

IMPACT OF ERASMUS+ ON THE ADULT EDUCATION SECTOR IN FINLAND

NATIONAL REPORT RIA-AE NETWORK
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This is a report of

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Table of contents

PART A – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
Summary of results.....	1
PART B – MAIN REPORT	6
1. Introduction	6
1.1. Erasmus+	6
1.2. Purpose and key questions of the study	7
1.3. Research design.....	11
2. Short portrait of the adult learning sector in Finland	13
2.1. Infrastructure and participation in adult education in Finland	13
2.2. Adult education policies in Finland	15
2.3. Existing studies on the impact of Erasmus+ on the adult education sector.....	17
2.4. Conclusions	17
3. The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+.....	18
3.1. Introduction.....	18
3.2. Participating organisations in Erasmus+	19
3.3. Adult learners’ participation	25
3.4. Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+	26
3.5. Conclusions on accessibility and inclusiveness.....	28
4. Impact of Erasmus+ at meso level	29
4.1. Introduction.....	29
4.2. Type of products developed and topics addressed.....	29
4.3. Impact at organisation level	32
4.4. Factors hampering or stimulating impact.....	42
4.5. Conclusions	46
5. Impact of Erasmus+ at micro level	46
5.1. Introduction.....	46
5.2. Impact on staff	46
5.3. Impact on adult learners	50
5.4. Conclusions	55
6. Impact of Erasmus+ at macro level	56
6.1. Introduction.....	56
6.2. Impact on other organisations	56
6.3. Impact on national, regional and sectoral policies.....	57
6.4. Conclusions	58
7. Support of National Agency: strengths and challenges	58
7.1. Key findings.....	58
7.2. Policy pointers	59
Literature.....	63
PART C – ANNEXES	64
Annex 1. Figures and tables programme statistics.....	64
Annex 2. Figures and tables from the online survey.....	67

Annex 3. Case studies.	72
Iisalmen kansalaisopisto	72
Kansanvalistusseura.....	73
Luksia, Länsi-Uudenmaan koulutuskuntayhtymä	74
Sastamalan opisto.....	75
Valo-Valmennusyhdistys	76

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Intervention logic Erasmus+ impact on the adult education sector.	8
2. Methodological approach for the national RIA-AE monitoring study.	11
3. Erasmus+ funding by area, 2018-2020.	19
4. Erasmus+ funding by area, 2021-2022.	19
5. Coordinator organisations for KA104 projects 2018-2020.	20
6. Coordinator organisations for KA204 projects 2018-2020.	21
7. Coordinator organisations for KA120, 121, 122 projects 2021-2023.	21
8. Coordinator organisations for KA210 projects 2021-2023.	22
9. Coordinator organisations for KA220 projects 2021-2023.	22
10. RIA-AE survey respondent organisation categories.	23
11. Number of staff in RIA-AE survey respondent organisations.	23
12. Number of adult learners in RIA-AE survey respondent organisations.	24
13. Number of Erasmus+ projects among respondent organisations since 2014.	24
14. Adult learners targeted in Erasmus+ projects among the RIA-AE survey respondents.	26
15. Survey respondents' responses on the outputs or products developed.	31
16. Survey respondents' views on the importance of Erasmus+ support.	31
17. Topics receiving more attention according to survey respondents.	33
18. Impact of Erasmus+ on internationalisation.	35
19. Impact of Erasmus+ on the learning offer.	36
20. Improvement in horizontal aspects in the delivery of adult learning.	39
21. Conditions in place to facilitate inclusion and diversity.	40
22. Conditions in place to facilitate digital transformation.	40
23. Conditions in place to facilitate green transition.	41
24. Conditions in place to facilitate participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement.	41
25. Impact of Erasmus+ on staff professionalisation and development.	49
26. Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on adult learners.	55
27. Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on macro level.	57

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Research questions.	11
Table 2. Main topics addressed by KA104 projects.	30
Table 3. Main topics addressed by KA204 projects.	30
Table 4. Main topics addressed by KA120, 121 and 122 projects.	30
Table 5. Main topics addressed by KA210 and KA220 projects.	30
Table 6. Factors stimulating impact.	43
Table 7. Factors hampering impact.	45

PART A – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summary of results

Background of the monitoring study

The transnational research network, the RIA-AE Network was established to study the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners, staff, volunteers and organisations in the field of adult learning. The objective of the network is to coordinate research activities on strengthening the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education and to enable the further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ programme. The RIA-AE Network has outlined the multi-level framework for monitoring the impact of Erasmus+ on macro, meso and micro levels.

Methodological approach

The methodological approach of the national monitoring study includes four modules which are planned to be repeated in 2023, 2025 and 2027:

1) Document study; 2) Online survey for Erasmus+ beneficiaries in the adult education sector in Finland; 3) Case studies with diverse Erasmus+ beneficiaries; 4) Interviews with adult learners participating in KA1 mobilities.

Research questions focus on the inclusiveness and accessibility of the programme, organisational impact, impact on staff and adult learners, possible policy impacts, and lessons for the future programme development.

Key findings

The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

The adult education organisations in Finland participating in the Erasmus+ programme are predominantly adult education centres and non-governmental organisations/associations/social

enterprises, with a growing involvement from foundations during the current programme period. These organisations typically range from medium-sized to very large, with many having over 250 staff members and serving a substantial number of adult learners.

Participants

Participants in Finnish Erasmus+ projects, including staff, volunteers, and adult learners, are diverse in their demographics and needs. There has been a significant focus on inclusiveness, with many projects targeting vulnerable populations such as migrants, unemployed adults, young NEETs, and adults with disabilities or learning difficulties. Adult education centres are actively engaging underrepresented groups by offering affordable courses and providing supportive structures for participants with varying economic, social, or learning challenges.

Obstacles

Human resource constraints, administrative burden, and financial limitations are major obstacles especially for smaller organisations reliant on volunteer work or part-time staff. Furthermore, diminishing national education budgets and the impact of inflation have complicated participation even for larger organisations. Finding appropriate partners and gaining the support of management also present challenges, as does aligning project objectives with diverse organisational goals and ensuring staff motivation to participate.

Although diverse groups of adult learners are included in the Erasmus+ projects and provided often holistic support for their participation, systemic issues related to organisational capacities, resource allocation to internationalisation and lack of management support for some organisations hamper accessibility and inclusiveness. The distribution of Erasmus+ funding also indicates regional disparities, suggesting a need for greater outreach and support in less active areas.

Opportunities

The study data shows potential for enhancing accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ by addressing these organisational barriers, promoting awareness and support mechanisms that facilitate participation especially in remote areas of Finland, and among newly established organisations or those unfamiliar with the programme.

Impact at meso level

The Erasmus+ programme has significantly influenced the participating adult education organisations in Finland, leading to considerable impacts on internationalisation, learning offer, and adherence to the horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme.

Internationalisation

Erasmus+ has largely succeeded in supporting the development of the international dimension within participating organisations. There has been a noticeable improvement in project management competence, the formation of international networks, and the strategic planning of international activities. Most respondent organisations now have guidelines or processes for managing international projects, and a majority discuss the development of international competences during staff performance appraisals. Nevertheless, dedicated budgets and formal strategies for internationalisation are less common.

Learning offer

The learning offer has diversified and become more aligned with the needs of adult learners, demonstrating the impact of Erasmus+ participation on learning content and teaching methods. New courses have been introduced, existing ones enhanced, and digital elements incorporated.

Horizontal priorities

Erasmus+ has contributed notably to enhancing inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, the green transition and participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement within

the participating organisations. Erasmus+ project outputs have advanced these horizontal priorities in participating organisations. However, respondent organisations reported varied advancement in these areas, with different levels of improvement e.g. in increasing sustainability practices or learning offer on green skills in their organisation.

Challenges and opportunities

Challenges include maintaining and disseminating project outcomes, aligning project themes and objectives with strategic needs of the organisation, incorporating outputs into national contexts, and removing motivational barriers for staff participation. The effect of Covid-19 pandemic and misconceptions from social service structures regarding the benefits and possibilities of mobility for people in vulnerable positions further hindered impact.

Active support and commitment from organisation management, strategic involvement in projects, robust groundwork and networking for trustworthy, high-quality partnerships, and the capability to apply project results effectively locally have all stimulated the impact of Erasmus+. Facilitating practical support for participants with fewer opportunities, proactive communication, and well-structured preparation of participants for mobilities were also emphasised.

Impact at micro level

Erasmus+ has had a profound and versatile impact on both staff and adult learners within participating organisations in Finland. The programme has facilitated professional development, social inclusion, and international competence, notably intercultural awareness and language skills.

Staff

Erasmus+ has significantly augmented the professional development of staff, with a majority reporting better understanding and application of good practices, practical skills relevant to their jobs, and use of innovative teaching methods upon their return. Participation has fostered

international competence, boosting language skills, cultural awareness, and pedagogical capabilities. Additionally, it has had a positive impact on staff's social and emotional skills, increasing self-confidence, a sense of initiative, and improved team working abilities. Many staff members express increased job satisfaction, motivation, and well-being as a result of their involvement in Erasmus+ programme.

Adult learners

For adult learners, Erasmus+ has enriched their living environments and broadened their social networks. While the direct impact on further educational enrolment or labour market success is less clear, there is evidence of increased intercultural competence, language skills, socio-emotional development – including empowerment and self-awareness – as well as resilience in navigating uncertainties. Adult learners express an increased sense of European identity and appreciation for European common values stemming from their participation.

Obstacles

Barriers to impact include logistical challenges such as time constraints for staff involvement in mobilities, alongside stereotypes and language barriers. The Covid-19 pandemic notably disrupted mobility activities. In addition to supporting participants to overcome physical, social, or economic barriers to participation, both staff and learners need continued encouragement and support to overcome potential insecurities and to cultivate the self-confidence and motivation necessary to engage with Erasmus+ activities.

Opportunities

The impact of Erasmus+ is amplified when there is strong commitment from management and when projects align with the strategic goals of an organisation. Trustworthy partnerships, thorough planning, and preparation significantly contribute to successful outcomes. Increased participation and impact of Erasmus+ projects are fostered through well-structured programmes that resonate with participants, effective communication

strategies, and support from line managers and other staff members that promote greater staff involvement, alongside support for overcoming practical barriers for adult learners.

Impact at macro level

While Erasmus+ projects in Finland have positively impacted other organisations and the adult education sector, having a more substantial role in affecting policymaking remains an area that could be further developed.

Other organisations

The Erasmus+ programme has demonstrated a significant impact on adult education both locally and nationally in Finland. Over half of survey respondents acknowledged that other organisations had benefitted from the outcomes of Erasmus+ projects, highlighting spillover effects such as the adoption of sustainable development practices, motivation to pursue Erasmus+ accreditation, and increased collaboration with other organisations and national networks. Erasmus+ projects have served as catalysts for innovation and inspiration among peer organisations.

Government policies

Government policies at local, regional, and national levels, however, seem less influenced by Erasmus+ initiatives. Both local and regional policy adjustments are limited (20% of respondents recognising an impact) and even more so at the national level (6%). Despite this, the principals of adult education centres, who often hold a dual role as local decision-makers, utilize Erasmus+ experiences to shape municipal strategies and budgeting processes.

Obstacles

A significant barrier to witnessing a broader impact is the small scale and narrow scope of most projects, combined with the difficulty in monitoring their influence once the project has ended.

Opportunities

Factors stimulating impact include local and regional networking events facilitated by adult education centres, regional and national networks of educational institutions, and involving local businesses in Erasmus+ activities.

Policy pointers

How to increase the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

The recommendations for increasing the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ include:

1. Ensure awareness of inclusion support and its utilisation, with a focus on clarifying and disseminating principles, especially regarding assistance for individuals with disabilities.
2. Provide training for adult education providers, emphasising methods to co-design mobility objectives with clients and inspire collaborative planning.
3. Adjust Erasmus+ support to accommodate rising costs, including travel expenses and substitute staff costs, particularly for organisations with limited budgets.
4. Promote Erasmus+ opportunities to adult learners with migrant and minority backgrounds, offering additional language training, economic support, and information in various languages.
5. Simplify administrative processes and digital tools to benefit all participating organisations, particularly smaller ones with limited resources.
6. Raise awareness in underrepresented regions through targeted communication strategies, workshops, and information sessions to ensure informed participation.
7. Facilitate networking and quality partnerships, with experienced organisations sharing advice on creating sustainable international partnerships.
8. Highlight the benefits of Erasmus+ participation to organisations' management, targeting them with communication and research-based information.
9. Monitor and address obstacles to participation by collecting and analysing data at both national and local levels, responding with targeted support measures.

How to increase the impact at meso level

The recommendations for increasing the impact of Erasmus+ at the meso level include:

1. Ensure that management understands the value of internationalisation by showcasing successful projects and their impact, motivating both potential newcomers and existing organisations to strengthen their commitment to internationalisation, including budgeting.
2. Align the rules, regulations, and practices of National Agencies to streamline project administration, addressing challenges arising from varying interpretations of rules and regulations across countries.
3. Provide guidance for strategic planning of internationalisation, continuing to assist organisations in developing and implementing strategies aligned with their needs, educational offerings, and staff competencies. Emphasise the linkage between internationalisation and organisational strategy to strengthen management commitment to the Erasmus+ programme.
4. Encourage the creation and dissemination of project outputs adaptable to local contexts and languages, stressing the importance of outputs that can be updated and tailored even after project completion. Organisations should develop plans to integrate lessons learned and innovative practices from Erasmus+ activities into broader institutional knowledge for the benefit of staff and learners.

How to increase the impact at micro level

The recommendations for increasing impact of Erasmus+ at the micro level are mostly directed towards participating organisations but can be highlighted in the communication and training provided by the National Agency.

The recommendations include:

1. Strengthen preparation before and follow-up after mobility by ensuring adequate support for staff and adult learners, including language

learning, intercultural training, and creating a safe group atmosphere, especially for group mobilities. Skills and competencies gained should be recognised and disseminated post-mobility.

2. Facilitate the sharing of newly acquired skills and knowledge within organisations to motivate staff participation in Erasmus+ programme and to increase management understanding of internationalisation's value.
3. Highlight examples of positive labour market outcomes to better communicate the programme's relevance.
4. Encourage group mobilities as they facilitate peer-to-peer learning and support, providing a safe and inclusive environment for participants with diverse backgrounds.
5. Provide economic support and address barriers for adult learners with physical, social, or geographical challenges to ensure inclusivity.
6. Integrate activities explicitly focusing on democratic participation, common values, European identity, and sustainability into mobility objectives or programmes.
7. Recognise the contribution of Erasmus+ experiences to participants' well-being, as reported by both staff and learners, and explore further promotion of this aspect in project communication.

3. Facilitate collaboration and dissemination beyond the education sector by involving NGOs, government agencies, policymakers, and the private sector in sharing knowledge and best practices gained through Erasmus+.

4. Facilitate bridging between local-level project outcomes and national policy objectives by exploring ways to strengthen dialogue between local project leaders and national policymakers.

How to increase the impact at macro level

The recommendations for increasing impact of Erasmus+ at the macro level include:

1. Provide capacity building and knowledge-sharing on strategic policy engagement, offering skills, knowledge, and support for participating organisations to engage with policymakers effectively. Methods may include preparing policy briefs or organising policy forums to share project outcomes and advocate for policy changes.
2. Implement a monitoring system to track Erasmus+ impact at the macro level, using follow-up surveys, impact assessment studies, and case studies to document long-term influence on other organisations and policies.

PART B – MAIN REPORT

1. Introduction¹

1.1. Erasmus+

Since the 1920s at the latest, international cooperation in adult education have been seen, sometimes more, sometimes less, on the one hand as a contribution to peace and international understanding, and, on the other hand, as a means of further developing national systems and practices.² With the Grundtvig programme, which was merged into the Erasmus+ programme in 2014, the European Union (EU) has been promoting international exchange in adult education since 2000. The importance of adult education in European educational cooperation, which was consistently low in terms of the proportion of funding compared to other areas of education in Erasmus+, has grown since 2021.³

With the Erasmus+ programme, the EU promotes international mobility and cooperation in the fields of education, youth and sport. In line with the guiding principle of lifelong learning, the programme addresses learners and educational institutions in all areas of education, from early childhood education to adult education via school, higher education and vocational education and training, as well as sports and youth work. The programme actions are intended to contribute to sustainable growth, secure high-quality jobs for

citizens, promote innovation and strengthen social cohesion, European identity and active citizenship.

In the 2021-2027 period, as in the previous funding period (2014-2020), Erasmus+ comprises three Key Actions (KA). 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).⁴ Their tasks include publicising and providing information about the programme, supporting applicants and beneficiaries, implementing the funding processes and cooperating with the European Commission and other NAs. The following objectives are pursued:

- KA1 (learning mobility of individuals): This key action aims to promote the personal, professional and social development of learners and educational staff through international mobility. Additional aims lie in the internationalisation and professionalisation of the participating organisations. Ultimately and in the long term, projects should contribute to political reforms and the increase of resources for mobility throughout Europe.
- KA2 (cooperation among organisations and institutions): This key action aims to support the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national

¹ Chapters 1 and 2 have been largely written by the transnational research coordination of the RIA-AE network consisting of Ockham IPS, Institut für Innovation und Technik (iit) and artédúc/University of Brussels.

² Knoll, J. (1999). "Internationalität" in der Erwachsenenbildung-Weiterbildung. Eine zeitgeschichtliche Skizze. DIE Zeitschrift Für Erwachsenenbildung, 6(2), 35–37.; Grotlüschen, A. u.a. (2022). Erwachsenenbildung in internationaler Perspektive: Grenzen und Chancen. Schriftenreihe der Sektion Erwachsenenbildung der Deutschen Gesellschaft Für Erziehungswissenschaft.

³ The total budget for Erasmus+ in the 2021-2027 funding period is around 26.2 billion euros, almost twice as much as in the previous funding period (2014-2020). The share of the budget for adult education in the funding for educational measures has increased from 4.9% to 5.8%, while it has been reduced from 44.3% to 34.6% for the higher education sector, for example (European Commission (2019). 2020 annual work programme: "Erasmus+": the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. p. 129; European Commission. (2023). 2024 annual work programme: "Erasmus+": the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. p. 142).

⁴ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/national-agencies>

and European level. In the long term, it should contribute to positive effects on the participating organisations as well as on the education systems.

In the new Erasmus+ funding period 2021-2027, some innovations were introduced for the adult education sector compared to the previous programme period (2014-2020). In KA2, there is now a new project format called "Small-Scale Partnerships", which is particularly suitable for small and/or less internationally experienced organisations as a first step in Erasmus+. Projects consist of a cooperation between at least two organisations from two partner countries. The duration is shorter and the administrative burden is lower than for the "Cooperation Partnerships", which still exist as well.

In KA1, funding is now available also for the mobility of adult learners. Until 2021, mobility measures in KA1 were only intended for the staff of educational institutions. In addition, organisations can now apply for an accreditation in KA1 for the whole programme period. Accreditation gives them access to funding for the implementation of mobility measures for learners or staff with comparatively little effort. In addition to accreditation, however, it is still possible to carry out a limited number of mobility activities via short-term projects.

In the field of adult education, the Erasmus+ programme aims in particular to strengthen the socioeconomic resilience of adults and increase their participation in lifelong learning. Participating organisations should actively promote inclusion and diversity, environmental sustainability, digital education and civic engagement and participation.⁵

1.2. Purpose and key questions of the study

The impact of Erasmus+ on adult education learners, teachers, volunteers and organisations in the field of adult education has not been so far the object of many research activities in Finland or

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 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. Founded in 2022, the network is open to new members and included NAs from 15 member states and Türkiye at the beginning of 2024.

In 2023/2024, the RIA-AE network implemented a coordinated transnational monitoring study on the impact of Erasmus+ in the field of adult education, the results of which are reported here for Finland. The monitoring study focuses on the impact of Erasmus+ Key Actions (KA) 1 and 2 on the funded organisations, the learners and the adult education sector in the respective country.

Particular attention is paid to the question of the extent to which impacts are evident in connection with the horizontal priorities of the programme set by the EU: Inclusion and diversity; Digital transformation; Environment and fight against climate change; Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement. The study identifies factors that contribute to the observed impacts. Based on this information, perspectives for the further development of the programme at national and European level are derived.

In order to analyse the effects of Erasmus+, the monitoring study is based on a multi-level model of adult education. Impacts can therefore be observed at different levels, which are interrelated. At the micro level, the effects of Erasmus+ on individuals – learners and educational staff – are analysed, for example, in relation to their learning outcomes, their personal development or their teaching and learning practice. At the meso level, the focus is on the funded organisations, their structures and their learning offer. Finally, at the

⁵ European Commission (2023). Erasmus+ programme guide. p. 114.

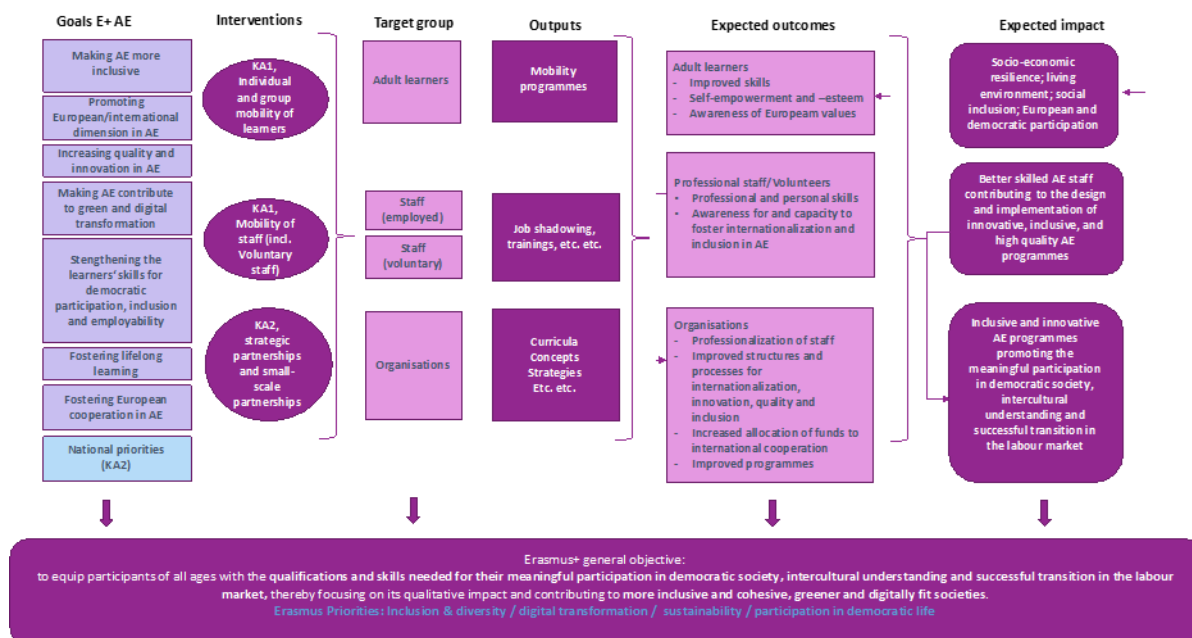
macro level, the focus is on political and institutional framework conditions and adult education as part of the education system.

The research questions addressed in the study are presented in Table 1. The indicators, data collection and analysis instruments used to answer these key questions are based on the impact model of Erasmus+. The impact model establishes a link between the objectives of the programme, the measures implemented, the results achieved and the intended impacts (see Figure 1).

This study focuses on Key Actions 1 and 2. Despite their different orientations, the intended impacts of the two Key Actions are partially overlapping and are mainly to be expected at the micro and meso levels. For example, project activities that involve learner or staff mobility and have a direct impact at the individual level are also possible in KA2, while in KA1 staff mobility can have an impact on the learning opportunities and internationalisation processes of the institutions. In addition, there are cases in which organisations carry out projects in both Key Actions, so that effects accumulate or interactions arise.

The macro level, on the other hand, is not the focus of these two Key Actions. For this purpose, Erasmus+ includes Key Action 3 (Policy Development and Cooperation), which is not part of the monitoring study. This central action, which is coordinated by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and not by the NAs, contributes to the development of new political strategies that can initiate modernisation and reforms at the level of the European Union and at the level of national adult education systems. Under Key Action 3, the EU funds Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA) which include various European event formats and enable National Agencies to cooperate and exchange good practice in order to improve the quality and impact of the programme. The RIA-AE network is one such TCA activity.

However, direct and indirect effects of KA1 and KA2 projects on the political and institutional framework conditions of adult education cannot be ruled out and are therefore also the subject of this study.



1. Intervention logic Erasmus+ impact on the adult education sector.

Research questions
How accessible/inclusive is the programme for the target groups? (Chapter 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the specificities and characteristics of the adult education organisations participating in the Erasmus+ programme? • What are the specificities and characteristics of participants, staff, volunteers and adult learners who, individually or in groups, participate or have participated in an Erasmus+ project? • What does this information say about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ internationalisation projects in the network countries (Erasmus+ priority inclusion and diversity)? Are there any 'Mobstacles' for organisations, professionals and learners to participate?
What is the impact of participation in KA1 and KA2 projects at the adult education institution on the following areas... (Chapter 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the organisation and in particular the organisational embedding of internationalisation in the organisations (strategy, finances, project management, networks, validation of international competences)? • Policies for the professional development of their staff in relation to individual needs and organisational objectives? • The introduction of new or adaptation of existing offers (programmes, activities, modules or new/adapted pedagogical, didactic and validation activities)? • The adaptation of (educational) activities and programmes to the needs of learners? • The involvement of learners in programme design? • Improving accessibility for adult learners (inclusion)? • Quality assurance policies? • The use of information and communication technologies and the digitisation of programmes (Erasmus+ priority digital transformation)? • The promotion of the teaching of international competences and common values (inclusion and diversity; tolerance; sustainability/ environment/ fight against climate change, digitisation, global citizenship, equal opportunities, anti-discrimination, etc.) in the offers (see Erasmus+ priorities: Inclusion & diversity / digital transformation / sustainability / participation in democratic life)? • Sustainable cooperation and synergies between adult education institutions, charities, cultural institutions, labour market actors and civil society to promote the independence of adult learners? • The dissemination, exchange of knowledge and experience within the organisation and with other (more or less experienced) organisations? • The establishment and development of an international network? • How do the impacts differ between the different types of adult education institutions (formal, non-formal, governmental, civil society, private)?
What impact does participation in KA1 and KA2 projects have on staff in the areas of ... (Chapter 5.2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills, knowledge, attitudes, competences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Foreign language and intercultural awareness ○ Digital competences, including to allow a shift towards digital education ○ Competences linked to occupational profiles ○ Understanding of practices, policies and systems across countries ○ Understanding for and ability to address issues of social inclusion and diversity ○ Capacity to trigger changes in terms of modernisation and international opening within their educational organisations ○ Organising mobility projects ○ Managing cooperation with European partners ○ Management skills (mentioned only in KA2)

Research questions continued
What impact does participation in KA1 and KA2 projects have on staff in the areas of ... (Chapter 5.2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sustainability competences (mentioned only in KA2) ○ Self-confidence, adaptability and perseverance? • The application and exchange of the international experience gained among the employees? • Identification with European society and the values associated with it (integration, diversity, tolerance, anti-discrimination, etc.)? • Professional development and career? • Motivation and satisfaction in daily work?
What impact do KA1 and KA2 projects have on adult learners in the areas of ... (Chapter 5.3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills, knowledge, attitudes, competences? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foreign language and intercultural awareness - Awareness and understanding of the European Union and common European values (e.g. respect for democratic principles, human dignity, unity and diversity, intercultural dialogue, as well as European social, cultural and historical heritage) - Key competences - Digital skills and media literacy - Sustainability-related skills and awareness for green transformation - Self-empowerment and self-esteem - Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship • Labour market outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced employability, improved career prospects and economic independence • Lifelong learning? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved learning performance and motivation for taking part in education and training - Enable learners to participate in training • Social Inclusion? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More active participation in society and enhanced positive interactions with people from different backgrounds - Socio-economic resilience • Is there a difference in impact between participation in group and individual mobility?
What impact do KA1 and KA2 projects have on other organisations and policy developments? (Chapter 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will the experiences from the KA1 and KA2 projects be taken over by other organisations that have not participated in Erasmus+ (dissemination of results)? ○ Do the results of the KA1 and KA2 projects contribute to policy developments at local, regional, national and European level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy reforms - Attracting new resources for mobility opportunities - Raising participation of adult of all ages and socio-economic background in adult education

Research questions continued

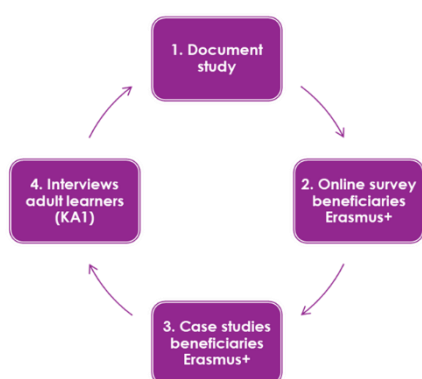
Lessons to support the effectiveness and efficiency of future Erasmus+ programmes (Chapter 7)

- How can the accessibility of the Erasmus+ programme to the target group adult learning be improved?
- Which adult education organisations are pioneers and why (with which institutional peculiarities including special features of the offers)?
- What are the opportunities and challenges for the participation of target groups?
- What are the first experiences with the KA1 individual or group mobility of adult learners and what are the opportunities and risks?
- What monitoring information is needed annually in addition to the "participation reports" in order to monitor the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ programme on the target group of adult learners? Can research provide a frame of reference that enables a sustainable improvement in effectiveness?
- How can the National Agencies support the adult education institutions even more strongly in reaching impact?

Table 1. Research questions.

1.3. Research design

The methodological approach of the national monitoring study in Finland includes four modules (Figure 2), which are repeated over the three waves 2023, 2025 and 2027 and thus enable an update of the impact monitoring. The monitoring is based on a transnational survey concept agreed within the RIA-AE network. The data for this study was collected and analysed in accordance with this concept based on four standardised modules. All or selected modules are implemented in all countries participating in the RIA-AE network and the results are analysed in a transnational study.



2. Methodological approach for the national RIA-AE monitoring study.

1.3.1. Module 1: Analysis of existing programme data and project documentation

Module 1 (document analysis) comprises the analysis of existing studies, programme and project documents as well as the data collected by the European Commission and the National Agency as part of the funding processes and for monitoring purposes. The latter are in particular data on the applicant and funded organisations and their projects, as well as the reports of the participating staff in KA1.⁶ They mainly consist of answers to standardised questions.

Project applications and project reports were not systematically analysed as part of this first national monitoring study. Instead, those were only used for the case studies, in spite of their rich potential for qualitative content analysis. This is because these reports, although available electronically, could not be retrieved from the European database in a format allowing for systematic qualitative analysis.

The period examined in this first monitoring round, from 2018 to 2022, comprises two different programme generations (2014-2020 and 2021-2027). This poses a number of challenges, as the

⁶ Due to an error in the Beneficiary Module database, no participant reports for staff and adult learners in KA1 are available for the period 2021-2022.

EU Commission's databases and the data collection tools have changed during this period. In addition to the European tools QlikView, QlikSense and the Mobility Tool+, which are available to the NAs for monitoring and programme management purposes, the publicly accessible Erasmus+ Results Platform was also used to generate data. Selected findings based on these data are included in the reporting. In order to meet the requirements of an impact study, the analysis focuses on organisations that completed at least one project between 2018 and the end of 2022.

1.3.2. Module 2: Online survey of funded adult education organisations

An online survey of all organisations that implemented and completed at least one project in KA1 or KA2 between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2022 serves as the central survey instrument for recording the impact of Erasmus+. The survey was only sent to organisations that had coordinated KA1 or KA2 projects.

The response rate for Finland was 52 percent for fully completed, and 70 percent for partially completed questionnaires.

1.3.3. Module 3: Case studies

For the first monitoring study in Finland, a total of five case studies were conducted as part of Module 3 (see Annex 3). The purpose of the case studies was to gain additional insights into the impact mechanisms of the programme and to collect examples to illustrate the results of the online survey. The case studies were conducted between October 2023 and February 2024 in organisations that differed as much as possible in terms of type of organisation, size, geographical location, thematic focus and experience in Erasmus+ projects.

Case studies included interviews of organisation management, international project coordination, staff, and where applicable, also adult learners who had participated in KA1 or KA2 mobilities. Except for one interview, all interviews took place online. Depending on the constellation, the interviews were conducted individually or in small groups, for example if learners had taken part in a

mobility together. The interviews were recorded and subjected to a thematic content analysis in line with the research questions.

1.3.4. Module 4: Interviews adult learners (individual and group mobility)

Only since 2021 has the mobility of adult learners (individual or group mobility) been eligible for funding as part of KA1 projects and KA1-accredited institutions. The NA is particularly interested in findings on the effects of mobility at an individual level and on obstacles that can make participation in mobility programmes more difficult. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, international learner mobility was still severely restricted until 2022, meaning that few learners had taken part in mobility programmes at the time of data collection.

For the first national study in Finland, the interviews with learners were integrated into the case studies. In total five adult learners were interviewed that participated in a mobility action. The age of these adult learners ranged from 31 years to 61 years. Three of them were female and two males. All were born in Finland. All had at least secondary level education completed, mostly vocational education, while one participant had a higher education background. At the time of the interview, two of the interviewees were retired, and others were working full-time, part-time, or seasonally.

In addition to learners in KA1 mobilities, also three adult learners participating in KA2 project were interviewed.

2. Short portrait of the adult learning sector in Finland

2.1. Infrastructure and participation in adult education in Finland

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

Stakeholders playing a crucial role include governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Education and Culture, responsible for formulating policies and strategies for lifelong learning. The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) is a national development agency which works in close cooperation with the Ministry to develop curricula, content and methods for adult education, among other educational levels. EDUFI acts as the National Agency for Erasmus+ and several other internationalisation programmes.

The adult education sector in Finland encompasses self-motivated education, staff training and labour market training. Moreover, the sector can be divided into liberal adult education (*vapaa sivistystyö/fria bildningsarbetet*), sometimes referred to as popular adult education; basic and general education for adults; vocational and career-oriented training; and higher education.

In line with the Erasmus+ programme definition on the adult education sector, this chapter focuses on non-vocational adult education, whether formal, non-formal or informal. Consequently, vocational qualifications, a significant aspect of adult education in Finland, are not discussed in the following chapters.

Participation in adult education

Nearly half of adults aged between 18 and 64 in Finland participate in adult education annually. Approximately 1,5 million people participated in adult education not leading to a qualification in 2021 (Tilastokeskus, 2022).

In 2022, 49 percent of employed individuals and 13 percent of unemployed individuals in Finland participated in education related to their work or profession. Additionally, 14 percent of adults participated in education with broader or hobby-related goals. Nearly 70 percent of these learners were women, who were also more likely to have a higher education background. (Tilastokeskus, 2022.)

In liberal adult education, 291 educational institutions organised a total of 81,000 trainings for 1,1 million people in Finland in 2021. More than half of these learners participated in courses organised by adult education centres or community colleges. While most learners are from higher socio-economic backgrounds, education institutions offer economic incentives, such as discounted costs for senior citizens and unemployed people to encourage participation. The fees for courses in adult education centres is generally very moderate, often amounting to only a few dozen euros for a semester of learning.

Expenditure

Around seven percent of the Ministry of Education expenditure is allocated to adult education, with 40 percent directed towards VET, one fourth towards higher education, one fifth towards liberal adult education, and approximately five percent towards the development of adult education and continuing education for teaching staff (Eurydice, 2023). Adult education leading to qualifications is generally free of charge, except for further and specialist vocational qualifications. The government also subsidises education and training that does not lead to qualifications to maintain reasonable student fees.

According to the Finnish Adult Education Association, primary funding sources for non-formal adult education in Finland include project

funding, programme funding, operating grants/structural funding, fees paid by individuals, and contribution paid by employers (EAEA, 2023).

Budget cuts are anticipated in the adult education sector. One overarching aim in the current government plan is to increase clients' financial contribution percentage in liberal adult education (Valtioneuvosto, 2023). Liberal adult education has already experienced budget cuts in previous decades, and learning centres and summer universities, in particular, anticipate further reductions in their budget.

Adult education sector in Finland

Liberal adult education

The purpose of liberal adult education, as stipulated in Finnish legislation, is to provide education and training that promotes people's versatile development, well-being, democracy, sustainable development, pluralism, multiculturalism, and internationalisation. Its content is not governed by legislation, and education providers make decisions regarding the objectives and content of the studies that do not result in a degree or qualification. Providers include local authorities, joint municipal authorities, associations, foundation, and companies. Studies offered encompass civic skills, general education, and various skills acquisition such as those related to arts, sports, culture, languages. (Ministry for Education and Culture.)

Various types of education providers are engaged in liberal adult education:

Adult education centres / community colleges (kansalaisopisto/medborgarinstitut)

- Tuition is available in all municipalities, with minimal participation fees
- Tasked with addressing local and regional civic needs and facilitating self-motivated learning and the development of civic skills
- Provide a significant portion of basic education in arts and also offer open university studies

- Teaching predominantly organised in evenings and week-ends, as well as through distance learning

Folk high schools (kansanopisto/folkhögskola)

- Operate as boarding schools, typically offering one full year of studies
- Mostly maintained by different associations and foundations, with some supported by local authorities

Learning centres (opintokeskus/studiecentral)

- Run by non-governmental organisations, political parties and labour unions
- Activities targeted at volunteers and active participants of their member organisations, often utilising peer learning through courses, lectures, seminars and study clubs
- Learning primarily conducted in evenings or week-ends, and frequently online

Sports training centres (liikunnan

koulutuskeskus/idrottsbildningscenter)

- Most liberal adult education courses are 3–5 day exercise courses, sports camps for children and young people, or courses for families
- Also provide training to sports clubs and associations, coaching activities, basic and further vocational training, and courses for companies

Basic education in the arts, such as music

institutions (musiikkioppilaitos/musikläroanstalt)

Summer universities

(kesäyliopisto/sommaruniversitet)

- Offer continuing education courses, public lectures, regional seminars, and culture events, as well as university education for senior citizens

(Eurydice, 2023; Ministry for Education and Culture)

The study offering of 12 learning centres was examined in a recent study (Vuorikoski & Manninen, 2023). In legislation, the role of

learning centres is to organise education to promote lifelong learning, well-being, active citizenship, and democracy. The 20,000 different non-formal training courses organised by these learning centres were categorised as follows in the study (Vuorikoski & Manninen, 2023):

- Personal growth 39,6 percent (e.g. handicrafts, ICT, cooking, arts, languages, science)
- Civic and organisational action 29,9 percent (e.g. trade unions, association administration, volunteering, political party training)
- Social and community support 11,1 percent (e.g. first aid, peer support, parenthood)
- Health and sport 10,3 percent
- Work and livelihood 7,1 percent
- Basic skills 1,4 percent

Basic and general education

Basic education for adults (*aikuisten perusopetus/grundläggande utbildning för vuxna*) as well as literacy and language training for immigrants is offered by various schools and institutions. Integration training for migrants (*kotoutumiskoulutus/integrationsutbildning*) is organized through Employment and Economic Development Offices. The objective of integration training is for migrants to acquire sufficient linguistic (Finnish or Swedish), social, cultural and life management skills. (Suomi.fi, n.d.). General upper secondary schools for adults (*aikuiskoulu/vuxengymnasium*) offer basic and general education, both in face-to-face and online formats.

Vocational and career-oriented training

In Erasmus+ programme, vocational education and training for adults is considered in the VET sector. Vocational training in Finland encompasses initial, further and specialist vocational qualifications in upper secondary vocational colleges; non-formal VET and short courses; courses in continuing education centres of universities; studies by organisations for crafts and

design; or labour market training offered by different institutions. (Eurydice, 2023)

Higher education

Higher education studies, including degrees, open studies, professional specialisation studies, or in-service training are organised by universities or universities of applied sciences through their continuing education centres, open universities or summer universities already mentioned above under liberal adult education. (Eurydice, 2023)

Umbrella organisations

Umbrella organisations include the Finnish Adult Education Association (*Vapaa Sivistystyö – Fritt Bildningsarbete*) for national non-formal adult education associations in Finland, founded in 1969, and the Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres (*Kansalaisopistojen liitto KoL ry*) for the adult education centres in Finland, founded in 1919.

2.2. Adult education policies in Finland

Current government has not drafted a specific education policy (situation in March 2024). In the government plan (*Valtioneuvosto*, 2023), adult education is discussed under "Response to skills shortage and continuous learning". The government plan emphasises the need to reform language teaching of Finnish and Swedish to potential or existing migrants at all levels of education and training. Additionally, the aim is to increase the market-orientation and private financing of continuous learning provision. Encouraging the completion of micro-credentials and study units in VET and higher education should be prioritised in financing. Planning of adult education is to be undertaken in collaboration with business and industry.

According to country reports of the Finnish Adult Education Association, a member organisation of the EAEA, Finnish adult education policies promote inclusive and accessible adult education that responds to labour market needs and societal challenges (e.g. digital and green transitions), while also fostering social cohesion, democratic

participation and well-being. The country report also notes that adult education organisations “are well aware of Erasmus+ mobility opportunities, but they may not have the capacity to apply for them” (EAEA, 2023).

Continuous learning reform 2021-

The strategy for Continuous Learning came into force in 2021. The main objectives for the reform were to ensure equitable participation and opportunities for everyone to upskill and reskill proactively; to equip everyone with the knowledge, competence and skills required for employment and a meaningful life; and to renew the world of work through a skilled labour force to support sustainable growth, innovation, competitiveness, and well-being. (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d./2)

In 2021, the new Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment was launched at the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Service Centre finances targeted training based on foresight information, for example, to alleviate skills shortages in healthcare, social welfare, early childhood education, and in the hospitality, tourism, culture and events industries. The Centre also finances training related to the hydrogen economy and the battery industry to support the green transition. (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d./3)

Furthermore, the reform aimed to develop micro-credentials and a national Open Badge system for basic skills for adults that would help identify and recognise learning acquired through non-qualification programmes. (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d./3)

In the continuous learning reform, the liberal adult education sector was made responsible for reaching underrepresented groups in learning and received funding for regional projects and training of migrants (EAEA 2022).

Policies related to horizontal priorities

Inclusion and diversity

The Finnish legislation requires that workplaces with at least 30 employees must have an equality

and non-discrimination plan, formulated in cooperation with staff, and in educational institutions, also with learners. According to a study commissioned by the Finnish National Agency for Education on the state of equality and non-discrimination plans in liberal adult education in 2023, less than half of the responding educational institutions had a required, jointly formulated plan in place (Mikkola, 2023). While gender equality and accessibility of education were well-considered, plans predominantly lacked provisions for preventing discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression (Mikkola, 2023).

Digital transformation

Liberal adult education is included the new policy (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2023) which envisions Finland becoming “the world’s leading developer and user of sustainable digitalization in teaching and education and training by 2027”. The aim of digital tools and environments is to support individual needs of learners and promote the equality and accessibility of education. The National Agency for Education is responsible for promoting the pedagogical use of digital environments in liberal adult education and arts education (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2023).

Environment and fight against climate change

Promoting sustainable development was added to the purposes of liberal adult education in 2009. Liberal adult education and continuous learning are also included in the Strategy of the National Commission on Sustainable Development (2022) under “Education, competence and sustainable lifestyles”. The Strategy suggests exploring how sustainable development has been incorporated into teaching and education, including in liberal adult education. However, liberal adult education courses focusing on sustainable development, green transition, or ecosocial Bildung, as it is often framed in the Finnish educational context, have been relatively scarce, revolving mainly around gardening or recycling (Kuusela et al., 2023).

In the past 10 years, a total of 24 adult education institutions have obtained the Finnish national

Sustainable Development Certification of Educational Establishments, maintained and developed by the OKKA Foundation (<https://koulujaymparisto.fi/in-english/>). Educational institution participating in the certification process is evaluated against a set of indicators for sustainable future on teaching, operational culture and management/leadership (<https://koulujaymparisto.fi/hae-sertifikaattia/vapaa-sivistystyo/kestavan-tulevaisuuden-indikaattorit/>).

Participation in democratic life

The purpose of liberal adult education is to organize education that supports active citizenship and societal cohesion, and promotes democracy and pluralism in society. The Ministry of Justice is currently working on a National Programme to Promote Democracy and Participation (<https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/project?tunnus=OM125:00/2023>), including the objective to promote the development of good practices in democracy education and human rights education. One possible priority is to strengthen democracy education, particularly political participation and civic engagement among migrants and multilingual Finns in the civic orientation course organised as part of integration training (Seikkula & Maury, 2022).

2.3. Existing studies on the impact of Erasmus+ on the adult education sector

There is only one existing study on the impact of Erasmus+ on the adult education sector in Finland. In 2023, the National Agency for Education commissioned a Master's thesis (Karppanen, 2023) on the impact of Erasmus+ staff mobilities in Finnish adult education centres, part of the broader liberal adult education system in Finland. According to Karppanen, impact was achieved in all projects regardless of the size of the adult education centre, its location or earlier experience in internationalisation. At the staff level, professional and international competence, closer collegial cooperation and raising of awareness was reported. International projects supported the

development of key competences among those participating in staff mobilities, development and innovation of lifelong learning and quality at the staff and organisational level, and internationalisation at the level of staff, learners and organisation. (Karppanen, 2023.)

Some studies exist on the societal impact of liberal adult education in Finland. Manninen and colleagues (2019) studied adult learners in a community college in Eastern Finland. Most of the registered learners (91 percent) were regular customers, had a higher quality of life and well-being compared to Finnish population on average. However, there were also learners who reported having few friends or weaker possibilities to influence their own lives. After taking courses in the community college, learners reported improvements in their well-being and health, social interaction, and language skills. There were statistically significant changes in the learners' attitudes towards education, friendship networks and tolerance. Participating in courses was most beneficial for those learners coming from a weaker starting position. (Manninen et al., 2019.)

Another impact study focused on the earnings and employment effects of enrollment in formal adult education in Finland (Kauhanen & Virtanen, 2021). The benefits were largest for those learners with only compulsory education. The employment and earning effects were small for those learners who already had a degree from higher education.

2.4. Conclusions

National policy priorities in the field of adult education

Finland's current government agenda emphasises several key priorities in adult education. Firstly, addressing skills shortages and promoting continuous learning is a primary focus, with specific attention to reforming language teaching for migrants and enhancing market orientation and private financing in learning provision.

Secondly, initiatives to promote inclusive and accessible adult education, aligned with societal needs such as digital and green transitions, are

highlighted especially in the liberal adult education sector. Thirdly, efforts to support active citizenship, societal cohesion, and democratic participation through education are underscored, aiming to address democratic deficits among migrants and multilingual populations, again with an emphasis on the liberal adult education. Overall, Finland's adult education policies are geared towards fostering individual growth, societal resilience, and sustainable development.

Stakeholders involved

The Ministry for Education and Culture and the National Agency for Education play key roles in the policymaking and development of the adult education sector in Finland. Educational institutions ranging from adult education centres and community colleges to universities and vocational colleges are pivotal in delivering diverse learning opportunities. Non-governmental organisations, associations, and foundations contribute significantly to the provision of adult education, often catering to specific community needs. Employers also play a role, particularly in supporting workforce training and development.

National priorities for Erasmus+ in the field of adult education

There are currently no national priorities for Erasmus+ in the field of adult education.

Blank spots in existing impact research

Studies on the impact of non-formal adult education on well-being and social capital (Manninen et al., 2019), and of formal adult education on earnings and employment effects (Kauhanen & Virtanen, 2021) have been conducted in Finland. However, beyond the recent Master's thesis (Karppanen, 2023) on the impact of Erasmus+ in Finnish adult education centres, part of the liberal adult education sector, there have been no impact studies on role of internationalisation in the adult education sector at large. There is limited insight into the broader societal effects of Erasmus+ programme in Finland. In-depth understanding how participation in Erasmus+ programme contributes to social inclusion, empowerment and well-being especially

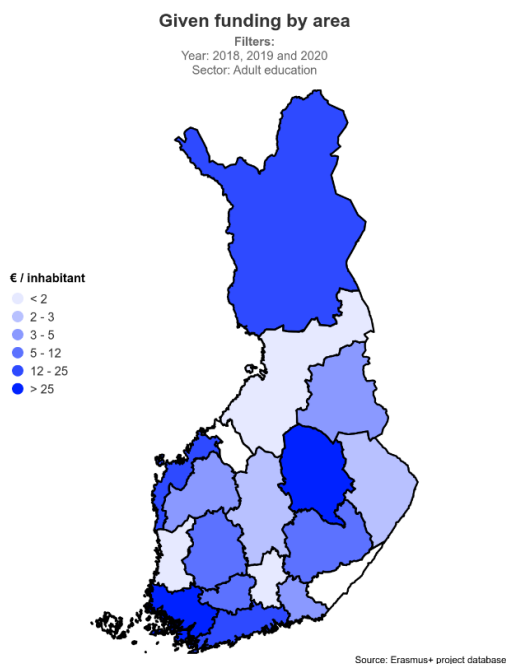
among marginalised groups or people in vulnerable positions is lacking.

3. The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

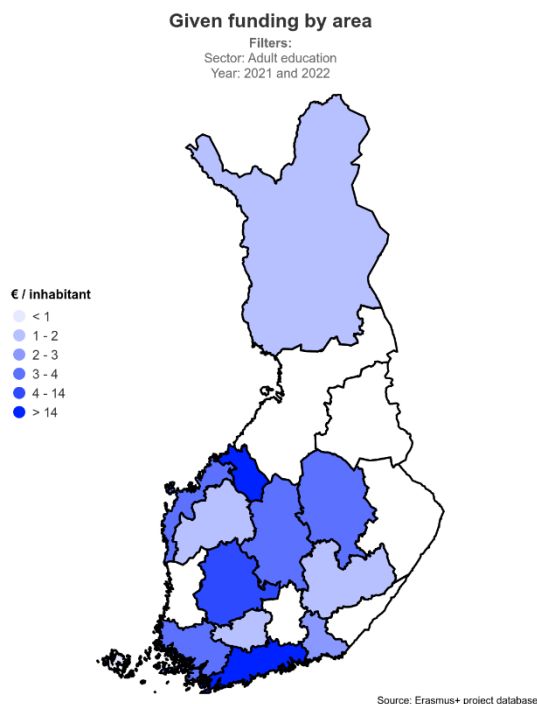
3.1. Introduction

Inclusion is one of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme and it is therefore important that the programme is attractive to organisations that have not previously benefited from Erasmus+, as well as to vulnerable participants who might otherwise be less inclined to participate in internationalisation activities. This chapter explores the characteristics of adult education institutions that participated in Erasmus+ in the previous and current programme periods. Additionally, the chapter examines the characteristics of adult learners who benefit from the developed outputs (KA2) and/or mobility (KA1). On this basis, assessments can be made regarding the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ within the adult education sector in Finland.

In addition to examining the types of organisations and adult learners involved, it is important note that certain regions remain less active in the Erasmus+ programme. This is highlighted in the maps below, which demonstrate Erasmus+ funding to different regions in Finland, presented as €/inhabitant between 2018-2020 and 2021-2022. Regions with minimal or no Erasmus+ adult education funding include North and South Karelia, Satakunta, Kainuu, Northern Ostrobothnia, and Päijänne Tavastia. Conversely, Southern and Central Finland, along with parts of Lapland as well as Northern Savonia, are well represented in the Erasmus+ funding. (Figures 3 and 4, source National Agency for Education, n.d.)



3. Erasmus+ funding by area, 2018-2020.



4. Erasmus+ funding by area, 2021-2022.

3.2. Participating organisations in Erasmus+

3.2.1. 2018–2020 period

The largest category of coordinating organisations in KA104 projects were adult education centres (40%). 16 percent belonged to the category of NGO/association/social enterprise, and 13 percent to local public bodies. (Figure 5.)

In KA204 projects, one fifth of coordinators belonged to the category of NGO/association/social enterprise. 17 percent were higher education institutions, and 13 percent secondary level general education institutions or adult education centres. (Figure 6.)

3.2.2. 2021–2027 period

In the current Erasmus+ programme period, the share of adult education centres in KA1 projects has grown to 54 percent of all mobility projects granted between 2021 and 2023. The NGO/association/social enterprise is still the second largest category, with 18 percent of projects, while foundations were the third largest category with 13 percent of projects. (Figure 7.) In KA210 small-scale partnership projects, the coordinators come mainly from the category NGO/association/social enterprise (59 percent of coordinators), followed by adult education centres (23 percent of coordinators). (Figure 8.)

In larger KA220 cooperation partnerships, 38 percent of coordinators are adult education centres. NGO/association/social enterprise category covers 19 percent of project coordinators (Figure 9).

The RIA-AE impact survey respondents from Finland reflect well the numbers of participating organisations. Nearly half of the survey respondents categorised their organisation under “adult education provider”. All other categories received 0-4 mentions. Respondents were able to select several answers to this question, with many

also choosing to explain their type further in the “other” category.

Based on the answers in the “other category”, or respondents’ other answer, the researcher placed the organisation to the closest type of organisation (e.g. “museum” would belong under “art & culture institute”). (Figure 10.)

Those organisations who had been involved in KA2 projects were familiar with both coordinator and partner roles. One respondent had also functioned as an associated partner.

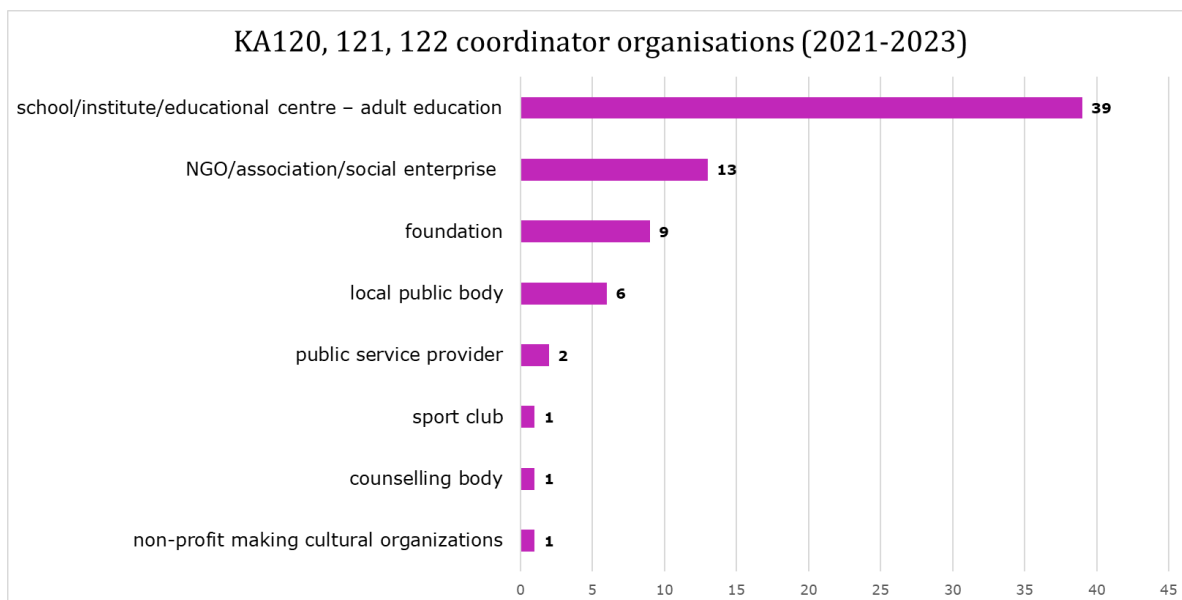
More than half of respondents (55 percent) did not have yet Erasmus+ accreditation for mobility.



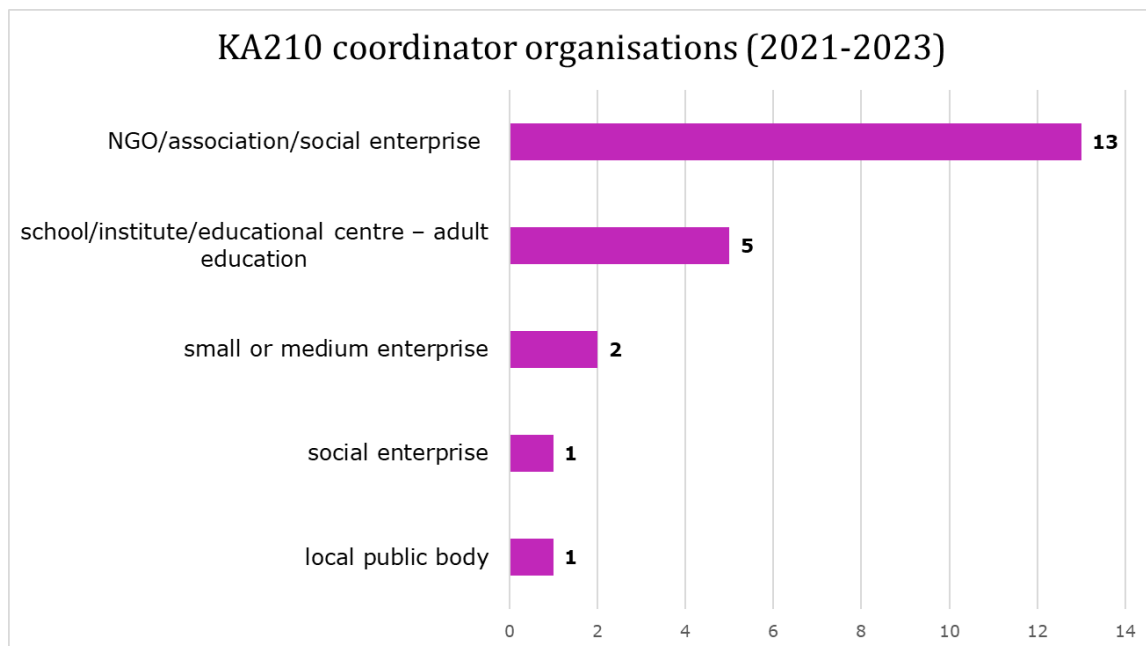
5. Coordinator organisations for KA104 projects 2018-2020.



6. Coordinator organisations for KA204 projects 2018-2020.



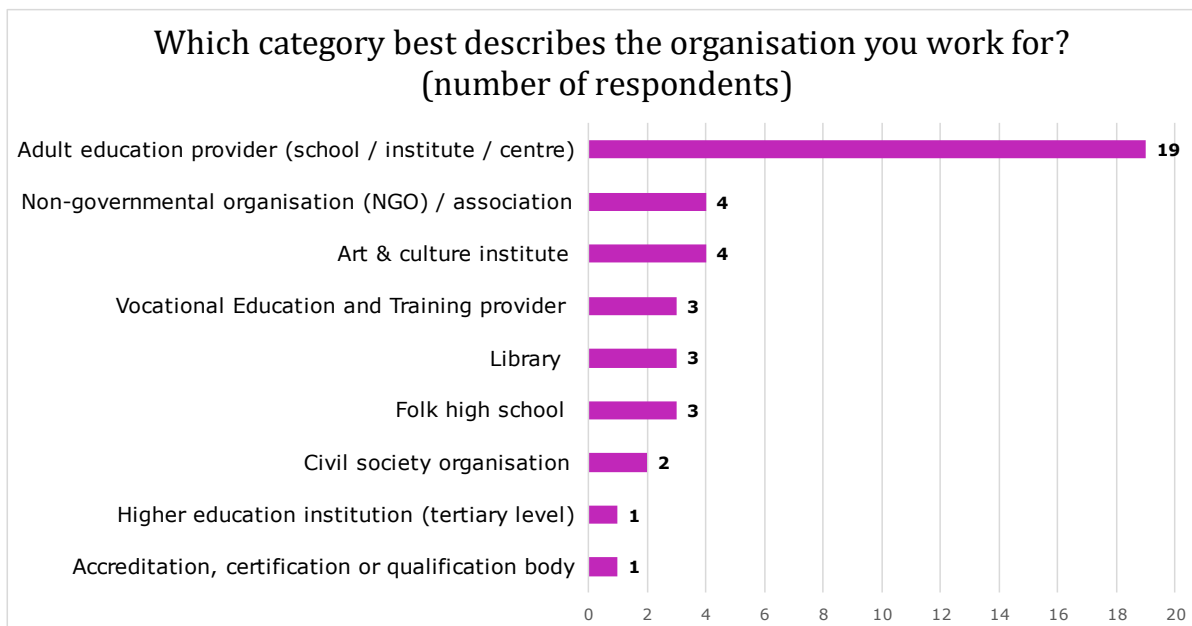
7. Coordinator organisations for KA120, 121 122 projects 2021-2023.



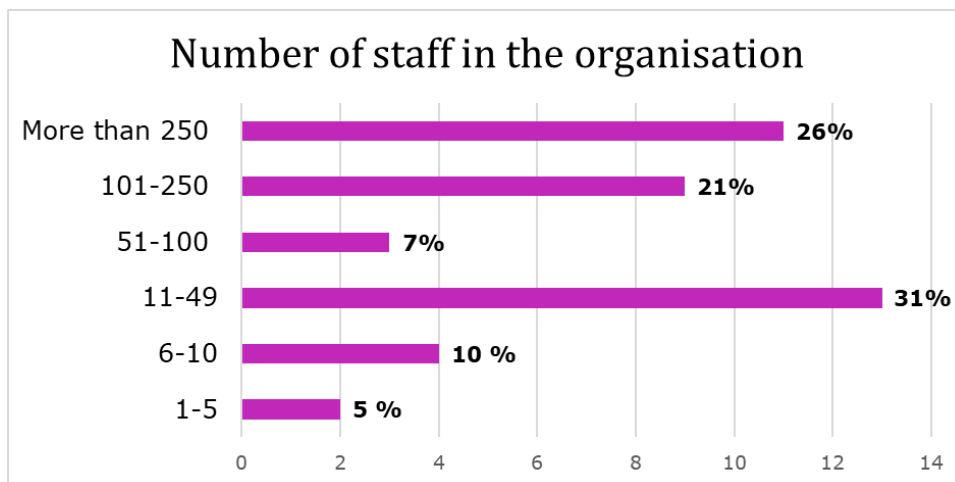
8. Coordinator organisations for KA210 projects 2021-2023.



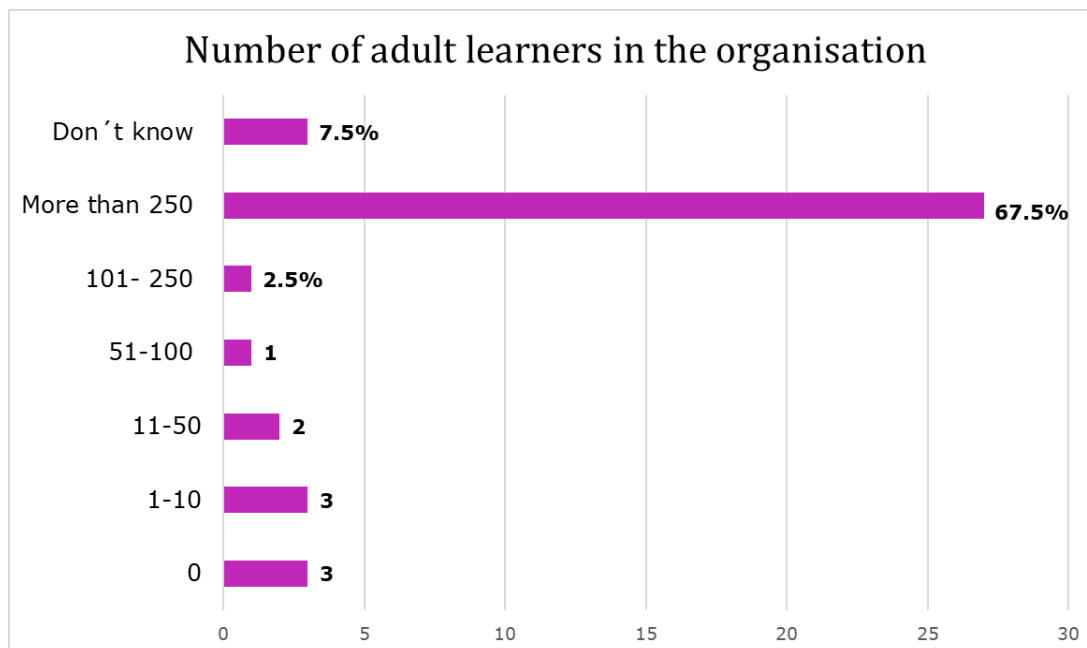
9. Coordinator organisations for KA220 projects 2021-2023.



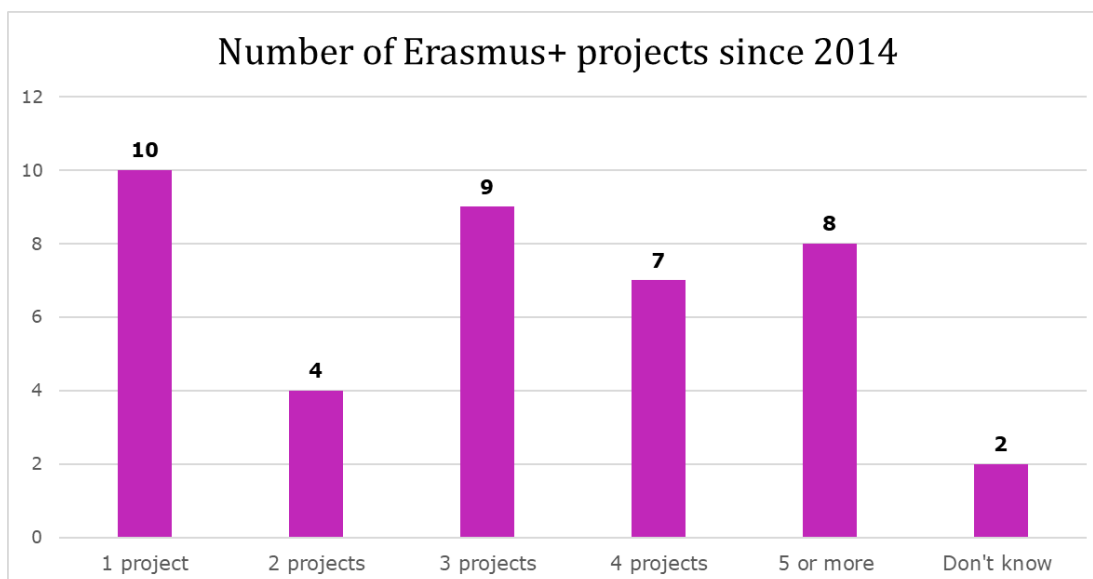
10. RIA-AE survey respondents' organisation categories.



11. Number of staff in RIA-AE survey respondents' organisations.



12. Number of adult learners in RIA-AE survey respondent organisations.



13. Number of Erasmus+ projects among RIA-AE survey respondents' organisations since 2014.

3.2.3. Size of participating organisations

Most of the respondent organisations were middle-sized, with 11-50 staff members, or very large organisations, with more than 250 staff members (Figure 11). The majority of responding organisations had more than 250 adult learners in their organisation (Figure 12).

3.2.4. Newcomers to the programme

Survey respondents had mainly been involved in Erasmus+ KA1 projects (88,4 percent of respondents). Nearly 40 percent of respondents had been involved in KA2 projects. A significant number, 25 percent, were newcomers, with only one Erasmus+ project since 2014. Only one fifth of respondents had had more than five Erasmus+ projects. (Figure 13.)

3.3. Adult learners' participation

The most common target group for Erasmus+ projects among the responding organisations since 2018 was migrants (19 responses, 47.5%). This was followed by "no specific target group" (15 responses, 37.5%), employed adults (14 responses, 35%) and unemployed adults (12 responses, 30%). Young adults, elderly people, adults lacking basic skills, adults with a low level of education, and adults with learning difficulties were each target groups for 11 responding organisations (27.5%). (Figure 14.)

"No specific target group" responses were clarified in the open-ended responses of the survey. One respondent wrote that for example, a library is meant to serve all kinds of different groups, making it difficult to classify a certain target group for the project. Another respondent mentioned that project outputs are often made for adults with disability, health issues, learning difficulties, migrant backgrounds, or difficulties in finding employment, but the learning materials are not specifically targeted for these groups. Instead, accessibility and using plain/easy language are stressed throughout in learning material production.

Case study organisations had very diverse target groups. One organisation works especially with people in very vulnerable situations who are looking for a new direction in their life: young NEETs, long-term unemployed, people rehabilitating from substance abuse, ex-offenders, and migrants. The aim is to promote their inclusion, education, and well-being in different parts of Finland, relying on experts by experience (those who have had themselves mental health issues, substance abuse or prison background). In short, the target groups include people who need holistic support to deal with piled up challenges in their life, and the aim is to support them with small steps towards employment, gaining competence and confidence.

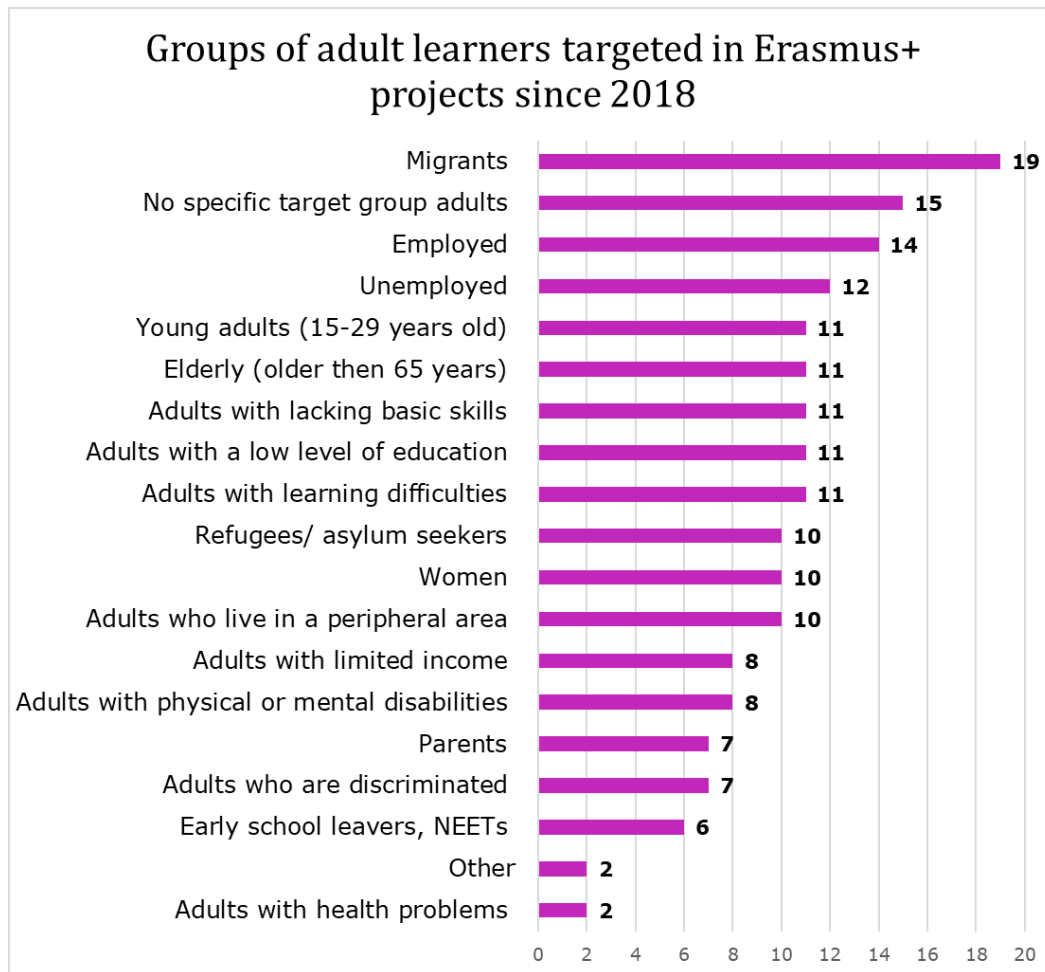
Some case study organisations were working in more peripheral or rural areas of Finland, and

besides supporting employment and well-being (sport, history, languages etc) in the area, had also gained new tasks such as migrant integration with the arrival of refugees in the municipality. A typical student in these adult education centres is a retired female from middle-class socio-economic background, mostly speaking Finnish or Swedish as their mother tongue.

However, all interviewed principals of adult education centres described how they were actively inviting less represented groups in their learning activities. For example, one education provider offers the chance to attend as many courses as one wants during the year with a symbolic, 15€ commitment fee per year. This kind of work was supported by the municipality as preventive social and health work, and was done in cooperation with the social work and employment services.

One principal mentioned that accredited mobility helps to reach out to people in vulnerable positions, or "especially welcome groups of people", making it possible to organize group mobilities for adult learners who need support for their economic, social, health or other challenges.

One of the case study organisations, Kansanvalistusseura is also involved in research by publishing the only adult education focused scientific, peer-reviewed journal in Finland (Aikuiskasvatus) as well as a European online journal in English (ELM).



14. Adult learners targeted in Erasmus+ projects among the RIA-AE survey respondents.

3.4. Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+

3.4.1. General mobility obstacles

The vast majority of respondents, 91 percent, plans to apply in the programme again in the future. However, survey respondents and case study interviewees also mentioned several obstacles for further participation. These can be grouped into reasons related to human resources, costs, appropriate partners and staff, Erasmus+ programme, and the lack of management support.

HUMAN RESOURCE-RELATED REASONS

Lack of time and human resources, both in small and large organisations was mentioned in several survey answers.

Small size of the organisation

Having a vast field of activities with only few paid employees, and relying on volunteer work makes it challenging to apply for KA2 projects. Volunteers may get tired or experience changes in their lives, and finding and induction of new volunteers for specific tasks is not simple.

Working with part-time/temporary teachers

As adult education centers often rely on part-time or temporary teachers, it is challenging to plan for long-term projects or make people commit to international work. Often the competence gained in

international projects is lost when people find full-time employment elsewhere.

Administrative burden

Project management, from application to implementation and reporting phase requires staff resources. However, one respondent noted that Erasmus+ programme has more bureaucratic reputation than what it has been in practice.

Target groups require strong support

Especially people in highly vulnerable situations require considerable support to make their mobilities happen. When everything is tailor-made, there are little possibilities to make the process smoothly automated.

COST RELATED REASONS

Diminishing national education budgets

Due to inflation, the Erasmus+ project funding is not enough to cover the rising costs. It is challenging to convince management/municipality to take part in the costs beyond what is covered by Erasmus+. Working time for project management is part of these additional costs.

Costs for hiring substitute teachers are not covered through Erasmus+, but it cannot be expected that teachers would only travel during unpaid leave days. Traveling during unpaid leave also poses challenges to employer insurances.

FINDING APPROPRIATE PARTNERS AND STAFF

Finding the right project topic to match the needs of diverse organisations, and produce the added value can be challenge.

Also, staff need motivation and support from their line manager and peers, not only from the international coordinator or the person working on Erasmus+ projects

"I have been little surprised, thinking myself that this is like the best thing in the world, but surprisingly not all of my colleagues have bought this idea. It has surprised me how much I must motivate and encourage people. But I have made it as my strategy that alright, although you are not

interested in this today, next week I will mention it again, and after a month again, and then after a month again. Repetition and having ownership for the cause are required: that someone is actively communicating and taking these possibilities forward, and if necessary, personally supports the person to go for a mobility." (staff)

ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME RELATED REASONS

Weak quality of Erasmus+ courses

Choosing the right course takes a lot of effort but is also a matter of luck. Mobilities planned by participants themselves require even more preparatory work, but their benefit might be larger.

Low percentage of approved applications

Low number of approved applications means a lot of worktime spent on a result that will not materialise.

LACK OF SUPPORT FROM MANAGEMENT

If the management is not interested in or does not appreciate internationalisation, it is never even raised to joint discussion.

3.4.2. Specific obstacles for KA1 mobility for adult learners

The majority of survey respondents, 63 percent, plans to organise mobility activities for adult learners. One-fourth of respondents were not sure, and 11 percent responded "no".

Main obstacles mentioned in the survey responses and case study interviews were:

Administrative burden

Making the application and project administration require staff effort. A high number of adult learners in the institution make project management very burdensome.

Commitment of the staff

Not all organisations, even the ones with a high number of adult learners, have dedicated staff responsible for adult learner mobility. Organisations expressed concern on the commitment of the overall staff for the project.

Lack of support from the management

In some organisations, management does not encourage to international activities, nor are they interested in them if the project is already ongoing. Several respondents expressed a lack of appreciation of international activities among the management.

Learners' personal situations

Family obligations, work, or economic obstacles may prevent learners' participation. For recovering addicts, there is a fear of relapse into substance abuse when leaving familiar routines for a mobility. Green travel might also be an obstacle for elderly people or those with physical disabilities, as traveling with ferry, train or bus takes time from Finland, and can be physically hard.

Finding the right people to participate

Respondents stressed the need to cooperate with different social and welfare or employment institutions to reach out to the people who are especially welcome, not only those who are already aware and participating in Erasmus+ programme.

Peer marketing was highlighted as important, as well as the need to have visibility in social media and local media.

Lack of understanding from social support structures

People in highly vulnerable situations experience bureaucratic obstacles not granting them the permission to participate in a mobility, e.g. the possibility of receiving a fine if not participating in rehabilitative work service for a certain period of time.

Lack of clarity on the inclusion support principles

Interviewees in case studies mention how the need to have a personal assistant, for example to help someone with a wheelchair during a mobility period can be an obstacle. Erasmus+ inclusion support is meant for covering these costs in full, but it seems that several people were not aware of this.

Organisations often also conduct their own surveys among their staff, members or learners on the

reasons for not participating in Erasmus+. One Finnish adult education organisation, the Finnish Bibliodrama Association recently did this kind of survey (Käyhkö, 2024). The most common reason mentioned by the respondents in this one organisation was adjusting the European trainings offered in their own schedule. Additionally, the health situation of their own or their family members, perceived lack of language skills, and thinking that mobilities were only aimed at active members were reasons most often cited among the membership of this association.

Some respondents in the Bibliodrama Association survey also said that they did not want to travel alone or be the only Finn participating in the training abroad. Communicating about Erasmus+ opportunities did not seem to be an issue, as 70 percent of association members reported being well aware of them, and 30 percent reported having heard something, but would like to hear more about them. (Käyhkö, 2024.)

3.5. Conclusions on accessibility and inclusiveness

Specificities and characteristics of the adult education organisations participating in the Erasmus+ programme in Finland

The adult education organisations in Finland participating in the Erasmus+ program are predominantly adult education centres and NGO/associations/social enterprises, with a growing involvement from foundations during the current programme period. These organisations typically range from medium-sized to very large, with many having over 250 staff members and serving a substantial number of adult learners.

Specificities and characteristics of participants, staff, volunteers and adult learners

Participants in Erasmus+ projects, including staff, volunteers, and adult learners, are diverse in their demographics and needs. There has been a significant focus on inclusiveness, with many

projects targeting vulnerable populations such as migrants, unemployed adults, young NEETs, and those with disabilities or learning difficulties. Adult education centres are actively engaging underrepresented groups by offering affordable courses and providing supportive structures for participants with varying economic, social, or learning challenges.

Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+

Human resource constraints, administrative burden, and financial limitations are major obstacles especially for smaller organisations reliant on volunteer work or part-time staff. Furthermore, diminishing national education budgets and the impact of inflation have complicated participation even for larger organisations. Finding appropriate partners and gaining the support of management also present challenges, as does aligning project objectives with diverse organisational goals and ensuring staff motivation to participate.

Accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ adult within the Finnish adult education sector

Although diverse groups of adult learners are included in the Erasmus+ projects and provided often holistic support for their participation, systemic issues related to organisational capacities, resource allocation to internationalisation and lack of management support for some organisations hamper accessibility and inclusiveness. The distribution of Erasmus+ funding also indicates regional disparities, suggesting a need for greater outreach and support in less active areas.

The study data shows potential for enhancing accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ by addressing these organisational barriers, promoting awareness and support mechanisms that facilitate participation especially in remote areas of Finland, and among newly established organisations or those unfamiliar with the programme.

4. Impact of Erasmus+ at meso level

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the impact of Erasmus+ on organisations. This includes the impact of Erasmus+ on how internationalisation and other Erasmus+ priorities are embedded in participating organisations, as well as the enhancement of staff quality and the learning offer of participating organisations. Given the varied activities and projects undertaken with Erasmus+ funding, we initially explore the different types of products developed. Then, we investigate the sustainable impact of Erasmus+ participation on both the organisation and learning aspects.

4.2. Type of products developed and topics addressed

4.2.1. Type of topics addressed

Based on the Erasmus project results search, a total of 244 Erasmus+ projects were coordinated by Finnish partner organisations between 2018 and 2023. Of these, 178 were KA1 projects and 66 were KA2 projects.

The primary topics addressed by different types of Erasmus+ projects are listed in the tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 below. The most popular priority for KA104 projects was "intercultural/intergenerational education and (lifelong) learning", for KA204 projects "new innovative curricula/educational methods/development of training courses", for KA120, 121 and 122 "inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination" and for KA210 and KA220 "new learning and teaching methods and approaches". KA1 projects had especially wide range of topics, including also "tackling geographical remoteness and involving rural areas" (2 projects) or "social assistance and welfare" (2 projects).

Main topics addressed by KA104 projects (76 in total):
Intercultural/intergenerational education and (lifelong) learning (26)
New innovative curricula/educational methods/development of training courses (25)
International cooperation, international relations, development cooperation (23)
Pedagogy and didactics (21)
ICT/new technologies/digital competences (15)
Teaching and learning of foreign languages (15)
Creativity and culture (14)

Table 2. Main topics addressed by KA104 projects.

Main topics addressed by KA204 projects (24 in total):
New innovative curricula/educational methods/development of training courses (11)
ICT/new technologies/digital competences (7)
Inclusion – equity (5)
Integration of refugees (4)

Table 3. Main topics addressed by KA204 projects.

Main topics addressed by KA120, 121 and 122 projects (102 in total):
Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination (9)
New learning and teaching methods and approaches (8)
International cooperation, international relations, development cooperation (8)
European identity, citizenship and values (7)
Environment and climate change (7)
Digital content, technologies and practices (7)

Table 4. Main topics addressed by KA120, 121 and 122 projects.

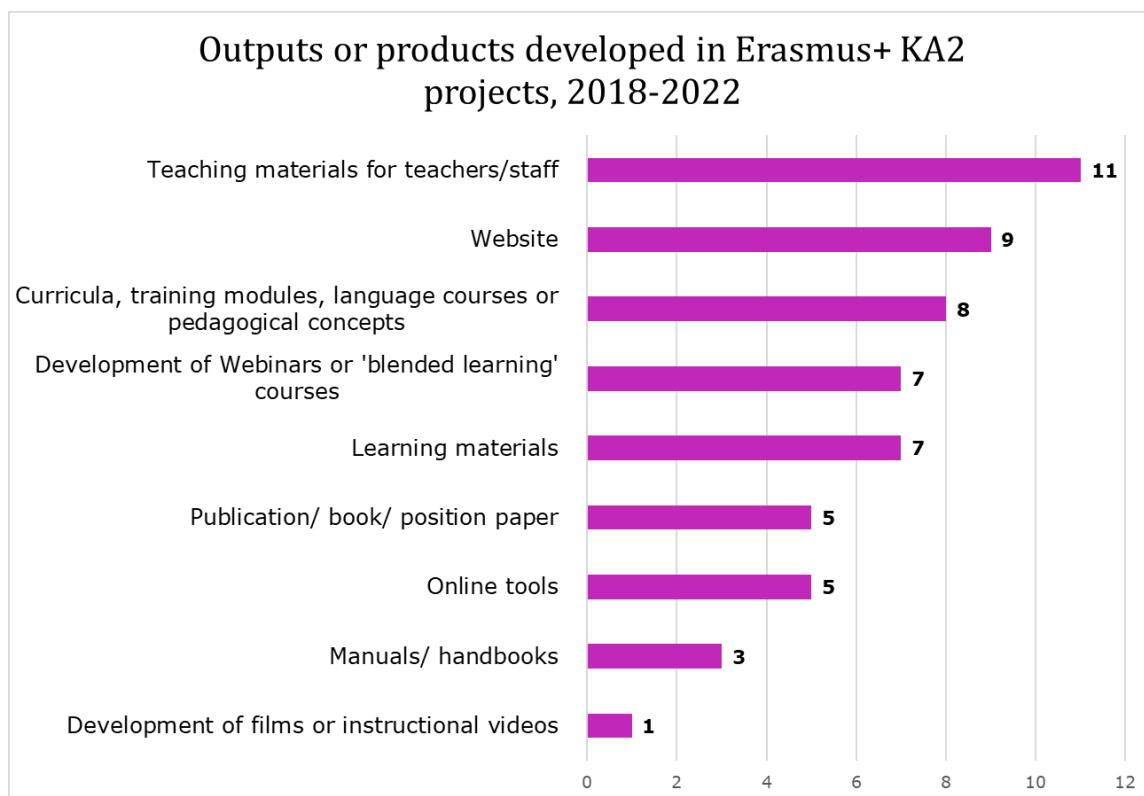
Main topics addressed by KA210 (22 in total) and KA220 (16 in total) projects:
New learning and teaching methods and approaches (11)
Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination (7)
Digital content, technologies and practices (7)
Bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divide (5)
Creativity, arts and culture (5)
Digital skills and competences (5)
Green skills (5)

Table 5. Main topics addressed by KA210 and KA220 projects.

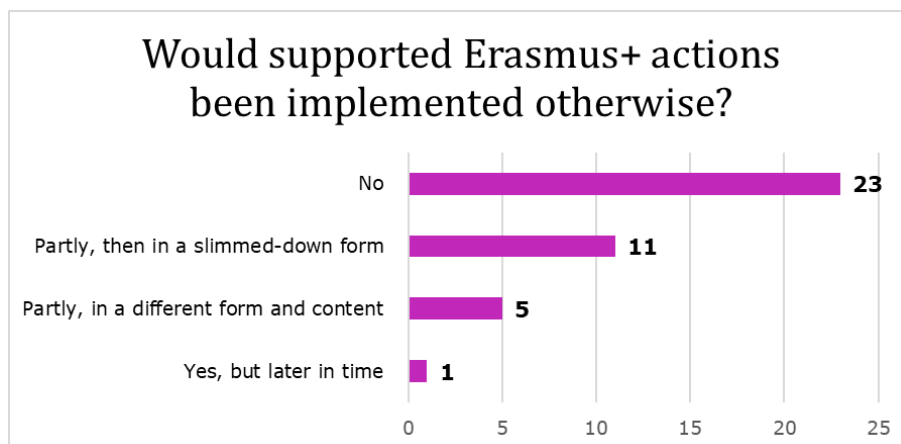
4.2.2. Type of products developed

According to survey respondents, the most prevalent types of outputs developed in Erasmus+ KA2 projects (2018-2022) were teaching materials for teachers/staff, website, curricula, training modules, language courses or pedagogical concepts, as well as development of webinars or 'blended learning' courses and learning materials. (Figure 15.) It must be noted that different KA2 projects are required to produce different level of products. Small scale KA2 projects are not required to produce substantive products, and in this case "website" might be a sufficient output developed in small-scale KA2 projects that mainly focus on peer-learning and exchange of good practices.

More specific examples were cited in case studies, such as the development of escape room games and virtual reality environments for adult learning, as well as the organisation of classical music events with European partners and adult learners in rural areas.



15. Survey respondents' responses on the outputs or products developed.



16. Survey respondents' views on the importance of Erasmus+ support.

4.2.3. Added value of Erasmus+ support

Survey responses clearly indicate that over half of the respondents believe that actions supported by Erasmus+ programme would not have been implemented without this support (23 responses, 58 percent). (Figure 16.)

In case studies, this question was often left out due to time constraints during interviews, as it was

already evident from the discussion that mobility actions, in particular, would not have occurred without Erasmus+ support. Interviewees emphasised the essential role of external funding in facilitating collaboration with international partners on a larger scale. Erasmus+ funding serves as a crucial tool for realising the objectives and concrete ideas of organisations.

4.3. Impact at organisation level

When asked which topics have gained more attention within their organisations since participating in Erasmus+ (Figure 17), the most commonly selected topic was the **professional development of staff** (83% of respondents). Learning new ways of working through Erasmus+ projects was frequently mentioned in the survey responses and case study interviews:

“Erasmus+ projects have enabled our members to gain the kind of special competence for which there has not been training opportunities in Finland, but for which there is a clear need.” (survey)

“New operating models or practices that we could bring to our organisation, these are extremely important. For example, noticing the importance of traditional handicrafts in another country, and thinking how this could be incorporated in the Finnish context, to workshops for young adult training for employment.” (staff)

“We cannot think that in some country in Europe, that they would not be making these amazing things. Sometimes there is this little bit stereotypical thinking of international education competence and where it exists. It is terribly important that we go and see what is being done elsewhere.” (management)

The second most important topic mentioned was **networking / learning partnerships with other organisations** (72% of respondents). The formation of more permanent cooperation with international contacts was a clear impact mentioned in case studies and survey responses. Internationalisation had fostered the courage to experiment, broaden worldviews and expand perspectives with partners.

“Own professional identity and perspectives have broadened from Finland to a more international level.” (survey)

“Reflecting one’s own organisation to similar activities in other parts of Europe” (survey)

“As the legislation guides us to respond to local needs with our training, it forces actors to work in quite small bubbles. Breaking these bubbles and understanding the benefits of internationalisation, not confining ourselves to these bubbles and seeing what kind of development work is being done out there in the world. Although projects and mobilities require resources, they also free up resources, as not everything needs to be invented by yourself. This kind of joint development and sharing of competence is very important.” (management)

The third most attention gaining topic was **inclusion and diversity** (61% of respondents). This, along with the fourth most important topic, **teaching/learning with digital technologies** (58% of respondents), will be covered in detail under the following sections of the report.

European values were also noted as a topic receiving increased attention in 58% of responding organisations. Seeing the bigger picture and recognising common themes were frequently mentioned:

“Internationalisation and broadening perspectives shows in staff competence and action. We have gained ideas and new operating models for our organisation, and learners have also been engaged in the activities. European values and strengthening tolerance are challenges across our entire society also in the future. Thank you to Erasmus+ programme that from its own part helps in this work!” (survey)

“A sense of being European.” (survey)

“Interacting with people from different European countries has opened our eyes to the diverse societies, communities, histories and cultures of the continent – this has been extremely valuable. Observing Finnish ways of working through the eyes of others helps to see successes and targets for development much more clearly than from the inside.” (survey)

Motivation and wellbeing of learners was selected by 47% of respondents as a topic receiving more attention in their organisation. This included, for example, the development of new

teaching content and learning materials, new teaching methods, and the expansion and attractiveness of course offering.

“Customer satisfaction with our learning offer has been high in evaluation surveys, and many new participatory courses have found their audience. Courses are cancelled less frequently than before. We have been able to respond to the demand and the needs of our customers.” (survey)

Active citizenship, democratic participation, civic and social engagement as well as **greening and fight against climate change** were also selected by 47% of respondents. These topics will be discussed further under horizontal priorities below.

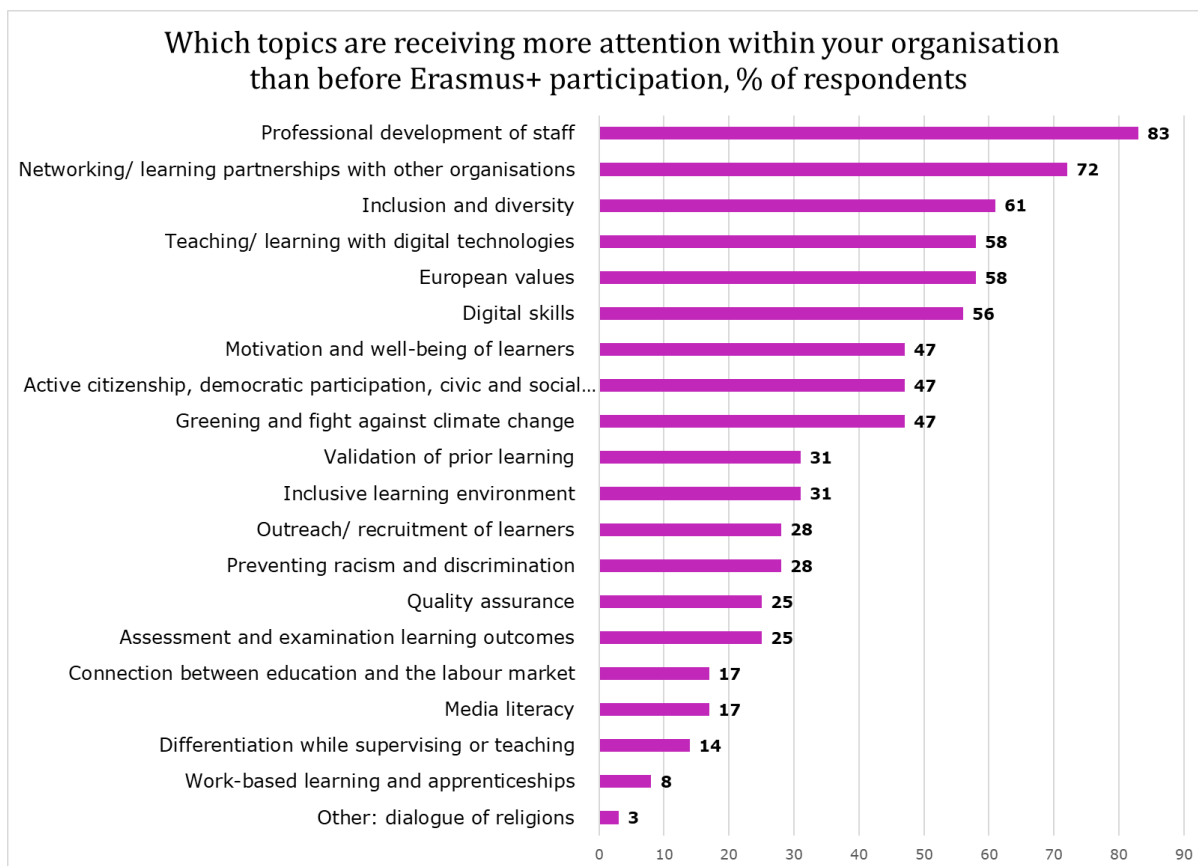
4.3.1. Impact on internationalisation

More than half of the survey respondents reported having three conditions in place to support internationalisation processes:

- 1) guidelines or agreed processes for managing international projects (71%)
- 2) participation in international networks and internationalisation activities (60%)
- 3) discussing the development of international competences in performance appraisals and career talks (54%)

However, only 11 percent of organisations had a dedicated budget for internationalisation, and 37 percent a policy/strategy for internationalisation.

Since 2018, conditions facilitating internationalisation within organisations had improved in over half of them (54%), with significant improvement noted in 15 percent of organisations. Only two respondents reported a decline in conditions.



Nearly all survey respondents highlighted how

17. Topics receiving more attention according to survey respondents.

participation in Erasmus+ had increased their organisation's awareness of the added value of international projects (95% agree or fully agree), strengthened their international network (92% agree or fully agree), and improved their management of international projects (90% agree or fully agree). (Figure 18.)

Responses were more varied for other statements. For example, 59 percent of respondents agreed that their organisation had a better strategy for internationalisation, and 46 percent felt that there was more support for internationalisation activities for their adult learners. Surprisingly, 26 percent of respondents agreed, but 21 percent disagreed with the statement "there is increased funding for internationalisation within our organisation". Additionally, 36 percent agreed that HR/staff policy for internationalisation in their organisation had strengthened as an impact of Erasmus+ participation.

International networks and partnerships

International networks and partnerships were seen as valuable for benchmarking one's field at the European level and generating new ideas to develop activities and services for adult learners. Expanding networks ensured the continuity of international cooperation. Appropriate new partners for development projects were often identified through job-shadowing or contact seminars.

"Despite all the toil, international projects have always brought us more joy and new insights than expected. Personally, I enjoy working in a European atmosphere and have always felt that my competence is more appreciated outside my home country. I have gained good friends for life. For our organisation, the Erasmus+ programme provides opportunities to support staff development financially. Our employer does not offer any other kind of assistance for developing professional or international competence. This makes it a very important tool and opportunity for us." (survey)

"Job shadowing is a really good tool for getting to know an interesting organisation that is completely unknown from before. We contact them, ask, and

then someone brave enough ventures there in person to see." (management)

"Strengthening European cooperation, forming those networks and personal partnerships which then generate something new. More long-term impact is born out of these more permanent partnerships and networks. We have this "strategy of the best partnership" in our organisation, meaning that we strive to find the best partner in the world, or at least in Europe, for each need. If there is even one weak link in the partner network during project work, it affects the entire project. Establishing this kind of partnership network requires groundwork and networking. And that is absolutely paramount." (management)

Management of international projects

Improved project management competence was mentioned in several responses.

"As the coordinator of the project, the greatest benefit was the experience I gained from managing and implementing an international Erasmus+ project. This competence I have been luckily able to share with other actors in our municipality." (survey)

Better strategy for internationalisation

Participation in an Erasmus+ project had prompted survey respondents to plan more organised and strategic international activities. In the survey, 37 percent of all respondents, and 59 percent of those with Erasmus+ accreditation, stated that their organisation had an international strategy in place.

In addition to an internationalisation strategy, representatives of organisation management stressed how Erasmus+ projects supported the realisation of the organisation's overall strategy:

"These projects can directly bolster the achievement of our strategic goals, for example these goals of ecosocial Bildung, digitalisation or global responsibility. We can apply for a project focusing on certain themes and start exploring some phenomenon together, for example collaborative learning. Thereby we gain a strong foundation for our future actions." (management)

4.3.2. Impact on learning offer

Outputs and insights incorporated into learning provision (86% agree)

Respondents shared many examples of how their learning provision had changed as an impact of Erasmus+ participation, including the introduction of entirely new courses or improvements to existing ones (Figure 19). Language learning incorporated more cultural elements; two subjects were combined, such as offering cookery in French; and handicraft teachers who had taken part in mobilities had designed completely new courses.

Learning offer aligned with the needs of adult learners (72% agree)

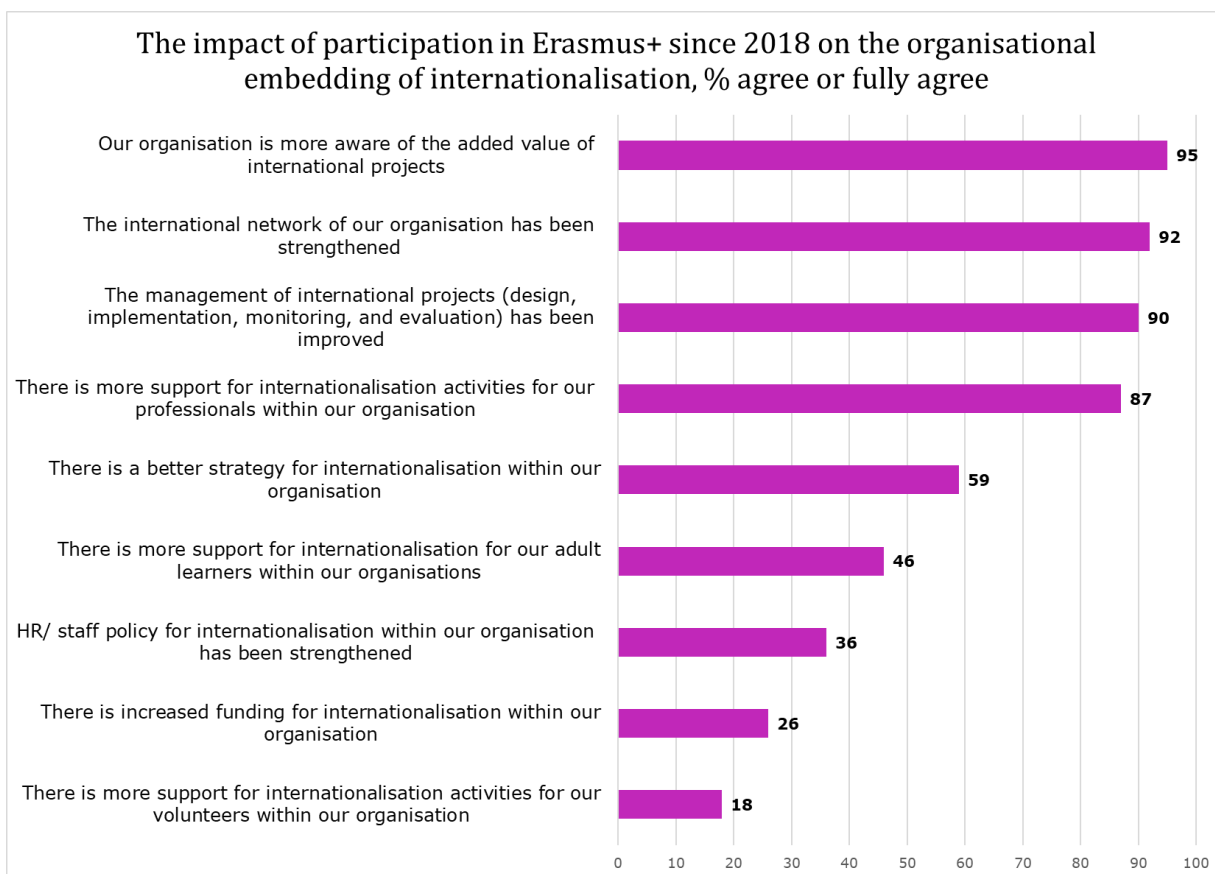
“Teachers who have participated in Erasmus+ activities have strengthened their motivation and professional skills. The courses they offer are popular and attractive for students.” (survey)

Accessibility of the learning offer has improved for different groups of adult learners (64% agree)

Respondents described how the learning offer took considered better the diversity, inequality and regional equality of learners compared to before.

More attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement (64% agree)

“In our target group of young adults in vulnerable positions, we conducted a survey on their aspirations for the future. Almost 80% of these young adults had no expectations for the future whatsoever. They lack any desires, dreams, or thoughts about what the future might hold for them. Building upon this is challenging. First, you need to foster these aspirations, and in my opinion, internationalisation is extremely important in this work. It is very easy for our organisation to



18. Impact of Erasmus+ on internationalisation.

identify with the shared value base of the Erasmus+ programme.” (management)

More attention to digital skills (61% agree)

Elderly students, for example, were being offered digital support through private tutoring.

4.3.3. Impact on horizontal priorities

Inclusion and diversity

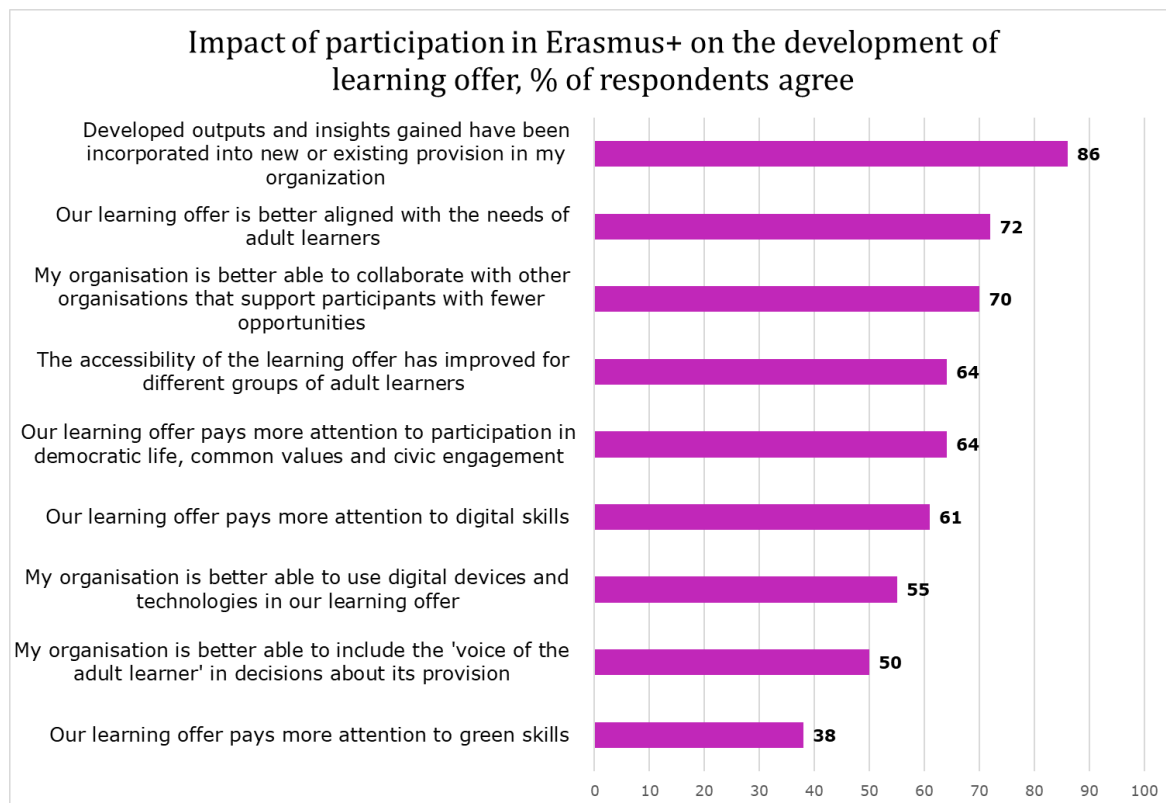
Both survey respondents and case study interviewees emphasised the significance of inclusion and diversity as an impact of the Erasmus+ programme at both the organisational and individual levels.

Nearly half of the survey respondents observed that attention to inclusion and diversity in the delivery of adult learning in their organisation had significantly improved (rather much, 34% and very much, 13%), with over a third noting improvement “to some extent” (37%). (Figure 20.)

Within respondents’ organisations, the conditions in place to facilitate inclusion and diversity included especially “using the voice of learners for developing, monitoring, and evaluating our offer” (84%) and “having procedures in place to assure our training offer is inclusive” (76%).

However, fewer organisations had dedicated staff responsible for coordinating, communicating and implementing inclusion and diversity activities (30%), or had formulated an inclusion and diversity strategy and action plan (35%).

Only 28 percent of respondents from larger organisations, those with more than 50 staff members, reported having an inclusion and diversity strategy and action plan. As the Finnish legislation mandates that organisations with more than 30 employees are required to draft an equality and non-discrimination plan (see previously under 3.2.), it could be that some respondents may have overlooked or forgotten that this obligatory plan would fall within the question. It is also possible that they might have not been aware of the existence of such a plan, or



19. Impact of Erasmus+ on the learning offer.

that indeed the organisation was lacking one. (Figure 21.)

“People in vulnerable positions often have limited exposure to experiences beyond Finland’s borders, encountering diverse cultures and values. --- We have been working with people in vulnerable positions for a long time and seen what could improve their circumstances. It is of course important that people get their grocery bags and so on, but that is insufficient in the long run. We must foster hope for the future or help people discover their own aspirations for their future.” (management)

International projects offer diverse perspective and ideas

“I believe Finnish educational institutions are quite similar to one another. When you work with international partners, you are exposed to different insights and experiences. There are similar challenges, but also different challenges, prompting us to view things from another perspective. If we only had Finnish schools participating, thinking might remain narrow. The international dimension broadens our perspective, introduces new ways of thinking, and generates new ideas.” (staff)

“It is important to have different kinds of organisations to cooperate. You learn more through cross-sectoral and multi-professional collaboration and having CSOs, associations, universities, adult education centres together.” (management)

Digital transformation

Survey responses were mixed regarding the improvement of attention to digitalisation in the delivery of adult learning in their organisation. While 43 percent of respondents noted significant improvement (rather much, 34% and very much, 13%), 38 percent indicated improvement “to some extent.

Erasmus+ projects often involve the development of learning material or online courses. Participating organisations had taken these materials, perhaps tailored for their own use, as part of their learning offer. Respondents reported an increase in online

or hybrid courses and the adoption of new digital pedagogies, particularly in language learning and with senior citizens. For instance, one case study organisation had established online multicultural language groups comprising learners from different countries online. One respondent commented how digital learning had become a part of every course, that teachers had necessary tools for this, and were supported to use them in their everyday work.

Most respondents had three conditions in place facilitating digital transformation in their organisation (Figure 22):

- 1) Using digital resources for teaching and learning activities (90%)
- 2) Having digital devices to use for teaching (87%)
- 3) Having continuing professional development opportunities for staff (84%)

However, only 26 percent of respondents had a digital strategy and action plan, and 21 percent considered learners in need of special support having access to assistive technologies. (Figure 23.) One respondent commented that digital learning methods are already being used broadly in Finland, and they had experienced being more in the role of an expert than a learner in international projects focusing on digitalisation.

Digitalisation was a focal point in several Erasmus+ projects within case study organisations, especially developing digital skills of teachers, senior citizens, and migrants in integration training. Nevertheless, digitalisation received less emphasis compared to inclusion and diversity in both survey responses and case study interviews. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, many Erasmus+ projects moved to remote learning and collaboration. For example, in one project, learners from different countries had joint music training practice online.

Future expectations include more digital collaborative teaching, especially in language learning, such as Italian teachers giving Italian language lessons online, and building reciprocal cooperation between adult education institutions in

different countries. Some adult education centres are already doing this in Finland.

Green transition

Survey responses varied regarding attention to environment and fight against climate change in their delivery of adult learning. While more than one third reported little to no improvement (35%), nearly a third noted significant improvement (30%). Organisational conditions to facilitate green transition were less prevalent than those for inclusion and diversity or digital transformation. The most common condition reported was “collaborating with organisations/individuals to strengthen sectoral capacity to operate more sustainably” (74%), followed by “having a specific training offer for green skills” (71%). Having a greening/sustainability strategy or action plan (60%) and monitoring the implementation of that plan (60%) were fairly common. In contrast, only 17 percent of respondents reported calculating their environmental footprint (17%), and 31 percent used environmental certifications or ecolabels. (Figure 23.)

Some respondents noted improvements in their green skills training offering as a result of Erasmus+ participation. Sustainable development principles were better integrated into teaching, for example in adult basic education which targets young unemployed adults and adults with a low education level. In one adult learners group mobility, the programme combined ecological sustainability with cultural themes, engaging learners who initially joined for cultural exploration.

Among the case studies, one organisation had obtained environmental certification and sustainable development was a strong focus its strategy and activities. Furthermore, KA1 mobilities often integrated environmental sustainability into the programme and objectives of the mobility, or travel arrangements. The challenge with climate-friendly travel from Finland is that one must usually take a ferry to Estonia, Sweden or Germany, and depending on the destination, the travel may not be counted as “green” according to the Erasmus+ regulations.

Green travel can also seem burdensome especially for elderly people, or even impossible for people with physical disabilities. Another obstacle for green travel from Finland is the cost in terms of higher cost of the train tickets, and staff working time. The additional travel days needed for the staff mobilities increase the total cost of mobilities.

Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement

Among the horizontal priorities, respondents noted the most significant improvement in attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement. Over half reported much improvement (40% rather much, 16% very much), with only a small proportion noting little to no improvement (16%).

Nearly all respondents reported offering activities empowering learners to develop and express their own opinions (95%). The majority also indicated that their organisations offered activities promoting learners’ democratic participation (78%), spaces for learners to take/experience responsibility (76%) or structures in place that allow learners to influence the learning offer (62%). (Figure 24.)

“We have introduced so called customer councils where students can participate in the development of teaching.” (survey)

“Services for Ukrainians have been developed in collaboration, increasing language skills and meaningful doing.” (survey)

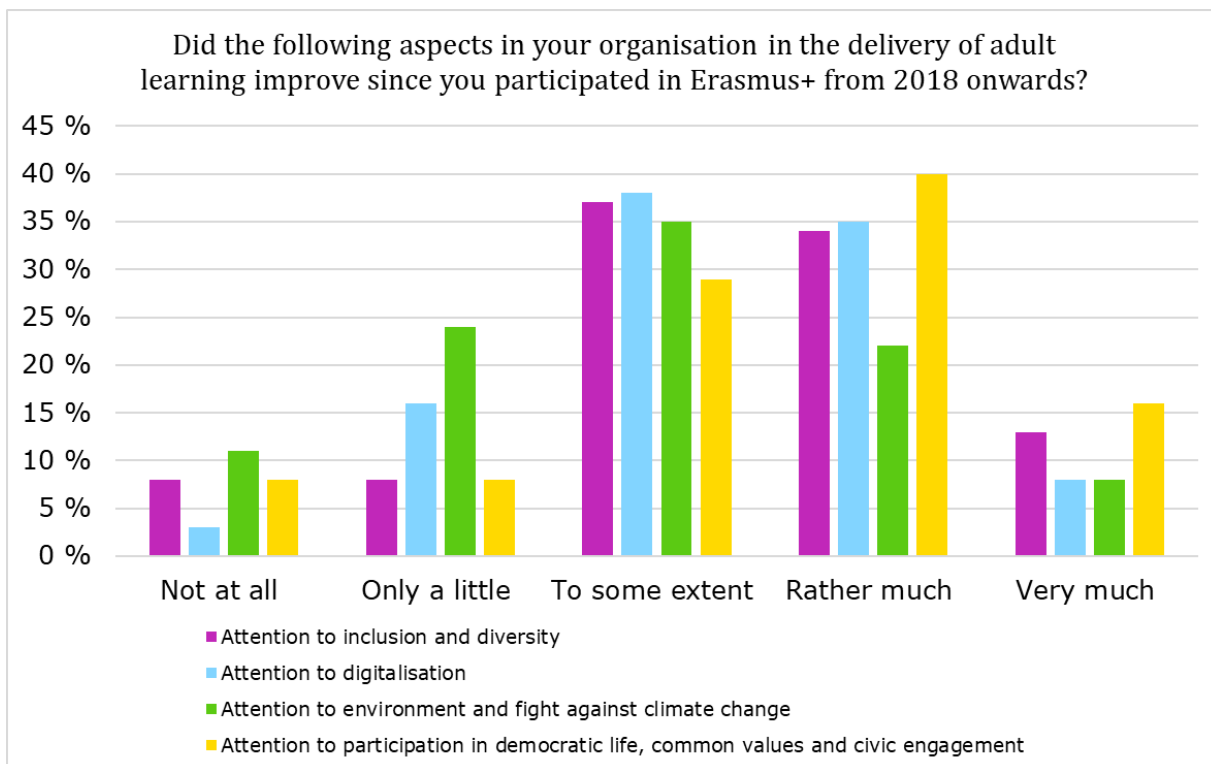
However, only a quarter of respondents reported having a strategy for promoting active citizenship and democracy (24%) or trained staff on active citizenship (27%). Interviewees across case study organisations highlighted the significance of discovering European identity, common values and joint goals through Erasmus+ programme. Participating in international projects often facilitated informal discussions among participants from different countries about historical, political and societal issues.

“Encountering a wider value base or overall humanity, and developing one’s own value thinking: this happens inevitably when you meet and work with different kinds of people. This is the

most important thing to me, always.”
(management)

“It has strengthened considerably the European identity which is there in the goals of Erasmus+ programme. That I belong to this community with professionals from all over Europe, and we are doing similar kind of work. We try to find a common language, and new methods of working together.” (staff)

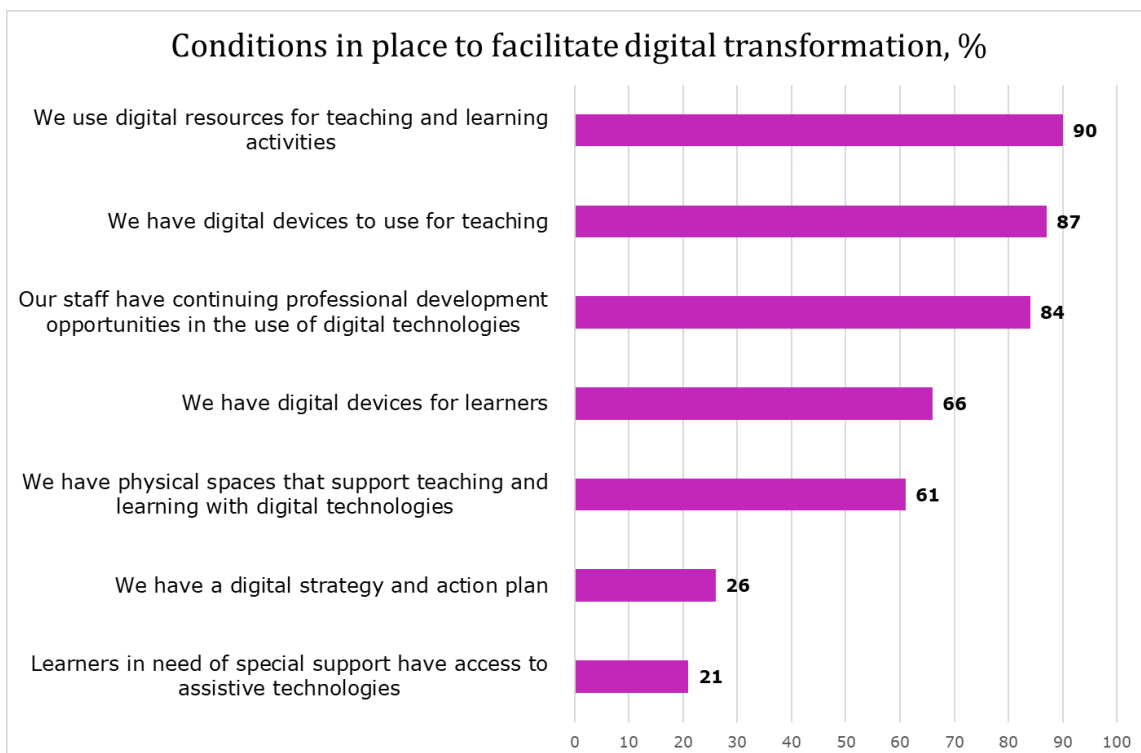
“These mobilities are vital to understanding of Europeanness. We speak a lot about what Europe is or who we are. We have Europe Day and this and that, but understanding at the grassroots level what that Europeanness is, in my mind that is important. These other people are doing exactly the same things over there, and this understanding makes us shift from some kind of prejudice to having a bit more knowledge.” (teacher)



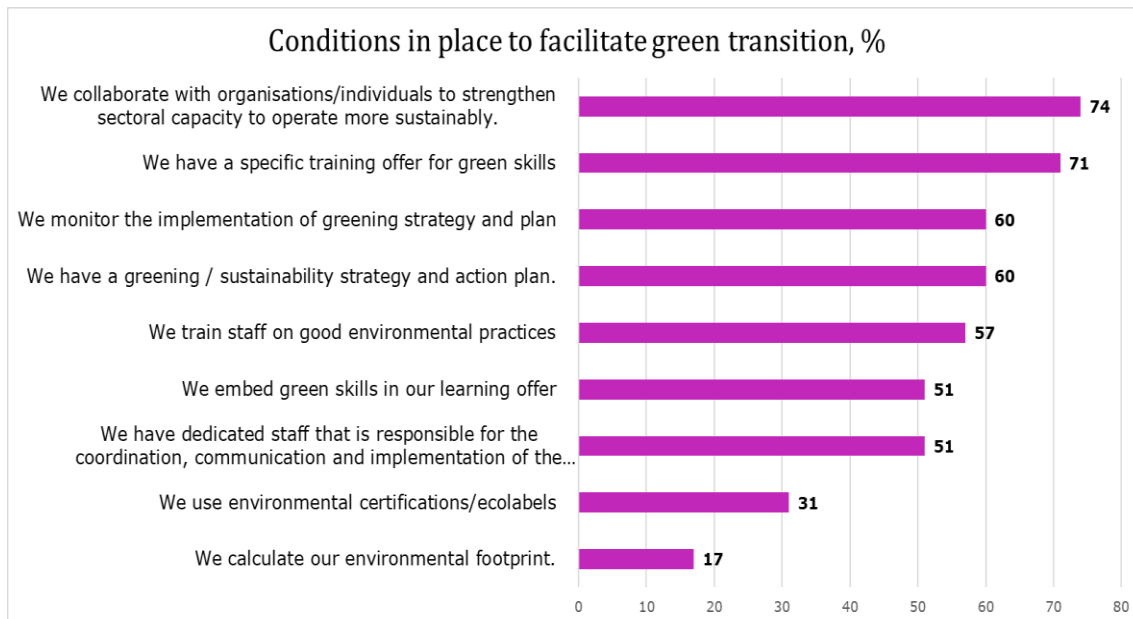
20. Improvement in horizontal aspects in the delivery of adult learning.



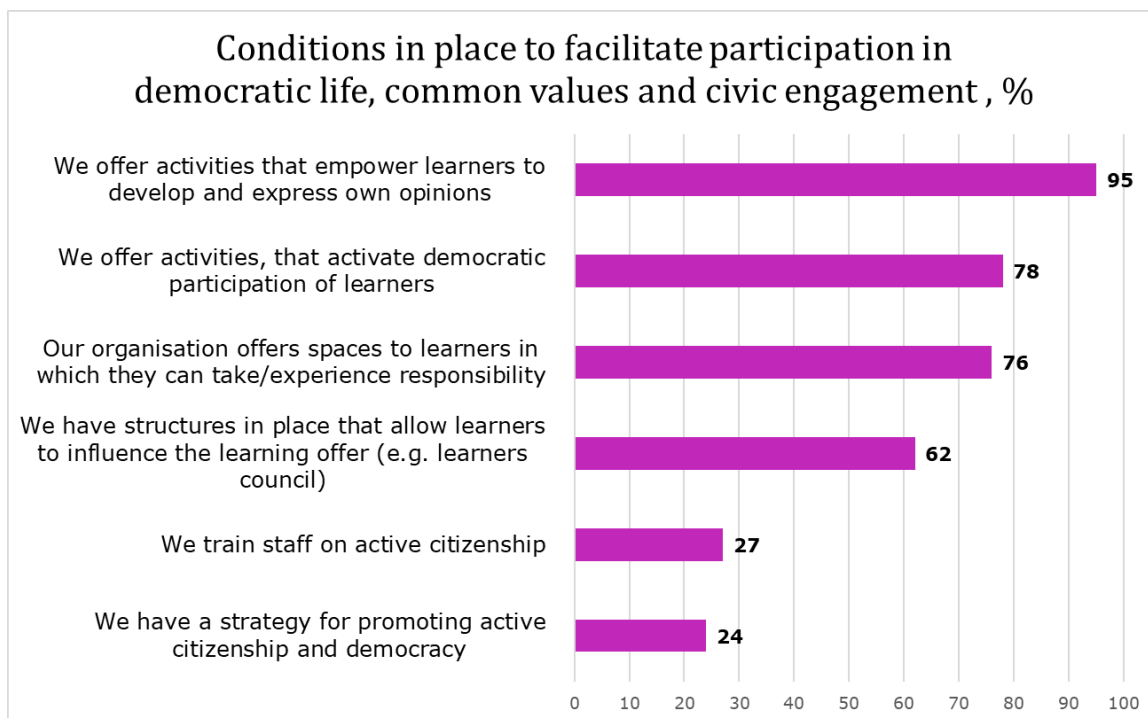
21. Conditions in place to facilitate inclusion and diversity.



22. Conditions in place to facilitate digital transformation.



23. Conditions in place to facilitate green transition.



24. Conditions in place to facilitate participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement.

4.4. Factors hampering or stimulating impact

Survey respondents and case study interviewees views on factors stimulating impact for KA1 and KA2 projects have been listed in the table 6. The commitment of management was highlighted as key for all kind of project impact, followed by trusted partners, being involved in the project planning, and aligning the project theme with the organisational strategy. Well-structured and prepared mobilities, as well as organising group mobilities for adult learners were highlighted.

In contrast, factors hampering impact, listed in table 7, include the difficulty of finding partners with the right motivation, not aligning project theme or outputs with the organisation's strategic needs, having little support from the management, and the need to demonstrate the added value and benefits to the management. The lack of motivation or practical possibilities for staff to participate and share their learning after the mobility activity were also mentioned.

Factors stimulating impact	
Overall	
Management commitment	
<p>Making development orientation visible in the organisation strategy helps to change the discussion paradigm of "we should focus on our basic work" into "development is our basic work", our goal is to improve and develop people's lives. Management shows support and belief truly in internationalisation, it is part of the strategy and normal activities without any "buts". Management should actively participate in mobilities or project work, reinforcing their commitment.</p> <p>"The commitment of school management is critical for long-term impact. The commitment does not happen if the principals or representatives of the education provider have never been enlightened about internationalisation. The management needs to know what kind of international activities are being done. The international dimension and benefits must be consistently highlighted in seminars, events, and strategic work of the management." (management)</p>	
KA2	KA1
Projects that are able to include widely staff and learners	Enough challenge to stretch participants outside their comfort zones
<p>Making people commit and have ownership of the project results ensures the most deepest, widest and long-term impact.</p> <p>Testing and disseminating outputs in teacher training enhances impact.</p> <p>Excitement among project workers and participants facilitates wider dissemination.</p>	<p>Moving to the zone of proximal development, a bit beyond than what one thought of being capable of doing creates a more lasting impact.</p> <p>Taking small steps to build on previous experiences: first listening to visiting international experts or workshops in Finland, then going for a staff mobility, then taking part in a KA2 project, and then taking a group of adult learners abroad.</p>
Outputs aligned with organisation's needs	Supporting participants with less opportunities to overcome practical obstacles for the mobility
<p>Outputs address existing needs among the organisation's clientele. Development of outputs considers national needs and how outputs will be embedded in the organisational activities.</p> <p>Project outputs are developed, not merely translated in national languages, making it possible to build, test and adapt them throughout and after the project.</p>	<p>"One coach was inviting me to participate. I was very hesitant. Kind of interested to go, but then again afraid, and would have liked to stay at home in my comfort zone. It felt quite tough to leave. I did not have a passport, and when I told this, they promised support for getting it. That was it then, I guess. I had no obstacle anymore, kind of." (learner)</p>

Factors stimulating impact	
KA2	KA1
Effective, collaborative planning process	Well-structured mobility programmes
<p>“That we plan the project together, that all partners commit and understand the project. That all actors have enough resources of their own throughout the project to participate and complete their own tasks.” (management)</p>	<p>Personal relevance – understanding what one can give and receive during the mobility – and clear objectives enhance programme effectiveness.</p>
	<p>Repeating communication and peer motivation</p> <p>Active encouragement from line managers, international coordinator, and peers promotes participation.</p> <p>Using various channels, e.g. meetings, blogs, vlogs, social media to share the experiences and repeat the messages several times.</p>
Knowing and trusting partners with joint motives	Grouping and preparing participants
<p>Having a clear joint focus and mutual interest in the project makes us keep on track and want to find solutions also on worse days.</p> <p>“The key to success is to have reliable partners, who are in this project activity for the same, right reasons, to develop something together, and we have a joint goal. That we are able to communicate understandably already before the project what are we doing and why.” (management)</p>	<p>Fostering group cohesion, creating group spirit, getting to know each other before departure, and managing expectations are crucial for successful mobilities.</p> <p>“We spend a lot of time for grouping and getting to know each other, as most of the people are unfamiliar with each other, and we are going to spend time closely together. We go through possible problem situations, how to discuss and deal with conflicts, and consider everyone’s needs. We try to form such an open discussion culture where everyone would be comfortable sharing their own thoughts and feelings.” (teacher)</p>

Table 6. Factors stimulating impact.

Factors hampering impact	
KA2	KA1
Difficulty finding partners with right motives and joint interests	Staff lack motivation, courage, or time for mobilities
<p>It is challenging to assess whether the project proposal and partnership composition is cost-effective; need to have recommendations from previous partners, looking up organisation's activities online, or seeing how communication works during the project planning phase.</p> <p>Trust can only develop through experience and working together – usually taking the risk to work with new partners is worthwhile.</p> <p>“Throughout the years I have seen many project professionals with briefcase companies. They manage very well certain procedures, know how to write applications, and how outputs need to be formulated, but if the heart and soul is missing, if the proposal does not link to any real activities or benefit local people and the organisation, then we are skating on thin ice.” (management)</p>	<p>All case study interviewees mentioned that failing to motivate staff to take part in mobilities or international projects hampers the impact. Obstacles mentioned by staff include language barriers, family commitments, workload, or lack of interest in internationalisation.</p> <p>Temporary, part-time contracts and seasonal nature of teachers' work especially in liberal adult education pose challenges for finding time for mobilities.</p> <p>“This work is seasonal. When the teaching period is finished, teachers might have another job or take vacation. During the semester, finding time for teachers' mobilities is challenging as they cannot miss giving classes, and we lack funding for substitute teachers. It is difficult to match the teachers' schedules with possible mobilities.” (management)</p>
Project theme or outputs not aligned with organisation's needs	Teachers uncompensated for disseminating learning
<p>If there is no existing need for the project outputs in our clientele, but one needs to create the purpose and opportunities to use the output.</p> <p>The absence of a national perspective on needs challenges the further use of project outputs.</p> <p>When the theme is incompatible with the organisation's strategic needs.</p> <p>Project outputs are not in national languages.</p> <p>Outputs result from too many compromises, requiring substantial resources for improvement.</p>	<p>Teachers in liberal adult education, often on part-time or temporary contracts, lack dedicated working time to disseminate their learning or new ideas from mobility periods to their peers within the organisation.</p> <p>“For example I have discovered these tools which would be beneficial for language teachers. I can use my working time to compile them, but temporary/part-time teachers are not remunerated for this work.” (staff)</p>
Not being involved in the project planning phase	Covid-19 pandemic
<p>Equal participation in joint project planning creates a stronger foundation for the project.</p>	<p>The pandemic caused almost full stop of Erasmus+ mobilities for two years. People are still reluctant to travel.</p>

Factors hampering impact	
KA2	KA1
Management lukewarm towards the project theme or internationalisation	Social worker or employment service stereotypes
The attitude of management is crucial. If they only see internationalisation as an expense rather than a benefit, they fear to invest in it. Then internationality only stays in speech instead of moving into practice.	“Especially for the public sector it has been really hard to understand why we are taking people in vulnerable situations abroad. Can they not just be satisfied staying at the workshop and help them at home, why go abroad? And then we must explain to every single social worker, study counsellor, and so on, that if this person has nothing to expect from the future, they are not feeling better. It feels like public sector officials have this idea that each person must remain in their right place, and they cannot change their position. That if a person once goes to a breadline, then that person is always someone who goes to a breadline. We just have to help the person, perhaps delivering the food aid at home in the future, so they would not have to go to the breadline. But that person will never work or study, because they will always be the person who receives food aid. This, to me, is a terribly depressing thought. That we are categorising people in this way.” (management)
Outdated outputs	Measuring or attributing impacts is challenging
Older outputs would require regular updating and further development to remain relevant.	“Intellectual capital, language skills, or atmosphere in the educational institution, all these kinds of things. How do you measure them? Like the positive attitude towards other cultures? Or gaining soft skills that are important for employment? It is difficult to demonstrate that these have been increased because of international mobility. And perhaps our management does not consider these as valuable as some other measurements.” (teacher)
	Climate change
	Some people might want to avoid flying due to increased concern over climate change.

Table 7. Factors hampering impact.

4.5. Conclusions

Conclusions on the impact of Erasmus+ at meso level

The Erasmus+ programme has significantly influenced the participating adult education organisations in Finland, leading to considerable impacts on internationalisation, learning offer, and adherence to the horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme.

Main impacts on internationalisation

Erasmus+ has largely succeeded in supporting the development of the international dimension within participating organisations. There has been a noticeable improvement in project management competence, the formation of international networks, and the strategic planning of international activities. Most respondent organisations now have guidelines or processes for managing international projects, and a majority discuss the development of international competences during staff performance appraisals. Nevertheless, dedicated budgets and formal strategies for internationalisation are less common.

Main impacts on learning offer

The learning offer has diversified and become more aligned with the needs of adult learners, demonstrating the impact of Erasmus+ participation on learning content and teaching methods. New courses have been introduced, existing ones enhanced, and digital elements incorporated.

Main impacts on horizontal priorities

Erasmus+ has contributed notably to enhancing inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, the green transition and participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement within the participating organisations. Erasmus+ project outputs have advanced these horizontal priorities in participating organisations. However, respondent organisations reported varied advancement in these areas, with different levels of improvement e.g. in increasing sustainability practices or learning offer on green skills in their organisation.

Factors hampering impact

Challenges include maintaining and disseminating project outcomes, difficulties in aligning project themes and objectives with strategic needs of the organisation, the ability to incorporate outputs into national contexts, and motivational barriers for staff participation. The effect of Covid-19 pandemic and misconceptions from social service structures regarding the benefits of mobility for people in vulnerable positions further hindered impact.

Factors stimulating impact

Active support and commitment from organisation management, strategic involvement in projects, robust groundwork and networking for trustworthy, high-quality partnerships, and the capability to apply project results effectively locally have all stimulated the impact of Erasmus+. Facilitating practical support for participants with fewer opportunities, proactive communication, and well-structured preparation of participants for mobilities were also emphasised.

5. Impact of Erasmus+ at micro level

5.1. Introduction

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

5.2. Impact on staff

To assess the impact of Erasmus+ on staff in adult education, three different sources were used. In addition to the survey and case study interviews conducted for this study, also Erasmus+ participant reports from staff mobilities between

January 2018 and May 2023 (N=879) were analysed.

The most common destination country for staff mobilities during this period was Spain (15 %), followed by Italy (12%), Ireland (8%), the UK (8%) and Germany (6%). Two-thirds of participants were on their first staff mobility period financed by the Erasmus+ programme. The most common activity types were participation in a structured course (42%) and job-shadowing/observation period (41%). Only 10 percent had participated in a training event, such as conference, and a mere 7 percent in a teaching or training assignment. Approximately 16 percent of staff mobility participants were male, and 84 percent female.

Nearly all Erasmus+ participant survey respondents (99%) would recommend this experience to a colleague.

For all participants (N=879) who had responded to the Erasmus+ participant survey from January 2018 to May 2023, the highest mean scores (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree) were for the statements "learned from good practice abroad" (4,45), "gained practical skills relevant for my current job and professional development" (4,44) and "using new teaching/training methods, approaches and good practices at my sending institution" (4,39). The lowest means were for "learning to learn" (3,13), "digital competence" (2,66) and "competences mathematics, science and technology" (2,01). The full table with competence statements from the Erasmus+ participant survey is in the Annex 1.

Emotional skills, such as having increased self-confidence, were highly rated by mobility participants from Finland (mean 4,18). Case study interviews confirmed this, indicating that staff members not only strengthen their professional identity, but also their self-efficacy and confidence to manage abroad within their professional sphere and as representatives of their organisation in a foreign language. However, staff members may also experience uncertainty and lack of courage before their first international mobility.

Survey results from the RIA-AE survey on the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on staff professionalisation and development are presented in the Figure 25.

International competence, 97%

The top impact on staff professionalisation and development, as named by survey respondents, was "our staff has better international competence" (97% agree). This included for example increased language awareness (kielitietoisuus), which was highlighted as a specific skill that had improved as a result of staff mobilities, facilitating the ability to teach multilingual student groups.

These impacts were also mentioned often in the case study interviews. Details are already discussed earlier under the horizontal priorities of meso-level impacts, as it can be difficult to distinguish the line between individual staff development of these competences, and the value that these more competent staff bring to the organisation with their improved competences.

"It has broadened all kinds of thinking. Like about teacher's work and cultures, and broadened one's own worldview, maybe made myself become more European. That I am not only a Finn, but maybe feel like I belong more to Europe, or European community." (teacher)

Inclusion and diversity, 83%

The second highest rated impact in the survey was "our staff pays more attention to inclusion and diversity" (83% agree).

"Staff considers accessibility better than before; both physical accessibility when it comes to learning spaces and joint events, and digital accessibility." (survey)

Engaging with innovation processes, 80%

The third highest rated statement for staff impact was "our staff is better able to engage into innovation processes" (80% agree). This was described as staff being more enthusiastic and open-minded to participate in new projects. Staff mobilities were described as a platform to deepen collaboration and learning from each other, for

example starting to plan a joint development project or adult learner mobilities together. Interviewees described how being outside one's own routines and seeing other ways of doing things provided a critical view to one's own work. Comparing ways of working with peers in another country helps to understand what one could do differently. One teacher described how she had changed her thoughts on adult learning, often perceived as "serious", and understood how adults might also enjoy playful, fun learning.

Following the PISA success in early 2000s, the Finnish education system has been admired internationally. This may have also caused complacency among Finnish education sectors at large. Case study interviewees note how participating in Erasmus+ projects has revealed prejudices on the value of working with some European countries, how "there is nothing worth bringing from there to Finland". Instead of dwelling in the Finnish presumed excellency, Erasmus+ experiences remind of the need to continually develop and learn from each other:

"Perhaps a positive surprise has been how people always talk about how high-quality Finnish education is, how we are the best in Europe, the best in the world and so on. But then we have seen also very progressive educational institutions outside Finland. That maybe also in Finland we should remember that you must constantly evolve, that otherwise we will really fall off the wagon of development. We will not be even in top ten anymore soon if we do not continue developing, sometimes it feels like elsewhere there is this more powerful drive to develop." (teacher)

Language skills, 77%

The courage and confidence to communicate in other languages was mentioned repeatedly in the survey responses and case study interviews. One survey respondent noted how staff being braver with their language skills has enabled them to organize e.g. bilingual story lessons for children. Improved professional language skills make it easier to also search for teaching resources in foreign languages online.

"It helps to verbalise and package one's own work: what is that we actually, what is it that I am actually doing in this job? What are we doing in our organisation? How do I tell that in English, and how can I explain it in another context in a way that people understand. Strengthening one's own professional identity and finding one's own place in the European context: what field am I working on, and what kind of work do I do." (staff)

Pedagogical and didactical skills, 77%

More than three thirds of survey respondents agreed that pedagogical and didactical skills were improved as a result of Erasmus+. New pedagogical methods included for instance flipped learning, participatory methods, or facilitation skills.

Staff wellbeing and work motivation

Case studies and open responses in the survey also revealed aspects that were not present in the multiple-choice questions. The Erasmus+ participant survey has an option for "become more motivated to carry on developing my professional skills" (mean 3,84), but both survey responses and case study interviewees rather stressed the inspiration and refreshment gained from international mobilities to continue doing one's own work – perhaps with new ideas and energy. Increased work motivation, satisfaction and wellbeing among staff was underlined several times. International projects offer the chance to learn a lot of oneself, develop as a worker and professional – and to have a break from ordinary routines.

"It is such a clear change to your normal everyday as a teacher. You can test how are you actually able to teach outside the classroom, in the field. That teaches both the teacher and the organisation on how to function outside your own organisation with other stakeholders: all the things you have to take into account to make things go smoothly. It is good to go sometimes outside your own organisation to see how others are teaching these things, to see different ways of doing. You get this kind of critical look to your own doing, what could I do differently, what could I take away with me from here." (teacher)

Facilitating cooperation within one’s own workplace

Group staff mobilities have had wider impacts for the workplace: when the participants have gotten to know people from other teams or departments during a joint mobility, cooperation has become easier as participants have gained a better understanding of their colleagues’ expertise.

“We have tried to build this kind of inter-team cooperation spirit inside our house: let’s get excited across teams on this topic, this could develop our organisation and increase our cooperation possibilities, we can get to know each other during the mobility. I have realised that when we have internal knowledge about each other’s competence, we can also share it.” (staff)

“That I am not just working on my own plot here, but we are together defenders of ‘everyday Bildung’, we are doing this together. Then it is easier in the future to call your friend that hey, I have this question, and you knew about this thing, right? It makes working together easier. This kind of hidden agenda is always included there.” (management)

Increased staff commitment to the organisation

Management level of the case study organisations especially highlighted that Erasmus+ functions as a tool for professional development. Offering quality learning opportunities for staff to develop themselves and meet colleagues from other countries brings added value and commits staff to the organisation, “it is worth working here also in the future”. This was especially significant for part-time teachers in liberal adult education.

“At the organisational level [Erasmus+ mobilities] are an important tool for developing our activities. It is also an important pull factor to us that commits staff, both part-time and full-time staff. Not all adult education centers are able to do this and be this engaged. We consider Erasmus+ projects as a tool for continuous professional development. In KA1 courses or job shadowing, or in any KA2 project, you always learn something about project management, languages, cultures, your own activities and modes of operation.” (management)



25. Impact of Erasmus+ on staff professionalisation and development.

5.3. Impact on adult learners

Given the absence of data from Erasmus+ participant surveys by adult learners, our assessment relies on the survey conducted specifically for this study, and especially on the case study interviews with adult learners.

In the impact survey (Figure 26), the majority of respondents agreed with these two statements regarding the impact of participation in Erasmus+ in their organisation: "the living environment/world of our learners has been enriched" (80% agree), and "our learners have gained new social contacts outside of their own environment (74% agree). However, statements regarding moving on to other learning programmes, increased participation in other activities, or enhanced prospects on the labour market were less agreed upon. One survey respondent remarked:

"It is difficult to evaluate people living across Finland and how they participate in their own environments or chances on the labour market. Of course, there are single examples of these as well." (survey)

In the case study interviews, the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on adult learners was described as various skills, knowledge, attitudes and competences by teachers, international coordinators, and the adult learners themselves. In addition to improved language skills and intercultural awareness, particularly socio-emotional skills, including empowerment, self-esteem, self-confidence, communication, self-awareness, tolerating uncertainty, perseverance and flexibility were stressed.

Social inclusion, enabling people from different backgrounds to interact and participate in a mobility, was also frequently mentioned. Lifelong learning, improving learners' motivation to take part in education and training was mentioned by some interviewees. While there were instances of positive labour market outcomes, such as improved employability or career prospects, these were not universally recognised as the main value of Erasmus+ mobilities.

"The skills that learners develop are extremely versatile. Digital skills, for example using maps and translation apps, then cooperation skills and especially social skills, because those mobilities are so intensive. Everything is new, you are in a new place, days might be long. That requires patience, and that you are able to verbalise your feelings and maintain your own wellbeing." (staff)

Among horizontal priorities, the priorities of inclusion and diversity, and participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement were highlighted most in case study interviews. Participants acknowledged the support and reaching out to diverse groups of people, including individuals with disabilities, health problems, social or economic barriers, and geographical constraints.

However, while migrants or refugees were often the focus of many adult education institutions in their Erasmus+ projects, they were not specifically highlighted as active participants in adult learner mobilities. Similarly, among the case study interviewees, cultural barriers were not mentioned, and all interviewed learners spoke Finnish as their mother tongue. Other cultural or linguistic minorities, such as the Roma people or sign language users were not mentioned in the interviews either.

Regarding the horizontal priority of participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement, the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners was clear in the development of social and intercultural competences, as well as raising awareness of and understanding the EU context, including the common values.

The priority of environment and fight against the climate change was observed in the programme content of certain Erasmus+ mobilities, and in the chosen modes of transportation. Learners had also noted differences in environmental practices such as recycling during their mobility period. However, discussions on digital transformation were relatively limited in the adult learners' interviews.

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Improved language skills

Using a foreign language during the mobility experience, such as German, inspired one adult learner to revive their Swedish language skills, applying the newfound confidence and language skills to other activities back in Finland:

"I had spoken German probably 30 years ago last time, and actually surprised myself that I was able to speak it much better than what I had thought. This raised my interest to revive my language skills, but after the mobility it was a pity not to be able to go to Germany to speak. Then I started to revive Swedish, as I have now more chances for that because of my friend circles. So from there I got this inspiration to revive language skills. I think it was because of this mobility that this kind of courage to speak Swedish increased." (learner)

Informal opportunities arose in another adult learners' group mobility to a local adult community college in Italy:

"One evening we went to the hotel downstairs pub, and started talking with local people there. They tried to find some words of English, and then we used Italian language translate from Google, and well, we chatted for a few hours there together. (learner)

Intercultural awareness

Learners and staff stressed the significance of interacting with peers from different countries during Erasmus+ mobility periods. While cultural differences were acknowledged, the overarching sentiment was "people are people everywhere". One teacher highlighted the value of having a hands-on experience of another culture: feeling the atmosphere and cultural change, seeing how people speak and behave, or touching the buildings.

"It is empowering for many of our students that when you get to see the world, travel to new environments, and manage there with your language skills, intercultural and communication skills: they notice that we have more in common than differences with these other people in other

countries. An Italian adult learner faces similar challenges and joys as a Finnish learner." (management)

"We developed that kind of exciting fellowship with them. Somehow that we are alike. And that we can really learn from each other." (learner)

"That kind of internationality, all the things you can gain when you get to know people from different countries. Kind of wider curiosity, and courage to throw oneself into the unknown. At least myself, I am not that social person always necessarily." (learner)

"I started to think that I could work with migrants. I would like to expand my thinking towards foreigners even more." (learner)

In learners' mobility with people recovering from substance abuse, it was especially meaningful to visit local NA group and find local peer support in an international context.

Discussing European and national identities, and the meaning of being a Finn or a European was also tackled before, during and after some group mobilities.

"It was good to think about prejudices and stereotypes, cultures and such. How this kind of strong patriotism and multiculturalism could discuss with each other. That was a very thought-provoking thing during the mobility." (learner)

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Empowerment

A staff member described how social interaction and experiencing new things has given adult learners the chance to break the ice and learn about their own capabilities and possibilities through the mobility.

"That kind of self-confidence and trust. Like I managed there as well, it does affect the way I work now. I am surely more self-confident because of those mobility periods." (learner)

"You got to know so many new people from different cultures. Then you noticed that you can get along with everyone and survive those social situations." (learner)

“We agreed that everyone is allowed to be themselves. And if you feel too tired to join some activity, you say this safe word, and can go back to the hotel to rest, for example.” (learner)

Self-awareness

Learners described how mobility experiences allowed them to recognise and utilize their strengths more effectively, with dormant skills, such as language proficiency, being reinvigorated.

Perseverance and flexibility

Mobility participants stressed the importance of resilience, persistence, and adaptability to tolerate sometimes very long programme days and diverse social dynamics of the group participating in the mobility, sometimes causing social conflicts. Group mobilities require team spirit and making compromises.

“I was completely exhausted already, and this one group member hurt their foot. Then I still discovered this empathy and real desire to help, although I was feeling really irritated. When I had to, I was still able to switch to this extra gear, to calm down and do sensible measures. That has given me self-confidence and that kind of self-esteem. The day had been so long already, I was completely exhausted, but I was able to continue and put on a work mode on, to do what one had to do, and succeed in that so well. That gave me a lot of self-confidence. It reminded me that I have these resources which I can stretch when needed to, that I do not break.” (learner)

Tolerating uncertainty

Adult learners engaged in a longer-term KA2 project expressed grappling with uncertainty, particularly in facing challenges and doubts regarding their abilities due to the difficulty of the symphonies they were practicing for. They had a long preparation for the project end result, which were joint practice weeks and symphony concerts with peers from Italy and Germany. However, these experiences were seen as opportunities for growth and learning:

“That is the thing, we prepared for a long time and devotedly for this thing by practicing together in Finland. When the project lasts such a long time, you grow and learn things you thought you would never learn. You learn to be persistent and face your own uncertainties.” (learner)

One case study group mobility included participants with challenging backgrounds: recovering from substance abuse, mental health issues, or ex-convicts. They faced different kinds of uncertainties before and during their mobility.

“I was afraid to go on the trip. Just going to the discomfort zone, when you did not really know what was coming. And also my recovery was then, not at the very early stage, but not that advanced still. So it was pretty exciting.” (learner)

Increased self-confidence and self-esteem

The majority of interviewees reported the growth of self-confidence and self-esteem during and after their mobility periods. These might have manifested through the hobby that brought them to the mobility, such as music instrument players receiving praise and recognition for their musical skills also in their local community during the final concert.

Teachers guiding a group of adult learners who had little experiences of travelling abroad described:

“Self-esteem, or self-worth, or something like that. I saw some of the learners looking towards distance with a smile on their face. You could see that we are on the verge of big things here. Someone was moved when we got to the first destination, that I am actually for the first time abroad. That I am in this situation, I have become this kind of person who does this, and I am here.” (teacher)

Staff saw that growing self-efficacy among learners was a priority: gaining an understanding that one is capable of doing something one did not know before.

“Obstacles that felt like them before were not obstacles anymore. Somehow this opening of opportunities, self-efficacy, that kind of peaking

outside one's own country, not just people and cultures of one's own country, but also looking far from oneself. We have a lot of customers with prison and substance abuse background, long unemployment, all kinds of things that may have weakened self-esteem, or created a lack of prospects. Then seeing how there are so many other things in the world, that on its own is such an amazing value." (staff)

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

Finding a future work direction

While a minority of survey respondents (29 percent) agreed with the statement that participation in Erasmus+ had given more chances for their learners on the labour market, interviewees shared some examples suggesting a positive impact, including newfound career directions and increased motivation for further training. Being insecure of own thinking, but then being able to find a future direction in terms of work or education was mentioned by learners and staff.

"I get to participate for free on such a trip which expands my thinking world terribly, and get to see other countries. I had been doing an internship in the social sector before. But having this background, a long spiral of crime and substance abuse, I had thought that I will go somewhere else, that I am not for this job. But on that mobility, something happened. I got this kind of compassion towards the customers, and it somehow impacted me in that way that I did want to stay in this sector and help people." (learner)

Another adult learner had been unemployed and struggling with depression before the mobility. In the group, he encountered people with different backgrounds and working in diverse sectors, received tips on possible future directions, and was inspired to participate in further training as a tourist guide after the mobility.

Due to GDPR reasons, the case study organisation working with people in marginalized positions does not keep records of their participants after the mobility has ended. This means that they have to

rely more on anecdotal evidence on their adult learners' employment:

"Unfortunately we do not have a strong statistical data here, but my feeling is, or I know that our adult learners have become employed after these mobility periods. It is not necessarily the only reason, there are other factors promoting employment, but you gain such a boost to go forward from the mobility. From a societal perspective, it is a huge gain, if a person who has suffered for years, or decades, of substance addiction or has a criminal background, and then becomes employed. This is such a massive social impact." (staff)

Increased motivation for lifelong learning

Most of the interviewees were already active adult learners, and had participated in several courses of the adult education centre that was organising the learner mobility. Lifelong learning was thus not a new thing for them. However, participation in Erasmus+ projects was found to reinforce adult learners' motivation for education, for example in the case of adult music learners realizing much more challenging repertoire than they thought was possible. Meeting and interacting with peers from another country increased their motivation to continue playing.

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Group mobility as an enabler of participation

Without exception, interviewed adult learners expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in an Erasmus+ mobility, gain an unforgettable experience and overcome barriers such as lack of courage, physical, social or economic constraints. The group created safety and opportunity for participation.

"Can it be possible, that this kind of old person could go on a trip like this with project funding: it

felt completely inconceivable. Of course I wanted to go, it felt like a joke.” (learner)

“I walk with a stick due to such a bad osteoarthritis, so I would not be able to go backpacking alone.” (learner)

Interviewed staff members confirmed the importance of organising adult learners’ mobilities in a safe group. This enables the participation of also those people who do not have the courage, or who cannot travel on their own, for example due to physical limitations. As a group member you are taken care of, everything is organised and you learn at the same time.

Economic support

Economic barriers were cited as significant obstacles by several participants, underscoring the importance of Erasmus+ funding in facilitating participation among economically disadvantaged individuals.

“I was unemployed at the time. I did not have a job then. I would not have any possibility to go on a week of backpacking, and I would not have had the courage either to go alone by train, as I rarely use trains even inside Finland.” (learner)

Encountering diversity in the group

The diverse composition of mobility groups was seen as instrumental in facilitating interactions among individuals from varied backgrounds, fostering communication, and mitigating stigmatization. One adult learner noted that it is important to have mixed groups, instead of only having a group of unemployed people, for example, participating. The groups were diverse in many ways: age, employment status, educational background, and so on. The group mobility thus not only made it possible to participate in the mobility, but also made people encounter diverse people whom they might not have interacted with otherwise.

Peer support

Participants highlighted the supportive environment of mobility groups, where shared experiences and mutual encouragement played a

crucial role in personal growth and development. Staff in one of the case study organisations described how one week of mobility meant a giant leap on their customers’ recovery path, corresponding to a year of progress in their “normal” life in Finland:

“There is some kind of magic there. It must be the new environment. And this inclusion overall, that I am like part of these people who go somewhere on an airplane, and that these opportunities are actually open and accessible for me. And then surely the support of peers. There is this new environment, where we survive together, we go and learn together. If there are people coming from similar backgrounds, you can reflect together, how have you been doing on your path, where are you planning to go next, and where could I go next?” (staff)

Increased well-being

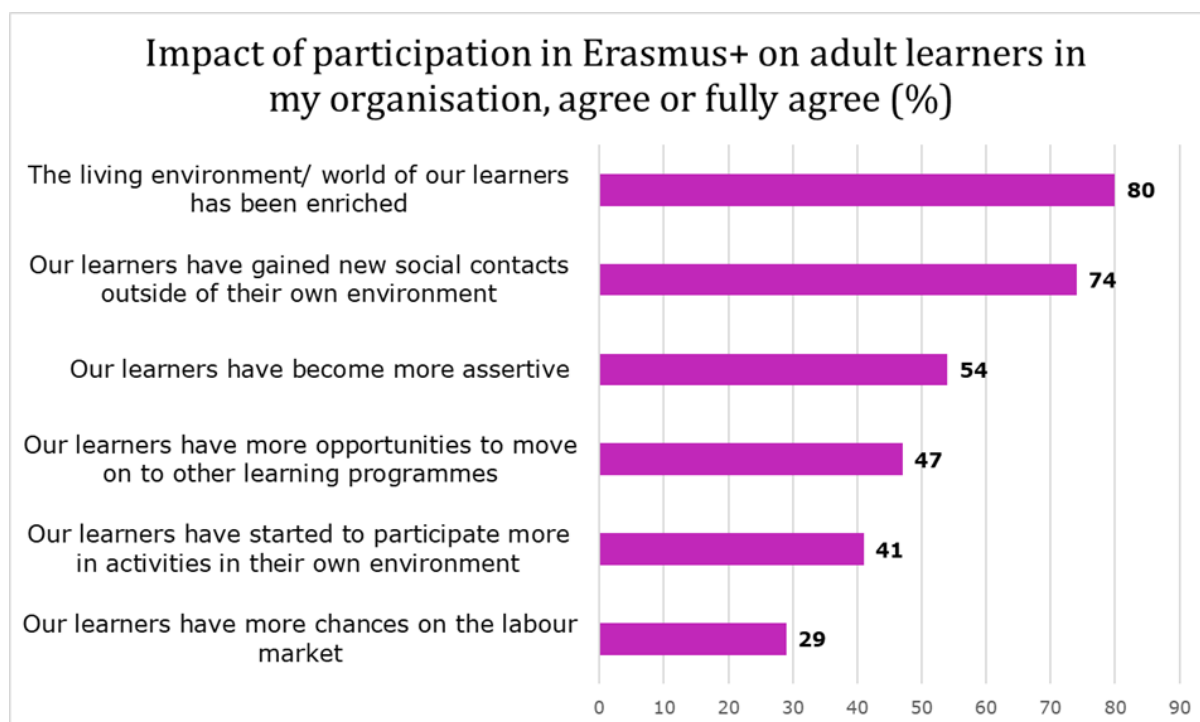
Similarly to staff, learners mentioned the increase in their own well-being as an important impact of Erasmus+ mobilities.

“I think if you are able to participate in a right kind of mobility that suits you, and if it strengthens you and adds positivity, that can create all kind of good thoughts that will help you in the future, one way or another.” (learner)

Interviewed staff confirmed this: adult learners reported that the mobility strengthened their well-being despite being really taxing, hard, and intensive.

“Considering how tough the mobility is, with traveling, stress and excitement involved, then despite all this the trip increases well-being. It has been surprising: somehow you would think that maybe well-being is not the number one thing, but it has been mentioned there really often.” (staff)

One teacher noted the value of social aspect for mental well-being. Especially if one has physical obstacles or other barriers to participate, then being able to join a hobby or learner group and do enjoyable things together fills an important social need.



26. Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on adult learners.

5.4. Conclusions

Erasmus+ has had a profound and multifaceted impact on both staff and adult learners within participating organisations in Finland. The programme has facilitated professional development, social inclusion, and international competence, notably enhancing intercultural awareness and language skills.

Main impacts on staff

Erasmus+ has significantly augmented the international competencies of staff, with a majority reporting better understanding and application of good practices, practical skills relevant to their jobs, and use of innovative teaching methods upon their return. Participation has fostered professional development, boosting language skills, cultural awareness, and pedagogical capabilities. Additionally, it has had a positive impact on staff's social and emotional skills, increasing self-confidence, a sense of initiative, and improved team working abilities. Many staff members express increased job satisfaction, motivation, and well-being as a result of their involvement in Erasmus+ programme.

Main impacts on adult learners

For adult learners, Erasmus+ has enriched their living environments and broadened their social networks. While the direct impact on further educational enrolment or labour market success is less clear, there is evidence of increased intercultural competence, language skills, socio-emotional development – including empowerment and self-awareness – as well as resilience in navigating uncertainties. Adult learners express an increased sense of European identity and appreciation for European common values stemming from their participation.

Factors hampering impact

Barriers to impact include logistical challenges such as time constraints for staff involvement in mobilities, alongside stereotypes and language barriers. The Covid-19 pandemic notably disrupted mobility activities. In addition to supporting participants to overcome physical, social, or economic barriers to participation, both staff and learners need continued encouragement and support to overcome potential insecurities and to cultivate the self-confidence and motivation necessary to engage with Erasmus+ activities.

Factors stimulating impact

The impact of Erasmus+ is amplified when there is strong commitment from management and when projects align with the strategic goals of an organisation. Trustworthy partnerships, thorough planning, and preparation significantly contribute to successful outcomes. Increased participation is fostered through well-structured programmes that resonate with participants, effective communication strategies, and support from line managers and other staff members that promote greater staff involvement, alongside support for overcoming practical barriers for adult learners.

6. Impact of Erasmus+ at macro level

6.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the impact of Erasmus+ beyond participating organisations. It addresses aspects such as how other organisations have benefitted from project outcomes, and whether adjustments have been made to their learning provision, or to governmental or sectoral policies at the national, regional, or local levels due to Erasmus+ projects.

6.2. Impact on other organisations

Over half of survey respondents, 54 percent, agreed with the statement that other organisations had benefitted from their project outcomes (Figure 27). However, respondents noted in the comments section that often project are too modest to induce significant changes beyond their own organisation, and tracking broader impact post-project conclusion is rarely possible.

Positive examples of influence on other organisations included:

“We have served as an inspiring example of integrating sustainable development to our educational activities. Building upon the Erasmus+ partnership project we coordinated, we are expanding the educational mandate of our adult education centre to encompass sustainable development.” (survey)

“Through a connection established by one of our teachers, a Finnish NGO became involved in an international Erasmus+ project. This stands out as one of the most rewarding and tangible outcomes.” (survey)

“Our municipality has become motivated to apply for an accreditation, inspired by successful projects.” (survey)

“We are a small and niche player with limited influence at the policy level. However, as a spin-off of projects, we have activated significant collaboration with universities and different national networks. Our trained instructors have also led groups in new, more prominent fora, such as regional and national sector-specific training events.” (survey)

A more immediate, direct impact was observed in Northern Savonia, where an adult education centre organised a novel cultural experience for local audiences in a remote geographical area as part of their Erasmus+ KA2 project. This was perceived as a means to promote health and well-being at the community level.

“We organised one of the symphony concerts in this small municipality which had never hosted a symphony orchestra before. That set the whole village in motion, and we have received a lot of positive feedback, and most probably experiences for a lifetime. It was a great moment also for the players, because quite many in the audience had tears in their eyes. When the audience stood up at the end of the concert and our players saw how deeply it had affected them: This was a wonderful moment for this whole project.” (teacher)

“We had people in this concert who had never been to a classical music concert in their life. They were moved to tears, and asked whether this can

exist, can this classical music be so wonderful? They had not realised it before.” (learner)

Increased visibility in local newspapers and the participation of municipal leaders in the project final events also augmented the local impact of the project outputs.

Adult education centres participate actively in local, regional and national networks. These provide a platform to disseminate project outputs more extensively.

“A year ago I organised this kind of “stirring up Erasmus+ seminar” here and invited principals and planners from neighbouring adult education centres, community colleges and music colleges to participate. I shared our experience in international projects, what we have achieved and why we think you should engage in similar activities. As a result, new schools applied for KA1 projects.” (management)

Thus, adult education centres are well connected with each other, but they are hoping to foster stronger connections with secondary and higher education networks in international matters. Adult education centres could serve as valuable partners for low-threshold adult education in projects. Some have successfully collaborated with other local institutions:

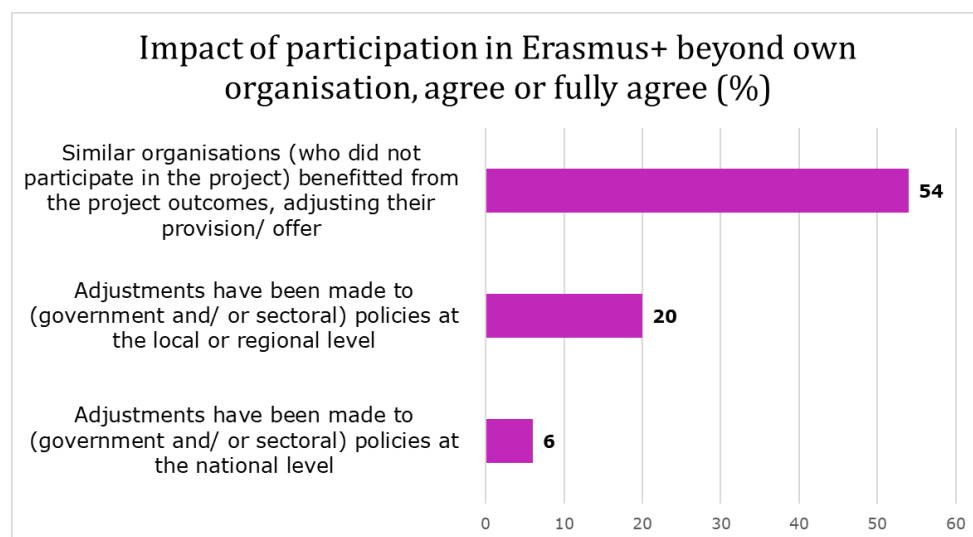
“Through these projects, we have forged partnerships here at the local level, depending on the theme of the project. We cooperate with general upper secondary school, comprehensive school, or with cultural actors, libraries or youth services.” (management)

It was also mentioned that in small municipality, hosting incoming international mobility or KA2 project meetings and events also benefits local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, or transportation services.

6.3. Impact on national, regional and sectoral policies

Far fewer respondents agreed that the impact of Erasmus+ participation would lead to adjustments in policies at the local or regional level (20 % agree or fully agree), and even less at the national level (6 % agree or fully agree).

Principals of adult education centres funded by local municipalities are part of the local decision-making processes, allowing them to share their experiences through annual reports and during budgetary deliberations. They can also influence the strategic processes and advocate for the importance of Erasmus+ and other internationalisation opportunities when drafting new objectives and action plans for the municipality.



27. Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on macro level.

Civil society organisations have reached out to policymakers at the national level, for example sharing insights gained from a mobility project focusing on the lives of homeless people across different countries. Presenting clients' perspectives to decision-makers, for example collected through small surveys has also been practiced.

6.4. Conclusions

While Erasmus+ projects in Finland have positively impacted other organisations and the adult education sector, having a more substantial role in affecting policymaking remains an area that could be further developed.

Main impact on other organisations

The Erasmus+ programme has demonstrated a significant impact on adult education both locally and nationally in Finland. Over half of survey respondents acknowledged that other organisations had benefitted from the outcomes of Erasmus+ projects, highlighting spillover effects such as the adoption of sustainable development practices, motivation to pursue Erasmus+ accreditation, and increased collaboration with other organisations and national networks. Erasmus+ projects have served as catalysts for innovation and inspiration among peer organisations.

Main impact on government policies

Government policies at local, regional, and national levels, however, seem less influenced by Erasmus+ initiatives. Both local and regional policy adjustments are limited (with 20% of respondents recognising an impact) and even more so at the national level (6%). Despite this, the principals of adult education centres, who often hold a dual role as local decision-makers, utilize Erasmus+ experiences to shape municipal strategies and budgeting processes.

Factors hampering or stimulating impact

A significant barrier to witnessing a broader impact is the small scale and narrow scope of some projects, combined with the difficulty in monitoring their extended influence once the projects have ended.

Factors stimulating impact include local and regional networking events facilitated by adult education centres, regional and national networks of educational institutions, and involving local businesses in Erasmus+ activities.

7. Support of National Agency: strengths and challenges

7.1. Key findings

Strengths

One of the key strengths in the Finnish adult education sector's participation in Erasmus+ is that the coordinators and participants of Erasmus+ projects are mainly adult education centres, often serving large communities of adult learners. However, more specialised associations, foundations and NGOs are also involved in the Erasmus+ programme, making the participant group more diverse.

Regular Erasmus+ applicants recognise the value of the programme closely linked to their organisational strategy, supporting, for example, their development work on diversity and inclusion or ecological sustainability. At the micro level, Erasmus+ participation has directly impacted staff professional development, motivation, and well-being. For adult learners, Erasmus+ has enriched their living environments and broadened their social networks. Although the direct impact on further educational enrolment or labour market success is less clear, there is evidence of increased intercultural competence, language skills, socio-emotional development – including empowerment and self-awareness – as well as resilience in navigating uncertainties. Group mobilities have been highly effective and strengthened social inclusion among diverse adult learners.

Overall, respondents greatly appreciated both the Erasmus+ programme and the support of the National Agency. The Erasmus+ programme has contributed to significant impacts on internationalisation, learning offer, and adherence to the horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme.

Challenges

Having or lacking steadfast, unquestionable support from the management level for internationalisation was seen as a crucial point for participating and achieving impact through Erasmus+ projects. Limited human resources, both in larger and smaller organisations, were seen as an obstacle to applying and implementing Erasmus+ projects. Rising costs for all kinds of expenses, including travel, combined with decreasing education budgets require an even stronger, evidence-based understanding on the benefits of internationalisation for the overall development of the organisation.

Some regions in Finland remain less active in the Erasmus+ programme.

The impact at meso and micro levels was strongly reported. However, the impact on the macro level, for project outcomes to have adjustments in local, regional or national policymaking, was seen as a challenge by most respondents.

7.2. Policy pointers

Recommendations related to increasing the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

1. Ensure that applicants are aware of the inclusion support and how to use it

The principles of inclusion support need further clarification and wider dissemination, particularly regarding the assistance for individuals with disabilities.

2. Provide training for adult education providers working with people in vulnerable situations

Interviewees requested for a training focusing on methods to co-design mobility objectives cooperatively with clients and inspiring participants to plan mobility together, instead of just participating in the trip.

3. Increase Erasmus+ support to account for rising costs and inflation

Traveling has become more expensive, both for flight and land travel. Funding allocations should be adjusted to accommodate these rising costs. The need to pay for substitute staff costs when a teacher is on an Erasmus+ mobility is an issue for some organisations with limited budgets. Additional financial support might be necessary to cover for substitute staff costs to ensure that these organisations can participate in the Erasmus+ programme.

4. Promote Erasmus+ opportunities especially to adult learners with migrant backgrounds or from cultural minorities

Learners experiencing cultural barriers or with a migrant background were under-represented in the case study organisations. Erasmus+ opportunities should be promoted also for these adult learners. Learners might gain motivation to participate in Erasmus+ activities for example through additional language training, economic support, or information provided in different languages.

5. Simplify administrative processes and digital tools

Erasmus+ programme offers possibilities for newcomer organisations to start with simpler cooperation and mobility projects. Continuing to develop more user-friendly digital tools and project management procedures would benefit all participating organisations, but especially smaller organisations with limited human resources.

6. Raise awareness in underrepresented regions

Targeted communication strategies could increase the participation of adult education organisations in the less active regions such as North and South

Karelia, Satakunta, Kainuu, Northern Ostrobothnia, and Päijänne Tavastia. Additional efforts could include workshops and information sessions for these regions to ensure that potential newcomers are well-informed on the opportunities of the Erasmus+ programme.

7. Facilitate networking and quality partnerships

Especially for newcomers, understanding where to find and connect with appropriate partners is crucial. Platforms (such as EPALE) and matchmaking events (such as contact seminars) are already available and should be promoted further. The organisations who have more experience of Erasmus+ programme could share their advice on how to create sustainable, high quality international partnerships that support the strategic goals of the organisations, ensure productive collaboration and reduce risks associated with new partnerships.

8. Highlight the benefits of Erasmus+ participation to management

Some organisations struggle with the lack of support from the management to internationalisation. Management level of adult education institutions needs to be targeted with more communication and research-based information on the benefits of internationalisation, and participation in the Erasmus+ programme.

9. Monitor and address obstacles to participate in the Erasmus+ programme

Collect and analyse data regularly at the national level, and encourage each participating organisation to collect similar data on the causes for their challenges at the local level. Identified obstacles should be responded with targeted support measures.

Recommendations related to increasing the impact at meso level

1. Ensure that the management level understands the value of internationalisation

“It helps if it is an outsider, someone from the National Agency, instead of the international

coordinator always talking about the impacts to the management.” (teacher)

The visibility of successful projects and their impact on the participating organisation, staff and learners need to be strengthened even further. These examples must also be shared with management level of adult education organisations to motivate potential newcomer organisations to join, or already participating organisations to strengthen their commitment to internationalisation also in terms of budgeting.

2. Align the rules, regulations, and practices of National Agencies to streamline project administration

Respondent organisations noted the challenges arising in project administration when each country has slightly different interpretation of the rules and regulations.

3. Continue providing guidance for strategic planning of internationalisation

The National Agency has provided guidance and tools to assist participating organisations to develop and implement internationalisation strategies that align with their strategic needs, educational offer and staff competencies. This support needs to be continued, strengthened, and further communicated especially to newcomers and less experienced organisations. Linking internationalisation strongly to the fulfilment of the organisational strategy can also strengthen the commitment of the management to the Erasmus+ programme.

4. Encourage the creation and dissemination of project outputs that are adaptable to local contexts and languages

In the Erasmus+ information sessions for project applicants, continue to stress the importance of outputs that can be easily updated and tailored also after the end of the project. Organisations need to develop concrete plans on how they can integrate lessons learned and innovative practices from Erasmus+ activities into their broader institutional knowledge to benefit staff and learners more widely.

Recommendations related to increasing the impact at micro level

These recommendations are mostly directed towards participating organisations but can be highlighted in the communication and training provided by the National Agency.

1. Strengthen preparation before and follow-up after the mobility

Ensure that sufficient preparation and follow-up is provided for mobility participants, both staff and adult learners. The preparation might include language learning and intercultural training, and for group mobilities, strengthening of peer support and creating a safe group atmosphere. Skills and competencies acquired by staff and adult learners must be recognised, supported and disseminated after the mobility.

2. Ensure sharing of newly acquired skills and knowledge within the organisation

Staff should be provided with opportunities and time to share their knowledge, skills and competencies gained from Erasmus+ activities to other staff members. This would also motivate more staff members to participate in the Erasmus+ programme and increase the understanding of the management on the value of internationalisation to the organisation, learning offer and staff professional development.

3. Collect and showcase examples of positive labour market outcomes

To better understand and communicate the labour market relevance of the Erasmus+ programme, examples of participants finding new career paths as a result of their participation could be highlighted in communication.

4. Encourage group mobilities

Based on the study data, group mobility initiatives are very suitable for adult learners as they facilitate peer-to-peer learning and support, sharing of experiences and mutual empowerment, and provide a safe and inclusive environment for participants with diverse backgrounds.

5. Provide economic support and address barriers for adult learners with physical, social or geographical challenges

To ensure that mobilities are truly inclusive and contribute to social equity, it is crucial to make Erasmus+ participation financially accessible and to offer tailored support for participants with physical, social or geographical barriers. As respondents note, this requires staff effort and very little can be automatised.

6. Integrate activities explicitly focusing on democratic participation, common values and European identity as well as on sustainability

Several organisations had included activities or objectives related to democracy, European identity, or environmental sustainability in their mobility practices or content. It is important to include this kind of explicit focus on horizontal priorities as part of the overall mobility objectives or programme.

7. Recognise the contribution of Erasmus+ experiences to participants' well-being

Both staff and learners reported the increase of well-being as a result of Erasmus+ participation. This aspect could be explored further in the promotion and communication of Erasmus+ projects.

Recommendations related to increasing the impact at macro level

1. Provide capacity building and knowledge-sharing on possible channels and methods for strategic policy engagement

Participating organisations should be provided with skills, knowledge, encouragement and support on how to engage strategically with policymakers at different levels, effectively communicate their successes, and advocate for policy changes based on the project outcomes and lessons learnt. Different channels and methods may include preparing policy briefs, organising policy forums, workshops, or roundtable discussions where project outcomes are shared with decision-makers. Examples from more experienced partner

organisations should be shared with newcomers and less experienced projects.

2. Implement a monitoring system for tracking the impact of Erasmus+ at the macro level

To enhance the monitoring of long-term impact of Erasmus+ at the macro level, follow-up surveys, impact assessment studies (such as RIA-AE), and case studies should be regularly implemented to document the influence of Erasmus+ on other organisations and policies.

3. Facilitate collaboration and dissemination beyond the education sector

In addition to adult education organisations, NGOs, government agencies, policymakers and the private sector should be involved in the dissemination, exchange of knowledge and best practices gained through the Erasmus+ programme.

4. Facilitate the bridging between local-level Erasmus+ project outcomes and national policy objectives

The National Agency could explore possibilities for making and strengthening the link and dialogue between local Erasmus+ project leaders and national level policymakers.

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PART C – ANNEXES

Annex 1. Figures and tables programme statistics

Erasmus+ participant survey results	
Statement	Mean
Learned from good practice abroad	4.45
Gained practical skills relevant for my current job and professional development	4.44
Using new teaching/training methods approaches and good practices at my sending institution	4.39
Creating opportunities for me to share the knowledge acquired through my mobility activity with colleagues	4.32
Improved my career and employment opportunities	4.30
Improved my knowledge of the subject I am teaching and/or my professional field	4.27
Improving the organisation and management at my sending institution	4.20
Emotional skills (e.g. having more self-confidence etc.)	4.18
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	4.10
Shared my own knowledge and skills with learners and peers	4.07
Social and civic competences	4.07
Been able to experiment and develop new learning practices and teaching methods	3.92
Introduction of new subjects or curricula at my sending institution	3.89
Improved my awareness of methods for assessing and giving credit for skills or competences acquired in formal and informal learning context	3.87
Built up new contacts/expand my professional network	3.86
Strengthening my sending institution's efforts to internationalise its activities	3.85
Become more motivated to carry on developing my professional skills	3.84
Cultural awareness and expression	3.82
Reinforcing a positive attitude of my sending institution towards sending more staff on teaching assignments job shadowing or training abroad	3.81
Organisational/management/leadership skills	3.80
Teamwork abilities	3.78
Strengthening my sending institution's cooperation with players in the labour market	3.75
Strengthening the cooperation with the partner organisations in this project	3.65
Practical skills (e.g. planning and organizing project management etc.)	3.65
Starting or joining new European/international projects	3.60

Erasmus+ participant survey results	
Statement	Mean
Analytical skills	3.58
Become better aware of European funding mechanisms for projects in my field of education and training	3.55
Creating opportunities for the launch or development of new educational activities such as curriculum development, development of joint courses or modules academic networks etc.	3.52
Strengthening my sending institution's cooperation with players in the civil society	3.17
Learning to learn	3.13
Digital competence	2.66
Competences in mathematics science and technology	2.01

Annex 1a. Participants in staff mobilities rating the competences gained during the mobility, 2018-2023.

Annex 2. Figures and tables from the online survey

Did the following aspects in your organisation in the delivery of adult learning improve since you participated in Erasmus+ from 2018 onwards?	Not at all	Only a little	To some extent	Rather much	Very much
Attention to inclusion and diversity	8%	8%	37%	34%	13%
Attention to digitalisation	3%	16%	38%	35%	8%
Attention to environment and fight against climate change	11%	24%	35%	22%	8%
Attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement	8%	8%	29%	40%	16%

Annex 2a. Attention to Erasmus+ horizontal priorities in the organisation.

To what extent do you (dis)agree with the statements presented below about the impact of participation in Erasmus+ since 2018 on the organisational embedding of internationalisation within your organisation?	Fully agree	Agree	Un-decided	Disagree	Completely disagree	Not applicable
By participating in Erasmus+	%	%	%	%	%	%
... our organisation is more aware of the added value of international projects	54%	41%	0%	3%	3%	0%
... there is a better strategy for internationalisation within our organisation	15%	44%	23%	5%	5%	8%
... there is more support for internationalisation activities for our professionals within our organisation	26%	61%	8%	3%	3%	0%
... there is more support for internationalisation activities for our volunteers within our organisation	8%	10%	54%	8%	0%	21%
... there is more support for internationalisation for our adult learners within our organisations	15%	31%	21%	15%	0%	18%
... there is increased funding for internationalisation within our organisation	5%	21%	46%	10%	10%	7%
... HR/ staff policy for internationalisation within our organisation has been strengthened	8%	28%	39%	13%	5%	8%
... the management of international projects (design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation) has been	28%	62%	8%	3%	0%	0%

Annex 2b. Impact of Erasmus+ on internationalisation.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements presented below regarding the impact of participation in Erasmus+ since 2018 on the development of the learning offer within your organisation and beyond?	Fully agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Completely disagree	Not applicable
By participating in Erasmus+ ... developed outputs and insights gained have been incorporated into new or existing provision in my organisation	28 %	58%	11%	3%	0%	0%
... our learning offer is better aligned with the needs of adult learners	6%	66%	23%	0%	3%	3%
... the accessibility of the learning offer has improved for different groups of adult learners	14%	50%	28%	0%	3%	6%
... my organisation is better able to include the 'voice of the adult learner' in decisions about its provision	8%	42%	39%	3%	3%	6%
... my organisation is better able to use digital devices and technologies in our learning offer	8%	47%	36%	3%	0%	6%
...our learning offer pays more attention to digital skills	0%	61%	30%	3%	0%	6%
... our learning offer pays more attention to green skills	11%	27%	49%	0%	0%	14%
... our learning offer pays more attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement	17%	47%	31%	3%	3%	0%
... my organisation is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants	19%	51%	19%	3%	3%	5%

Annex 2c. Impact of Erasmus+ on the learning offer.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements presented below regarding the impact of participation in Erasmus+ since 2018 on adult learners in your organisation?	Fully agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Completely disagree	Not applicable
By participating in Erasmus+ ...	%	%	%	%	%	%
... the living environment/ world of our learners has been enriched	29%	51%	14%	3%	0%	3%
... our learners have gained new social contacts outside of their own environment	11%	63%	20%	0%	3%	3%
... our learners have started to participate more in activities in their own environment	9%	32%	50%	0%	3%	6%
... our learners have become more assertive	14%	40%	37%	0%	3%	6%
... our learners have more opportunities to move on to other learning programmes.	15%	32%	41%	0%	3%	9%
... our learners have more chances on the labour market.	3%	27%	56%	0%	3%	12%

Annex 2d. Impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements presented below regarding the impact of participation in Erasmus+ beyond your own organisation?	Fully agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Completely disagree	Not applicab
By participating in Erasmus+ ...	%	%	%	%	%	%
... similar organisations (who did not participate in the project) benefitted from the project outcomes, adjusting their provision/ offer	9%	46%	26%	9%	0%	11%
... adjustments have been made to (government and/ or sectoral) policies at the local or regional level	0%	20%	37%	20%	3%	20%
... adjustments have been made to (government and/ or sectoral) policies at the national level	0%	6%	46%	17%	3%	29%

Annex 2e. Impact of Erasmus+ beyond own organisation.

Annex 3. Case studies.

Iisalmen kansalaisopisto

(Iisalmi Community College)

Type of organisation, aims, activities and target groups

Iisalmi Community College, owned and run by the City of Iisalmi in Eastern Finland, is an institute of general education, where also children and young people can have a hobby and learn a new skill. The college is open for everyone who wants to develop their abilities, both personally and professionally, for a reasonable investment of time and money. No prior qualifications are required, but the college is also not entitled to award any qualifications or degrees.

The College provides approximately 11,000 teaching hours annually and employs around 40-50 teachers. The college offers courses in the following educational areas, most prominently in the fields of arts, crafts, languages and music:

- Arts (Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Literature)
- Arts and Crafts (Textile Work, Wood and Metalwork, Ceramics, Silverwork and Jewellery)
- Computers and tablets
- Music (Singing, Karaoke, Choirs, International Music Groups)
- Free Public Lectures
- Home and Gardening (Cooking, Gardening)
- Languages (Finnish, English, Russian, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Estonian, Swedish, Sign Language etc.)
- Tailored Services for Companies and Organisations
- Wellbeing (Dance, Massage)
- Other (Wedding Planning, Photography, First Aid)

The language of instruction is Finnish, but some teachers may also use English and other languages as well if necessary.

The groups are filled in the order of registration and some groups fill up quickly. Over ten different foreign languages are taught in the college.

Unemployed people, retired people and immigrants get a discount on most courses.

Experience with Erasmus+ and role in projects

The college has already a long experience with Erasmus+, starting with Grundtvig funding more than a decade ago. Teachers have been attending training courses or job shadowing with KA1 funding, and the college has also been receiving groups from abroad. The college has Erasmus+ accreditation. The college has been a partner, and recently a coordinator in KA2 projects.

Experience with alternative grants and support programmes

The principal is also in charge of the adjacent Music Institute which has also been using Nordplus funding for mobilities. The community college has not explored yet Nordplus funding.

Internationalisation Vision and strategy

The college has an internationalisation strategy for the years 2021-2027. Creating a genuinely international and open learning environment is one of the goals of the college, and they have received a Quality and Development grant from the Finnish National Agency for Education to help reach this goal. Opportunities for internationalisation are provided for teachers and students through study visits, training opportunities and job shadowing. The aim is to understand and learn about diversity and foreign cultures, as well as to develop the courses offered in the college.

Migrants who attend Finnish language courses can also join other language courses and arts and crafts courses for free. Having Finnish and foreign language speakers learning in the community college together is seen to promote the integration process. A multicultural music group can also be joined completely free.

Financing

Project funding (Erasmus+ and the Finnish National Agency for Education) forms the core funding for international activities, complemented by self-financing of the college budget. In some activities, also participants' contribution of self-funding is needed to cover the costs.

Support infrastructure for internationalisation and management of international projects

There are no separate personnel managing international projects. The principal is leading the internationalisation work, while teachers will take part in the coordination work of international projects. The principal is a regional communication person for Erasmus+ and Nordplus projects, active in town twinning work, and has also been awarded by the municipality for his international work.

<https://www.iisalmi.fi/In-english/Services/Education/Community-College>

Kansanvalistusseura

(The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation / The KVS Foundation)

Type of organisation, aims, activities and target groups

The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation sr. (the KVS Foundation) is a politically and religiously non-affiliated organisation focused on lifelong learning. The KVS Foundation views lifelong learning as a collective effort to educate ourselves to take care of each other and the environment. KVS acts in developing and advocating liberal education.

The KVS Foundation currently employs nearly 30 experts and over 100 teachers. KVS operates **the Southern Helsinki Adult Education Centre** (Etelä-Helsingin kansalaisopisto, ETKO) **and the Kulkuri Online School** for expatriate Finnish children. KVS prioritises digital accessibility in education services and promotes learning communities nationally and internationally.

The Southern Helsinki Adult Education Centre annually organises over 250 courses with approximately 3,000 participants, offering subjects

from foreign languages to well-being, arts, and sustainable development. Most course participants are women who speak Finnish as their mother tongue. Reflecting the socioeconomic structure of the area where the Adult Education Centre is located, most learners have a higher education background and are either employed or retired. The centre also offers hybrid and distance learning courses.

As part of its advocacy work, the KVS Foundation publishes two open-access learning media: **Aikuiskasvatus**, a peer-reviewed journal on adult education in Finnish and European Lifelong Learning Magazine, **ELM Magazine**, an English-language publication on adult education. Additionally, KVS manages the communications for **the European Association for the Education of Adults** (EAEA).

The KVS Foundation also publishes a blog, **Sivistyksen pelottomat** (The Fearless Defenders of Sivistys, in Finnish) catalysing discussions. The blog presents courageous and analytical insight into everyday life and education.

Established in 1874, the KVS Foundation is Finland's oldest foundation dedicated to *sivistys* (Bildung). KVS is celebrating its 150th anniversary by coordinating the Year of Sivistys 2024, designated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Through various projects, the KVS Foundation develops new operational models and innovations. All tools created in these projects are freely available for others to use. International projects focus on media literacy, IT skills for seniors, and sustainability. Commitment to sustainable development, ecosocial Bildung and the green transition is fundamental to the KVS Foundation which has achieved the Sustainable Development Certificate from the OKKA Foundation and is currently planning a Circular Economy residential city block for lifelong learning in the city centre of Helsinki.

Experience with Erasmus+ and role in projects

The KVS has participated in Erasmus+ and its precedent programmes for over a decade. In recent years, KVS has strengthened its

international focus through several KA1 and KA2 projects and is currently coordinating KA2 projects.

Experience with alternative grants and support programmes

The KVS Foundation has received additional funding from the Finnish government, such as cooperation projects in Palestine and an online learning project in collaboration with UNESCO in Afghanistan.

Internationalisation Vision and strategy

The KVS Foundation is leading many international operations and initiatives as part of its regular activities. Strategic goals include developing advocacy communication, mapping and applying new operating models and strengthening international networks.

Support infrastructure for internationalisation and management of international projects

The KVS Foundation centrally manages international projects, including those for the adult education centre ETKO. Each project has a designated project coordinator.

For more information, visit www.kvs.fi

Luksia, Länsi-Uudenmaan koulutuskuntayhtymä

(Municipal Education and Training Consortium in Western Uusimaa)

Type of organisation, aims, activities and target groups

Luksia offers vocational qualifications and tailored personnel training to meet the needs of individuals, private companies and public institutions. Each year Luksia caters for approximately 5,000 certificate and adult students with a staff of around 350. Luksia is owned by 8 member municipalities in the Western Uusimaa region.

The largest campuses are situated in Lohja (60 km from Helsinki) and Nummela (Vihti, 40 km from

Helsinki). In addition, there are smaller units in the region hosting especially adult students with a migrant background. In addition to initial vocational education, also migrants' integration training has been organised in Luksia.

Experience with Erasmus+ and role in projects

Luksia participates every year several international projects funded by Erasmus+. Luksia has been granted the Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter until 2027.

Luksia has coordinated three KA2 projects, two in the adult education sector and one in the VET sector. The Erasmus+ adult education projects have been related to the integration training, especially on teachers' competences to use digital tools and flipped learning in their teaching.

Additionally, Luksia has been a partner for several KA2 projects in the VET sector and a hosting partner for incoming student and staff mobilities.

Experience with alternative grants and support programmes

Luksia has received funding for international projects from Nordplus programme as well as from the Finnish National Agency for Education as a partner in several VET internationalisation networks. Currently Erasmus+ programme is the main funding source for internationalisation.

Internationalisation Vision and strategy

Luksia began to expand its international activities from 2011 onwards when a full-time Coordinator of International Affairs was hired. Luksia has been an active partner in several international networks supported by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The main aims for internationalisation are related to offering equal opportunities for vocational students in all fields to gain international competences and supporting staff to network internationally and acquire new perspectives for their own work. International projects support the overall development of Luksia's educational services.

Financing

The main source of funding for international activities is Erasmus+. In addition to project funding, Luksia budgets self-funding to cover personnel and administrative costs related to international work.

Support infrastructure for internationalisation and management of international projects

Currently internationalisation work is divided between two teachers working with international projects part-time. Together with the education manager in charge of developing international activities, they lead the planning and implementation of international projects.

www.luksia.fi

Sastamalan opisto

(Sastamala Community College)

Type of organisation, aims, activities and target groups

Sastamalan Opisto (Sastamala Community College) is a non-profit Finnish open adult education centre. The college welcomes all learners, young and old and offers opportunities for a wide variety of recreational activities and study. Learning is largely self-motivated and, as a rule, not aimed at achieving a formal qualification. The college is owned by the City of Sastamala and funded by the state and city.

Sastamalan Opisto delivers more than 1,000 courses for 4,000 learners each year, with about 20,000 teaching hours within the rural town of Sastamala, hiring about 200 hourly paid teachers each year. The permanent staff consists of seven educational and administrative coordinators, two administrative staff and a principal as well as two part-time regional managers. The college is responsible for designing its own curriculum to ensure that it best reflects the demand in its local area.

The courses cover a wide range of areas including life skills, music, the expressive arts, crafts, Information Technology, languages, cooking,

sports and well-being. The college also has a small open university education department. Every year the college organizes talks and lectures on a range of cultural topics as well as current social and historical issues. The college also provides Finnish as a foreign language tuition for immigrants. It is possible to study languages also as a private student as well as online using the Internet.

One of the college's main tasks is to ensure the maintenance and development of creativity in the interest of the people, cultural industries and the community as a whole. Not only does the college offer a wide variety of opportunities for learning about art, practicing art and experiencing art in college classes, it also supports cultural actions such as arts exhibitions, concerts, theatre productions and other events. The college is the home for many choirs and orchestras. Learners often come from a higher socioeconomic background, the college aims at reaching also people with low income (e.g. retired and unemployed) through symbolic commitment fee of 15 euros that provides access to all courses of the college.

Sastamalan Opisto acts as an umbrella organisation for the third sector operators; associations, self-help groups and community groups. As a community college Sastamalan Opisto is tasked with the fostering of people's engagement with their communities and therefore works closely with village associations.

Experience with Erasmus+ and role in projects

Sastamalan Opisto is international. It has participated in some twenty European Union transnational and multilateral adult education and school education projects since 2004, and is currently a partner in a number of Erasmus+ KA2 strategic partnerships (both Exchanges of Good Practices and Innovation Projects) and receives Erasmus+ KA1 mobilities. Sastamala Community College has been granted Erasmus+ accreditation for the period 1 March 2021-31 December 2027.

Experience with alternative grants and support programmes

The College receives national project funding from the ministries and the National Agency for Education, as well as international funding from the Nordplus programme.

Internationalisation

Vision and strategy

The international strategy of the college aims at internationalisation and lifelong learning for both staff and students with a strong support from the management. For staff, the goal is professional renewal and utilizing international experience to improve curricula and course content. Innovations developed in projects are integrated into curriculum development. For students, international activities provide perspectives on foreign languages and cultures, enhancing the sense of inclusion and community. International activities also support internationalisation at home within the community.

Recently, Erasmus+ mobility projects have focused on green travel and reaching people with less opportunities to participate in international activities.

Financing

The main source of funding for international activities is Erasmus+, particularly staff and student KA1 accredited mobilities, KA2 strategic partnership projects, and the Nordplus programme. Additional funding is sought from the Finnish National Agency for Education quality and development grants for liberal adult education (LAKE). In addition to project funding, self-funding by students and staff for the mobilities, and funding from the municipality are needed to cover personnel and administrative costs.

Support infrastructure for internationalisation and management of international projects

The college's international activities are led by the principal, with educational planners responsible for project applications, support roles, and project management. All full-time staff members and part-time teachers participate in the activities. The

educational planner is the support person for staff and teacher mobilities.

<https://sastamalanopisto.fi/>

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys

Type of organisation, aims, activities and target groups

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys is a national association improving access to learning, employment, wellbeing and participation in the society. Their mission is to support, guide and train some of the most vulnerable members of the society to reach good, ordinary life, where their goals in areas of health and wellbeing, employment, housing and family/friends have been achieved. Vulnerable groups include e.g. ex-offenders, people in recovery, homeless people, young people not in education, employment or training, as well as long-term unemployed people.

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys was founded in 2016 by four regional associations that are working towards building inclusion in society: Silta-Valmennusyhdistys, Rauman Seudun Katulähetys, Porin Sininauha (Pori) and Sastamalan mielenterveysseura. Valo-Valmennusyhdistys currently works in Tampere, Helsinki, Espoo, Turku, Raisio, Kaarina, Jyväskylä, Kuopio, Seinäjoki, Sastamala, Rauma, Huittinen, Lahti, Mikkeli, Joensuu, Savonlinna and Porvoo. Valo has currently about 120 employees in these different locations across Finland, and some also abroad.

The services offered by Valo-Valmennus include:

Employment and rehabilitation services

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys provides employment services as well as various rehabilitative services to employment authorities, local authorities/municipalities, education providers/colleges and other public organisations. The aim of these services is to improve participants' skills, provide a sense of accomplishment, strengthen self-esteem and independence, improve inclusion and support

participants in transitioning towards education and/or employment.

Educational services

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys provides education services with informal or work/employer-based learning environments, enabling learning through real life tasks. The Valo-Valmennus –concept enables the completion of vocational qualification modules in informal learning environments. They also develop basic skills training (reading, writing, maths, IT) in the learning environments.

Housing

They offer supported housing to those who need support in transitioning to independent living. The housing services are offered either in individual units or small clusters, where standard rental agreements can be arranged (the housing first model).

Youth Services

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys primarily works with young people at risk of exclusion from society. They operate Youth Guarantee Houses (services) in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and Rauma. The houses offer young people services such as: youth work, individual and group support, hobbies and support with education and employment. In addition, so called "Nuotti" coaching is provided to young people whose physical, mental and/or social functioning has declined.

Development projects

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys has several active development projects related to the following themes:

- Improving inclusion in society for young people
- Developing informal learning environments and validation of skills/competences
- Learning paths and skills building for ex-offenders and people in recovery
- Improving basic skills
- Exercise and well-being know-how
- Valo-Valmennusyhdistys actively seeks external funding from different sources with local, national and international partners to further develop services for the most vulnerable groups in society.

Experience with Erasmus+ and role in projects

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys began international activities within Erasmus+ programme already on the second year after its founding in 2017. They have ongoing KA1 and KA2 projects and Erasmus+ accreditation both in the field of youth and adult education sectors.

Experience with alternative grants and support programmes

Valo-Valmennusyhdistys has received mobility funding from the Nordplus programme and from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The founding organisations participate in international European Social Fund development projects.

Internationalisation Vision and strategy

The main aim for internationalisation is to support the target groups of the organisation through international mobilities and development work. The objective is to have internationalisation as a cross-cutting theme across the whole organisation, on all levels of staff, from management to operational level, and also for the customers and learners taking part in the services offered by Valo-Valmennus. Developing and piloting new operational models with international partners, networking and learning from each other are at the core of the international work of Valo-Valmennus.

Support infrastructure for internationalisation and management of international projects

The management of Valo-Valmennus supports strongly internationalisation, and also ensures that staff members are able to participate in staff or learner mobilities. Coordinator of International Affairs handles practical project management and communication.

<https://valo-valmennus.fi/>