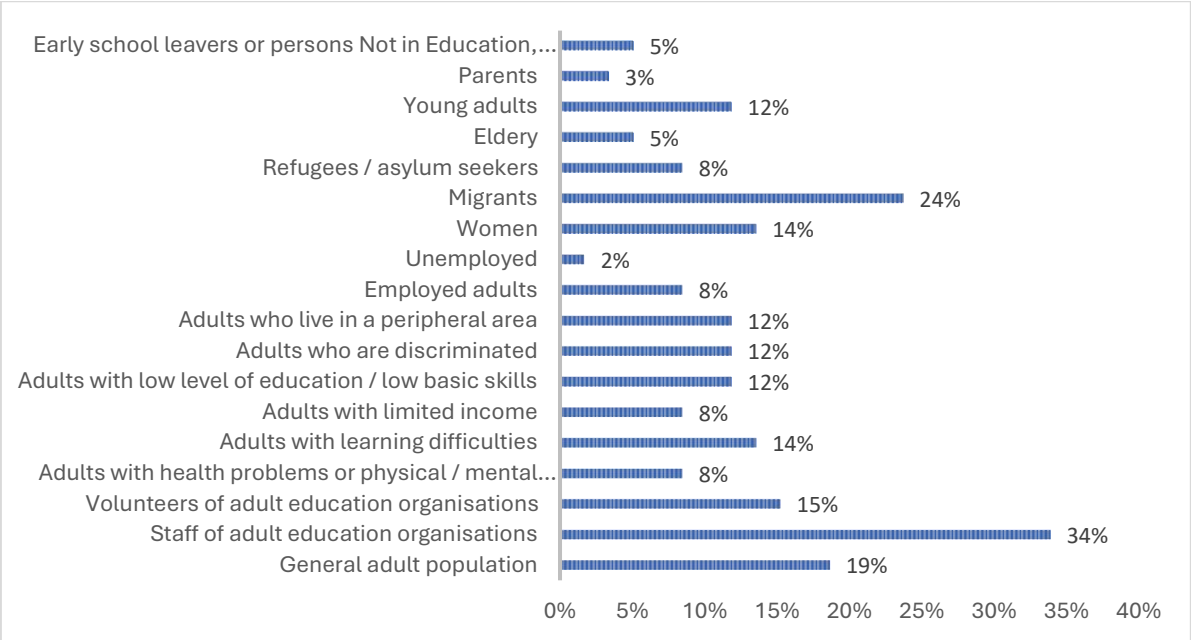
"**Participants realise that their ideas matter and that they can contribute something themselves**."

6.4 Target groups addressed

KA1 and KA2

Turning to the target groups addressed, projects focusing on participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement **reach a broad and diverse spectrum of learners, combining organisational actors with various participant groups**. **Staff of adult education organisations represent the largest group**, accounting for 34%, followed by the **general adult population** comprising 19% and volunteers at 15%. This indicates that many projects aim not only to reach learners directly but also to strengthen capacities within organisations.

FIGURE 30: GROUPS OF ADULT LEARNERS TARGETED BY PROJECTS (KA1 AND KA2) THAT ADDRESSED ONE OR MORE ELEMENTS OF THE PRIORITY "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N=59)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

At the same time, **a wide range of groups facing structural disadvantages is targeted**. Migrants account for 24%, making them one of the most prominent learner groups, while women and adults with learning difficulties each comprise 14%. Additional groups such as young adults, those living in peripheral areas, individuals experiencing discrimination, or those with low levels of education each account for around 12%, pointing to a relatively inclusive approach.

Smaller shares are observed for refugees or asylum seekers, adults with limited income, or those with health problems or disabilities, each comprising around 8%. Altogether, this distribution suggests that projects combine capacity-building within organisations with efforts to engage diverse and, in part, more vulnerable learner groups.

Specific findings from case studies:

CS1's Erasmus+ projects **primarily target blind and visually impaired adults** while following a strongly inclusive approach that extends beyond the immediate target group. The projects focus on **strengthening accessible learning, digital participation and independent access to information** through adapted learning methods, accessible digital tools and practical assistive solutions. At the same time,

activities and outputs are designed to remain relevant and usable for a broader range of adult learners and support staff.

CS2 dual role as both an umbrella organisation and an education provider shapes their target group approach. At the level of the umbrella organisation **primarily addresses staff and educational professionals in adult education institutions**, aiming to **strengthen their competences and support the transfer of participatory approaches into institutional practice**. At the same time, projects of the interviewed education centre mainly focus on **adults in rural and peripheral areas, particularly older learners and groups facing limited participation opportunities** due to regional structures. Therefore, CS2 combines direct local outreach with a broader multiplier-oriented approach.

One "Design for all" in adult education (CS1)

A distinctive feature of CS1's Erasmus+ projects is the **strong "design for all" approach** guiding the development of learning activities, materials and digital tools. Although the projects primarily target blind and visually impaired adults, outputs are intentionally designed to remain accessible, practical and relevant for a much broader range of learners and users:

"**We really try to follow a 'design for all' approach, it should truly work for everyone. We do not exclude people without disabilities either. That is very important to us: it should genuinely be accessible and useful for all**."

CS2 further states that the effective target group often expands during project implementation, as interest in the developed tools, methods and learning offers also emerges among **people beyond the original target group**. At the same time, the projects deliberately involve the **wider support environment of visually impaired learners, including trainers, assistants, relatives and support staff**, recognising that sustainable inclusion and participation require not only empowering learners themselves, but also **strengthening the competences and awareness of those surrounding them**.

The projects coordinated by CS3 focus **particularly on adults facing structural barriers to participation**, especially learners in basic education settings. Many participants are affected by multiple forms of disadvantage, including low formal education levels, limited socio-economic resources or low participation in democratic and civic processes. Through participatory learning activities and practical engagement formats, the projects aim to **strengthen empowerment, civic awareness and opportunities for democratic participation** among underrepresented groups.

6.5 Conclusion

The findings of Chapter 6 illustrate that the **priority "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" plays a prominent role within Erasmus+ projects** in Austrian adult education.

The numbers alone tell a compelling story. More than four fifths of surveyed organisations address the priority either as **a central or complementary project focus**, indicating a sustained commitment to strengthening democratic participation, civic engagement and European values within adult education practice. This is not

simply a reflection of funding incentives or box-ticking – it speaks to a **genuine and sustained commitment within the Austrian adult education sector to strengthen the foundations of democratic participation**.

Particularly revealing are the **complementary approaches between KA1 and KA2 projects**. While KA1 activities mainly support direct and experience-based learning through mobility, training and intercultural exchange, KA2 projects place a stronger emphasis on developing transferable methods, curricula and educational materials that can support longer-term institutional and educational development. Across both actions, **projects particularly focus on strengthening critical thinking, media literacy, civic competences and democratic participation**.

At the same time, the findings demonstrate a **strong emphasis on inclusion and participation of underrepresented groups**. Projects frequently engage migrants, adults with low levels of formal education, people with disabilities and learners in rural or socially disadvantaged contexts. The **case studies illustrate particularly practice-oriented and participatory approaches**, ranging from inclusive “design for all” concepts to projects that directly involve learners in local participation processes and cooperation with public institutions.

7 Impact in the thematic area

This chapter describes the impact of Erasmus+ projects addressing the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” on different aspect of the learning offer of the beneficiary organisations, their staff and learners. It discusses whether Erasmus+ enhanced the focus of provision on democratic process and political rights, volunteering activities, learners’ influence on training offer, European citizenship, European common values, civic competences, media literacy, critical thinking and strengthening partnership with civil society organisations.

7.1 Impact on the learning offer

Turning to the impact on the learning offer, projects addressing participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement have led to **broad and multi-layered changes, affecting both the content and the delivery of educational provision**. These patterns are closely aligned with the survey results presented earlier (see Figure 18 in Chapter 4.3), where high levels of agreement already pointed to improvements in the alignment, accessibility, and integration of learning offers.

Building on this, the more detailed findings show that **organisations have particularly strengthened their focus on media literacy and critical thinking, as well as on civic competences, social responsibility, and European common values**. Across these areas, responses are consistently concentrated in the “agree” and “strongly agree” categories, indicating that these themes are not only present but actively embedded in learning activities.

FIGURE 31: IMPACT OF ERASMUS+ ON LEARNING OFFER - "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N=48)

Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

At the same time, the influence extends beyond curricular content. Many organisations report that their **mission statements are now more closely aligned with European values**, while **cooperation with civil society organisations has been strengthened**. Increased attention to neighbourhood initiatives, community life, and volunteering further suggests that learning offers are becoming more closely connected to real-life contexts and opportunities for participation.

In parallel, changes can also be observed in how learning is organised. Respondents highlight that **learners have gained more influence on courses and organisational policies**, and that **staff are better equipped to address questions related to European identity and civic engagement**. This points to a shift towards more participatory and reflective learning environments.

Seen together with the earlier survey results (Figure 18), which already indicated improvements in accessibility and alignment with learners' needs, these findings illustrate how the **priority has been integrated at multiple levels**. Rather than affecting isolated elements, it shapes both what is taught and how learning offers are designed, making civic participation and common values a more visible and embedded part of adult education provision.

Specific findings from case studies:

CS1's projects demonstrate how the priority "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" can be implemented through **accessible and inclusive learning approaches.** Erasmus+ supported the further **development of adapted teaching methods and accessible digital learning opportunities for visually impaired learners**, particularly in the areas of **digital participation, media literacy and critical engagement with online information**. The projects combine digital empowerment with the promotion of autonomy, inclusion and active participation in social life.

In CS2, the thematic priority is reflected particularly through the **stronger integration of democratic participation and active citizenship into adult education activities**. Erasmus+ enabled the development of **participatory learning concepts and pilot activities** within rural municipalities, where learners and local communities were actively involved in local participation processes. International exchange further contributed to introducing new perspectives on civic engagement and democratic participation into local educational practice.

What stands out in the case of CS3 is a stronger emphasis on active participation and civic engagement within the learning offer by embedding **democratic participation directly into the learning process**. Learners are not only introduced to democratic concepts theoretically, but actively develop ideas, collaborate with local actors and engage with public institutions and participation processes. In addition, workshops and materials integrate broader European values such as sustainability, inclusion and climate awareness, linking democratic participation with wider societal challenges.

Repositioning adult education centres as spaces for democracy (CS2)

CS2 illustrates how the priority "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" can shape the learning offer of adult education institutions. Through Erasmus+ projects, **democratic participation, citizenship education and community involvement** became more central elements of workshops, training activities and local learning processes

A distinctive aspect of CS2's projects is the effort to **strengthen the role of adult education centres as spaces for democratic participation and civic engagement**. Rather than focusing exclusively on traditional leisure-oriented learning offers, the projects aim to reconnect adult education more strongly with its original role as a place for dialogue, participation and community involvement.

"**The idea is to position adult education centres more strongly again as centres for democracy […] back towards the original roots of adult education centres.**"

Through workshops, local participation activities and international exchange, the projects explore how citizen participation can be strengthened across different European contexts and **how adult education institutions can actively contribute to democratic participation on a local level.**

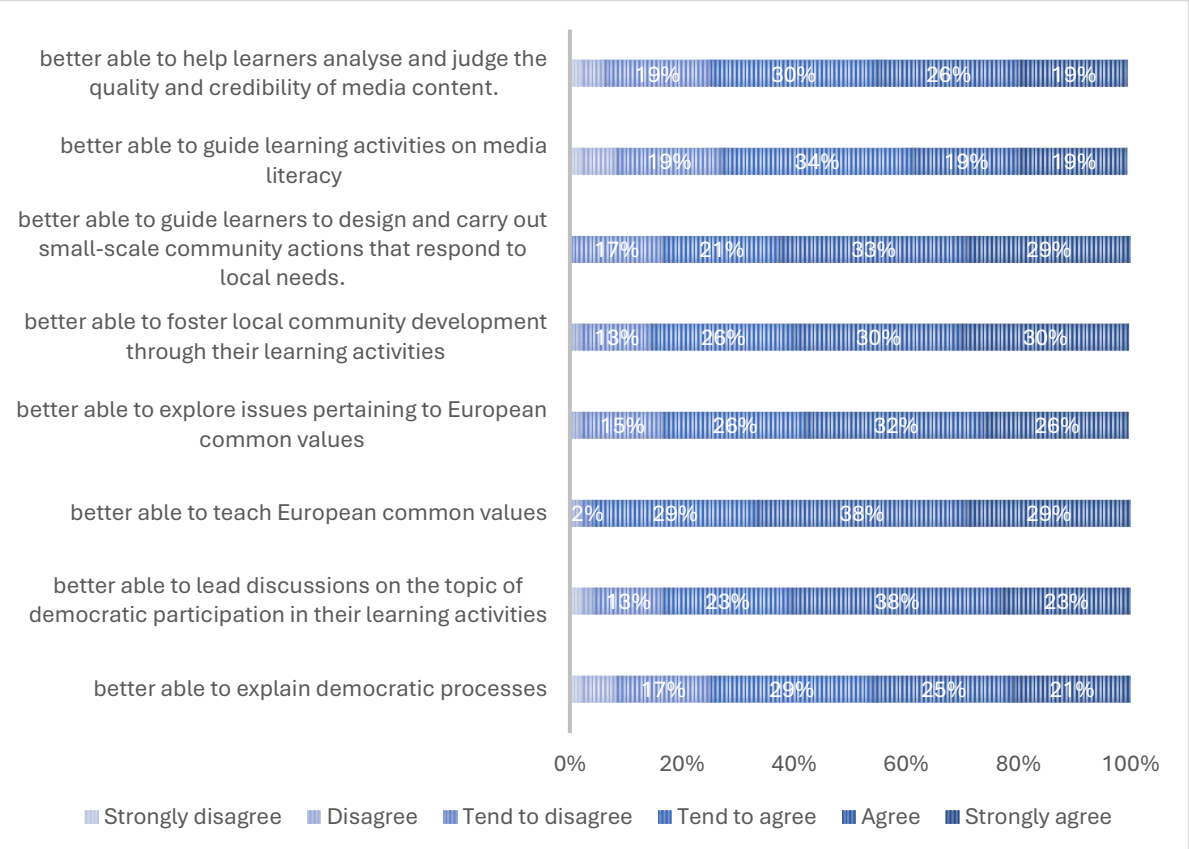
7.2 Impact at staff level

The impact at staff level shows a clear **strengthening of competences and professional practices** in projects addressing participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement. This is closely in line with the broader patterns observed earlier (see Figure 19 in Chapter 4.3), where high levels of agreement already pointed to improvements in staff skills and capacities.

In more detail, staff report **enhanced abilities to develop learning pathways tailored to learners' needs**, with a large share of responses falling into the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories. Similarly, **international competences appear to have improved considerably**, reflecting increased confidence in working across contexts and engaging with European dimensions of education. **Pedagogical and didactical skills are also strengthened**, reinforcing the capacity of staff to design and deliver learning offers effectively.

These findings mirror the results presented in Figure 19, where most respondents indicated positive effects on **pedagogical, organisational, and international competences**. The current data further suggests that these improvements are closely linked to the thematic focus of the projects, as **staff are not only developing general skills but are also becoming better equipped to integrate questions of participation, values, and civic engagement into their work**. In this way, the impact extends beyond individual skill development, contributing to a more reflective, internationally oriented, and thematically grounded professional practice.

FIGURE 32: IMPACT OF ERASMUS+ ON STAFF - "PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE, COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT" (N=48)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Specific findings from case studies:

Within the thematic area of "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement", CS1 reports **particularly strong effects on staff competences related to media literacy, critical engagement with digital information and European common values**. Erasmus+ supported staff in developing teaching approaches that help visually impaired learners **assess the quality and credibility of media content, critically reflect on online information and engage more independently with digital environments** and emerging technologies such as AI. At the same time, international cooperation and exchange with both national and European partners **significantly strengthened staff capacities to address and teach European common values, inclusion and democratic participation** within their educational practice. Staff particularly emphasise that the exchange of experiences and perspectives with partner organisations **broadened their understanding of these topics** and strongly influenced their own pedagogical approaches.

For CS2, the thematic impact at staff level is particularly visible in the **strengthened ability of educators to address European values, democratic participation and active citizenship** within their educational practice. Through international cooperation, project meetings and exchange with partner organisations from different European countries, **staff gained new perspectives on democratic learning, participation processes and citizenship education**. Experiencing different educational and democratic practices across Europe encouraged reflection on their own approaches and broadened their understanding of European values and perspectives

Adapting learning for visually impaired learners (CS1)

A central impact of Erasmus+ for CS1 lies in strengthening staff capacities to **adapt teaching methods, learning environments and educational materials to the specific needs of visually impaired learners**. Staff describe how Erasmus+ provides an important framework for experimenting with more inclusive and accessible forms of knowledge transfer that go beyond traditional teaching approaches.

Particular emphasis is placed on developing **multisensory and accessible learning formats that allow learners to engage with content not only visually, but also through touch, sound and interactive participation**. Erasmus+ projects further supported the adaptation and development of accessible learning materials and helped reduce existing barriers and disadvantages affecting the target group.

"**It has to be possible to experience things through touch, hearing and feeling. Traditional frontal teaching simply does not work. Erasmus+ gives us a very good platform to develop these approaches further and reduce existing disadvantages for our target group**."

A noticeable effect in CS3 concerns the **growing importance of participatory and co-creative approaches** within educational practice. Erasmus+ projects supported educators in leading discussions on democratic participation, exploring European values and creating more participation-oriented learning environments within workshops and classroom settings. At the same time, **staff became better equipped**

to guide learners in developing their own ideas, expressing perspectives and engaging in small-scale community-based actions and participation processes. In this way, democratic engagement was increasingly integrated into practical learning experiences rather than addressed only at a theoretical level. **International exchange further enriched these approaches** by exposing staff to different European participation practices and inclusive civic education models across partner countries.

European exchange as perspective shift (CS2)

For staff in CS2, one of the most valuable aspects of Erasmus+ lies in the **international exchange with partner organisations** across Europe. Project meetings and cooperation with partners from different countries are described as important opportunities to leave one's own "bubble", encounter different democratic cultures and reflect on alternative educational and participation practices.

Staff particularly emphasise that experiencing contrasts between different European contexts **broadens perspectives on democracy, participation and adult education**. These encounters not only generate new ideas for their own work, but also strengthen a sense of European connectedness and long-term professional relationships between organisations and educators.

"The exchange is probably the most valuable part — and often partnerships emerge that continue for years or even decades."

7.3 Impact at learners level

Specific findings from case studies:

CS1 reports particularly strong **effects on learners' social participation, autonomy and inclusion**. Erasmus+ projects supported visually impaired learners in engaging more independently with digital and social environments, while also **strengthening confidence, everyday participation and critical engagement with information and media**. The projects further contributed to reducing isolation and creating new opportunities for social connection, participation and self-expression.

In CS2, the thematic impact at learner level is particularly visible in the way participation activities and mobility experiences **strengthen self-confidence, independence and openness towards new experiences, especially among learners with fewer opportunities**. First-time mobility experiences abroad appear as highly empowering and as important opportunities for learners to broaden perspectives and gain new experiences. A further key aspect lies in the active involvement of learners throughout project activities. **By contributing their own ideas, experiences and engagement, participants develop a stronger sense of identification, ownership and participation**. This participatory approach is closely connected to the projects' focus on democratic participation and active citizenship.

Particularly strong empowerment and participation effects emerge in CS3. Through participatory and co-creative learning approaches, **democratic participation became an integral part of the learning experience** rather than only a theoretical topic. Learners were encouraged to contribute ideas, express perspectives and actively engage with questions of participation, community and social responsibility. The projects appear to have **strengthened learners' awareness that their voices**

and everyday actions matter within democratic and societal contexts. Staff describe how participants increasingly felt heard, developed a **stronger sense of agency and became more aware of their own role within participation and community processes**, particularly through exchanges with public actors and local participation activities.

"For the first time, being heard" (CS3)

A particularly powerful aspect of CS3's projects lies in **creating participation opportunities for adults who often feel excluded from democratic processes**. Through participatory workshops, local activities and exchanges with public actors, learners were encouraged to contribute ideas, express concerns and experience that their perspectives matter.

Staff describe how even short workshop phases led to noticeable changes in confidence, civic awareness and participation. Learners increasingly recognised that their everyday actions and experiences could have political and societal relevance, while public presentations and local participation activities created spaces where participants could actively make their voices heard.

"**Some participants said they had lived in Vienna for over 30 years and had never felt that they could say something or be heard – and for the first time they had the opportunity to really take part**."

Specific findings from adult learners:

The interviews with adult learners indicate that participation in KA1 mobility activities generates impacts that go beyond the immediate learning context and often **affect participants' personal development, civic awareness and engagement with European issues**. Across the interviews, learners consistently describe the mobility experiences as highly enriching and motivating, particularly due to the combination of international exchange, direct encounters and experiential learning formats. Several participants report **increased self-confidence, greater openness towards diversity and stronger trust in their own abilities**, while some also describe enhanced reflection skills and interpersonal competences.

A particularly strong impact emerges in relation to European awareness, democratic understanding and critical reflection. Many learners emphasise that **direct exposure to European institutions, historical sites and political discussions enabled them to better understand European decision-making processes, democracy and the role of the EU**. In several cases, participants describe a noticeable shift from sceptical or distant attitudes towards a more differentiated and positive perception of European cooperation, while still maintaining a critical perspective.

The findings further suggest that **mobility experiences can foster long-term engagement with societal and political issues**. Learners report **increased interest in democratic participation, greater awareness of diversity and discrimination, and a stronger motivation to engage with social and historical topics** in their personal or professional contexts. Some participants also describe concrete follow-up effects, such as integrating newly gained perspectives into their educational work, discussing European topics more actively, or encouraging others including people with disabilities or limited prior mobility experience to participate in similar activities.

Democracy becoming tangible through mobility

For several adult learners, the mobility experience made European democracy and political participation feel more concrete, understandable and personally relevant.

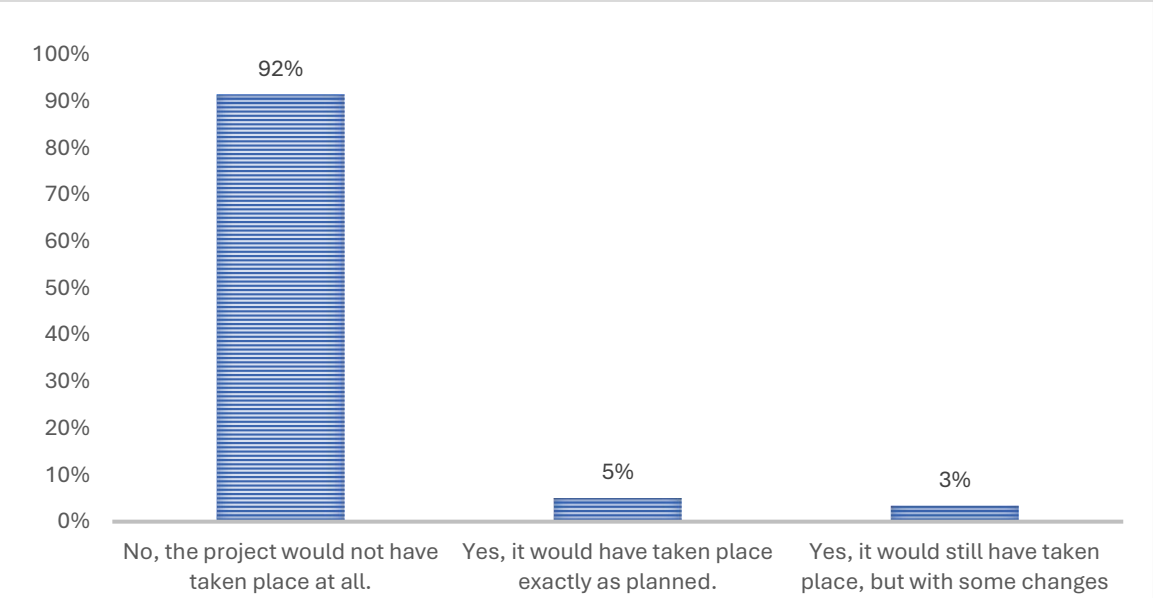
"**There I learned things that really showed me how important the EU actually is for Austria**."

"**There was a real enthusiasm for what the EU means – differently for each person, but still something shared. You could really feel this enthusiasm for Europe and for what it means to have the EU, to work within the EU, or to be part of this whole system. That enthusiasm for the idea of Europe, for what it represents and how important the EU as an institution actually is – that was very tangible.**"

7.4 Added value of Erasmus+ support

The added value of Erasmus+ support emerges particularly clearly when considering whether projects would have taken place without the programme. A very large majority of respondents indicate that their **projects would not have been implemented at all without Erasmus+**, accounting for 92%. Only a small share reports that the project would have taken place exactly as planned (5%) or with some modifications (3%). This distribution highlights the **decisive role of Erasmus+ funding in enabling project implementation in the first place**, rather than merely enhancing or scaling existing initiatives. In many cases, the programme appears to act as a key precondition for addressing themes such as participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement.

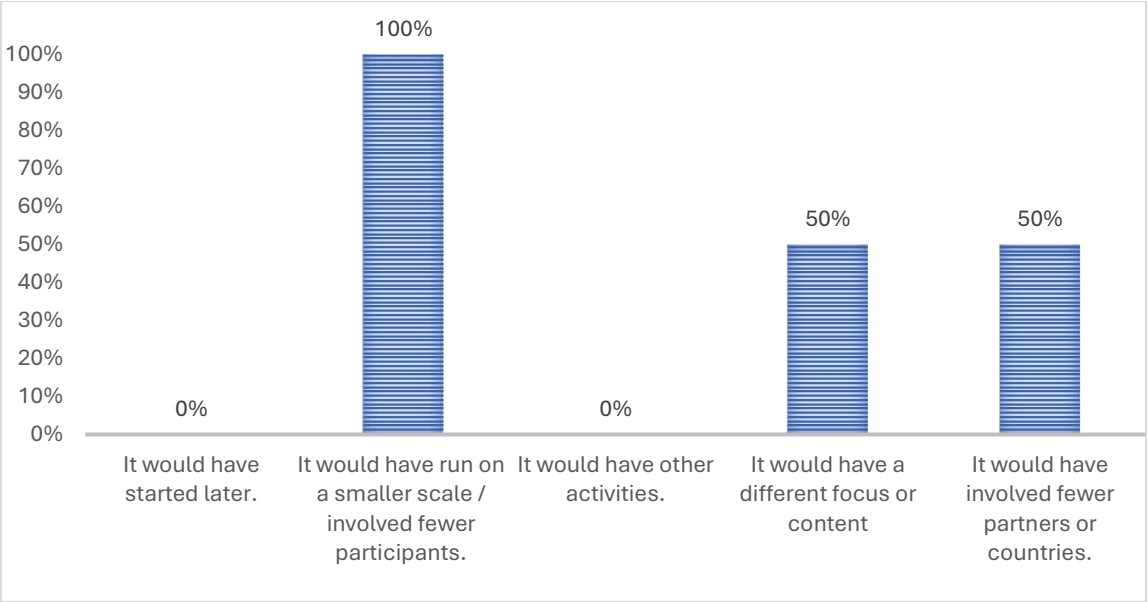
FIGURE 33: ADDED VALUE OF ERASMUS+ SUPPORT (N=59)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Further insight into the added value of Erasmus+ emerges when looking at how projects would have differed without the programme, even in cases where implementation might still have been possible.

FIGURE 34: ASPECTS OF PROJECT THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT WITHOUT ERASMUS+ (N=2)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations

Among the small number of relevant responses, **all indicate that projects would have involved fewer participants, accounting for 100%**. In addition, half of the respondents report that the content of the project would have been different, while an equal share indicates that fewer partners or countries would have been involved, each comprising 50%. Although based on a limited number of cases, these findings suggest that **Erasmus+ support does not only enable projects to take place, but also significantly shapes their scale, content, and transnational dimension**.

7.5 Conclusion

Participation in Erasmus+ projects addressing the priority "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" **generates substantial effects at the level of learning offers staff development and learner participation**. Across the findings, democratic participation, media literacy, critical thinking and European common values emerge as increasingly embedded elements within adult education provision, often combined with more participatory and learner-centred approaches. At organisational and staff level, **Erasmus+ contributes to the development of pedagogical, international and facilitation competences**, while also strengthening the ability of organisations to implement inclusive, community-oriented and participatory learning formats. **Transnational cooperation and exchange further support the integration of new perspectives and approaches** into educational practice.

At learner level, participation is associated with **increased confidence, civic awareness and engagement with societal and European issues**. In particular, experiential and participatory learning formats appear to **strengthen learners' sense of agency and encourage more active involvement in democratic and community life**. The findings also highlight the **strong added value of Erasmus+**

support. For most organisations, projects in this thematic area would either not have taken place or would have been implemented on a considerably smaller scale without Erasmus+ funding, underlining the programme's central role in enabling participatory and transnational approaches within adult education.

PART E – Conclusion and policy pointers

8 Conclusion and policy pointers

8.1 Conclusions

8.1.1 The accessibility and inclusiveness of the programme

The findings of the second monitoring round underline that Erasmus+ has become an important instrument for internationalisation in Austrian adult education, particularly within the non-formal sector. The programme reaches a broad spectrum of organisations, including associations, NGOs, adult education centres, libraries, social enterprises and established providers of general adult education. Compared to the previous reporting round, the current data and case studies illustrate even more clearly that Erasmus+ is not exclusively accessible to large institutions with long-standing international experience. Smaller organisations and grassroots initiatives increasingly use Erasmus+ strategically to strengthen their educational work, professionalise staff and position themselves within European networks.

At the same time, the findings confirm structural inequalities in access to the programme. While smaller organisations participate successfully, participation often depends on highly committed individuals, existing informal networks and the availability of organisational resources that allow institutions to invest considerable time into application writing, coordination and reporting. Particularly for organisations with limited staff capacity, Erasmus+ participation remains associated with a high administrative burden and financial uncertainty during the application phase.

The interviews further show that inclusion is not only a question of who participates, but also of who can sustainably benefit from participation. Organisations working with adults with fewer opportunities repeatedly stressed that mobility formats need to be adapted carefully to the realities of their target groups. Issues such as insecure residence status, financial insecurity, language barriers, health limitations or limited mobility experience influence participation possibilities substantially.

Additionally, the results demonstrate that Erasmus+ mobility activities can foster European identification and democratic awareness in subtle but meaningful ways. Learners and staff frequently described a stronger awareness of European cooperation, democratic values and cultural diversity through direct international exchange. Particularly within group mobility settings, European citizenship was not experienced abstractly, but through concrete encounters, shared learning experiences and the feeling of belonging to a wider European community.

8.1.2 Impact at organisation level

The results of the study confirm that Erasmus+ has a substantial impact on participating organisations beyond the duration of individual projects. Participation contributes not only to the implementation of specific activities, but increasingly to longer-term organisational development processes. In many organisations, Erasmus+ has become a driver for strategic internationalisation, innovation and professionalisation.

Compared to the previous survey round, the organisational impact appears more deeply embedded in institutional structures. International cooperation is no longer perceived merely as an additional activity, but as part of organisational identity and

future development. Many organisations reported that Erasmus+ participation led to new internal processes, stronger project management capacities and increased openness towards European cooperation.

A particularly important finding concerns the relationship between Erasmus+ and the horizontal priorities of the programme. The study indicates that themes such as inclusion, digitalisation, sustainability and democratic participation are increasingly integrated into organisational practices through Erasmus+ projects. In several cases, these priorities moved from being formal project requirements towards becoming integral elements of educational offers and organisational strategies.

Digital transformation remains one of the most visible impacts. Organisations describe how Erasmus+ accelerated the use of digital tools, hybrid learning formats and international online collaboration. At the same time, the findings suggest that digitalisation is increasingly understood not only as a technical issue, but also as a pedagogical and social one connected to accessibility and participation.

Another central finding concerns the importance of dissemination and internal anchoring of project results. The case studies clearly demonstrate that sustainable impact depends less on the mere production of outputs and more on the organisational capacity to integrate experiences into everyday practice. Successful organisations often developed internal multiplier structures, involved staff teams broadly and linked project activities with existing organisational priorities.

At the same time, the findings reveal continuing tensions between project logic and sustainable implementation. Several organisations described difficulties in maintaining developed outputs or international cooperation structures once project funding ended. Particularly smaller organisations stressed that long-term sustainability often depends on additional national or regional co-financing.

8.1.3 Impact at staff level

Erasmus+ generates substantial professional and personal learning effects for staff members in adult education. Participants repeatedly described mobility and international cooperation not merely as opportunities for professional development, but as transformative experiences that broadened perspectives, strengthened confidence and renewed motivation for educational work.

Participation in Erasmus+ contributed particularly strongly to the development of intercultural competences, pedagogical innovation and professional openness. Staff members described increased confidence in international cooperation, greater awareness of European educational practices and stronger willingness to experiment with new teaching and learning approaches.

Compared to the first survey round, the qualitative findings point more strongly towards the emotional and identity-related dimensions of Erasmus+ participation. Staff frequently referred to a renewed sense of purpose, stronger identification with European cooperation and increased awareness of the societal role of adult education in promoting inclusion, participation and democratic values.

Digital competences continue to represent a central area of impact. Participants highlighted not only improved technical skills, but also greater confidence in using digital learning environments and integrating digital tools into pedagogical practice. The findings suggest that Erasmus+ strengthens not only the professional capacities

of staff members, but also their engagement, motivation and identification with adult education as a socially and democratically relevant field of practice.

8.1.4 Impact at learners' level

The impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners often extends far beyond formal learning outcomes. Participants described mobility experiences as important moments of personal growth that increased self-confidence, strengthened independence and encouraged further engagement in learning activities.

Particularly for adult learners with fewer opportunities, Erasmus+ created spaces of recognition, participation and empowerment that were often absent in previous educational biographies. Learners referred to improved communication skills, greater openness towards other cultures and stronger confidence in their own abilities. Several participants described mobility experiences as meaningful turning points that motivated them to continue participating in education and lifelong learning.

The interviews additionally indicate that international mobility can strengthen democratic awareness and civic participation. Learners repeatedly highlighted experiences of intercultural dialogue, solidarity and mutual learning as important outcomes of mobility activities. European values were often experienced not through formal teaching, but through everyday interaction, shared activities and encounters with people from different social and cultural backgrounds.

Group mobility formats appeared particularly valuable for learners with limited prior international experience. The collective nature of the mobility created a sense of security and enabled participation for learners who might otherwise not engage in international activities. Overall, Erasmus+ contributes to reducing educational isolation, strengthening participation in lifelong learning and enabling adult learners to experience themselves as active participants within both their local communities and a broader European context.

8.1.5 Characteristics of Erasmus+ project(s) addressing "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement"

The findings illustrate that projects addressing the priority "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" have become a well-established and increasingly visible component of Erasmus+ adult education activities in Austria. Rather than approaching democratic participation solely through formal political education, organisations tend to implement the priority through practice-oriented, inclusive and learner-centred approaches that connect democratic values with everyday experiences, social participation and community engagement.

A particularly striking finding concerns the broad understanding of participation that emerges across the projects. Democratic engagement is rarely treated as an isolated topic. Instead, it is closely linked to critical thinking, media literacy, inclusion, accessibility, sustainability and community participation. In this sense, the projects reflect a holistic understanding of democratic life that extends beyond institutional politics and emphasises empowerment, dialogue and active involvement in society.

The results further show that Erasmus+ projects address the priority through highly diverse educational formats. While KA1 projects primarily create direct participation experiences through mobility, workshops and group learning settings, KA2 projects

more often focus on developing transferable methods, curricula, materials and participatory approaches that can be embedded into broader educational practice. Together, both actions contribute to strengthening democratic learning at individual, organisational and community level.

The case studies additionally demonstrate that projects can create particularly meaningful participation opportunities for groups that are often underrepresented in democratic processes. Across the cases, participation is not understood merely as a learning topic, but increasingly as something learners actively experience through co-creation, dialogue, community activities and encounters with public institutions and European actors.

Compared to the previous survey round, the findings suggest a stronger thematic anchoring of democratic participation within organisational strategies and educational practice. The priority increasingly appears not as an additional project element, but as a cross-cutting orientation that shapes pedagogical approaches, learning environments and organisational self-understanding. In this regard, Erasmus+ contributes not only to civic competences and European awareness, but also to strengthening adult education as a democratic and socially relevant space.

8.1.6 Impact of Erasmus+ projects addressing “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement”

The findings demonstrate that Erasmus+ projects addressing the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” generate substantial impact at the level of organisations, staff and adult learners. Across the cases, the projects contribute not only to the acquisition of specific competences, but also to broader processes of empowerment, participation and social inclusion.

At organisational level, the projects strengthen the thematic integration of democratic participation, civic engagement and European values into educational practice. Many organisations describe Erasmus+ as an important framework for developing more participatory, inclusive and community-oriented learning approaches. In several cases, the projects also contributed to broadening educational offers by integrating topics such as democratic participation, sustainability, media literacy and social responsibility more systematically into learning activities and institutional strategies.

For staff members, the projects appear to foster both professional and personal development. International cooperation and exchange strengthened educators’ ability to address democratic participation, European values and civic engagement within their educational work. At the same time, staff reported broader perspectives on European cooperation, stronger confidence in facilitating participation-oriented learning environments and increased awareness of inclusive and community-based educational approaches.

The impact on adult learners is particularly striking. Across the interviews, learners describe increased self-confidence, stronger feelings of being heard and recognised, and greater willingness to participate actively in social and democratic processes. Participatory and co-creative learning settings appear especially important in this regard, as they allow learners not only to discuss participation theoretically, but to experience it directly through dialogue, group activities and engagement with local communities or public actors. A further important finding concerns the role of Erasmus+ in strengthening European awareness and democratic understanding.

Learners repeatedly describe how mobility experiences, encounters with European institutions and intercultural exchange contributed to a more differentiated understanding of Europe, democracy and civic participation. Particularly within group mobility settings, European values and solidarity were often experienced through concrete interaction and shared experiences rather than formal instruction alone.

8.2 Policy pointers

Recommendations, if needed, related to:

- **Strengthening inclusive and supported mobility formats**: Expand support for group mobility and participation-oriented mobility formats that are particularly accessible for adult learners with fewer opportunities, limited prior international experience or low confidence in formal learning settings.
- **Reducing administrative burden and resource pressure**: Continue efforts to simplify application, reporting and financial management procedures, particularly for smaller organisations and organisations working with vulnerable target groups.
- **Enhancing support for newcomers and smaller organisations**: Expand mentoring, peer-learning and matchmaking opportunities for organisations with limited Erasmus+ experience.
- **Supporting long-term sustainability and transfer of results**: Encourage stronger follow-up structures and opportunities for the continuation of successful project approaches beyond individual funding periods.
- **Reducing linguistic and communicative barriers**: Language barriers continue to influence participation possibilities, particularly for learners with limited prior international experience. Accessible communication formats, multilingual materials and language-sensitive support structures could help broaden participation and improve inclusion.
- **Making participation opportunities more visible for adult learners**: Increased visibility, targeted information activities and learner-friendly communication could support broader participation, particularly among adults with limited prior educational participation.

Annex 1 Mission statement RIA-AE network

RIA-AE Network mission statement

Adult education provides skills development opportunities that help EU citizens find better jobs and improve their well-being. As an education sector, adult education is largely disconnected from the rest of the education system and receives limited funding and policy attention compared to other sectors. However, research shows that adult education is important and that it can contribute significantly to the personal, social and economic well-being of individuals and the social cohesion of a society.

The impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners and on the field of adult education has been little researched to date. 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 being set up: the Network for Research-based Impact Analysis of the Erasmus+ Programme in Adult Education (RIA-AE Network).

The aims of the RIA-AE network

The RIA-AE network pursues the following objectives:

- contributing to a better understanding of the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education under the Erasmus+ programme.
- strengthening cooperation and dialogue between research, politics and practice.
- contributing to the further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ programme by enabling high-quality and practice-oriented evaluation and impact research.
- increasing the visibility of the benefits of adult education and the Erasmus+ programme in the EU and the Member States.

Procedure

To achieve these goals, the RIA-AE network brings together the National Agencies for Erasmus+ from different European countries to work together on the development of a new approach to programme evaluation and impact assessment of Erasmus+.

The starting point for the joint activities is an inventory of existing research and knowledge on the benefits and effects of mobility projects and international partnerships in adult education. Building on this, a research concept with a multi-level approach and coordinated research methods offers the opportunity to investigate the effects of Erasmus+ at an individual,

organisational and systemic level in the respective countries and on an international comparative basis.

Principles of cooperation

Co-operation within the network is based on shared responsibility and is always open to new members. The cooperation framework includes several National Agencies and external research partner organisations (e.g. universities, research institutes). Each NA involved in the network can decide whether to carry out the research projects itself or to commission a research partner.

Values

To achieve the goal of high-quality research, the network partners adhere to common standards of social and educational research. The methods used for the research activities can include all methods commonly used in empirical social research - quantitative, qualitative or a mixture of different methods.

Annex 2 Overview studies on Erasmus+ in the field of AE

The first monitoring round included a review of existing studies on Erasmus+ in the field of adult education. For the second monitoring round, this review was updated, and no new studies relevant to this overview were identified.

Annex 3 Literature list

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Annex 4 Short case study portraits

Case study 1 (CS1)

About the organization:

The Hilfsgemeinschaft of the Blind and Visually Impaired Austria is a non-profit association dedicated to improving the quality of life and promoting the rights of people with visual impairments. With around 5,000 members, the organisation offers a wide range of services, including education, counselling, and social support.

The organisation's primary target group consists of individuals who are blind or have visual impairments. While projects are generally designed with this group in mind, they are often accessible to and taken up by a broader range of participants. The organisation follows a "design for all" approach, aiming to develop inclusive formats that can benefit diverse groups beyond the immediate target population.

Core activities include:

- Educational programmes (e.g. Braille, ICT skills, smartphone use)
- Legal and social counselling
- Support for independent living and social participation
- Community-building and informal learning activities

Erasmus+ projects:

Vigo4AI Project (https://www.vigo4ai.com)

Problem statement:

People who are blind or visually impaired often face barriers in accessing and using AI and digital technologies, as most tools and training offers are not designed to be accessible. This leads to a digital skills gap and limits participation in an increasingly digital society.

Objective and change processes:

The project is focused on empowering individuals with visual impairment and blind individuals by enhancing their digital competence using artificial intelligence (AI). It aims to introduce AI technologies to individuals with visual impairment and their educators, providing them with accessible tools to improve daily and professional tasks.

Activities:

The project develops practical, multilingual AI training for blind and visually impaired adults and their educators. Training topics include the use of assistive apps; the integration of AI add-ons into screen readers and the use of generative AI tools for prompting, content creation and evaluating outputs. In addition, participants learn how to design and publish accessible AI chatbots using browser-based platforms.

Output developed:

The project produced comprehensive curricula and teaching materials on AI applications, along with accessible e-learning modules based on these courses. In addition, educators were trained and equipped with the skills to independently deliver AI training to learners with visual impairments.

T4VIS-In3D (https://www.access-austria.at/innovationen-projekte/detail/t4vis-in3d)

Problem statement:

Blind and visually impaired individuals face barriers in accessing digital education, while digital skills are increasingly essential for the labour market. At the same time, technologies such as 3D printing offer strong potential for inclusive learning but are not widely used in education, and educators often lack the necessary skills. In addition, tactile learning materials are essential but remain costly and limited, highlighting the need for more accessible and scalable solutions.

Objective and change processes:

The project aims to harness 3D printing technology to improve employment opportunities for people with visual impairments by developing accessible training materials and course content. It supports a shift from passive participation to active empowerment, enabling visually impaired individuals not only to use the technology confidently but also to act as trainers themselves. At the same time, it promotes the integration of 3D printing into inclusive education and expands its use beyond traditional subject areas.

Activities:

The project provides training for educators and trainers working with visually impaired learners in the use of 3D printing technology. This includes hands-on experience in creating tactile learning materials and assistive tools. Building on this, trainers are supported in developing the pedagogical skills needed to teach 3D printing to visually impaired learners in an accessible and methodologically appropriate way.

Output developed:

The project created an open-access collection of tactile 3D models (STL files) for blind and visually impaired users, supporting the production of accessible learning and assistive tools. These materials are freely available and are published on existing platforms such as Thingiverse, as well as on a newly developed open-access platform dedicated to resources for visually impaired people.

Benefits/ impact of Erasmus+ at organisation, staff, learners level and wide environment

Participation in Erasmus+ has generated significant benefits at multiple levels. For learners, it has led to increased self-confidence, independence, and participation in social life, particularly through improved digital skills. Staff members have benefited from enhanced professional competences, new pedagogical

approaches, and stronger international collaboration, which has increased motivation. At the organisational level, Erasmus+ has strengthened networking, innovation capacity, enabling the development of new programmes and services. Beyond the organisation, the projects have contributed to greater awareness of accessibility and inclusion, strengthened cooperation with external stakeholders, and positioned the organisation as a recognised expert in the field.

Lessons learned

Successful Erasmus+ projects require strong commitment and active involvement of the target group, following a “design with, not for” approach. Inclusive activities demand additional planning and resources, particularly regarding accessibility and individual support needs. While international cooperation creates significant added value, it also requires time, clear communication, and well-defined roles among partners. In addition, flexibility and openness to innovation are important, especially when working with rapidly evolving technologies. Building internal capacities takes time but is essential for sustainability. Ensuring long-term impact depends on integrating project results into ongoing organisational practice and actively disseminating them to wider audiences.

Methods

This case study is based on one qualitative interview conducted in February 2026 with the Head of the Project Department and two staff members in a lead role. The interview followed a semi-structured, guideline-based approach. The data was analyzed qualitatively to identify key themes related to project implementation and impact.

Case study 2 (CS2)

About the organization

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bildungshäuser Österreich (ARGE BHÖ) is a non-profit association that brings together adult education centres (“Bildungshäuser”) across Austria with diverse institutional backgrounds, including church-based organisations, public bodies, and civil society actors. Despite their different affiliations and educational orientations, the member institutions share a common commitment to the principles of educationalist N.F.S Grundtvig as well as democratic values, diversity, and human rights.

The association promotes exchange, cooperation, and mutual learning among its members by facilitating networking, sharing of experiences, and access to information and a common quality management system. It actively supports the development of new ideas and joint projects in response to pedagogical trends, societal changes, and cultural challenges. In addition, it represents the interests of its members and plays an active role in education policy, positioning itself as a relevant partner for organisations involved in adult education and lifelong learning at both national and international levels.

The ARGE Bildungshäuser primarily targets staff of its member adult education centres, especially pedagogical staff and leadership. Its learning activities focus on

staff training, exchange, and international mobility to introduce new perspectives and innovative approaches, which are then transferred into the programmes of the member institutions.

Bildungshaus SPES Zukunftsakademie was also a part of the interview, providing valuable insights from the perspective of a member institution within the ARGE network. It is an education and consultancy centre combining a future academy with a sustainable seminar hotel, focusing on personal development, community engagement, and societal transformation. SPES Zukunftsakademie develops and implements collaborative projects in the fields of regional development, participation, and sustainability, and is a long-standing Erasmus+ partner within the ARGE Bildungshäuser network.

Erasmus+ project(s)

Promociti (https://www.arge-bildungshaeuser.at/erasmus-projekte/promociti)

Problem statement:

Adult education institutions, including education centres, often do not systematically integrate active citizenship and civic participation into their programmes. At the same time, there is a growing need to strengthen democratic engagement in society. However, pedagogical staff frequently lack the competences and practical experience required to design and facilitate participatory processes, highlighting a gap in both training and institutional practice.

Objective and change processes:

The project aims to strengthen the capacity of adult education institutions to promote active citizenship by developing and delivering a train-the-trainer programme for pedagogical staff. It supports a shift from limited engagement with civic participation towards its systematic integration into educational programmes.

Activities:

Key activities include transnational project meetings across partner countries and a survey on the role of adult education in promoting active citizenship. This is complemented by in-person training modules, online peer collaboration, the implementation of regional pilot workshops, and dissemination through multiplier events.

Outputs developed:

The project developed a train-the-trainer curriculum on active citizenship, including modules on participatory methods, hybrid learning formats, and digital storytelling. In addition, it led to the implementation of pilot workshops in partner countries, where participants applied their knowledge in practice and initiated cooperation with local and regional stakeholders. Dissemination materials and events further supported the transfer of results to a wider audience.

FUTURE SKILLS (https://www.arge-bildungshaeuser.at/erasmus-projekte/future-skills#broschuere-und-ergebnisbericht)

Problem statement:

Adult education institutions face increasing challenges in recruiting, developing, and retaining qualified staff in a rapidly changing environment shaped by labour shortages, digitalisation, and shifting societal values. These developments create uncertainty and make it difficult for organisations to take informed and future-oriented strategic decisions in staff and organisational development.

Objective and change processes:

The project aims to analyse future requirements for staff development, leadership, and organisational culture in adult education centres, with a particular focus on identifying key "future skills." It supports organisations in developing strategies and practical approaches to address these challenges. The project contributes to a shift from reactive to forward-looking organisational development, enabling institutions to make more informed, strategic, and sustainable decisions in response to ongoing changes in the labour market and society.

Activities:

Key activities included transnational project meetings and study visits, an extensive research phase, and online focus groups with education centre leaders and external experts. The project also organised dissemination through multiplier events in different countries.

Outputs developed:

The project produced a publication presenting its findings, designed as a practical guide to support innovative and forward-looking approaches to organisational and staff development in adult education centres.

Benefits/ impact of Erasmus+ at organisation, staff, learners level and wide environment

Participation in Erasmus+ has generated benefits across multiple levels. For staff, it has strengthened competences, broadened European perspectives, and fostered enriching exchange and long-term partnerships. At the organisational level, it has expanded networks and supported the development of new learning approaches, particularly in areas such as democratic participation. Through cooperation with member education centres, these impacts also reach learners directly, leading to increased self-confidence, engagement, and civic competences. Beyond the organisation, Erasmus+ has contributed to stronger cooperation and knowledge exchange within the field of adult education.

Lessons learned

Successful Erasmus+ participation depends strongly on available staff resources and realistic planning, as time constraints are the main barrier to engagement. Actively involving the target group throughout the project is crucial to ensure relevance, ownership, and uptake of results. International exchange is highly valuable but requires clear structures, communication, and preparation to be effective. In addition, the sustainability of project results often depends on follow-up funding and institutional support, highlighting the importance of embedding

outcomes into ongoing organisational practice.

Methods

This case study is based on one qualitative interview conducted in March 2026 with two participants: a representative of the ARGE involved in project coordination and a project coordinator from Bildungshaus SPES Zukunftsakademie. Both interviewees have collaborated on several Erasmus+ projects. The interview was analysed using a qualitative approach.

Case study 3 (CS3)

About the organization

lernraum.wien is the research and development unit of the Wiener Volkshochschulen, specialising in adult education in the context of migration and social diversity. It combines applied research, training, and project work, with a strong focus on developing and implementing innovative educational approaches for adult learners.

A central feature of the organisation is the close link between research and practice. Insights from national and international projects are directly translated into teaching materials, training formats, and programme development, particularly in areas such as democratic participation, inclusion, and basic education.

The organisation takes a critical and learner-centred approach, focusing especially on adults who are often underrepresented in education and participation processes. Through its work, it aims to strengthen access to education, promote participation, and support more inclusive and equitable learning environments.

A representative of the Viennese Climate Team also participated in the interview. The Climate Team, analysed in the Erasmus+ project BEEP as a case of participatory practice, is an initiative that actively involves citizens in developing and implementing climate action measures. Including this perspective was particularly valuable, as it brings in practical experience from a real participation process and highlights the link between adult education and civic engagement at the local level.

Erasmus+ project(s)

BEEP (https://www.vhs.at/de/e/lernraum-wien/beep)

Problem statement:

European countries face the challenge that a growing number of residents are excluded from formal democratic processes, particularly due to citizenship status that prevents them from participating in elections. At the same time, there is a noticeable sense of “democratic fatigue” across parts of the population, resulting in declining engagement and participation.

Objective and change processes:

The project aims to strengthen civic participation by equipping adult education providers with the competences, methods, and tools needed to actively engage diverse groups in democratic processes. It focuses on building the capacity of educators to design and facilitate participatory learning formats, particularly for those who are often excluded from formal participation.

Activities:

The project analysed case studies on participatory practices, including initiatives such as the Viennese Climate Team, and collected qualitative data through interviews with teachers, stakeholders, and focus groups.

Outputs developed:

The project produced a set of research- and practice-oriented outputs, including an analysis of participation and exclusion, and an overview of participatory processes across partner countries and the EU. It developed course designs, workshops, and learning offers in basic education that support participation. In addition, a handbook on political participation and policy recommendations at local and regional level were created.

Benefits/ impact of Erasmus+ at organisation, staff, learners level and wide evironment

Erasmus+ has had a strong and lasting impact on the organisation by embedding project outputs into internal structures, particularly through the integration of participatory methods and materials into teaching practice. For staff, international collaboration and transnational meetings have provided valuable insights into different institutional contexts and practices, broadening perspectives and strengthening professional exchange. For learners, the integration of participatory methods has enabled more active involvement in the learning process. Learners are encouraged to contribute their own ideas, develop greater awareness of democratic processes, and engage more actively in their communities. At a wider level, multiplier events and ongoing exchange have strengthened networking and contributed to the dissemination and long-term impact of participatory approaches.

Lessons learned

Embedding participatory approaches into everyday teaching requires time, resources, and continuous support for educators. While methods and materials are available, their sustained use depends on how well they can be integrated into existing curricula and time structures. Actively involving learners is essential: when given the opportunity to contribute, they engage more strongly and develop greater awareness of their role in society. At the same time, projects show that participation must be carefully facilitated to address barriers such as language, access, or prior exclusion.

Methods

This case study is based on one qualitative interview conducted in March 2026 with one project coordinator and one project staff member from lernraum.wien, as well

as one representative of the Viennese Climate Team. The interview was analysed using a qualitative approach.