EUROPEAN UNION

RIA
ADULT EDUCATION

Country research report Italy

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

National report RIA-AE Network

Vanna Boffo

Lorenza Venturi

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

INDIRE
ISTITUTO
NAZIONALE
DOCUMENTAZIONE
INNOVAZIONE
RICERCA EDUCATIVA

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

COLOPHON

This is a publication of:

INDIRE - Istituto nazionale documentazione innovazione ricerca educativa

Head Office: via M. Buonarroti 10, 50122 Firenze |

Operational Headquarter: via C. Lombroso, 6/13, 50144 Firenze

www.indire.it

Agenzia nazionale Erasmus+ INDIRE

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI FIRENZE - Dipartimento di Formazione, Lingue, Intercultura, Letterature e Psicologia (FORLILPSI)

P.IVA/Cod.Fis 01279680480

Via Laura, 48 - 50121 Firenze (FI)

Tel. +39 055 2756101

PEC: forlilpsi(AT)pec.unifi.it

The study was commissioned within the framework of the RIA-AE network by the National Agency INDIRE - Istituto nazionale documentazione innovazione ricerca educativa and is financed with funds from the European Union.

Scientific Direction:

Vanna Boffo, University of Florence

Lorenza Venturi, INDIRE National Agency ERASMUS+

Scientific Coordination:

Francesca Torlone, University of Florence

Editorial staff:

Daniela Ermini, INDIRE National Agency ERASMUS+

Christel Schachter, University of Florence

Marco Ceccarelli, University of Florence

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any way without the prior permission of the publisher and other copyright holders. Authors are not liable for data provided by third parties.

Disclaimer: The information and views set out in this study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the National Agency INDIRE The NA at Italy does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study. Neither the Italy nor any person acting on the NA at Italy's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Table of contents

Table of contents 1
Abbreviations 3
List of Tables 4
List of figures 4
PART A – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 7
Executive summary 8
PART B – INTRODUCTION 11
1. Introduction 12
1.1 12
1.2 12
1.3 13
PART C – General impact of Erasmus+ 16
2 17
2.1 17
2.2 18
2.3 18
3 21
3.1 21
3.2 21
3.3 312
3.4 356
4. Impact of Erasmus+ at organisation and staff level 38
4.1 368
4.2 378
4.3 412
4.4 467
5. Impact of KA1 mobility on learners 49
5.1 479
5.2 489
5.3 534
5.4 5960

PART D – Impact of Erasmus+ on "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" 62

6. Characteristics of Erasmus+ project(s) addressing "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" 63

6.1 62

6.2 6263

6.3 6465

6.4 678

6.5 6870

7. Impact in the thematic area 71

7.1 7071

7.2 7273

7.3 745

7.4 756

7.5 767

PART E – Conclusion and policy pointers 79

8. Conclusion and policy pointers 80

8.1 7980

8.2 8182

Annex 1 Mission statement RIA-AE network 83

Annex 2 Overview studies on Erasmus+ in the field of AE 845

Annex 3 Literature list 859

Annex 4 Short case study portraits 87

Abbreviations

AE	Adult Education
AES	Adult Education Survey
BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EU	European Union
KA1	Key Action 1
KA2	Key Action 2
NA	National Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OER	Open educational resource
RIA-AE	Network for research-based impact analysis of the Erasmus+ programme in adult education

List of Tables

Table 1. Concluding table with achievements and challenges

List of figures

Figure 1.1. Overview research modules SR2

Figure 3.1 Type of organisation participating in KA1 projects in the period of 2021 to 2025 - based on Commission data (N=1509)

Figure 3.2 Type of organisation participating in KA2 projects in the period of 2021 to 2025 - based on Commission data (N=1063)

Figure 3.3 Legal status of beneficiary organisations that participated in Erasmus+ (2021-2024): only KA1, only KA2 and, KA1 and KA2 (N= 99, 110, 106)

Figure 3.4 Sectors in which beneficiary organisations primarily operate: only KA1, only KA2 and, KA1 and KA2 in the period of 2021-2024 (N= 99, 110, 106)

Figure 3.5 Number of staff working in the organisation (N=328)

Figure 3.6 Number of adult learners that participated in learning activities in 2024 separated by only KA1, only KA2, and KA1 and KA2 (N=315)

Figure 3.7 Number of KA1 projects organisations have participated in (as coordinator or partner) since 2021 (N=205)

Figure 3.8 Number of KA2 projects organisations have participated in (as coordinator or partner) since 2021 (N=216)

Figure 3.9 Role of organisations which participated in KA2 projects in the period of 2021-2024 (N=231)

Figure 3.10 Type of internationalisation activity(ies) the organisation has participated in since 2021 (N=315)

Figure 3.11 Intention of beneficiary organisations to apply to KA1 mobility for adult learners in the future (N=315)

Figure 4.1 Type of outputs or products developed as part of participation in KA2 in Erasmus+ (2021–2024) (N=211)

Figure 4.2 Extent to which KA2 outputs and products are still used after participation in Erasmus+ (N=194)

Figure 4.3 Share of mobilities per activity type - Staff (N= 5809)

Figure 4.4 Ways in which participant benefitted from participation - Staff (N= 5809)

Figure 4.5 Ways in which participant gained knowledge about horizontal priorities - Staff (N= 5809)

Figure 4.6 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the learning offer (N=227)

Figure 4.7 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on working staff (N=227)

Figure 4.8 Topics receiving more attention after participating in Erasmus+ in the period 2021-2024 (N=227)

Figure 5.1 Share of mobilities per activity type - Adult learners (N= 1116)

Figure 5.2 Gender division - Adult learners (N= 1116)

Figure 5.3 Age at start of program - Adult learners (N= 1088)

Figure 5.4 Receiving country of participant - Adult learners (N= 1116)

Figure 5.5 Planned and realised mobilities in the period of 2021-2024

Figure 5.6 Gender division - Adult learners (N= 2023)

Figure 5.7 Age at start of program - Adult learners (N= 238)

Figure 5.8 Receiving country of participant - Adult learners (N= 262)

Figure 5.9 Share of participants with first time mobility - Adult learners (N= 1116)

Figure 5.10 Satisfaction with various arrangements of mobility - Adult learners (N= 1116)

Figure 5.11 participant was receiver of preparation, training or information by organisation - Adult learners (N= 1116)

Figure 5.12 Satisfaction with various arrangements of mobility - Adult learners (N= 262)

Figure 5.13 participant was receiver of preparation, training or information by organisation - Adult learners (N= 262)

Figure 5.14 Participant received support to improve language skills before or during mobility period - Adult learner (N= 252)

Figure 5.15 Ways in which participant benefitted from participation - Adult learners (N= 1116)

Figure 5.16 Ways in which participant gained knowledge about horizontal priorities - Adult learners (N= 1116)

Figure 5.17 Ways in which participant benefitted from participation - Adult learners (N= 262)

Figure 5.18 Ways in which participant gained knowledge about horizontal priorities - Adult learners (N= 262)

Figure 6.1 The extent projects (KA1 and KA2) are addressing the priority theme “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” (N=323)

Figure 6.2 The extent KA1 and KA2 projects directly or indirectly addressing the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement" (N=135, 115)

Figure 6.3 Status of KA1/KA2 projects that are directly or indirectly addressing the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement” (N= 43, 74, 46, 61)

Figure 6.4 Activities of KA1 projects that addressed one or more elements of the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" (N=87)

Figure 6.5 Goals of projects (KA1 and KA2) that addressed one or more elements of the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement”(N=217)

Figure 6.6 Activities of KA2 projects that addressed one or more elements of the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” (N=132)

Figure 6.7 Groups of adult learners targeted by projects (KA1 and KA2) that addressed one or more elements of the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” (N=217)

Figure 7.1 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the learning offer (N=227)

Figure 7.2 Impact of Erasmus+ on learning offer - "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" (N=176)

Figure 7.3 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on working staff (N=227)

Figure 7.4 Impact of Erasmus+ on staff - "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" (N=176)

Figure 7.5 Added value of Erasmus+ support (N=217)

Figure 7.6 Aspects of project that would have been different without Erasmus+ (N=11)

PART A – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summary

Background of the study

This study is part of a transnational monitoring project of the Erasmus+ programme in adult education conducted by the Research-based Impact Analysis in Adult Education (RIA-AE) Network. Within this project, national monitoring studies are implemented in parallel with the same methodology in the member countries of the network. They inform the National Agencies in charge of Erasmus+ about the implementation and impact of the programme in their respective country. These national studies also feed into a transnational study with the aim of highlighting the effects of the programme at European level and providing impetus for its further development.

The monitoring focuses on the impact of two of the three Key Actions (KA) of the Erasmus+ programme: KA 1 (learning mobility of individuals) and KA 2 (cooperation of organisations and institutions). The impact is examined on funded organisations and their staff, the learners and the adult education sector in the respective country. Particular attention in this report is given to the priority theme 'participation in democratic life and civic engagement'

The monitoring design agreed within the network is based on a mixed methods approach. It consists of a document analysis including project documents and data from EU databases, an online survey and case studies among funded organisations, as well as interviews with adult learners and non-participating organisations. The data collection for Italy took place between September 2025 and December 2026 and was carried out by INDIRE - Istituto nazionale documentazione innovazione ricerca educativa with the technical support of Ockham IPS.

Main results

The accessibility and inclusiveness of the programme

The Adult Education sector in Italy is distinguished by high institutional heterogeneity, characterized by the absolute predominance of Third Sector entities (NGOs, foundations, and associations), supported by the significant participation of social enterprises and public institutions such as the Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA). Longitudinal data (Wave 2) document a process of access "democratization": the proliferation of small-scale partnerships (KA122 and KA210) has facilitated the entry of micro and small organizations (employing 1-10 staff members), thereby lowering barriers to entry. From a geographical perspective, Erasmus+ acts as a lever for territorial convergence; regions in Southern Italy are capitalizing on these opportunities to bridge the historical socio-economic divide with the North by promoting networks focused on social inclusion. However, structural obstacles persist, primarily the administrative burden placed on undersized organizations and the logistical-familial constraints that hinder the participation of adult learners.

Impact at organisation level

The analysis confirms the absolute additionality of the program: in the absence of European funding, methodological innovation and research initiatives within the Third Sector would not take place. Compared to the first monitoring wave, which focused

on intangible benefits, a "pedagogical systematization" is observed today. Beneficiary organizations translate transnational experiences into robust material outputs (curricula, training modules, digital tools, and dissemination products) that are permanently integrated into their daily educational offerings, thereby ensuring the institutional sustainability of the outcomes.

Impact of staff level

Staff mobility is primarily realized through structured training courses and job shadowing activities. The recorded benefits have evolved from a simple motivational revitalization to a marked enhancement of technical-methodological competencies. Exposure to foreign institutional practices has measurably increased staff competencies regarding inclusion, diversity, and digital transformation. Furthermore, the profile of the "civic educator" clearly emerges—a professional capable of facilitating community networks and promoting critical thinking.

Impact learners' level

Both individual and group mobility attract a demographically diverse user base, characterized by marked female participation. Group mobility is confirmed as an essential strategic tool for providing psychological reassurance, mitigating anxiety, and overcoming linguistic barriers for the most vulnerable learners. Satisfaction rates are optimal, a result of rigorous organizational protocols for pre-departure preparation and linguistic support. The educational experience abroad assumes the contours of a "civic rite of passage" that increases self-esteem, enhances soft skills, and instills a profound awareness of the individual's role within the European democratic space.

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

This horizontal priority is extensively integrated: KA2 partnerships frequently address it directly to produce tangible civic infrastructures, while KA1 mobilities pursue it as a secondary objective through intercultural exposure. By targeting migrants, young adults, and individuals with low educational attainment, these projects effectuate a pedagogical paradigm shift, transforming marginalized groups from passive beneficiaries into active agents of democratic change. The impact on educational offerings is profound, marked by the stable introduction of modules centered on media literacy, political rights, and countering disinformation. The Erasmus+ infrastructure proves to be the sole catalyst capable of sustaining such democratic empowerment.

TABLE 1. CONCLUDING TABLE WITH ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Thematic Area	Achievements	Challenges
Accessibility & System Dynamics	Democratization of access allowing micro and small organizations to participate. Promotion of territorial convergence and social inclusion.	High administrative and bureaucratic burdens for undersized entities with limited staff.
Organizational Capacity	Pedagogical systematization" resulting in sustainable, tangible outputs (curricula, digital tools). Absolute additionality of European funding.	Ensuring the long-term scalability, dissemination, and transferability of project outputs.
Staff	Measurable enhancement of technical-methodological skills in	Transitioning adult education organizations into

Development	diversity, inclusion, and digital transformation. Emergence of the "civic educator" profile	permanent "territorial hubs" requires sustained financial support.
Learner Outcomes	Optimal satisfaction rates and diverse demographic engagement. Educational mobility acts as a "civic rite of passage," boosting self-esteem and soft skills.	Logistical, occupational, and familial constraints inhibit participation. Vulnerable learners face significant anxiety and linguistic barriers.
Civic Engagement (PDL)	Pedagogical paradigm shift transforming marginalized groups into active democratic agents. Successful integration of media literacy and political rights modules.	Structural reliance on the Erasmus+ infrastructure as the sole catalyst for sustaining democratic empowerment initiatives.

Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2024)

Policy pointers

Based on the documented challenges and analyzed successes, the following strategic recommendations are outlined:

- **Administrative Simplification and Support for Micro-Organizations:** Given the demonstrated efficacy of grassroots organizations in intercepting broad local user bases, it is vital to continue simplifying bureaucratic procedures. The use of lump-sum funding and small-scale partnerships must be further incentivized to lower entry barriers for entities with limited administrative staff.
- **Incentives for Inclusive Mobility:** To address the logistical, occupational, and familial difficulties that inhibit the participation of vulnerable adult learners, the program should implement more flexible financial and organizational support mechanisms. Furthermore, group mobility must be systematically promoted, alongside guaranteed, intensified support for linguistic preparation and mentoring (pastoral care).
- **Consolidation of the "Civic" Role and Output Transferability:** It is recommended to provide financial support for the transition of adult education organizations toward serving as genuine "territorial hubs" for active European citizenship. The scalability and dissemination of curricula related to media literacy and the development of critical thinking must be fostered, capitalizing on the newly acquired competencies of educators and the innovation generated by KA2 projects.

PART B – INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

1.1 The Erasmus+ programme and the RIA-AE network

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

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

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

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

In the Italian context, the analysis of Erasmus+ in adult education is also framed through the lens of demographic change, active ageing and the educational challenge of accompanying longevity. Italy represents a particularly relevant context for this

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

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

perspective, as it is one of the oldest societies in Europe and is currently engaged in a broad scientific and policy debate on sustainable, inclusive and generative longevity. From this standpoint, adult education cannot be reduced to employability, basic skills or the remediation of educational and social disadvantages. It must also be understood as a strategic field for supporting autonomy, participation, intergenerational exchange, social inclusion and quality of life across the whole adult life course. This interpretative perspective is consistent with the Italian research debate on learning, education and active ageing. As Boffo et al. (2025) argue, accompanying longevity requires educational and training practices capable of supporting individuals, communities and professionals in learning to live in a longevity society (WHO, 2002; 2015). In this sense, accompanying longevity means creating educational and training conditions that enable people to prepare for longer life trajectories through lifelong learning, territorial networks, intergenerational practices, care, agency and social participation.
In this report, KA1 mobility and KA2 cooperation are therefore read not only as instruments for internationalisation, but also as educational and training instruments that may contribute to active ageing and preparation for longevity. They can strengthen confidence, intercultural openness, civic participation and relational resources among adult learners, while also supporting adult education organisations in becoming territorial actors within broader ecosystems of lifelong learning, social inclusion and democratic participation.

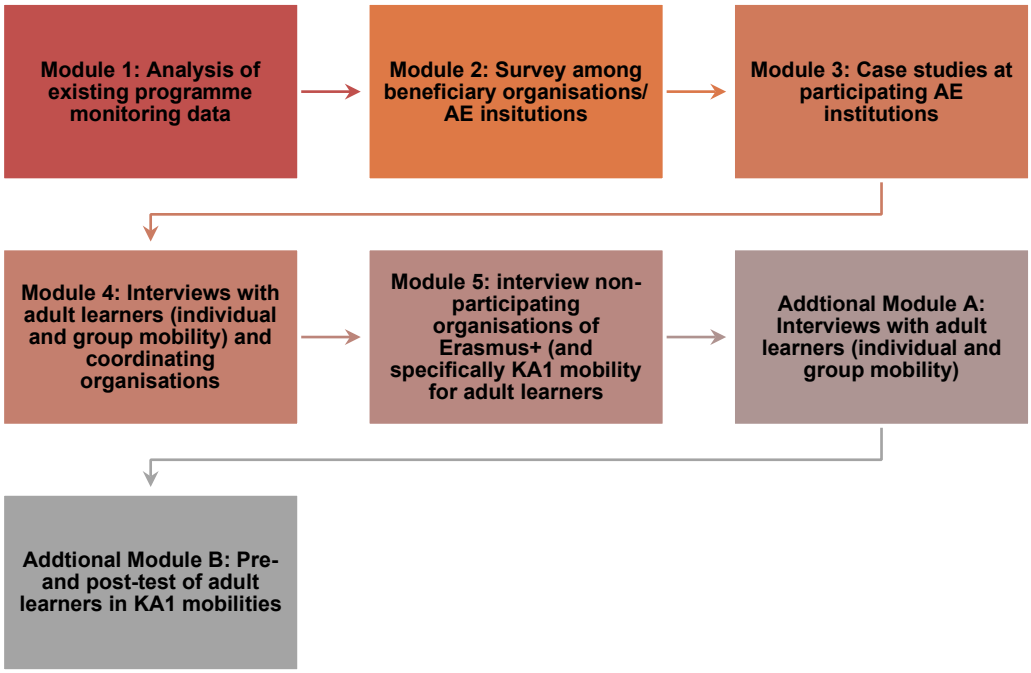
Key questions that are guiding this thematic focus are:

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

1.3 Methodological approach

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

Figure 1.1. Overview research modules SR2



In practical terms, the inclusion of this thematic focus in the second RIA-AE research round required tailored research tools and analytical frameworks. Surveys, interviews, and case studies were designed to capture learners' development in civic values, engagement behaviours, and perceived social inclusion. In addition, basic questions from SR1 are repeated to ensure comparability across the three monitoring rounds.

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

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

- **Module 1 (Document analysis)**. This module comprises an analysis of existing national research on Erasmus+ in the field of adult education, as well as of data collected by the European Commission and the National Agency as part of the funding processes and for monitoring purposes. It mainly seeks to answer questions about the inclusiveness of the programme, map beneficiary organisations, and assess the extent to which these organisations represent the diversity of the adult education sector.
- **Module 2 (Online survey among beneficiary organisations)**. This module consists of an online survey of all organisations that implemented and completed at least one project in KA1 or KA2 under the current programme between 2021 and the end of 2024. It serves as the central survey instrument for assessing the impact of Erasmus+. For organisations that participated in more than one project, only one person—usually the project coordinator of the most recent project—received an invitation to take part in the survey. For Italy we reached out to 501 coordinating

beneficiary organisations of which 256 responded (220 completed the survey; 36 did so partially). We reached out to 389 partner organisations of which 121 responded (94 completed the survey; 27 partially). All respondents that did not at least finish questions 1-8 were excluded from the dataset. For Italy this lead to a final number of 328 responses. Of the responding organisations (n = 328), 55,97% carried out at least one project in KA1, and 61,27% carried out at least one project in KA2. A further 30,50% of the organisations were active in both key actions. 28,65% of the organisations are accredited in KA1.

- **Module 3 (Case studies)**. This module consisted of 4 case studies (total number 11 participants) in organisations having coordinated at least one Erasmus+ project in the current programme. The case studies focused on projects within the thematic area "*Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement.*" They included desk research of project documentation, as well as interviews with project managers, staff, and learners, leading to a case study report (see Annex 4).
- **Module 4 (Interviews with KA1 participants)**. This module included 17 interviews with adult learners who participated in a KA1 mobility, as well as with their 6 project coordinators. The interviews with adult learners provide deeper insight into the impact of mobility on participants. They also help to reflect on the experience of organising KA1 mobility for different target groups and to identify possible obstacles encountered during mobility. This, in turn, supports better organisation of KA1 mobility for learners in the future.
- **Module 5 (Interviews with non-participating organisations)**. This module included interviews with the leaders of 4 organisations that did not participate in Erasmus+. These interviews aim to better understand the obstacles preventing participation in the programme. During the interviews, we explored their potential interest in applying for Erasmus+ and their experiences with barriers for their organisations as well as for their target groups, to derive recommendations for future Erasmus+ funding.

PART C – General impact of Erasmus+

2 Short portrait of the adult education sector in Italy

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

2.1 Institutional framework conditions and providers' structure

Adult education in Italy is organised through a multi-level and plural system, in which responsibilities are distributed among national, regional and local actors. The formal adult education system falls mainly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Merit and is implemented through the Provincial Centres for Adult Education, known as CPIA, together with upper secondary schools offering second-level adult education pathways. The CPIA were introduced by Presidential Decree No. 263/2012, which replaced the former Permanent Territorial Centres and evening courses with a new institutional structure specifically dedicated to adult learners. Their educational offer includes first-level pathways, literacy and Italian language courses for foreign adults, and connections with second-level pathways leading to upper secondary qualifications.

The governance of adult learning, however, extends beyond the formal education system. Regions play a central role in vocational education and training, active labour-market policies and continuing training, while local authorities, employment services, social partners, third-sector organisations and civil society actors contribute to non-formal and informal learning opportunities. Italian legislation on lifelong learning, in particular Law No. 92/2012, recognises learning as a process that takes place throughout life and across formal, non-formal and informal contexts. This has encouraged the development of territorial networks for lifelong learning, although their implementation remains uneven across the country.

The financing of adult education reflects this institutional plurality. Formal adult education pathways delivered by CPIA are mainly funded through the national education budget and public resources allocated by the State. Courses leading to qualifications within the education system are generally free of charge for learners, apart from small administrative contributions. Other areas of adult learning, especially vocational training and continuing education, are financed through regional funds, European funds, interprofessional training funds, employer-based schemes, local initiatives and project-based funding, including Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund Plus.

The provider structure is therefore highly diversified. It includes CPIA, upper secondary schools offering adult pathways, regional vocational training centres, universities, third-sector organisations, social enterprises, cultural institutions, libraries, municipalities, employers, trade unions and professional associations. This diversity is one of the strengths of the Italian adult education landscape, as it allows different types of learners and communities to be reached. At the same time, it also creates challenges in terms of coordination, quality assurance, visibility of learning opportunities and recognition of learning outcomes.

Among the most important reforms, the establishment of the CPIA represents the main institutional innovation in the formal adult education sector. The reform introduced a more structured system, based on personalised learning pathways, recognition of prior learning and individual learning agreements. In parallel, the broader lifelong learning framework promoted by Law No. 92/2012 and subsequent agreements has strengthened the policy relevance of territorial networks, validation

of competences and cooperation among public and private actors. However, the full integration of these components into a coherent national lifelong learning system remains an ongoing process.

2.2 Adult education policies

Adult education policies in Italy are shaped by a set of persistent social, educational and economic challenges. One of the main issues is the need to raise participation in adult learning, particularly among adults with low levels of qualifications, low basic skills, limited digital competences or fragile socio-economic conditions. Participation is also affected by territorial inequalities, with significant differences between regions and between urban, rural and inner areas. These challenges are particularly relevant in a country marked by demographic ageing, labour-market transitions, migration, digital transformation and the need to support active citizenship and social inclusion.
A second major challenge concerns the fragmentation of the adult learning system. While Italy has a rich variety of providers and learning opportunities, the system is not always easy for adults to navigate. The coexistence of formal education, vocational training, continuing education, non-formal learning and local community-based initiatives requires stronger coordination mechanisms. This is especially important for adults with fewer opportunities, who may face economic, linguistic, cultural, organisational or motivational barriers to participation.
Current adult education policies are therefore oriented towards several interconnected priorities. These include the strengthening of basic skills, literacy and numeracy; the development of digital and green competences; the improvement of Italian language provision for migrant adults; the recognition and validation of prior learning; the personalisation of learning pathways; and the creation of stronger links between education, work, welfare and local development. The CPIA play a particularly important role in this policy framework, as they operate both as educational institutions and as potential hubs for territorial cooperation. INDIRE has supported the Ministry of Education and Merit in monitoring and accompanying CPIA development, with particular attention to credit recognition and personalised curricula.
Policy measures in recent years have also been influenced by the European skills agenda, the digital and green transitions, and the need to improve the capacity of education systems to respond to social vulnerability. In this context, Erasmus+ is increasingly relevant not only as a mobility programme, but also as an instrument for organisational development, innovation and European cooperation in adult education. Its priorities — inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, participation in democratic life and sustainability — are closely aligned with many of the key challenges of the Italian adult education sector.
Important reforms in this area are less recent than in some other education sectors, but they continue to shape the current policy landscape. The CPIA reform, the legislative framework on lifelong learning, the development of territorial networks and the growing attention to validation and certification of competences remain central reference points. More recently, policy debate has increasingly focused on the need to connect adult education with skills strategies, labour-market transitions, social inclusion, local development and the recognition of flexible learning pathways, including micro-credentials.

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

Between 2024 and early 2026, the adult education sector in Italy underwent a significant process of development within the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programming

framework. The available institutional documentation and research sources show that Erasmus+ is increasingly assuming a role that extends beyond the traditional dimension of international mobility. It is progressively emerging as a strategic instrument for organisational, pedagogical and territorial innovation in the field of lifelong learning.

The main empirical basis for analysing the development of the sector is provided by the national reporting produced by the Erasmus+ INDIRE Agency, which annually monitors Italian participation in the different actions of the programme. In particular, the Erasmus+ 2024 Report documents a marked strengthening of participation in the adult education sector. In 2024, 130 Italian organisations were accredited in Adult Education, with total funding of approximately EUR 9.6 million allocated to mobility and cooperation activities. In the same year, 2,697 mobilities involving educators and trainers were carried out through job shadowing, teaching assignments and participation in training courses, alongside 1,326 mobilities involving adult learners. Regarding international cooperation, the report also highlights the funding of 44 cooperation partnerships under Key Action 2, supported by more than EUR 6.3 million and focused on themes such as social inclusion, participation and the digital transition.

Alongside annual monitoring reports, recent years have also seen the development of evaluative studies aimed at providing a deeper understanding of the programme's medium- and long-term effects. Among these, particular relevance is held by the Medium- and Long-Term Report on the Erasmus+ Programme, published by INDIRE in January 2025. The study analyses the implementation of Erasmus+ across the different sectors of the Italian education system, including adult education, through a public consultation and a questionnaire addressed to a sample of experts. The findings reveal a broadly positive perception of Erasmus+ as a strategic lever for innovation within educational organisations. According to the report, 93% of respondents consider Erasmus+ a fundamental educational opportunity, while a large majority recognise its contribution to innovation, inclusion and internationalisation.

The methodologies applied in the existing studies are mainly based on institutional monitoring, descriptive statistical analysis, surveys, public consultations and stakeholder perceptions. These approaches provide useful evidence on participation trends, perceived impact and organisational change. However, the current evidence base remains limited when it comes to longitudinal research, quasi-experimental designs or direct assessment of outcomes for adult learners. In most cases, the available studies focus on organisations, projects and beneficiaries' perceptions rather than on long-term learner trajectories.

The main thematic areas emerging from the documentation are social inclusion, participation of adults with fewer opportunities, digital transformation, democratic participation, organisational innovation, internationalisation and the strengthening of local lifelong-learning ecosystems. A recurring theme is the growing attention to migrants, adults with low skills, socio-economically vulnerable groups and learners living in territories where access to educational opportunities is more fragile. Another important strand concerns the interaction between European cooperation and national lifelong-learning strategies, including the potential synergies between Erasmus+, territorial networks, skills policies and other European or national funding instruments.

In parallel with institutional reporting, a scientific and professional strand of reflection has developed around the transformations currently affecting adult education in the European context. A significant contribution in this field is provided by the EPALE community — the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe — which has

promoted editorial and research work through the EPALE Journal. Issue 17, published in 2025 and devoted to the futures of adult education, brings together contributions that examine the transformations of the sector, the role of local educational institutions — especially CPIA — and the prospects for lifelong learning in the context of contemporary digital and social transitions. In continuity with this line of reflection, the subsequent call for papers for issue 19 of the journal, dedicated to assessing the impact of Erasmus+ on adult education, points to the consolidation of an increasingly structured research interest in the effects of the programme and in its implications for national education systems.

The most important findings emerging from the available documentation suggest that Erasmus+ is contributing to the consolidation of adult education in Italy as a more visible and internationally connected sector. The programme supports the professional development of educators and trainers, strengthens cooperation among organisations, promotes innovation in educational practices and encourages the inclusion of adults with fewer opportunities. It also contributes to opening adult education providers to European networks and to strengthening their capacity to design, manage and evaluate international cooperation projects.

At the same time, the literature and institutional reporting point to some limitations. First, there remains a relative scarcity of Italian peer-reviewed studies directly examining the outcomes of Erasmus+ projects for adult learners through systematic and longitudinal research designs. Second, available data often describe adult learners as a heterogeneous population, while segmentation by specific vulnerability profiles — such as low skill levels, migrant background, disability or socio-economic disadvantage — is still limited in publicly available indicators. Third, although reports and stakeholders often identify administrative burden and fragmentation of digital tools as critical issues, empirical evidence remains limited when it comes to quantifying their impact on participation, project quality or the sustainability of outcomes.In light of these considerations, future research on Erasmus+ in the adult education sector in Italy should strengthen the connection between institutional monitoring and more systematic impact-oriented research. This would require studies capable of assessing the effects of projects not only on organisations, but also on adult learners, educational staff and local lifelong-learning systems. Particular attention should be paid to the long-term effects of mobility and cooperation activities, the participation of adults with fewer opportunities, the role of territorial networks and the conditions that allow Erasmus+ results to become sustainable beyond the duration of individual projects.

3 The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

3.1 Introduction

Inclusion and diversity are one of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme. Equal opportunities and equal access, inclusion, diversity and fairness should be promoted in all programme actions.[3] The focus of funding is therefore on organisations as well as disadvantaged learners who would otherwise not be likely to participate in internationalisation activities. This chapter discusses the characteristics of the organisations that participated in Erasmus+ between 2021 and 2024, but also the characteristics of the adult learners who benefit from the outcomes developed in KA2 and/or who take part in mobility activities in KA1. Within the theoretical framework of adult education, this analysis predominantly focuses on civic adult education rather than continuing education (Milana, 2012), emphasizing active citizenship and democratic participation. Methodologically, it is crucial to state a specific limitation: in the short term, it is not possible to conduct an objective measurement of impact (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Ockham IPS, Institute for Innovation and Technology, & Artéduc, 2025). Therefore, the data collected and discussed herein primarily reflect the subjective perceptions of the participants (Mezirow, 1997). Consequently, the analysis distinguishes clearly between quantitative "measurement" and qualitative "perception", adopting alternative concepts such as personal "transformation" and "knowledge acquisition" to evaluate these experiences. On this basis, statements can be made about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ in civic adult education in Italy.

3.2 Participating organisations in Erasmus+

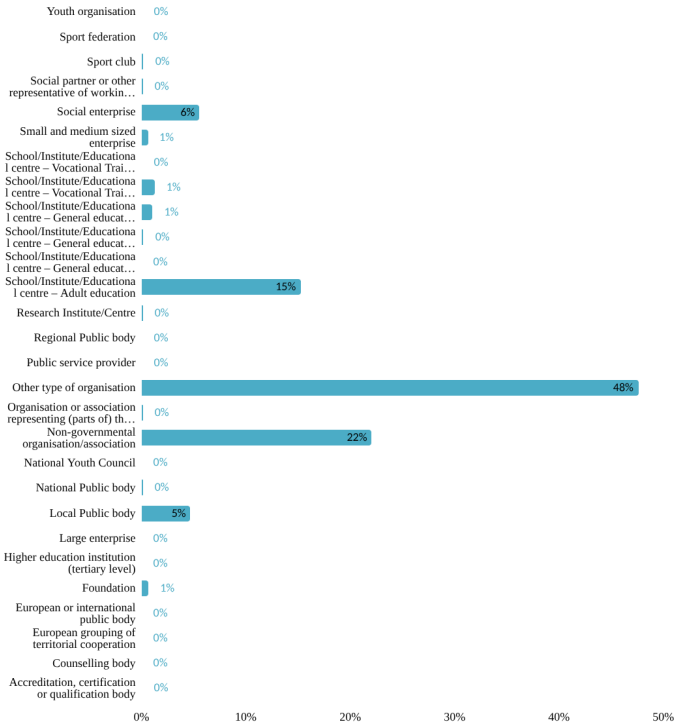
3.2.1 Type of organisations

The aggregated data provided by the European Commission for the 2021-2025 period, supplemented by the responses to the national surveys of Wave 2, provide a picture of a sector characterized by high institutional heterogeneity. Against a total volume of N=1509 participating organizations in mobility projects (Key Action 1) and N=1063 in cooperation partnerships (Key Action 2), the absolute predominance of the Third Sector is confirmed. Organizations classified as "Other type of organisation" (which in the Italian context of the European database frequently subsume social promotion associations, NGOs, and foundations) or "Non-governmental organisation/association" represent the core of the participation. Alongside these, there is a significant presence of "Social enterprises" (social cooperatives), which combine business activity with educational and inclusive purposes. Local and regional public authorities show a minority but qualitatively relevant participation, often intervening as support entities or coordinators of mobility consortia.
Compared to the initial evidence that emerged during Wave 1, in which participation was driven primarily by actors with a consolidated history in European project design, Wave 2 highlights a significant broadening of the participatory base. Wave 1 documented an adaptation phase to the new seven-year programming period: organizations, at that juncture, were measuring themselves against the introduction of the new accreditation mechanisms and the newly established horizontal priorities. Today, longitudinal analysis allows us to observe a maturation of the system.

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

Accredited organizations (KA120-ADU) have stabilized their internationalization strategies, developing multi-year European development plans that guarantee continuous mobility for staff and learners. In parallel, the measures introduced to favor newcomers, particularly small-scale projects (KA122-ADU and KA210-ADU), have produced the expected results. Wave 2 data show an increase in the participation of micro and small organizations (entities with 1-5 or 6-10 staff members), which find in these flexible and accessible financial instruments a "stepping stone" towards transnational cooperation.

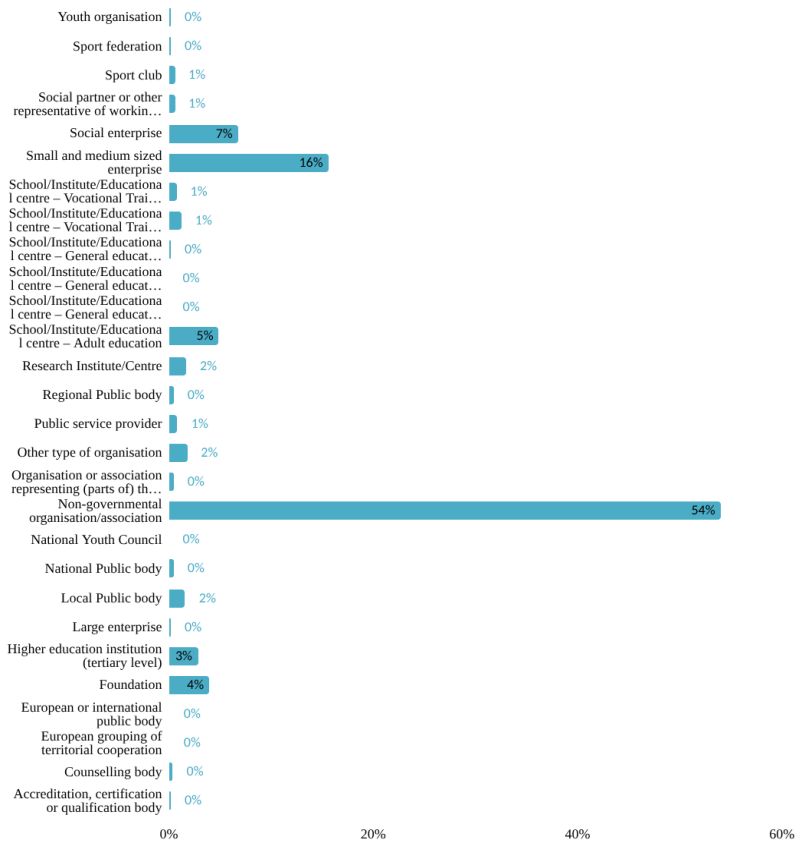
Figure 3.1 Type of organisation participating in KA1 projects in the period of 2021 to 2025 (N=1509)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

The second chart of institutional origin (N=1063) illustrates the composition of the cooperation partnerships (KA2). The organizational architecture in this segment appears more complex. While the centrality of the Third Sector is confirmed, an increase emerges in the share of research institutions, university departments, and vocational education and training (VET) providers operating with a cross-sectoral perspective. Small-scale partnerships (KA210-ADU) act as a privileged gateway for local micro-organizations.

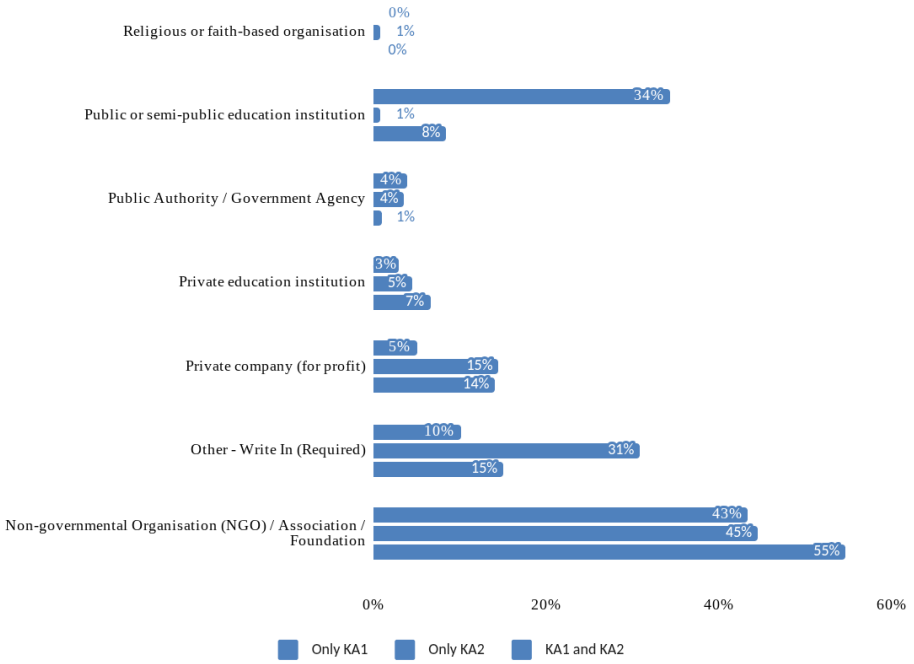
Figure 3.2 Type of organisation participating in KA2 projects in the period of 2021 to 2025 (N=1063)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

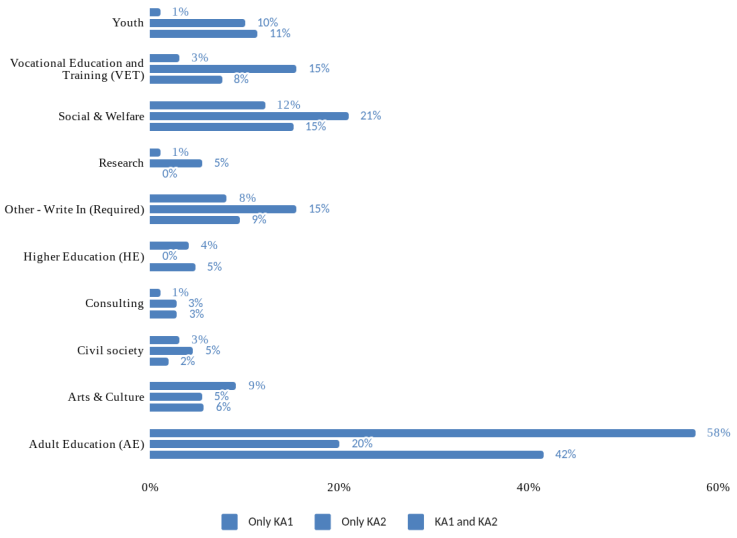
Wave 1 had intercepted a strong propensity for more structured organizations to monopolize large partnerships (KA220). Wave 2 data, decoded through Figure X, indicate a process of "democratization" of access. The proliferation of KA210 projects has allowed the entry of a new cohort of local community actors (neighborhood associations, small cultural entities), diversifying the morphology of the network and enriching the pool of non-formal educational practices.
Figure X, relating to the primary sector of operation, highlights how the absolute majority falls primarily within the "Adult Education (AE)" sector, followed by significant intersections with "Vocational Education and Training (VET)" and "Social & Welfare". This last finding is crucial: adult education in Italy is intrinsically linked to welfare policies, social assistance, and the integration of marginalized groups. A further line of development, identifiable in the comparison between the two research waves, concerns the role of public and semi-public institutions. While in the preparatory documents of Wave 1 the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) were described as crucial actors but sometimes hindered by bureaucratic-administrative rigidities, current data suggest a process of gradual "institutional capacity building". Systematic access to Erasmus+ funds is supporting formal adult education in the innovation of its curricula, especially in the areas of linguistic and digital literacy, bridging historical systemic gaps. The coexistence within the program of Third Sector entities (agile and deeply rooted in the social fabric) and public institutions (structured and widespread) generates a synergistic effect that increases the overall resilience of the AE sector in Italy.

Figure 3.3 Legal status of beneficiary organisations that participated in Erasmus+ (2021-2024): only KA1, only KA2 and, KA1 and KA2 (N= 99, 110, 106)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

Figure 3.4 Sectors in which beneficiary organisations primarily operate: only KA1, only KA2 and, KA1 and KA2 in the period of 2021-2024 (N= 99, 110, 106)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

3.2.2 Geographical distribution

The evaluation of the programme's impact necessitates a rigorous analysis of its spatial distributive equity. To this end, georeferenced data provided by the European Commission, aggregated by NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) codes, allows for an accurate mapping of institutional participation across Italy.

The regional breakdown of KA1 beneficiaries demonstrates comprehensive national coverage, whilst highlighting specific poles of high participatory density. The NUTS 1 areas of the North-West (e.g., ITC4 - Lombardy) and the North-East (e.g., ITH5 - Emilia-Romagna) record absolute peaks in terms of approved projects and generated mobility flows. This substantial volume reflects the dense associational and educational fabric of these northern regions, which inherently benefit from resilient organisational infrastructures and consolidated traditions of internationalisation.

Concurrently, the central and southern regions demonstrate a pronounced and growing engagement in both KA1 and KA2 actions. This reveals a relatively balanced diffusion across the Italian peninsula, effectively bridging the historical socio-economic divide between the North and the South. Such geographical transversality is highly indicative of the National Agency's effective dissemination strategies and the widespread recognition of Erasmus+ as a vital resource for institutional capacity building in diverse territorial contexts. Finally, it is essential to note that while the statistical data records the formal location of the organisations' headquarters, the actual implementation of project activities frequently extends to peripheral and marginalised areas, thereby significantly amplifying the programme's socio-educational impact on local communities.

The geography of KA2 projects partially mirrors the trend of KA1, confirming the solid performance of the central-northern regions. However, the disaggregated analysis of NUTS 2 codes (regional level) reveals a dynamic polycentrism. Central regions (ITI4 - Lazio, ITI1 - Tuscany) operate as crucial hubs, hosting numerous lead organizations that coordinate extensive transnational partnerships.

The comparison between the qualitative evidence of Wave 1 and the quantitative datasets of Wave 2 offers one of the most relevant analytical insights of the entire report. The academic literature referenced in the Wave 1 drafts (e.g., Daniele V., Malanima P., 2011) highlighted the historical socio-economic divide between the Center-North and the South of Italy (Mezzogiorno), a divide that is traditionally also reflected in the indicators of lifelong learning and educational poverty.

In Wave 1, access to European funds risked appearing polarized. However, the consolidated data from Wave 2 highlight a marked dynamism in the NUTS 1 areas relating to the South (ITF) and the Islands (ITG) (e.g., ITF4 - Apulia, ITG1 - Sicily, ITF3 - Campania). A phenomenon of progressive territorial convergence driven by the program is observed. Organizations in the South are capitalizing on the opportunities offered in particular by "Small-scale partnerships" and short-term mobility to build cooperation networks. In these territories, Erasmus+ does not solely act as a tool for methodological innovation, but takes on the role of a strategic lever for territorial equalization. The projects promoted in the Southern areas are characterized by a strong slant toward social inclusion and the development of basic skills, acting as a supplementary infrastructure where the public educational offering is less widespread.

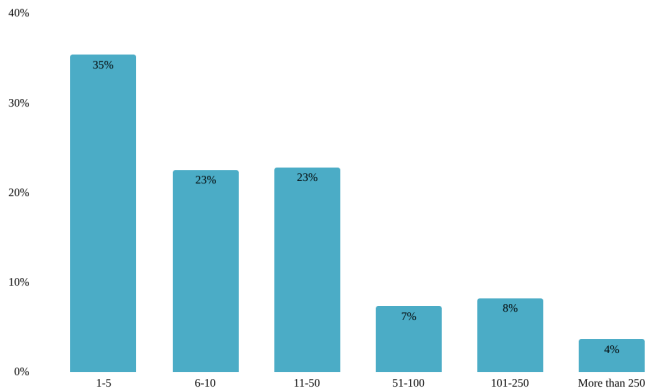
In summary, the empirical evidence base of Wave 2 documents the maturation of a civic Adult Education ecosystem. This educational ecosystem must be understood in relation to its diverse local and institutional contexts, where the interaction between formal public institutions and agile Third Sector entities creates specific, localized

conditions for learning and inclusion (Federighi, 2019a). While retaining its historical structural asymmetries, this contextualized ecosystem utilizes the flexible architecture of Erasmus+ (Accreditation vs. Small-scale projects) to maximize its attractiveness, extending the right to adult learning transversely across the entire peninsula.

3.2.3 Size of the participating organisations (KA1 and KA2)

The dimensional analysis of the beneficiary organizations represents a crucial interpretive juncture for evaluating the Erasmus+ program's capacity to penetrate the national educational fabric at multiple levels. "Size" is operationalized here through two main indicators, gathered empirically via surveys administered to coordinators and partners (Wave 2) and compared with data from the first survey phase (Wave 1): the number of staff members and the volume of adult learners involved annually in training activities.
The chart regarding the breakdown of staff (derived from the survey question "How many staff members currently work at your organisation?") illustrates a highly fragmented organizational ecosystem, characterized by a polarization towards micro and small sizes. A majority percentage of the responding organizations, both among partners and coordinators, falls into the "1-5", "6-10", and "11-50" staff unit size brackets. The presence of medium or large entities (over 100 or 250 staff members) is statistically marginal, limited to specific public institutions, university networks, or structured consortia.
This graphical representation consistently reflects the nature of the Italian Third Sector, which, as highlighted in the preparatory documents and the Module IV Report of Wave 1, is historically founded on small-scale social promotion associations and social cooperatives, often driven by a restricted core of professionals working alongside project collaborators or volunteers. The architecture of the program, particularly Key Action 1 (KA122-ADU - Short-term projects) and the small-scale partnerships of Key Action 2 (KA210-ADU), demonstrates remarkable adherence to this morphology, offering financial tools proportionate to the administrative capacities of micro-organizations.

Figure 3.5 Number of staff working in the organisation (N=328)

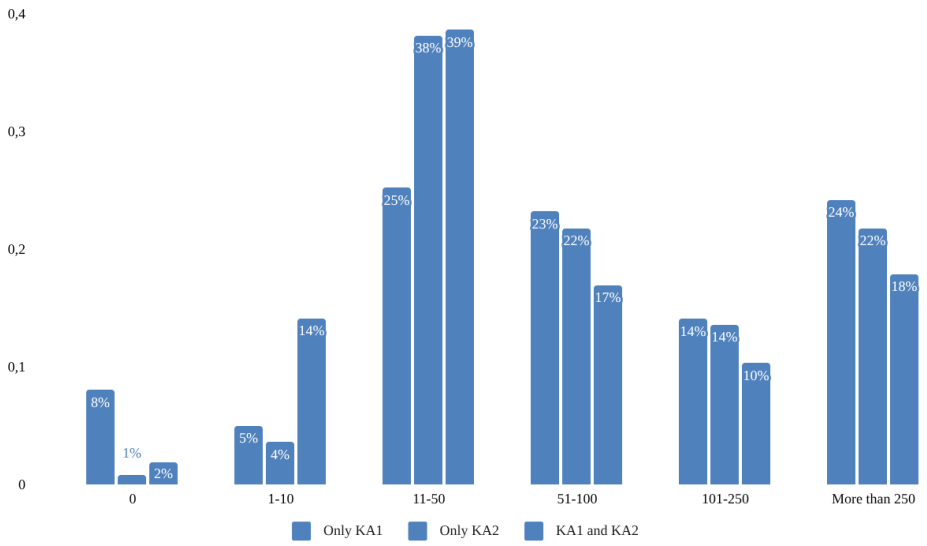


Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The chart concerning the user base (based on the variable "How many adult learners participated in learning activities provided by your organisation in 2024?") provides a complementary and, in some ways, asymmetrical picture compared to staff size.

Despite the prevalence of small workforces, a significant share of organizations reports reaching a high number of learners. This evidence suggests a high multiplier effect and pronounced operational efficiency: organizations with agile administrative structures manage to intercept vast user bases, often operating through territorial networks, digital platforms, or widespread local training interventions.

Figure 3.6 Number of adult learners that participated in learning activities in 2024 separated by only KA1, only KA2, and KA1 and KA2 (N=315)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

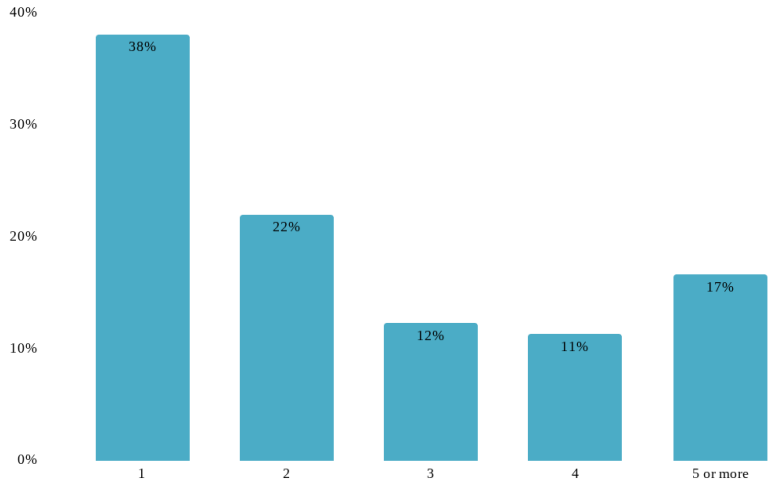
The diachronic comparison with Wave 1 data reveals systemic developments of great interest. During the first survey, a greater concentration of funding was observed, especially regarding Key Action 2 (KA220-ADU), toward entities with larger and more structured workforces. This dynamic was attributable to the project and managerial complexity required for the launch of the first projects of the new 2021-2027 seven-year period.
The consolidated data from Wave 2 document a clear rebalancing. The massive entry of micro-organizations (1-5 employees) signals the successful overcoming of the initial barriers to entry. The flexibility measures introduced by the European Commission (e.g., lump sum funding) have produced the desired results, allowing entities of minimal size to participate actively. The empirical evidence shows an ongoing capacity-building process: small entities use Erasmus+ not only to train their limited staff but as a lever to progressively expand their scale of intervention and the complexity of their operations at the local and transnational levels.

3.2.4 Number of projects involved and variety of roles

The degree of maturity within the adult education ecosystem can be seen in the frequency of participation and the complexity of roles taken on within consortia and partnerships. This section explores the project design expertise of Italian organizations and the variety of roles they fill (Coordinator, Partner, Supporting

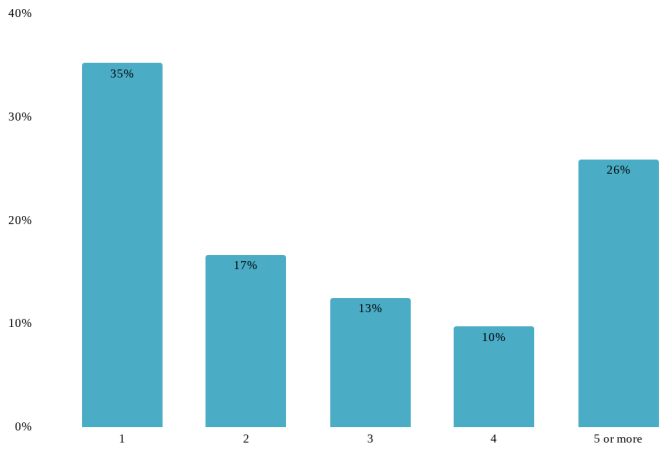
Organization), utilizing data from the Commission's databases and self-assessment surveys.
The Italian cohort of the RIA-AE network demonstrates a marked degree of expertise and a continuous commitment within the Erasmus+ framework. This longitudinal engagement is highlighted by the fact that 43% of the responding organizations have participated in 5 or more KA1 and KA2 projects since the beginning of the current programming period. Conversely, a significant portion (21.4%) consists of newcomers engaging in their first project, demonstrating the program's enduring capacity to attract and integrate new actors.
Regarding the specific types of internationalization activities, the organizations show a balanced distribution: 35% participate exclusively in KA1 mobility actions, 32% focus solely on KA2 cooperation projects, and 33% adopt a hybrid strategy (both KA1 and KA2). Furthermore, Italian organizations predominantly assume leadership roles within consortia: in KA2 strategic partnerships, 71% of the institutions have acted as project coordinators.

Figure 3.7 Number of KA1 projects organisations have participated in (as coordinator or partner) since 2021 (N=205)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

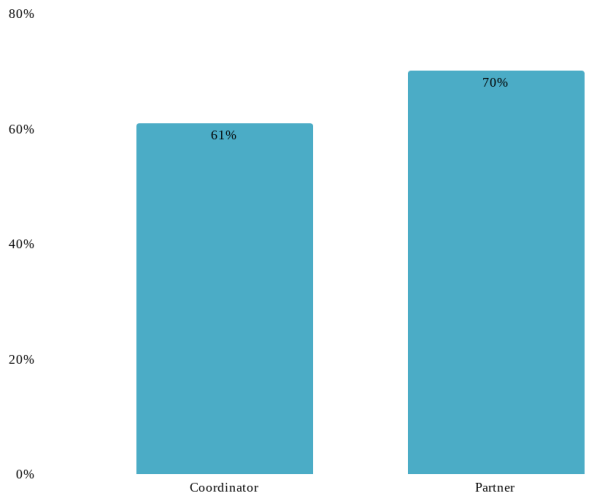
Figure 3.8 Number of KA2 projects organisations have participated in (as coordinator or partner) since 2021 (N=216)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The chart mapping the number of Erasmus+ KA1 and KA2 projects in which the organization has taken part (as coordinator or partner) during the current programming period reveals a bimodal distribution. On one hand, a solid cluster of "serial applicants" emerges - highly specialized organizations reporting participation in numerous projects. These entities act as the keystones of the system, ensuring stability, institutional memory, and the transfer of good practices. On the other hand, Wave 2 data confirms the entry of a significant percentage of newcomers - organizations experiencing European project planning for the first time - which focus their activities on one or at most two small-scale projects.

Figure 3.9 Role of organisations which participated in KA2 projects in the period of 2021-2024 (N=231)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

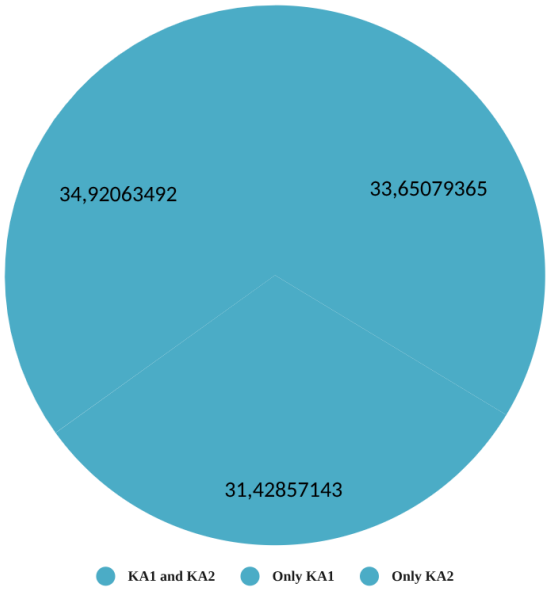
Within the context of Key Action 1 (KA1), a marked differentiation is observed. Formal institutions and accredited organizations predominantly assume the role of Coordinator or Applicant Organisation. Alongside these, the dataset highlights the

emergence of ancillary yet fundamental roles, such as Supporting Organisations and Hosting Partner Organisations. This variety of roles indicates the development of increasingly sophisticated mobility value chains, where entities specialized in hosting support organizations focused on sending and pedagogical preparation.
Within the framework of Key Action 2 (KA2), the role of Coordinator (partnership coordinator) has historically been the prerogative of entities with high administrative solidity and pre-financing capabilities. However, the chart detailing the distribution of roles in KA2 projects shows a vast base of Italian entities participating as Partners. The partner position often represents the ideal methodological incubator: the organization participates in curriculum innovation and the exchange of practices without being burdened by the full responsibility of administrative and financial project management.

A comparative reading between the first monitoring phase and Wave 2 offers significant analytical insights regarding the evolution of networking skills:

- Wave 1: The documentary analysis highlighted a certain crystallization of roles: coordinators tended to remain coordinators, interacting within closed and repetitive relational networks.
- Wave 2: This phase, on the other hand, documents a dynamic of greater permeability and upward mobility. Several organizations that appeared exclusively as partners in small-scale partnerships (KA210) during the first survey have capitalized on their acquired skills, transitioning to the role of coordinators in more complex projects (KA220).

Figure 3.10 Type of internationalisation activity(ies) the organisation has participated in since 2021 (N=315)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

Similarly, in the field of mobility (KA1), the transition from beneficiaries of short-term projects (KA122) to obtaining Erasmus Accreditation (KA120) represents a systematic development trajectory documented by the most recent data.

Finally, there is a qualitative enrichment in the functions assumed. Surveys relating to the priority on "Participation in democratic life" indicate that the role of organizations is not limited to the technical execution of project tasks, but is evolving toward an advocacy and civil intermediation function. Partner organizations, by virtue of their proximity to the local territory, increasingly act as vital conduits between European democratic values (developed within the projects) and marginalized local communities.

3.3 Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+

3.3.1 General obstacles in KA1 and KA2

Although respondents generally reported positive experiences with Erasmus+, several organisations also highlighted barriers that may limit participation in the programme. One of the most frequently mentioned obstacles concerns the administrative and organisational complexity associated with Erasmus+ projects. Respondents noted that the preparation and management of project proposals require significant administrative effort and time investment. Limited organisational resources were also identified as a barrier. Smaller organisations in particular reported challenges related to limited staff capacity and the difficulty of dedicating sufficient time to project preparation, implementation and reporting. Some respondents also mentioned structural constraints related to the size of their organisations or the limited number of potential participants within their local context. In smaller communities, organisations sometimes face difficulties in reaching large numbers of learners or implementing large-scale project activities. Despite these challenges, respondents generally emphasised that the benefits of participation in Erasmus+ projects outweigh these difficulties. When evaluating these benefits, it is necessary to treat participant 'satisfaction' and actual learning 'outcomes' as autonomous analytical dimensions, as a high level of satisfaction does not automatically equate to structural outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Nevertheless, respondents reported significant perceived transformations and knowledge acquisition (Mezirow, 1997), particularly in terms of organisational learning, networking opportunities and innovation in educational practices. Furthermore, while Erasmus+ is a significant factor in this process, it should not be viewed as the sole catalyst for participant empowerment (De Greef, 2021); rather, it acts synergistically with pre-existing local networks, organizational efforts, and individual motivations to foster active citizenship (European Commission, 2015; Hippel & Tippelt, 2010).
The case studies conducted within Module 3 highlighted several obstacles affecting participation in Erasmus+ projects, even among organisations with consolidated international experience. One of the most recurrent challenges concerns the administrative and bureaucratic burden linked to project application, management and reporting procedures. Small and medium-sized organisations reported difficulties in balancing Erasmus+ management requirements with their ordinary educational and social activities, especially in contexts characterised by limited human resources and strong operational workloads. Another major issue emerging from the interviews concerns the sustainability and continuity of projects after the end of European funding. Organisations stressed that Erasmus+ projects often generate valuable educational methodologies, professional networks and community partnerships, but maintaining these results over time becomes difficult without stable structural funding. Several interviewees emphasised that the uncertainty of future calls and the increasing competition for Erasmus+ funding risk weakening long-term cooperation processes and interrupting educational initiatives that proved highly effective at local

level. The case studies also revealed challenges connected to the recognition of non-formal and participatory educational practices. Organisations working with methodologies such as Theatre of the Oppressed, community theatre and experiential learning highlighted that artistic and performative outcomes are often undervalued within standard project evaluation systems, which tend to privilege more formalised outputs such as manuals or toolkits. Participants stressed the importance of recognising relational, performative and community-based dimensions as meaningful educational outcomes within adult education projects. Finally, organisations reported obstacles related to the inclusion of vulnerable learners in project activities. Linguistic barriers, low self-confidence, economic difficulties and limited availability due to work or family responsibilities frequently reduced participation opportunities for migrants, socially marginalised adults and people with fewer opportunities.

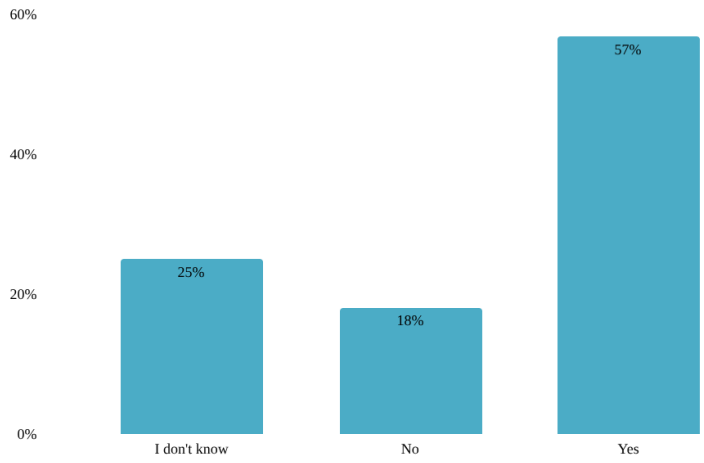
The interviews with non-participating organisations conducted within Module 5 highlighted a series of structural, informational and organisational barriers preventing access to Erasmus+. A first major obstacle concerns the perceived complexity of the programme. Many organisations described Erasmus+ procedures as excessively bureaucratic and difficult to approach, particularly for small associations and local organisations lacking dedicated administrative staff or previous experience in European project design. Another recurring barrier concerns the lack of internal competences related to internationalisation and project management. Several organisations reported not having sufficient knowledge regarding Erasmus+ application procedures, partnership building, financial management and reporting obligations. In many cases, organisations expressed interest in participating in Erasmus+, but perceived the programme as inaccessible due to insufficient technical expertise and limited institutional support. The interviews also highlighted economic and logistical difficulties affecting both organisations and learners. Limited financial resources, staff shortages and concerns about anticipating project expenses represented significant deterrents for participation. At learner level, organisations stressed that adult participants often face obstacles linked to work obligations, family responsibilities, linguistic insecurity and mobility-related anxiety, particularly among vulnerable groups. Furthermore, some organisations perceived Erasmus+ as more accessible to already structured and experienced institutions, while smaller grassroots organisations felt disadvantaged in the competition for funding opportunities. This perception contributed to a sense of exclusion and discouragement among organisations operating in local community contexts. Despite these barriers, non-participating organisations generally recognised the potential value of Erasmus+ in terms of professional development, networking opportunities and social inclusion. Many interviewees expressed interest in future participation, particularly if accompanied by simplified procedures, mentoring mechanisms and stronger support structures for first-time applicants.

3.3.2 Specific obstacles for KA1 mobility for adult education learners

The introduction of learning mobility for adult learners represents one of the most significant and paradigmatic innovations in the architecture of the Erasmus+ program for the 2021-2027 seven-year period. This measure was conceived with the clear intent of democratizing access to international experiences, extending them beyond the traditional pool of formal, school, and university education, to reach individuals involved in non-formal and informal education pathways. The empirical analysis conducted on Italian beneficiary organizations presents a complex application

framework. The examination of quantitative and qualitative data reveals the existence of structural, situational, and dispositional barriers that mitigate the potential impact of this opportunity.
Figure X, generated from the survey question "Do you plan to organise mobility activities for adult learners in the framework of a future KA1-project ('Learning mobility of individuals')?", offers a fundamental metric for evaluating the real penetration capacity of Key Action 1 within the fabric of non-formal education. If the awareness analysis (previous paragraph) certified a communicative success for the program, Figure 9 shifts the axis of the investigation from the cognitive dimension to that of strategic intentionality and operational feasibility.
The chart presents a distribution of responses that reflects the complex balance between the inclusive ambition of the organizations and the pragmatism imposed by systemic barriers. The percentage of organizations responding affirmatively ("Yes") represents the share of entities that have internalized learner mobility as a structural element of their educational offering. The survey indicates a strong intention to plan future mobility (57% of respondents intend to do so), yet the structural barriers remain formidable. This segment is typically composed of accredited organizations (KA120-ADU) or entities that have already consolidated reliable partnership networks, thus possessing the administrative infrastructure necessary to manage the complexity of the adult target group.
The comparison with the exploratory data of Wave 1 allows for tracing a clear maturation trajectory of the sector. During the first survey phase, the intention to organize learner mobility was cloaked in a strong "project optimism"; many organizations, especially newcomers, expressed a positive intent based more on enthusiasm for the new financial opportunity than on a real feasibility assessment.

Figure 3.11 Intention of beneficiary organisations to apply to KA1 mobility for adult learners in the future (N=315)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The Wave 2 data, crystallized in Figure 9, instead show the transition to a mature pragmatic evaluation phase. Today's data is purged of the novelty effect: organizations that answer "Yes" today possess a clear Theory of Change and tested operational tools. Conversely, the increase in cautious or defeatist positions signals a phenomenon of "systemic attrition": entities that, despite having attempted or

hypothesized the action in Wave 1, experienced failures or insurmountable managerial difficulties, deciding to remodel their future strategies.
In summary, Figure X documents a capacity polarization: the program acts as a formidable accelerator for organizations equipped with administrative resilience, but it highlights the need to introduce simplified support mechanisms or specific incentives to prevent local community organizations, which are closest to vulnerable learners, from giving up on this fundamental opportunity for European inclusion from the outset.
Survey Respondents also identified several factors that may limit the organisation of mobility activities for adult learners within the framework of KA1 projects. A number of organisations indicated that adult learners often face practical constraints that make participation in international mobility difficult. These constraints include work commitments, family responsibilities and limited availability for travel. In addition, some organisations reported organisational challenges related to the planning and management of mobility activities, particularly for institutions that have limited experience with this type of project. Language barriers and financial constraints were also mentioned as potential obstacles for some groups of learners, particularly those with fewer opportunities. These responses suggest that while mobility activities can offer valuable learning experiences for adult learners, additional support mechanisms and flexible approaches may be needed to ensure broader participation among diverse learner groups.
The interviews conducted with adult learners and coordinating organisations within Module 4 highlighted several obstacles specifically affecting participation in KA1 mobility activities. One of the most recurrent barriers concerns linguistic insecurity and fear of international mobility, particularly among adult learners with vulnerable backgrounds or limited previous international experience. Coordinators reported that many participants initially perceived mobility experiences as emotionally challenging due to anxiety related to communication, travelling abroad and interacting in unfamiliar cultural environments. Another significant obstacle concerns personal and family responsibilities. Adult learners often experience difficulties in participating in mobility activities because of work obligations, caregiving responsibilities and limited flexibility in their daily lives. Coordinating organisations stressed that these constraints particularly affect women and adult learners from disadvantaged socio-economic contexts. Economic vulnerability also emerged as a relevant issue. Although Erasmus+ funding covers mobility costs, some participants still perceived participation as financially demanding due to indirect expenses, uncertainty regarding reimbursements or concerns about temporarily leaving employment or family duties.
The interviews additionally highlighted the importance of group mobility as a protective and facilitating factor. Coordinators explained that travelling in groups significantly reduces anxiety, strengthens mutual support and facilitates participation among learners with fewer opportunities, especially migrants and adults with low self-confidence. Pre-departure preparation activities, mentoring and continuous pedagogical support were therefore considered essential to overcoming initial fears and encouraging participation. Several organisations also stressed that adult learners frequently underestimate their own capacities and initially perceive Erasmus+ mobility as “not meant for them”. Consequently, a substantial amount of motivational and relational work is required to support learners in recognising themselves as legitimate participants within international educational experiences.
The interviews with non-participating organisations revealed additional obstacles specifically related to KA1 mobility for adult education learners. A major issue concerns the difficulty of involving vulnerable adult learners in international mobility

experiences. Organisations reported that many potential participants experience fear, insecurity and resistance towards travelling abroad, particularly when they have limited educational backgrounds, low linguistic competences or scarce previous mobility experiences. Non-participating organisations also identified logistical and organisational barriers as highly significant. Many organisations stated that they lack the internal resources, staff capacity and administrative competences necessary to organise and manage mobility projects adequately. The complexity of coordinating travel arrangements, accommodation, learner support and financial procedures was often perceived as excessive for small local organisations. Another obstacle concerns the socio-economic conditions of adult learners. According to interviewees, work instability, precarious living conditions and family responsibilities frequently prevent adults from participating in mobility activities, even when opportunities are available. This issue was described as particularly relevant for migrants, unemployed adults and socially marginalised groups. Furthermore, several organisations highlighted insufficient information and guidance regarding KA1 opportunities for adult learners. In some cases, Erasmus+ mobility was still perceived as a programme mainly oriented towards younger students or highly educated participants, generating a psychological distance between the programme and adult learners with fewer opportunities. Overall, the interviews emphasised the need for stronger accompaniment measures, simplified administrative procedures and more inclusive support systems capable of making KA1 mobility genuinely accessible to vulnerable adult learners and to smaller community-based organisations.

3.4 Conclusion

The analysis of the accessibility and inclusiveness of the Erasmus+ programme within the civic Adult Education sector in Italy reveals a dynamic and highly committed educational ecosystem, deeply influenced by varying territorial contexts. It is driven predominantly by small-scale non-governmental organisations, associations, social enterprises and public adult education centres, such as the CPIA. These entities, despite their limited number of employees — 75% have fewer than 50 staff members — achieve significant resonance, involving large cohorts of adult learners — over 250 a year for almost a third of the organisations — across all national macro-regions, thus contributing to bridging the gap between North and South. However, this process of democratization of access is continually tested by structural, administrative and socio-economic obstacles.

The qualitative evidence collected through interviews with coordinators and non-participating organisations further confirms this ambivalent picture. On the one hand, Erasmus+ appears as an important opportunity for widening access to European cooperation, strengthening local educational provision and connecting community-based organisations with transnational networks. On the other hand, the interviews show that access to the programme remains uneven and strongly dependent on organisational capacity. Smaller organisations, although often closer to vulnerable adult learners and territorial needs, may experience Erasmus+ as difficult to access because of administrative complexity, limited staff, lack of specific project-management competences, financial anticipation and uncertainty about the sustainability of activities after the end of the funded period.

The interviews also show that obstacles are not only technical or bureaucratic. For adult learners, participation in mobility may be limited by work commitments, family responsibilities, care duties, linguistic insecurity, low confidence, limited previous travel experience and concerns about indirect costs. These barriers are particularly

relevant for learners with fewer opportunities, for whom international mobility may appear distant from their everyday life conditions and not immediately perceived as an accessible educational possibility. In this sense, the distance between the declared inclusiveness of the programme and the concrete conditions of participation remains a central issue.

In the Italian context, these findings should also be interpreted through a life-course and longevity perspective. Adult learners cannot be considered as a homogeneous category. Age intersects with gender, educational level, employment status, socio-economic condition, family responsibilities, care obligations, territorial location and welfare support in shaping the real possibility of accessing Erasmus+ opportunities. This is particularly significant for mature and older adults, whose participation may be affected not only by economic or linguistic barriers, but also by health conditions, caregiving roles, reduced social confidence, weaker access to information and a limited perception of mobility as an opportunity addressed to them.

From this perspective, the accessibility of Erasmus+ should be assessed not only in terms of the formal availability of funding opportunities, but also in relation to the concrete educational, organisational and welfare conditions that allow adults at different stages of life to participate. The Italian evidence therefore invites a more refined understanding of inclusion: the key question is not only how many organisations and learners participate, but also which organisations are structurally able to enter the programme, which adult learners are actually reached, and which groups remain underrepresented or excluded.

Overall, Erasmus+ has opened important spaces for inclusion, internationalisation and civic adult education in Italy. However, its inclusive potential depends on the capacity to reduce the distance between formal accessibility and actual participation. Strengthening accessibility requires more than administrative simplification: it also calls for tailored support mechanisms, mentoring for less experienced organisations, clearer information channels, flexible financial arrangements, linguistic preparation, relational accompaniment and organisational models capable of supporting learners before, during and after mobility. In a longevity society, Erasmus+ can contribute to active ageing and to accompanying longer life trajectories only if mobility and cooperation opportunities are designed to include adults across different stages and conditions of life.

4. Impact of Erasmus+ at organisation and staff level

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the outcomes and expected impacts of Erasmus+ on the organisations. Framing the analysis within the theoretical reference of adult education, it is essential to distinguish between continuing education (primarily focused on professional and vocational upskilling) and civic adult education (aimed at fostering democratic participation and active citizenship) (Milana, 2012). This

report is predominantly oriented towards the concept of civic adult education. Therefore, this chapter examines the impact of Erasmus+ on the development and improvement of the quality of civic learning opportunities offered by the participating organisations. It begins by presenting the concrete project results and products as well as the topics prioritised because of participation. Subsequently, findings on the effects of Erasmus+ participation on staff are reported.

4.2 Topics and products of Erasmus+ projects

4.2.1 Topics of the projects

KA1

The processing of the Commission's monitoring data (Figure X: Topic Names of KA1 projects) outlines a clear hierarchy of the chosen intervention areas for adult education mobility in Italy. The predominant theme appears to be social inclusion and the promotion of equality (TOPIC-165: Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination), confirming the sector's historical vocation towards vulnerable groups. This is followed with high frequency by the theme of active aging (TOPIC-185: Active ageing), an indicator of project alignment with national demographic challenges, and the development of digital skills (TOPIC-163: Digital literacy skills).

KA2

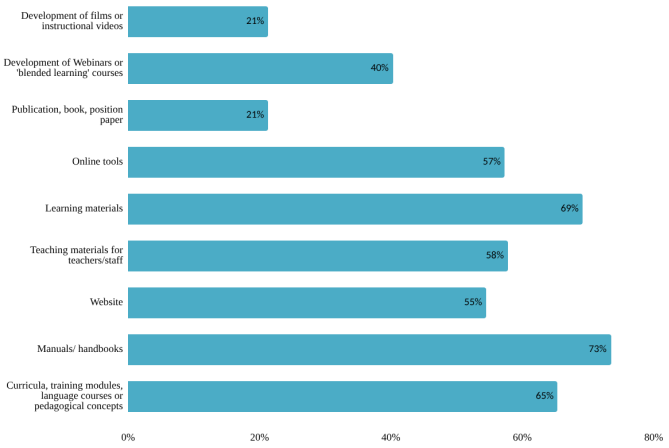
Institutional data regarding cooperation partnerships reflect a focus that is consistent with mobility but operates on a broader systemic level.

- Primary horizontal objective (Figure X: Primary horizontal objective of KA2 projects): The absolute dominant priority is inclusion and diversity (HORIZ-INCLUSION-2021), which forms the value framework for almost all partnerships.
- Other horizontal objectives (Figure X: Other horizontal objectives of KA2 projects): The integration of the priority on common values and civic engagement (HORIZ-COM-VALUES) emerges strongly, and is closely associated with the sectoral objective of creating upskilling and reskilling pathways for adults (SECTOR-ADU...).

4.2.2 Type of KA2 products developed

The operational translation of these themes materializes in the intellectual production of the consortia. The national survey (Figure X: Type of outputs or products developed, N=211) shows particularly high production rates for educational and methodological tools. Organizations primarily develop "Curricula, training modules, language courses, or pedagogical concepts" and "Teaching materials for teachers/staff." These are accompanied by a robust production of "Dissemination products (podcasts, social campaigns, animations)" and "Online digital tools," confirming the successful technological transition of cooperation practices.

Figure 4.1 Type of outputs or products developed as part of participation in KA2 in Erasmus+ (2021–2024) (N=211)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The highest frequencies are recorded in the development of "Curricula, training modules, language courses or pedagogical concepts" and "Teaching materials for teachers/staff." Additionally, there is a pronounced production of "Dissemination products (e.g., podcasts, social media campaigns)" and "Online tools," confirming a sector-wide digital transition.
The diachronic comparison of the generated outputs offers a precise measure of the increase in institutional capacity.

- Wave 1 (Intangible Focus): Qualitative evidence (Module III) highlighted that the main "products" perceived by organizations—especially newcomers—were largely intangible and relational. These included the exchange of good practices, networking, and increased staff motivation. Tangible products were often limited to end-of-mobility reports or simple internal presentations.
- Wave 2 (Pedagogical Systematization): The analysis of Wave 2 graphs documents a transition toward a phase of pedagogical systematization. The high production rate of actual formal "Curricula" and "Training Modules" indicates that organizations have acquired the skills necessary to translate informal exchanges into structured educational tools. These tools are transnationally validated and stably integrated into the Educational Offer Plans. Furthermore, the increase in digital outputs (platforms, podcasts) reflects the greater technological sophistication acquired by the sector during the 2021-2024 period.

The Wave 2 data analyzed in this section confirm that the Erasmus+ program in the Italian AE (Adult Education) sector does not merely fund mobility for its own sake. Instead, it acts as:

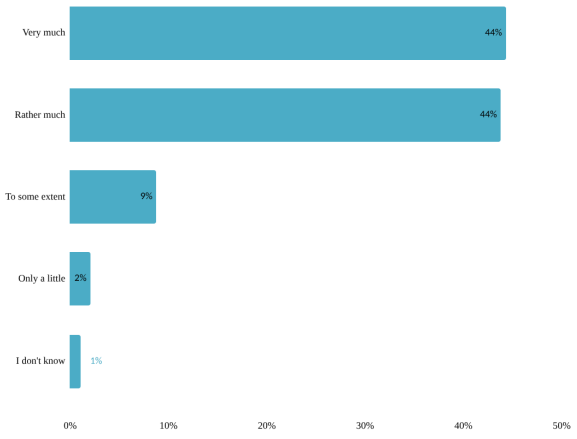
- A formidable content incubator, heavily centered on inclusion and democratic values.
- A generator of structured intellectual products.

This marks a clear advancement in project maturity compared to the initial implementation phases of the seven-year cycle.

4.2.3 KA2 output used

Evaluating the effectiveness of cooperation partnerships (Key Action 2) requires measuring not only the capacity to generate intellectual products but also the degree to which these outputs are effectively integrated into daily organizational practices.
The data extracted from the survey (Italy partner/coordinator survey data extract), visualized through bar charts concerning the use of outputs, present a clear hierarchy of adoption. Specifically, the graph highlights that the absolute majority of organizations report actively using the generated products.

Figure 4.2 Extent to which KA2 outputs and products are still used after participation in Erasmus+ (N=194)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The visual distribution of the data demonstrates a strongly positive trajectory regarding the retention and active employment of KA2 products. A significant majority of the 194 responding organisations report a continuous, systemic utilization of the assets generated during their transnational cooperation, confirming that these resources do not fall into obsolescence following the conclusion of the funding cycle. Specifically, the highest frequencies of sustained use are concentrated in categories related to core pedagogical engineering. Outputs such as *curricula, training modules, language courses*, and *teaching materials for educators* exhibit the most robust post-project lifecycle. This evidence suggests that the didactic resources designed within European consortia are consistently incorporated into the standard, everyday learning offerings of the Italian adult education providers.
Furthermore, the figure highlights an enduring engagement with digital and dissemination outputs. Assets such as *online tools, digital learning platforms*, and *media products* (e.g., podcasts, animations, and awareness campaigns) maintain a high rate of continuous utilization. This aligns comprehensively with the programmatic shift towards the digital transition and the enhanced focus on civic engagement documented in the broader Wave 2 dataset. Conversely, outputs pertaining strictly to *policy recommendations* show a slightly more moderate rate of sustained application. This variance logically reflects the inherent complexities and the extended timeframes

required to influence macro-level political frameworks, compared to the immediate applicability of micro- and meso-level educational tools.
Placing these findings in a comparative dialogue with the exploratory evidence from the Wave 1 draft reports yields valuable insights into the overall maturation of the Italian AE ecosystem. This educational ecosystem must be understood dynamically in relation to its diverse local and institutional contexts, where the capacity to integrate project outputs is strongly influenced by the specific territorial and organisational realities in which the providers operate (Federighi, 2019a). During the first wave of research, organizations - particularly newcomers to the programme - frequently emphasized the intangible benefits of KA2 projects. The focus was predominantly on the acquisition of networking capabilities, the informal exchange of good practices, and the general enhancement of staff motivation. Tangible outputs were occasionally perceived merely as formal administrative requirements necessary for project compliance.
The quantitative consolidation presented in the current figure (N=194) documents a clear institutional evolution. The high rate of sustained output utilization indicates that Italian adult education providers have developed a more sophisticated capacity for knowledge management and capitalisation. Transnational experiences and innovative methodologies are now systematically codified into tangible products and structurally embedded into organisational routines. This transition confirms that the impact of KA2 funding is deeply rooted in the daily didactic operations of the beneficiary organisations, ensuring that the European added value persists well beyond the formal closure of the projects.
Open-ended responses provide additional insights into the factors that facilitated or hindered the continued use of outputs and products developed during Erasmus+ projects. Overall, respondents indicated that the continued use of project outputs was strongly facilitated when the products developed were closely aligned with the actual needs of the organisation and its target groups. Several organisations reported that project results were integrated into their regular training activities, educational programmes and organisational practices. In particular, materials such as training modules, pedagogical tools and learning resources were frequently reused in both face-to-face and online learning contexts. Another important factor stimulating the use of outputs was the direct involvement of staff in the development of project results. When staff members participated actively in the creation of materials or methodologies, organisations reported a higher level of ownership and therefore a greater likelihood that these outputs would continue to be used after the end of the project. Respondents also highlighted the importance of cooperation with international partners and local networks. In several cases, participation in Erasmus+ projects facilitated the development of new educational tools and innovative methodologies that could be adapted and applied in different learning contexts. At the same time, some organisations identified certain barriers that limited the broader use of project results. These included limited organisational capacity, difficulties in adapting project outputs to different delivery formats (for example from in-person to online training), and limited opportunities to disseminate results beyond the project partnership. A few organisations also indicated that geographical distance between partners or limited participation of stakeholders during the implementation phase sometimes reduced the potential impact of project outputs. Overall, the qualitative responses suggest that the sustainability and continued use of Erasmus+ outputs depend largely on their practical relevance, their integration into existing organisational activities, and the level of staff engagement during project implementation.

The evidence emerging from the Module 3 case studies further enriches this interpretation by showing that KA2 outputs are not used only as formal project deliverables, but are often reabsorbed into the ordinary pedagogical and organisational life of adult education providers. In the case studies, organisations described a wide range of outputs, including manuals, toolkits, training modules, compendia of practices, podcasts, videos, animations, online repositories, recordings of training activities, pedagogical sheets and structured training agendas. These materials were not conceived merely as final products for reporting purposes, but as resources intended to support replication, adaptation and continued use within local educational contexts.

A particularly relevant finding concerns the way in which outputs generated through KA2 cooperation projects become part of the organisations' internal learning processes. In some cases, methodologies and contents developed through European cooperation were subsequently integrated into regular training activities, staff practices and adult learning pathways. This confirms that the sustained use of KA2 products depends not only on their technical quality, but also on their capacity to connect with the organisation's existing pedagogical identity and with the concrete needs of learners, educators and local communities.

The case studies also invite a broader understanding of what should count as a KA2 output. Organisations working with participatory, artistic and community-based methodologies stressed that the most meaningful outcomes are not always reducible to manuals or written toolkits. In fields such as Theatre of the Oppressed and community-based adult education, performances, theatre-forum activities, public interactions and collective processes may represent core educational outcomes in themselves. From this perspective, the continued use of KA2 outputs should be assessed not only through the persistence of material products, but also through the capacity of these products and practices to generate participation, reflection, civic engagement and methodological transfer over time.

At the same time, the case studies also reveal a critical perspective on the proliferation of standardised outputs. Some interviewees observed that the repeated production of manuals and toolkits across European projects may risk reducing their visibility and value, especially when such products are not sufficiently embedded in concrete training practices or dissemination strategies. This suggests that the long-term impact of KA2 outputs depends less on the quantity of products generated and more on their usability, accessibility, pedagogical relevance and integration into the everyday work of adult education organisations.

4.3 Impact at organisation and staff level

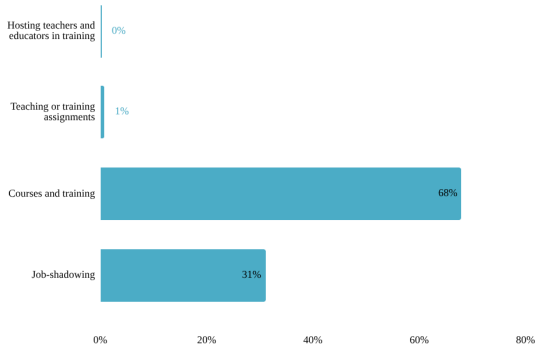
The analysis of staff mobility provides a fundamental metric for understanding how individual educators and administrative personnel interact with the European dimension. The Commission dataset encompasses a substantial sample of adult education professionals (N=5809), allowing for robust quantitative observations.

An examination of the distribution of mobility formats reveals a pronounced preference for structured learning environments. The data indicates that participation in "Courses and training" constitutes the preeminent activity type chosen by Italian staff members. "Job shadowing" represents the second most frequent format, offering experiential immersion into the operational frameworks of foreign counterpart institutions. Teaching assignments abroad represent a smaller, yet qualitatively significant, fraction of the mobilities.

The qualitative interviews from Wave 1 highlighted a general hesitancy among newcomers to engage in complex activities like teaching assignments due to linguistic barriers and perceived pedagogical asymmetries. The distribution in Wave 2 confirms that structured courses remain the primary entry point for internationalization, serving as a necessary foundation before staff transition to more interactive and demanding formats such as job shadowing.

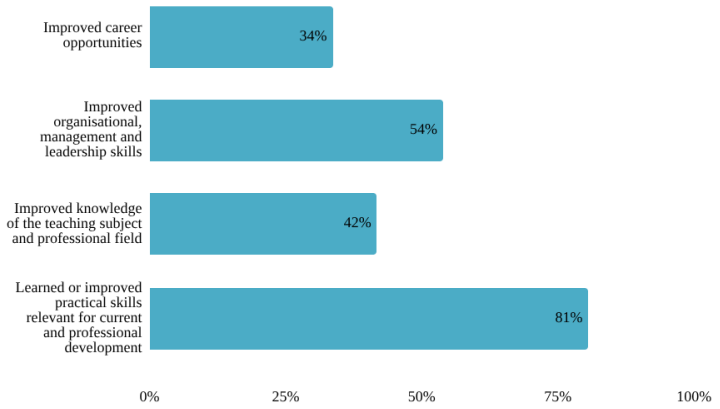
When analyzing the self-reported benefits of these mobilities, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between participant satisfaction (the subjective appreciation of the experience) and actual learning outcomes (the structural competencies acquired), treating them as autonomous analytical dimensions. While satisfaction levels are generally high, the graphical distribution also underscores a profound enhancement of core professional competencies as an explicit outcome. Participants report high frequencies of improvement in 'teaching and learning methods' indicating an immediate transfer of innovative pedagogical concepts into their professional repertoire.

Figure 4.3 Share of mobilities per activity type - Staff (N= 5809)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

Figure 4.4 Ways in which participant benefitted from participation - Staff (N= 5809)

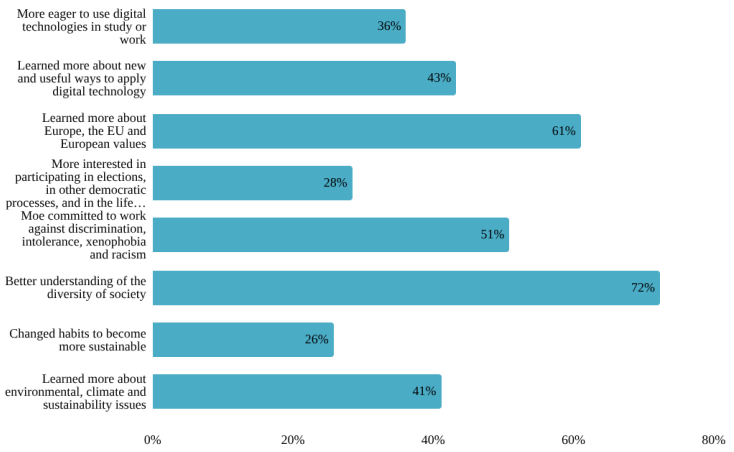


Source: European Commission monitoring data

Furthermore, the data shows substantial gains in cultural awareness and the expansion of international professional networks. During the initial monitoring phase, the impact on staff was predominantly characterized in terms of psychological and motivational revitalization. The Wave 1 reports frequently cited mobility as a crucial mechanism for "preventing burnout" and boosting morale. The Wave 2 data demonstrates a maturation of this impact: the benefits have evolved from purely motivational to highly technical and methodological, equipping educators with specific instructional strategies.

The Erasmus+ programme architecture mandates the integration of cross-cutting horizontal priorities. The data illustrates how staff assimilate these macro-themes through mobility. Participants indicate that exposure to foreign institutional practices significantly increased their actionable knowledge regarding "Inclusion and diversity" and "Digital transformation." This empirical finding aligns with the programme's logic: direct observation of advanced digital ecosystems or inclusive methodologies in partner countries provides staff with tangible models to replicate domestically.

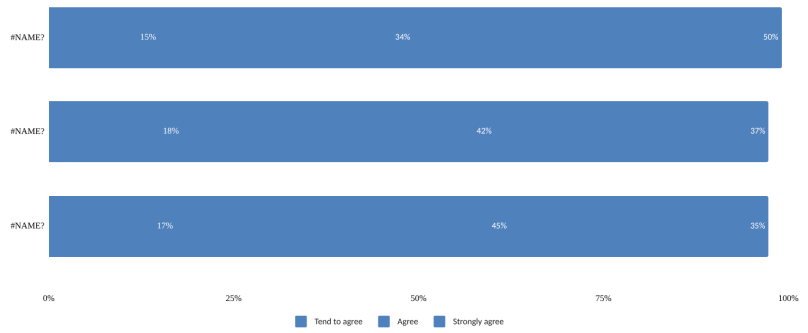
Figure 4.5 Ways in which participant gained knowledge about horizontal priorities - Staff (N= 5809)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

To complement the individual staff perspective, the Wave 2 survey data assesses the systemic impact from the viewpoint of the beneficiary organisations (N=227, comprising both coordinators and partners). This meso-level analysis reveals how individual competencies are codified into institutional assets.

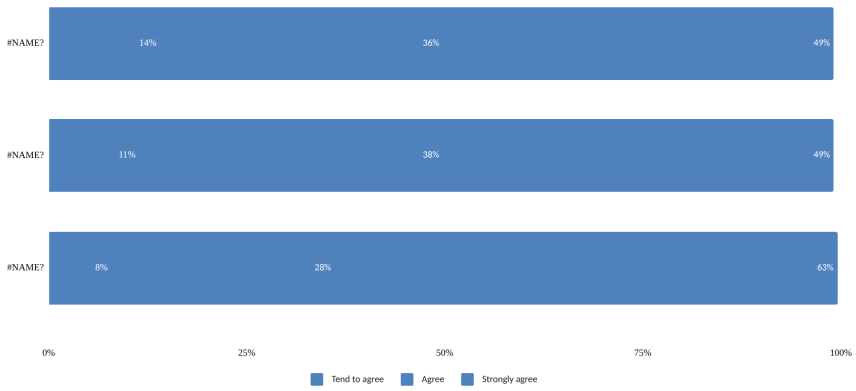
Figure 4.6 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the learning offer (N=227)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

The organizational assessment of staff development converges strongly with the self-reported data. The graphical distribution demonstrates widespread agreement among the 227 responding institutions that their personnel have significantly augmented their capacity to manage and educate adult learners. The data highlights a pronounced organizational recognition of enhanced digital literacy and improved competencies in designing community-based educational interventions. The organisations view their staff no longer merely as classroom educators, but as facilitators of transnational networks and local community engagement.

Figure 4.7 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on working staff (N=227)

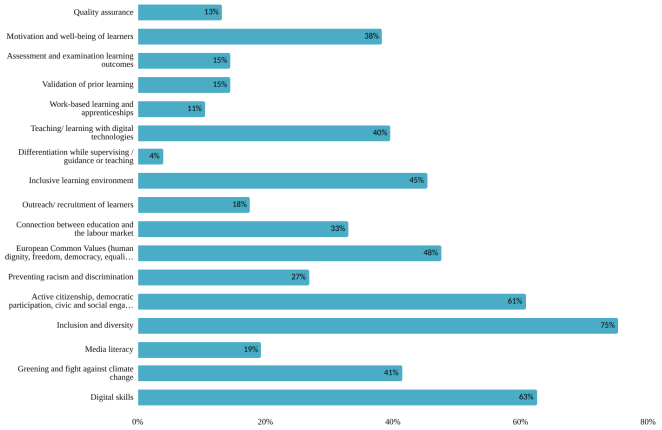


Source: European Commission monitoring data

The translation of staff competencies into institutional practice is vividly captured in the analysis of the learning offer. The histogram detailing the integration of project

results reveals that a vast majority of organizations have systematically upgraded their educational portfolios. The data shows high levels of agreement regarding the introduction of new curricula, language courses, and specialized pedagogical concepts. Furthermore, a substantial segment of the sample confirms an enhanced focus on democratic processes and political rights within their standard learning offer. The Wave 1 draft reports (Module III) indicated that early-stage projects often resulted in isolated, ad-hoc activities or short-term workshops. The Wave 2 data signifies a structural shift. The innovations are now systematically embedded into the permanent learning offer, indicating a higher degree of institutionalization and sustainability of the Erasmus+ outcomes.

Figure 4.8 Topics receiving more attention after participating in Erasmus+ in the period 2021-2024 (N=227)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The final figure synthesizes the strategic reorientation of the Italian AE sector. The data illustrates the thematic areas that have gained prominence. While the programme plays a highly significant role in this reorientation, generalizing formulations that view Erasmus+ as the sole catalyst for participant empowerment should be avoided; rather, the programme acts as a key component within a broader synergy of pre-existing local initiatives, institutional strategies, and individual motivations. "Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination" remains the foundational pillar, receiving the highest level of continued attention. However, the data reveals a striking ascent in the prioritization of "Digital literacy skills" and "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement". This represents a profound developmental milestone. In 2024, the sector's focus was heavily concentrated on basic inclusion and addressing immediate post-pandemic infrastructural deficits. The 2025-2026 data documents an ecosystem that, having stabilized its inclusive practices, is now actively utilizing the Erasmus+ framework to pursue higher-order societal objectives. The participating organizations have expanded their mandate, positioning themselves as vital civic infrastructures dedicated to fostering active European citizenship and democratic resilience among adult learners.

Open-ended responses provided concrete examples of how participation in Erasmus+ projects has strengthened organisations, their learning offer and their staff

capacities. Several respondents reported that participation in Erasmus+ contributed to the development of new educational tools, training programmes and innovative learning methodologies. In many cases, project activities led to the creation of new courses or learning modules that continue to be used within the organisation's training offer. Another frequently mentioned impact concerns the strengthening of organisational capacity. Organisations reported that participation in Erasmus+ projects helped them better identify the needs of their target groups and develop activities that respond more effectively to these needs. Some respondents highlighted that projects were often designed based on real needs within their communities, which facilitated the integration of project outcomes into their regular activities. Participation in international partnerships also contributed to expanding organisations' networks and strengthening cooperation with European partners. Respondents indicated that these collaborations created opportunities for knowledge exchange, the sharing of good practices and the development of innovative educational approaches. Furthermore, several organisations reported improvements in staff competences, including pedagogical skills, project management skills and the ability to work in international and intercultural environments. These experiences contributed to a broader organisational culture of innovation and internationalisation. Overall, the qualitative responses indicate that participation in Erasmus+ projects has had a lasting impact on organisational development, strengthening both institutional capacities and the quality of educational provision.

4.4 Conclusion

The investigation into the impact of the Erasmus+ programme at the meso (organisational) and micro (staff) levels within the adult education sector in Italy presents the image of an educational ecosystem — intimately tied to its specific territorial and social contexts (Federighi, 2019a) — undergoing profound systemic transformation, particularly in the domain of civic adult education. The triangulation of quantitative data provided by the European Commission and direct empirical surveys of coordinators and partners allows for solid conclusions to be drawn regarding the effectiveness of mobility (KA1) and cooperation (KA2) actions. Specifically, it highlights a clear development trajectory between the first monitoring phase (Wave 1) and the current consolidation phase (Wave 2).

A first conclusive element, which represents a fundamental commonality and a reinforcement compared to Wave 1, concerns the high additionality of the programme. The data confirm that Erasmus+ funding constitutes a primary infrastructure supporting methodological innovation and internationalisation. At the same time, it is important to avoid describing the programme as the exclusive driver of empowerment, recognising that its transformative capacity depends on its integration with local contexts and on the active civic commitment of the organisations involved (Nuissl, 1999; Stein & Valters, 2012). Nevertheless, without European support, many educational and training research and development initiatives within Italian organisations — predominantly small and medium-sized Third Sector entities — would simply not take place.

Compared to the exploratory evidence of Wave 1, where participation in European projects was often interpreted as an opportunity for international openness and as a way to overcome local isolation, Wave 2 certifies a process of profound institutionalisation. The project results, particularly the tangible and intangible products generated by KA2, do not remain confined to the transnational dimension but are systematically translated into permanent organisational assets. The widespread integration of new curricula, training modules and digital platforms within

regular educational provision demonstrates that the programme's impact has firmly taken root in the daily operational routines of adult education providers.
The longitudinal comparison reveals a highly relevant thematic and strategic development. During Wave 1, the attention of organisations was primarily focused on managing the basic vulnerabilities of learners and acquiring elementary management practices, with inclusion predominantly framed in terms of literacy and social support. The Wave 2 data document a paradigmatic leap. While maintaining the inclusion of disadvantaged groups as a central focus, there is a marked refocusing toward the objective of participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement. Organisations now actively use European networks to develop tools for media literacy, critical thinking and community activism. This shift signals a maturation of the political and social role of adult education providers, who increasingly perceive themselves as territorial strongholds for building active European citizenship.
This organisational maturation is also relevant in relation to the Italian debate on active ageing and accompanying longevity. The consolidation of curricula, tools, staff competences and territorial networks suggests that Erasmus+ can strengthen the capacity of adult education organisations to respond to demographic change through educational and training practices oriented towards lifelong learning, participation and social inclusion across the adult life course. In this sense, the impact of the programme at organisational and staff level is not limited to internationalisation or project innovation, but also contributes to the development of adult education providers as territorial actors capable of supporting learning opportunities for adults at different stages of life.
Overall, the findings show that Erasmus+ has a strong transformative potential for adult education organisations and their staff. Nevertheless, this potential depends on the ability to ensure sustainability, transferability and long-term integration of project results. The main challenge is therefore to move from isolated project-based innovation to stable organisational learning, so that the tools, competences and networks developed through Erasmus+ can continue to benefit adult learners, local communities and the wider Italian adult education ecosystem.

5. Impact of KA1 mobility on learners

5.1 Introduction

Learners in adult education are reached in Erasmus+ projects in different ways. On the one hand, they can participate directly in project activities, for example in mobility measures in KA1 projects or in events that are designed and implemented in their

own country by KA2 projects. On the other hand, they can benefit indirectly from the results of the projects, especially in Key Action 2, where courses and teaching/learning materials are often developed. In this chapter we solely focus on the perceived transformations and knowledge acquisition resulting from KA1 mobility, based on the interviews with adult learners that recently participated in KA1 mobility and their coordinating organisation. Consistent with the theoretical framework of this report, the analysis is explicitly oriented towards civic adult education rather than continuing education (Milana, 2012). Methodologically, it must be noted that an objective short-term measurement of impact is not feasible (Federighi, 2019b; Guba & Lincoln, 1989); therefore, the findings discussed herein reflect the subjective perceptions of the learners (Mezirow, 1997).

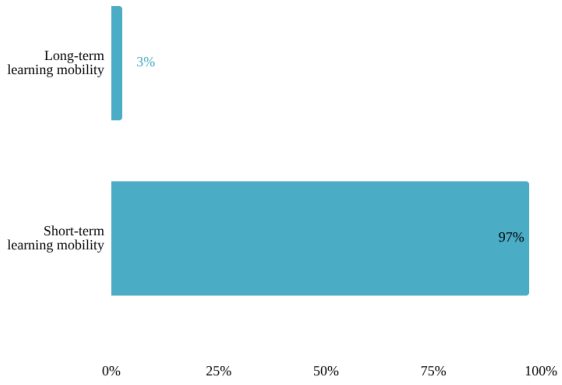
5.2 Number and type of adult learners participating – individual and group mobility

The demographic and typological mapping of adult learners constitutes the analytical prerequisite for evaluating the equity and inclusivity of the program. The data extracted from the Commission's database make it possible to outline the participants' profile by distinguishing between individual pathways and group mobility.

Individual Mobility

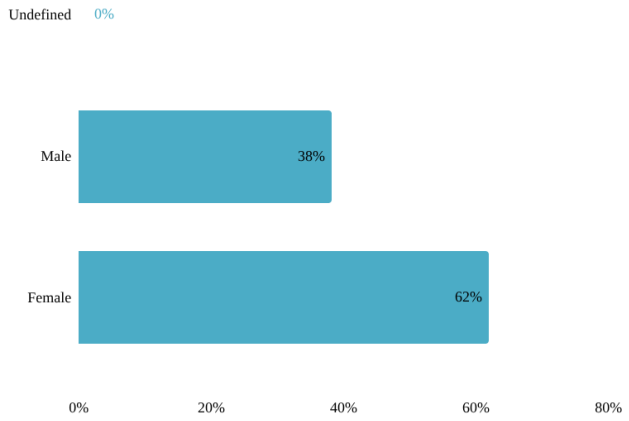
The distribution of activity types for individual mobility highlights a clear propensity toward structured and defined learning periods. These periods are necessary to guarantee a rigorous pedagogical framework for a target group that is often distant from formal education contexts.

Figure 5.1 Share of mobilities per activity type - Adult learners (N= 1116)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

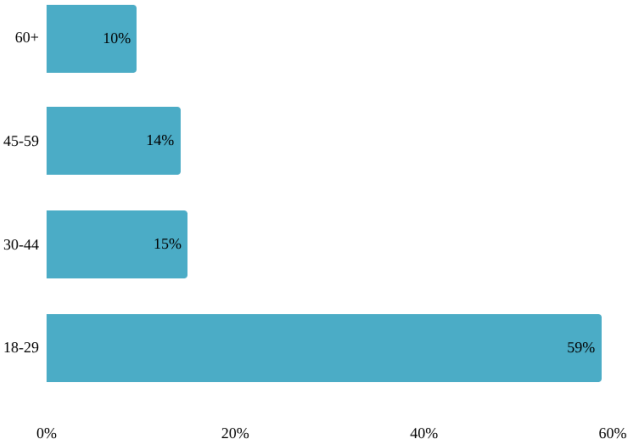
Figure 5.2 Gender division - Adult learners (N= 1116)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

The analysis of the gender breakdown confirms a structural predominance of the female component, a fact intrinsically consistent with the general dynamics of participation in non-formal education and socio-cultural activities within the Italian context. Furthermore, the age distribution outlines a demographically heterogeneous user base, capable of intercepting both the young-adult bracket (often seeking reskilling) and the more mature cohort, perfectly in line with active ageing priorities.

Figure 5.3 Age at start of program - Adult learners (N= 1088)

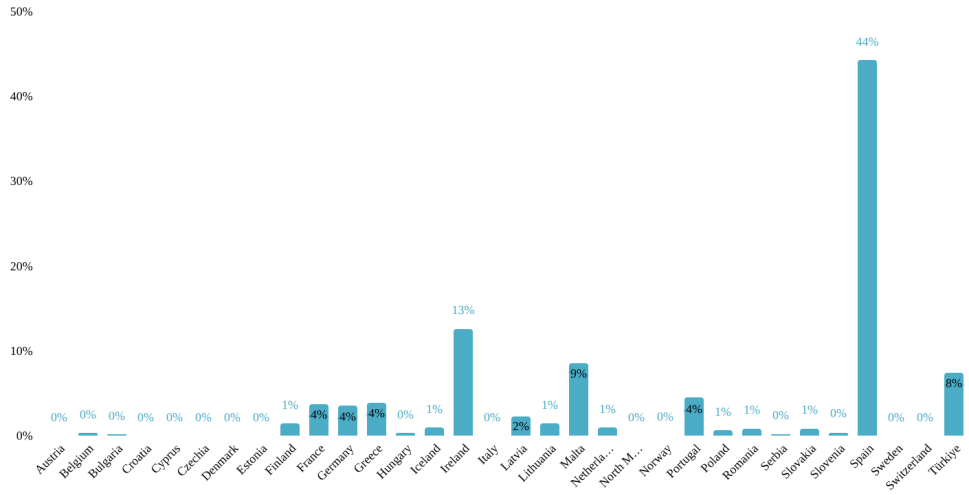


Source: European Commission monitoring data

The age distribution of adult learners invites a broader interpretation of KA1 mobility through a life-course, active ageing and longevity perspective. Adult learners should not be understood as a single, undifferentiated population, nor should adult education be limited to the traditional working-age perspective. The participation of older adults suggests that Erasmus+ mobility may contribute to sustaining learning motivation, autonomy, social participation and civic engagement across longer life trajectories.

In this sense, KA1 mobility can be interpreted as an educational and training practice for accompanying longevity. For older adults, mobility may support not only the acquisition of specific skills, but also the maintenance of social confidence, intercultural openness, relational resources and participation in wider communities. This interpretation is particularly relevant in the Italian context, where demographic ageing requires adult education policies to be connected with broader strategies for lifelong learning, social inclusion, intergenerational exchange and preparation for life in a longevity society.
The geography of destinations shows a selection clearly oriented toward countries capable of offering consolidated reception networks or linguistic-cultural affinities designed to mitigate the initial systemic shock.

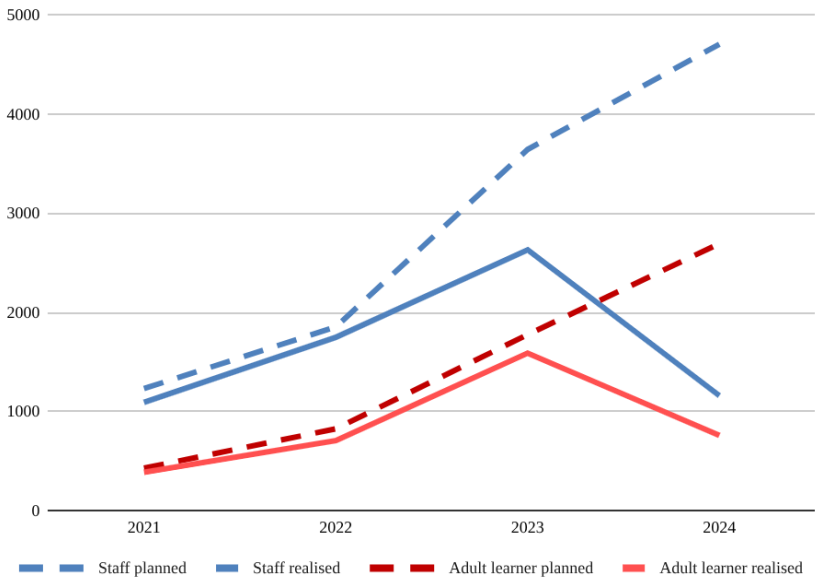
Figure 5.4 Receiving country of participant - Adult learners (N= 1116)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

Finally, the indicator relating to the realization rate compared to the planned targets provides a measure of the logistical efficiency of Italian providers. These organizations successfully operate in a complex context characterized by frequent unforeseen events linked to the daily availability of the adult target group.

Figure 5.5 Planned and realised mobilities in the period of 2021-2024

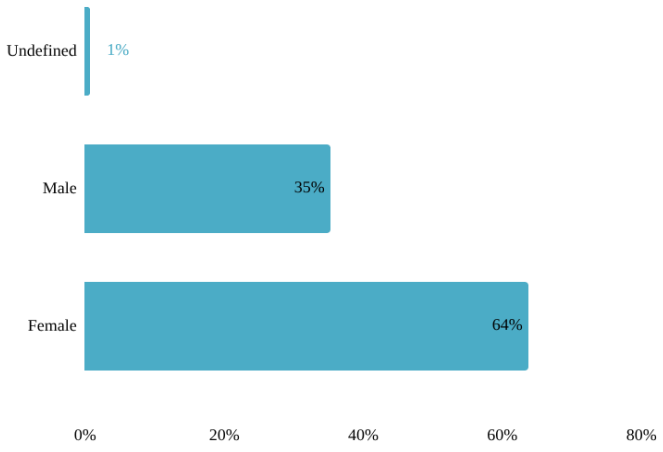


Source: European Commission monitoring data

Group Mobility

The aggregated data for group mobility, based on a significantly larger sample (N=2023), reiterates and amplifies the gender trends observed in individual mobility, consolidating the evidence of a marked feminization of the target group. Even in this format, the demographic and geographic variables confirm the inclusive vocation of the program.

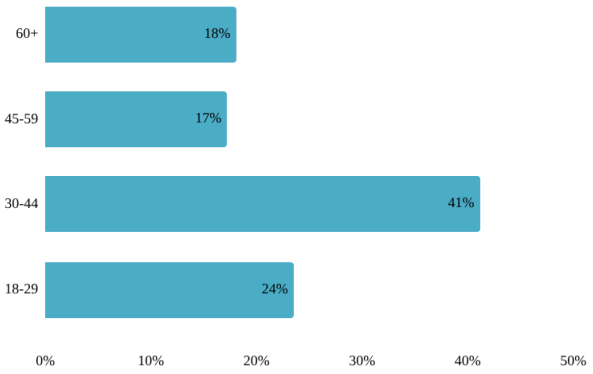
Figure 5.6 Gender division - Adult learners (N= 2023)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

Figure 5.7

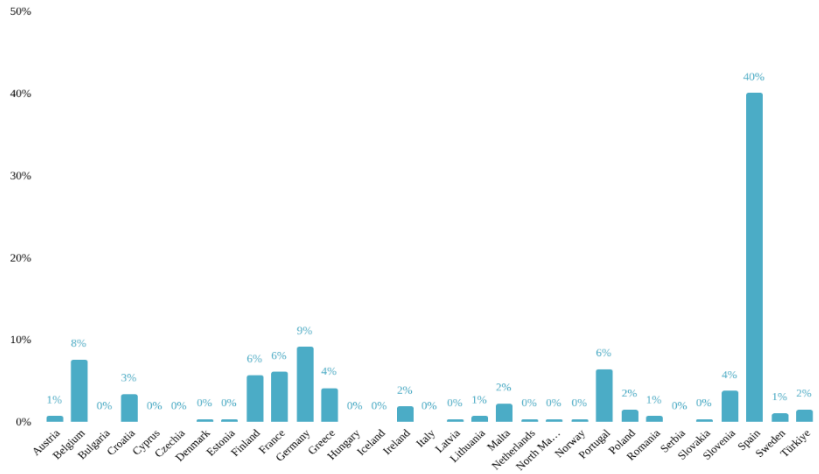
Age at start of program - Adult learners (N= 238)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

The examination of these figures takes on full meaning when read from a diachronic perspective. The Wave 1 Draft Reports (Module IV) had strongly emphasized the crucial importance of group mobility as a tool for psychological reassurance. Vulnerable adult learners often experience fear—such as travel anxiety and linguistic insecurity—at the thought of facing a foreign experience alone. The quantitative data of Wave 2 objectify this qualitative intuition: the high volumes recorded in group mobility certify that Italian organizations have adopted this modality as a structural strategy to break down participation barriers.

Figure 5.8 Receiving country of participant - Adult learners (N= 262)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

The interviews conducted within Module 4 provide a qualitative reading of the quantitative profile of adult learners involved in KA1 mobility. The interviewed organisations and learners confirm the heterogeneity of the target group reached by KA1 activities in Italy. Participants include adult learners enrolled in formal second-chance education pathways, learners attending CPIA courses, adults involved in non-formal education contexts, volunteers, professionals active in social and community-

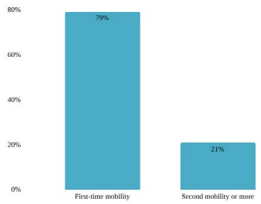
based organisations, and older adults participating through local lifelong learning networks. This qualitative evidence supports the interpretation of KA1 learner mobility as a flexible instrument capable of reaching different segments of the adult education population. The distinction between individual and group mobility is particularly relevant. Individual mobility appears more suitable for learners who already possess a certain degree of autonomy, previous educational experience or confidence in international contexts. By contrast, group mobility emerges as especially appropriate for learners who may require stronger organisational, relational and emotional support before and during the mobility experience. The interviews also suggest that the composition of the learner groups is strongly shaped by the organisational profile of the sending institution. Public adult education providers, such as CPIA and evening schools, tend to involve learners enrolled in formal educational pathways, while third sector organisations and associations often reach adults engaged in civic, social, cultural or community-based activities. This confirms that KA1 mobility for adult learners does not address a homogeneous category, but rather a plurality of adult learning trajectories, ranging from formal education to non-formal and community-based learning.
Overall, Module 4 confirms that the quantitative figures on individual and group mobility should be interpreted in light of the diversity of learners' backgrounds and needs. Group mobility, in particular, appears to function not only as an organisational format, but also as an inclusive pedagogical strategy, enabling participation among adults who might otherwise perceive international mobility as distant, difficult or inaccessible.

5.3 Experiences with KA1 mobility

Individual and group mobility

The examination of the learners' lived experience provides valuable indicators regarding the pedagogical and logistical quality of European action. This figure represents a formidable success indicator for inclusion policies.
A vast majority of participants are undertaking an international mobility experience for the first time, demonstrating that the program successfully intercepts individuals previously excluded from the dynamics of active European citizenship. While overall satisfaction rates are extremely high in both formats, it is analytically necessary to clearly distinguish between this high level of subjective satisfaction and the actual structural learning outcomes achieved by the participants.

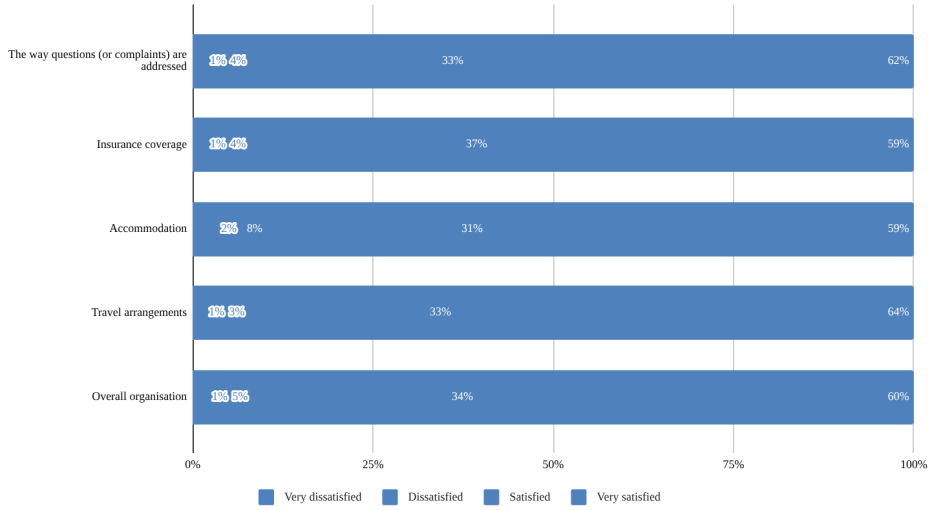
Figure 5.9 Share of participants with first time mobility - Adult learners (N= 1116)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

Learners positively evaluate the reception, the quality of teaching, and the support services, confirming the logistical maturity of both sending and hosting organizations.

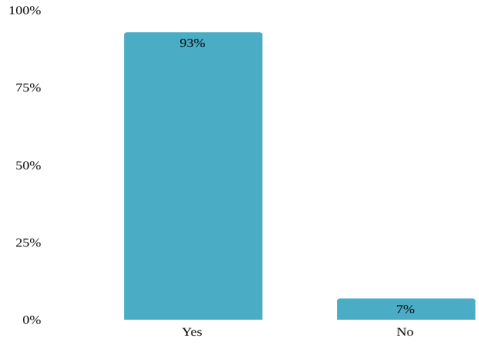
Figure 5.10 Satisfaction with various arrangements of mobility - Adult learners (N= 1116)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

Furthermore, these graphs illustrate the preliminary investment made by the organizations. Almost all learners report having received adequate pre-departure preparation and dedicated linguistic support.

Figure 5.11 participant was receiver of preparation, training or information by organisation - Adult learners (N= 1116)

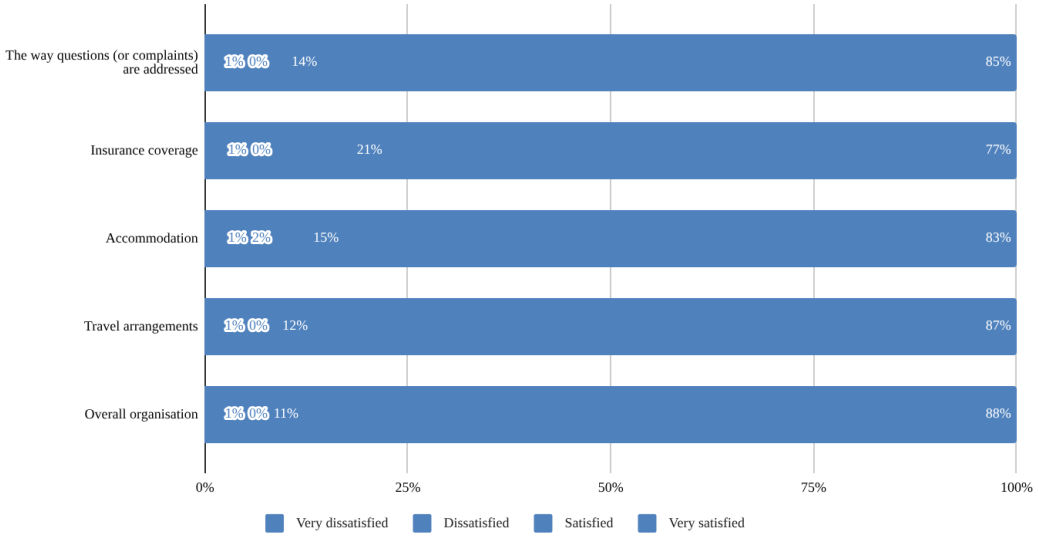


Source: European Commission monitoring data

The Wave 2 results regarding preparation and satisfaction show an evolutionary continuity compared to the critical issues identified in Wave 1. In the early stages of the seven-year period, language barriers and the administrative burden constituted formidable obstacles, and educational providers often cited the difficulty of providing sufficient linguistic accompaniment to learners with no foundational knowledge. Current data demonstrate a successful metabolization of this problem. Organizations have structured effective protocols for pastoral care (comprehensive support) and

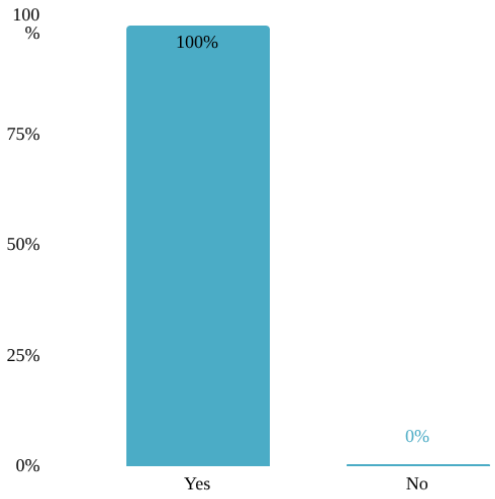
linguistic preparation, which translate into excellent final satisfaction rates, thereby eliminating the risk of marginalization during the foreign experience.

Figure 5.12 Satisfaction with various arrangements of mobility - Adult learners (N= 262)



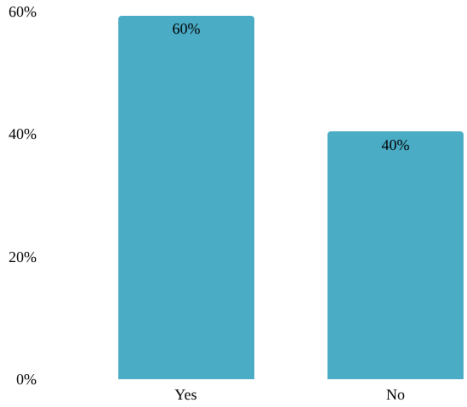
Source: European Commission monitoring data

Figure 5.13 participant was receiver of preparation, training or information by organisation - Adult learners (N= 262)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

Figure 5.14 Participant received support to improve language skills before or during mobility period - Adult learner (N= 252)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

5.3. 1 Impact of mobility on persons attitudes and behaviour

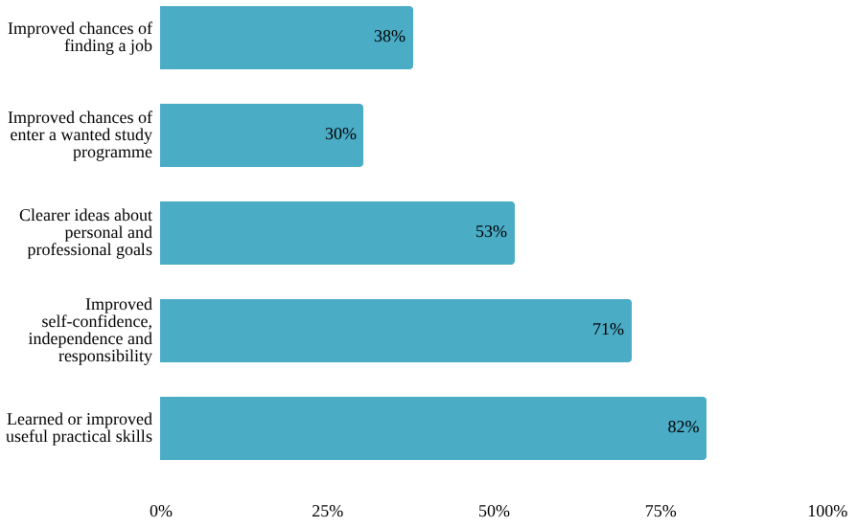
Individual mobility and group mobility

The transformative core of the program is perceived through the evolution of the civic, personal, and relational skills of the direct beneficiaries. The analysis of self-reported benefits outlines a picture of profound individual empowerment. However, it is crucial to avoid generalizing formulations that present Erasmus+ as the sole catalyst for this empowerment; these transformations are deeply interconnected with the learners' pre-existing individual motivations and the continuous support from their local communities (De Greef & Poppelaars, 2018; Mezirow, 1997). Learners record significant increases in self-esteem, in their confidence toward lifelong learning, and in the development of transversal skills (soft skills) essential for social and occupational inclusion.

A data point of extraordinary significance concerns the acquisition of awareness regarding the program's horizontal priorities. The graphs show that mobility acts as a vehicle for digital literacy, the understanding of inclusion dynamics, and, preeminently, for the development of a conscience tied to participation in European democratic life.

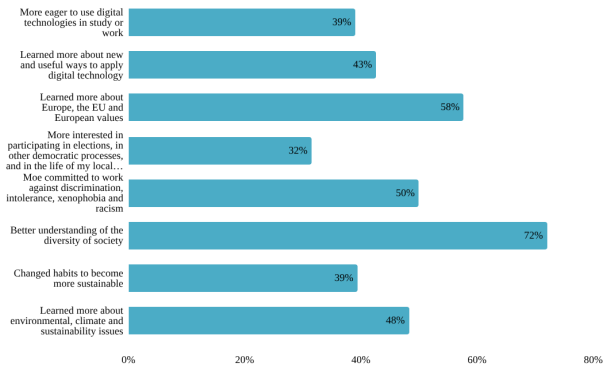
The comparison between the two waves highlights a stratification of the impact. In Wave 1, the focus groups with learners (Module IV) returned narratives primarily focused on personal redemption: escaping domestic isolation, overcoming cultural prejudices, and feeling like "citizens" beyond national borders.Wave 2 quantifies these aspects but adds a clear political and value-based dimension to them. The impact is no longer limited to psychological well-being or the increase of personal motivation (however fundamental these aspects are), but extends to the structuring of a European value system. Learners return from mobility with a tangible understanding of complex concepts such as environmental sustainability and civic engagement.

Figure 5.15 Ways in which participant benefitted from participation - Adult learners (N= 1116)



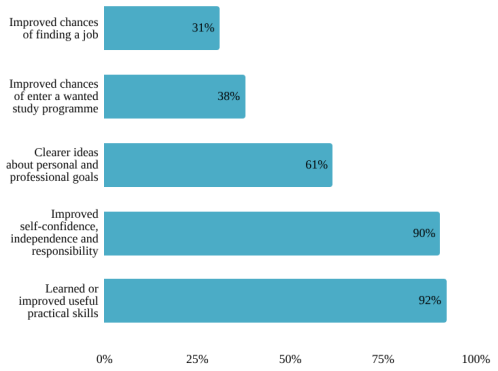
Source: European Commission monitoring data

Figure 5.16 Ways in which participant gained knowledge about horizontal priorities - Adult learners (N= 1116)



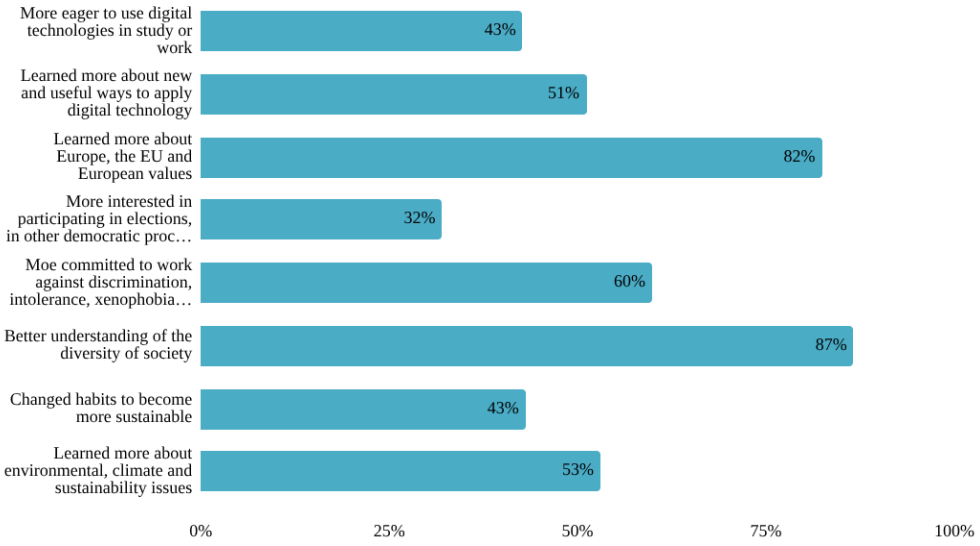
Source: European Commission monitoring data

Figure 5.17 Ways in which participant benefitted from participation - Adult learners (N= 262)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

Figure 5.18 Ways in which participant gained knowledge about horizontal priorities - Adult learners (N= 262)



Source: European Commission monitoring data

The interviews conducted within Module 4 confirm and deepen the quantitative findings by showing that the impact of KA1 mobility on adult learners is primarily perceived as a process of personal opening, increased self-confidence and relational growth. Learners did not describe mobility merely as a training activity, but as an experience capable of modifying their perception of themselves, their possibilities and their ability to engage in unfamiliar contexts. The encounter with other countries, institutions, educators and learners contributed to broadening participants' perspectives and to strengthening their sense of belonging to a wider European educational and civic space.

A recurring element emerging from the interviews concerns the overcoming of initial fears, particularly linguistic insecurity and anxiety related to travelling abroad. Some learners initially felt uncertain about their ability to communicate in another language or to manage an international experience. However, the mobility experience often helped them to recognise their own resources and to develop greater confidence in

facing new situations. In this sense, KA1 mobility contributed not only to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also to a transformation in learners' self-perception, supporting them in seeing themselves as capable of participating in international and intercultural learning environments.
The interviews also highlight the importance of the experiential and affective dimension of mobility. Several participants described Erasmus+ as an experience that cannot be fully understood only through explanation, but must be lived directly. Learning emerged through exposure to difference, direct encounter, comparison with others and participation in shared activities. The impact therefore concerns not only formal learning outcomes, but also attitudes and behaviours, including openness towards others, curiosity, willingness to communicate, motivation to continue learning and greater readiness to engage in new social and educational contexts.
At the same time, Module 4 shows that these transformations are not produced by mobility alone. They are strongly supported by the organisational and relational conditions created before and during the experience. Preparation, encouragement, linguistic support, group accompaniment and the presence of trusted coordinating organisations played a decisive role in helping learners move from initial hesitation to active participation. The impact of KA1 mobility on attitudes and behaviours should therefore be understood as the result of the interaction between the mobility experience, learners' individual motivations and the pedagogical support provided by the sending organisations.

5.4 Conclusion

The examination of the quantitative data from Wave 2, analyzed in continuity with the qualitative heritage of Wave 1, allows us to affirm that the KA1 mobility dedicated to adult learners represents a measure of systemic success. The program acts as a powerful social equalizer, providing internationalization opportunities to demographic groups—such as adults with low qualifications, the elderly, and vulnerable categories—that have been historically excluded from such processes.
The civic educational ecosystem of Italian providers has successfully calibrated the available tools, favoring group mobility and intensifying pre-departure preparation mechanisms to neutralize logistical and psychological friction. This support infrastructure guarantees an experience of the highest quality, evidenced by optimal satisfaction rates.
The final perceived transformation of learners vastly exceeds the mere updating of basic skills. Instead, mobility takes shape as a civic rite of passage, transforming marginalized individuals into active subjects equipped with greater self-esteem, new digital skills, and a clear awareness of their role within the European democratic space. Ultimately, this conclusion highlights profound processes of knowledge acquisition and personal growth, rather than a quantifiable measurement of short-term impact.
The data emerging from the Module 4 interviews also suggest that the transformative value of KA1 mobility lies not only in the experience of going abroad, but in the educational framework that makes this experience possible, meaningful and sustainable for adult learners. Mobility becomes impactful when it is integrated into a broader educational and training process: before departure, through preparation and the building of confidence; during the experience, through relational and linguistic support; and after return, through reflection, storytelling and the opportunity to transfer what has been learnt into personal, professional and community life. For many adult learners, especially those with limited previous mobility experiences or fragile

educational backgrounds, crossing a national border also means crossing symbolic boundaries: fear of being inadequate, linguistic insecurity, low self-esteem and the perception that European opportunities belong to ‘others’. The interviews show that, when these boundaries are navigated with support, mobility can trigger new forms of self-recognition, enabling learners to perceive themselves as legitimate participants in European learning spaces.

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

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

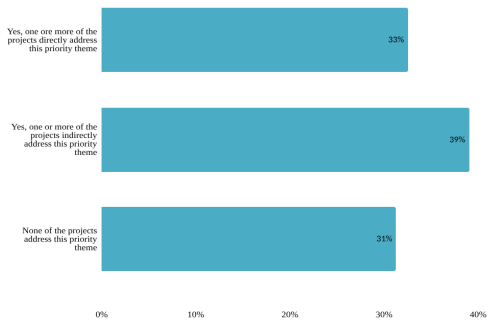
6.1 Introduction

Erasmus+ states that one of its key goals is to “promote citizens’ right to take part in democratic life, and encourage active involvement at all levels – local, national and European. For adult learners reinforcing their ability to engage in democratic life is particularly important, as well the development of European common values, supporting civic engagement and developing critical skills and literacy. This chapter addresses the question of to what extent Erasmus+ projects address the Erasmus+ priority “Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement” and by which organisation. Framed within the theoretical perspective of civic adult education, this section acknowledges the methodological limitation that a short-term objective impact measurement is unfeasible (Ockham IPS et al., 2025). Therefore, the analysis explores the perceived transformations and knowledge acquisition reported by the actors involved, distinguishing clearly between the quantitative 'measurement' of data and qualitative 'perception' (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).. It also addresses the characteristics of these projects in terms of objectives set and activities implemented.

6.2 Type of organisations

To comprehend the penetration of the PDL priority, it is necessary to examine how widely it has been adopted across the different funding streams (KA1 and KA2) and the operational status of these initiatives.
The aggregate data reveals a substantial structural integration of civic themes within the Italian civic adult education ecosystem. A significant proportion of the 323 responding organisations report that their projects align with the PDL priority. This high rate of adoption underscores a growing institutional awareness regarding the social mandate of adult education providers, positioning them as key actors in fostering democratic resilience.

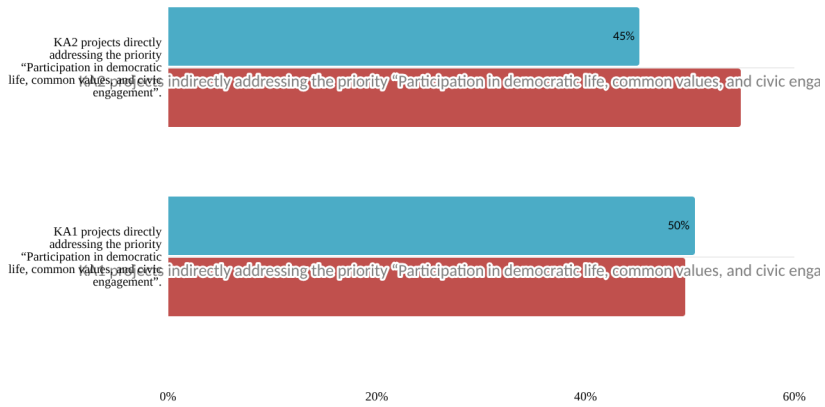
Figure 6.1 The extent projects (KA1 and KA2) are addressing the priority theme “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” (N=323)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

When disaggregating the data by Key Action, distinct patterns of engagement emerge. Key Action 2 (KA2) Cooperation Partnerships (N=115) demonstrate a strong tendency to address the PDL priority *directly*, explicitly anchoring their project architecture to the promotion of common values and the generation of civic-oriented intellectual outputs. Conversely, within Key Action 1 (KA1) mobility projects (N=135), the priority is frequently addressed *indirectly*. In these cases, civic engagement operates as a secondary outcome, cultivated through intercultural exposure and the pedagogical upskilling of staff, rather than being the sole programmatic focus.

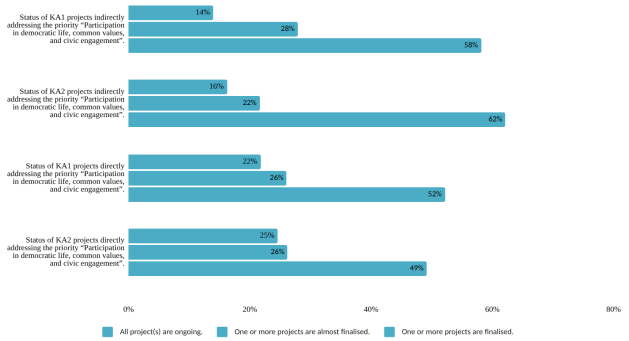
Figure 6.2 The extent KA1 and KA2 projects directly or indirectly addressing the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement" (N=135, 115)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The operational status of these projects indicates a highly active and ongoing programmatic phase. The distribution across the various N-subgroups (representing projects that are ongoing, almost finalized, or finalized) shows a concentration of active implementations. This suggests that the emphasis on democratic participation is a defining characteristic of the current operational phase of the 2021-2027 programme.

Figure 6.3 Status of KA1/KA2 projects that are directly or indirectly addressing the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement” (N= 43, 74, 46, 61)



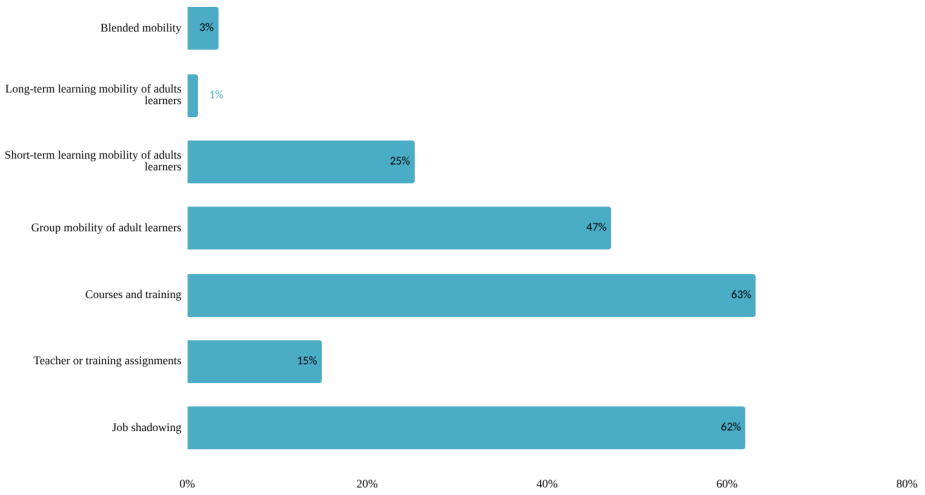
Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The robust integration of the PDL priority marks a profound developmental milestone compared to the baseline established in Wave 1. During the initial research phase (2024), Italian beneficiary organisations were predominantly focused on fundamental inclusion, aiming to address basic literacy deficits and post-pandemic social isolation. The Wave 2 data indicates a strategic maturation. Having consolidated their basic operational capacities, organisations are now leveraging the Erasmus+ framework to pursue higher-order societal objectives, transitioning from a framework of compensatory education to one of active democratic empowerment.

6.3 Objectives and activities supported

The translation of the PDL priority into concrete programmatic actions requires an analysis of the specific goals pursued and the pedagogical vehicles utilized by the consortia.
Within the mobility framework, the operationalization of civic goals relies heavily on structured pedagogical interventions. The data highlights that "Courses and training" for staff, coupled with "Group mobility of adult learners," are the primary mechanisms deployed. These activities are purposefully designed to immerse participants in environments that model democratic practices and active citizenship.

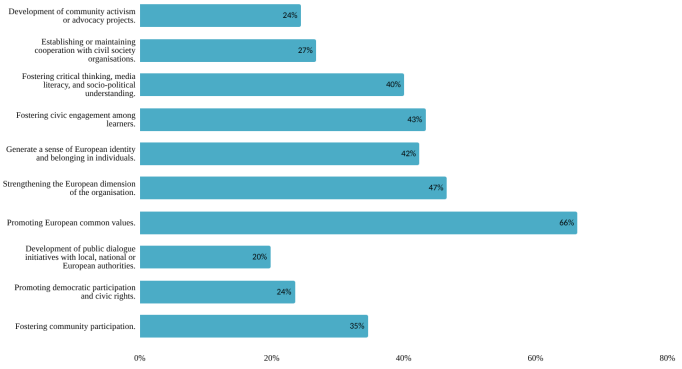
Figure 6.4 Activities of KA1 projects that addressed one or more elements of the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" (N=87)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The survey data detailing the precise objectives of these projects delineates a clear strategic hierarchy. The most frequently cited goal is "Promoting European common values," reflecting a systemic effort to foster a cohesive European identity among adult learners. Concurrently, a substantial cluster of organisations prioritizes "Fostering critical thinking, media literacy, and socio-political understanding" alongside "Fostering civic engagement among learners." This indicates a sophisticated pedagogical approach that seeks to equip adult learners with the cognitive tools necessary to navigate complex information ecosystems and actively participate in their communities.

Figure 6.5 Goals of projects (KA1 and KA2) that addressed one or more elements of the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement”(N=217)

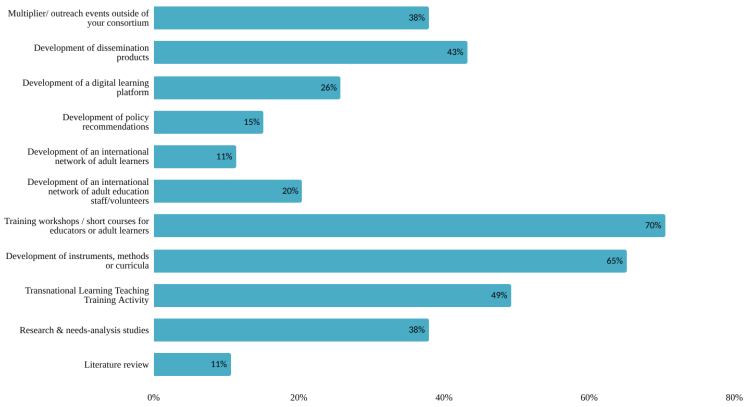


Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The cooperation partnerships exhibit a highly productive and outward-facing activity profile. The dataset records significant frequencies in the "Development of dissemination products (e.g., podcasts, social media campaigns, animations)" and the formulation of new "Curricula and pedagogical concepts." Furthermore, numerous KA2 projects focus on "Establishing or maintaining cooperation with civil society

organisations." This demonstrates that KA2 funding is utilized to create tangible civic infrastructure and advocacy tools that extend beyond the classroom.

Figure 6.6 Activities of KA2 projects that addressed one or more elements of the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” (N=132)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

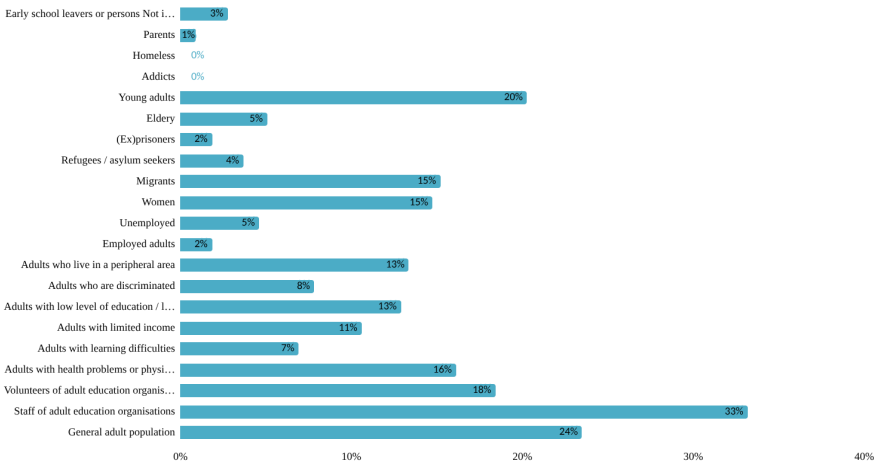
The evolution of activities and objectives highlights a shift from internal capacity building to external community impact. In Wave 1, activities were largely introspective, focusing on exchanging basic good practices and enhancing staff motivation. In Wave 2, the activities are distinctly performative and community-oriented. Organisations are generating media products and forming local alliances to stimulate democratic discourse, showcasing an elevated level of institutional agency.
The Module 3 case studies provide a qualitative interpretation of how the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” is translated into concrete objectives and educational activities within KA2 cooperation projects. The interviews show that this priority is not addressed as an abstract policy label, but is embedded in educational and training practices aimed at strengthening critical awareness, participation and collective agency.
In particular, the case studies highlight a strong connection between civic engagement and anti-discrimination education. Organisations described projects focused on migration, counter-narratives, stereotypes, bias, racism, intolerance, media disinformation and social injustice. These themes were addressed through participatory methodologies designed to help learners, educators and communities read social reality critically, question dominant narratives and develop possible forms of action. In this sense, the PDL priority is pursued not only through the transmission of civic contents, but through educational and training practices that support participants in becoming reflective and potentially transformative subjects.
The activities supported by KA2 projects are therefore strongly experiential and community-oriented. The case studies refer to Theatre of the Oppressed, theatre-forum, legislative theatre, community-based workshops, training activities, dissemination events, media products, videos, podcasts and pedagogical tools as key vehicles for promoting participation and democratic engagement. These activities create spaces in which democratic interaction can be practised directly: participants

are not only informed about civic values, but are invited to experience dialogue, conflict interpretation, collective reflection and shared responsibility.
A particularly relevant element emerging from the interviews is the coherence between project objectives and methodological choices. Organisations stressed that themes such as participation, empowerment and democratic engagement must be reflected in the way projects are designed and implemented. Horizontal coordination, co-creation of knowledge, shared responsibility among partners and attention to the voices of learners and communities are therefore not only organisational preferences, but part of the educational, formative and civic meaning of the projects themselves.
Finally, the case studies show that KA2 projects addressing the PDL priority often operate as bridges between European cooperation and local civic ecosystems. Transnational partnerships allow organisations to exchange and integrate different methodological traditions, while local networks support the adaptation of project results to community needs. From this perspective, KA2 cooperation projects function as civic laboratories, where educational tools, artistic practices and community engagement strategies are combined to foster critical thinking, democratic participation and social inclusion.

6.4 Target groups addressed

The efficacy of civic education initiatives is fundamentally linked to their ability to reach marginalized and disenfranchised populations.
The demographic mapping of the targeted cohorts confirms the deeply inclusive nature of the Italian AE sector. The survey data identifies "Adults with a low level of education/low basic skills," "Migrants," "Young adults (15-29 years old)," and "Adults with limited income" as the primary recipients of these civic-oriented projects.

Figure 6.7 Groups of adult learners targeted by projects (KA1 and KA2) that addressed one or more elements of the priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” (N=217)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

While the target demographics remain largely consistent with those identified in Wave 1, the *educational paradigm* applied to these groups has evolved. In Wave 1, migrants and low-skilled adults were frequently positioned as passive recipients of basic linguistic and vocational training. The Wave 2 data, supported by the emerging case

study narratives, reveals a transformative shift: these vulnerable groups are now actively engaged as agents of change. Projects on the PDL priority seek to dismantle the barriers that preclude these individuals from public discourse, providing them with the platform and the critical literacy required to exercise their democratic rights fully.
The case studies confirm the inclusive orientation emerging from the survey data, while providing a more nuanced understanding of the target groups addressed by projects linked to the PDL priority. The organisations involved work with a wide range of adult learners and communities, including migrants, people with fewer opportunities, individuals with disabilities, former inmates, economically disadvantaged adults, young adults, NEETs, educators, activists, volunteers and community members involved in local civic initiatives.
A relevant finding emerging from the interviews is that these groups are not approached merely as vulnerable beneficiaries of educational provision. Rather, they are progressively involved as holders of situated knowledge, personal narratives and civic experiences that can contribute to wider processes of awareness, participation and social change. In this sense, the projects do not simply “target” marginalised groups, but create conditions for their voices, biographies and forms of agency to become visible within educational, cultural and civic spaces.
The case studies also show that the boundaries between target groups are often fluid and intersecting. Projects may simultaneously involve migrants, educators, facilitators, activists, people with disabilities, adults with socio-economic disadvantages or individuals with fragile educational biographies. This confirms that the PDL priority is implemented through an intersectional understanding of vulnerability, where exclusion is not reduced to a single condition but is connected to multiple dimensions, including migration background, economic disadvantage, limited access to education, disability, detention or post-detention experiences, and low participation in public life.
The organisations analysed also tend to work with “multiplying” target groups. Educators, trainers, facilitators, volunteers and community workers are frequently involved not only as participants, but as actors capable of transferring tools, methodologies and civic awareness into their own professional and local contexts. This is particularly evident in projects based on Theatre of the Oppressed, storytelling, digital narration, community workshops and cultural education, where the learner is also understood as a potential mediator of participation within broader communities.
From this perspective, the case studies reinforce the interpretation of Erasmus+ projects addressing the PDL priority as spaces of democratic activation. Their relevance lies not only in reaching vulnerable groups, but in transforming the educational relationship with these groups: from assistance to participation, from representation to self-narration, and from inclusion as access to inclusion as active contribution to civic and democratic life.

6.5 Conclusion

The analysis of the Wave 2 data concerning the priority "Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement" yields highly encouraging conclusions regarding the trajectory of the Erasmus+ programme in Italy. The empirical evidence demonstrates a widespread, structural assimilation of civic objectives across both mobility (KA1) and cooperation (KA2) formats.
The longitudinal comparison with Wave 1 encapsulates the maturation of the Italian adult education sector. Providers have transcended a purely compensatory model of adult learning, embracing a comprehensive mandate of democratic empowerment.

By directing sophisticated activities - such as media literacy training, community advocacy, and the development of civic curricula - toward the most vulnerable segments of the population, these organisations are effectively utilizing the European funding architecture to fortify the social fabric and promote a deeply rooted, participatory European citizenship (De Greef, Hanekamp, Segers, Verté, & Lupi, 2012). The case studies further qualify this conclusion by showing that the PDL priority is most effective when it is not limited to the thematic content of projects, but becomes embedded in their educational and organisational logic. The organisations analysed do not only address vulnerable groups; they create participatory settings in which learners, educators, volunteers and community members can become narrators of their own experience, interpreters of social inequalities and potential agents of civic change. This evidence suggests that the added value of Erasmus+ in this thematic area lies in its capacity to connect three levels of action: the personal level of empowerment and self-recognition, the organisational level of methodological innovation, and the community level of democratic participation.

In this sense, projects addressing participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement should be understood as civic infrastructures in formation: fragile and often dependent on project-based funding, but capable of generating spaces where European values are not only taught or disseminated, but practised, negotiated and embodied through educational and training experiences. In the Italian context, this civic dimension also resonates with a broader life-course and longevity perspective, since participation in democratic life, social belonging and community engagement are key conditions for active ageing and for learning to live in a longevity society (Boffo et al. 2025).

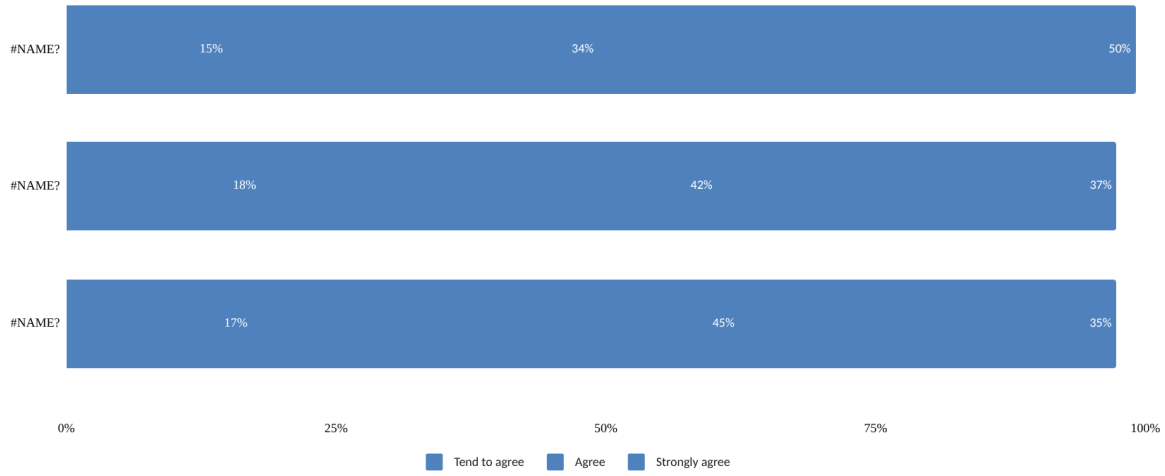
7. Impact in the thematic area

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

7.1 Impact on the learning offer

The integration of the PDL priority necessitates a substantial re-engineering of the educational curricula provided by adult education (AE) organisations. The survey data measures the depth of this programmatic shift.
The aggregate data reflecting the general impact on the learning offer (N=227) demonstrates a widespread systemic upgrade. A vast majority of responding organisations indicate high levels of agreement regarding the introduction of innovative pedagogical concepts, new curricula, and digital learning tools. This establishes a baseline of institutional capacity: Italian AE providers are actively utilizing Erasmus+ to modernize their standard educational portfolios.

Figure 7.1 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the learning offer (N=227)

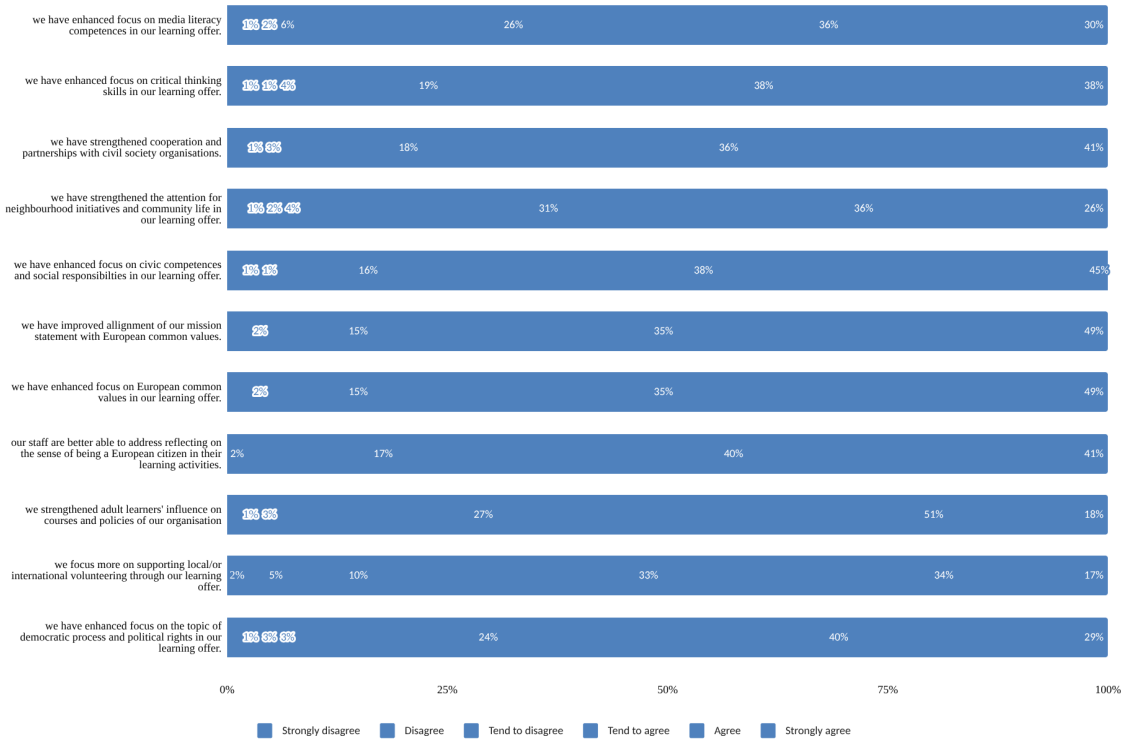


Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

When isolating the subset of organisations specifically evaluating the PDL priority (N=176), the data reveals a targeted thematic expansion. The graphical distribution of the Likert scales highlights dominant frequencies in the "Strongly agree" and "Agree" categories for statements concerning civic education. Organisations report a structurally enhanced focus on democratic processes and political rights within their daily provision. Furthermore, the data indicates a significant increase in activities

designed to support local and international volunteering, alongside dedicated modules aimed at promoting European citizenship and shared values.
The comparative analysis with Wave 1 illustrates a distinct programmatic evolution. During the first phase of research (2024), the learning offer was predominantly oriented towards compensatory inclusion—providing basic language courses for migrants or foundational digital literacy for the elderly. The impact was largely measured by the volume of marginalized individuals reached. The Wave 2 data signifies a qualitative leap. The learning offer has evolved to include sophisticated civic literacy components. Organisations have transitioned from simply hosting vulnerable learners to actively training them in critical thinking, media literacy, and democratic participation, embedding these advanced topics permanently into their institutional curricula.

Figure 7.2 Impact of Erasmus+ on learning offer - "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" (N=176)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

The case studies confirm that the impact of Erasmus+ on the learning offer is not limited to the creation of new curricula, tools or dissemination products. Rather, the interviews show that the outcomes of European cooperation are progressively incorporated into the ordinary educational and training practices of the organisations involved. Contents, methodologies and resources developed through KA2 projects are reused in training activities, local workshops, community initiatives and adult learning pathways, becoming part of the organisations' regular provision. This impact is particularly evident in the way organisations transform project outputs into adaptable educational resources. Manuals, toolkits, training agendas, digital

storytelling tools, videos, podcasts, online repositories, case-based materials and public workshops are not treated only as final deliverables, but as resources that can be reactivated in different contexts and with different groups of learners. The learning offer is therefore enriched not only in terms of quantity, but also in terms of methodological variety, accessibility and capacity to address complex civic themes through experiential, reflective and participatory activities. The case studies also highlight a circular relationship between transnational cooperation and local educational provision. European projects allow organisations to experiment with new approaches, compare different methods and develop common tools with international partners. These elements are then adapted to local needs and incorporated into educational and training activities addressed to learners, educators, facilitators, volunteers and community actors. In this sense, Erasmus+ contributes to stabilising a more civic-oriented learning offer, in which critical thinking, anti-discrimination education, media literacy, intercultural dialogue and democratic participation become embedded in the everyday work of adult education providers.

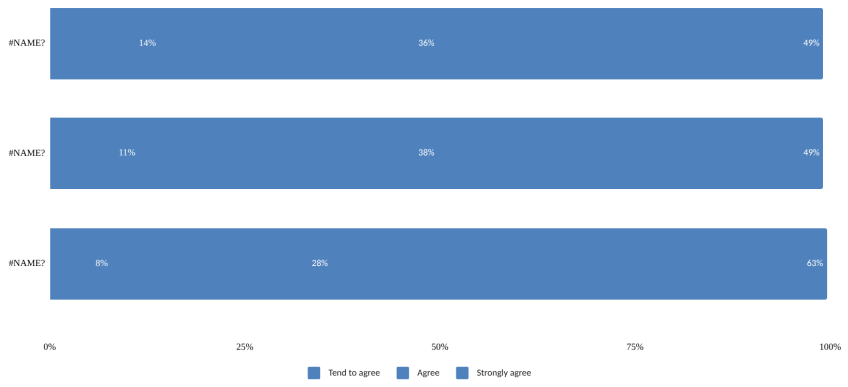
Overall, the qualitative evidence suggests that the strongest impact on the learning offer occurs when Erasmus+ outputs do not remain isolated project products, but become reusable components of an organisation's educational and training repertoire. Their long-term value depends on their capacity to remain meaningful beyond the formal duration of the project and to support the consolidation of practices oriented towards participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement.

7.2 Impact at staff level

The successful implementation of a civic-oriented learning offer relies entirely on the competencies and the professional posture of the educational and administrative staff.

The general assessment of staff development (N=227) confirms robust professional growth across the sector. Organisations report that their personnel have significantly improved their capacities in teaching with digital technologies and managing diverse classrooms. The exposure to transnational mobility and cooperation partnerships provides staff with a continuous professional development trajectory that mitigates structural deficits in the national system.

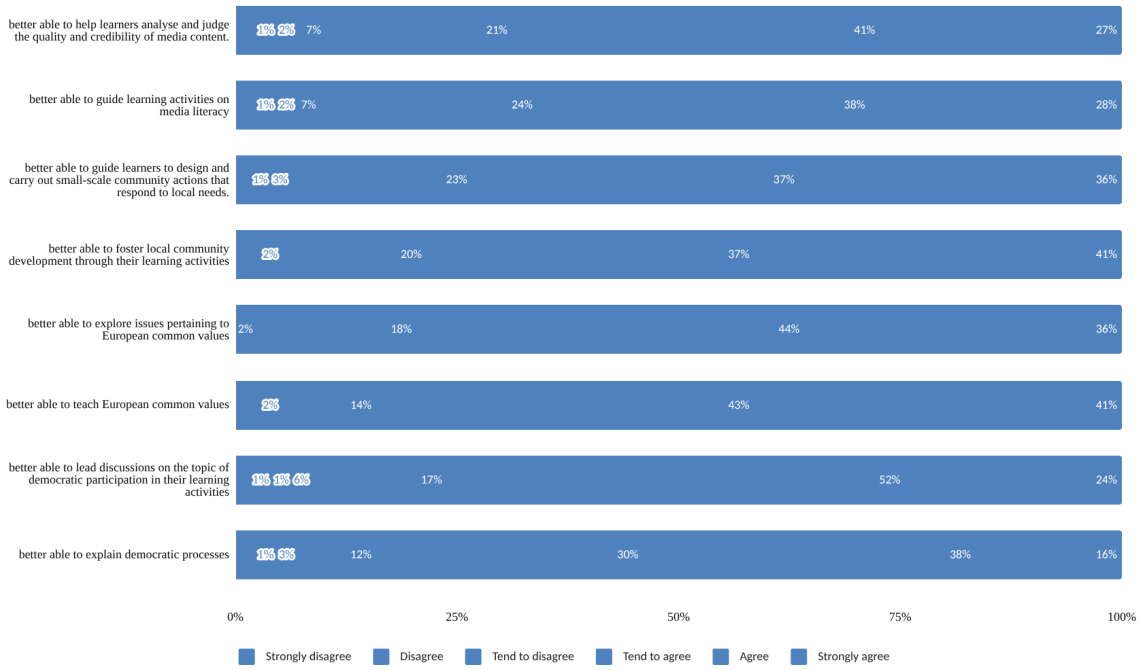
Figure 7.3 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on working staff (N=227)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

Analyzing the specific impact of the PDL priority (N=176), the data delineates the emergence of a new professional profile: the *civic educator*. The survey responses indicate that staff members have acquired specific competencies to facilitate discussions on European common values, guide learners in developing critical thinking, and deconstruct media misinformation. Additionally, the data highlights a marked improvement in the staff's ability to establish and maintain strategic partnerships with external civil society organisations, acting as community networkers.

Figure 7.4 Impact of Erasmus+ on staff - "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement" (N=176)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

In Wave 1, the primary benefits reported for staff were psychological and motivational. Erasmus+ was frequently cited in the Draft Report Module III as a vital tool for preventing professional burnout and enhancing basic intercultural communication skills. The Wave 2 findings document a maturation of this impact. Staff development is now characterized by the acquisition of highly specialized socio-political and network-building skills. Educators are empowered to transcend traditional classroom boundaries, actively engaging with local stakeholders and non-governmental actors to build comprehensive civic education ecosystems.
The case studies provide a more detailed understanding of the impact of Erasmus+ on staff, showing that participation in KA2 projects strengthens not only technical project-management skills, but also the professional capacity to work across educational, organisational and community contexts. Staff members acquire and refine competences related to coordination, facilitation, intercultural cooperation,

output development, dissemination, partnership management and adaptation of methodologies to different groups and territories.
A significant finding concerns the transformation of working practices within organisations. In some case studies, Erasmus+ cooperation is associated with horizontal coordination, shared responsibility and co-creation of knowledge among partners. This requires staff to develop negotiation skills, the ability to mediate between different organisational cultures and the capacity to maintain coherence between the civic objectives of the project and the way activities are designed and implemented. The impact on staff is therefore not only individual, but also organisational: it contributes to reshaping internal cultures of collaboration and project governance.
The interviews also show that staff increasingly operate as connectors between different spaces: adult learning settings, local communities, civil society organisations, international partnerships and dissemination environments. This confirms the emergence of a professional profile able to combine educational and training work with civic facilitation, network-building and community engagement. Staff members are not only required to deliver activities, but also to translate European cooperation into local practices and to support learners and communities in engaging with civic and democratic issues.
At the same time, the case studies show that this development is demanding. Participatory coordination, long-term partnership building and the integration of diverse methods require time, continuity and sustained organisational capacity. Erasmus+ strengthens staff competences and professional confidence, but it also increases the complexity of their work, particularly in terms of relational investment, accountability, dissemination and sustainability after the end of the funded period.

7.3 Impact at learners level

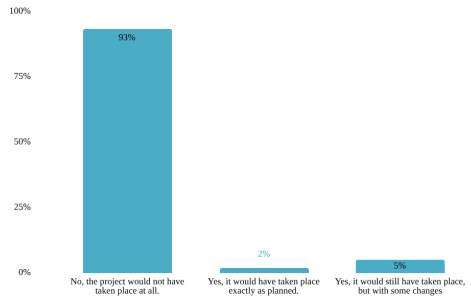
At learners' level, the case studies shift the analysis from the description of target groups to the perceived transformations generated by participation in PDL-oriented projects. The impact is closely connected to the possibility of moving from participation in activities to active involvement in educational, cultural and civic spaces. Learners are not addressed only as recipients of training, but as people whose experiences, biographies and situated knowledge can contribute to collective reflection and community change.
Across the case studies, the impact on learners emerges in terms of self-recognition, critical awareness and increased capacity to interpret social issues. Projects based on theatre, storytelling, digital narration, cultural education, community workshops and participatory activities create spaces in which learners can connect personal experiences with broader questions such as migration, discrimination, exclusion, disability, detention, socio-economic disadvantage, media narratives and democratic participation.
This suggests that the learner-level impact of projects addressing the PDL priority is not limited to the acquisition of specific civic contents. It also concerns the development of attitudes and dispositions: confidence in expressing one's voice, ability to engage with others, awareness of rights and inequalities, and willingness to participate in collective contexts. The educational and training value of these projects lies in their capacity to make learners visible as subjects capable of producing meaning, sharing knowledge and contributing to social and civic life. From this perspective, the case studies indicate that the strongest impact occurs when learners are not merely included in project activities, but recognised as active contributors to

the learning environment. The shift is from access to participation: learners do not only enter educational spaces, but are supported in using those spaces to narrate, interpret, compare and act.
The interviews with learners further reinforce this interpretation by showing the subjective dimension of perceived transformation. Learners described Erasmus+ experiences as opportunities to encounter new contexts, establish meaningful relationships and discover possibilities that had previously appeared distant or inaccessible. In some accounts, the most meaningful aspects of the experience were not limited to formal activities, but included informal encounters, personal connections and the feeling of being part of a wider European learning space.
These narratives suggest that the impact on learners concerns not only skills, but also self-positioning. Participation can generate a renewed sense of confidence, openness and civic motivation, especially when learners are supported by organisations capable of creating trust, preparation and spaces for reflection. In this sense, the impact of the PDL priority at learners' level lies in the emergence of agency: the perception that one can participate, contribute and act within educational, social and European contexts.
The qualitative evidence also invites caution. These accounts should be interpreted as perceived transformations rather than objective short-term measurements of impact. Nevertheless, they provide important insight into how learners make sense of the experience and how Erasmus+ can contribute to strengthening confidence, relational openness, and awareness of one's role within broader civic and educational communities.

7.4 Added value of Erasmus+ support

The concept of "additionality" measures the dependency of these civic and democratic innovations on the financial and architectural support of the Erasmus+ programme.
The data regarding the counterfactual scenario (what would have happened without the programme) provides the most definitive evidence of the programme's indispensable nature. Among the 217 organisations addressing PDL elements, the overwhelming majority selected the response: *"No, the project would not have taken place at all."* This confirms that the European funding mechanism is the absolute prerequisite for the design and execution of civic engagement initiatives within the Italian AE sector.

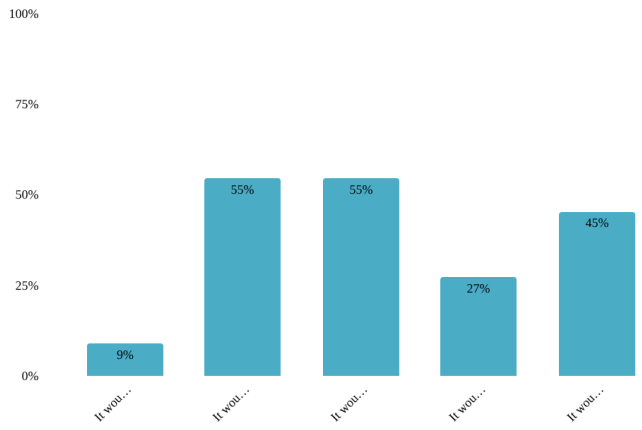
Figure 7.5 Added value of Erasmus+ support (N=217)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

For the minimal fraction of the sample (N=11) that indicated the project might have proceeded in some form, the anticipated alternative scenarios involve drastic reductions in scope. These organisations specify that without Erasmus+, the initiatives would have run on a significantly smaller scale, involved far fewer participants, lacked transnational partners, and featured a fundamentally different, less ambitious thematic focus.

Figure 7.6 Aspects of project that would have been different without Erasmus+ (N=11)



Source: Online survey beneficiary organisations RIA-AE network (2025–2026)

This quantitative confirmation precisely mirrors the qualitative findings of the Wave 1 case studies. The initial research concluded that self-funded internationalization or advanced research and development in the Italian Third Sector is virtually non-existent due to systemic financial constraints. Wave 2 solidifies this finding: the Erasmus+ programme does not merely add value to existing national frameworks; it acts as the foundational infrastructure that enables the adult education sector to innovate, internationalize, and pursue European democratic priorities.

7.5 Conclusion

The empirical evidence gathered in Chapter 7 confirms that the Erasmus+ priority “Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” has produced a significant transformation within the Italian adult education sector. This transformation concerns not only the thematic content of projects, but also the way adult education organisations design their learning offer, develop staff competences and support learners’ participation in educational, social and civic spaces.
The longitudinal comparison from Wave 1 to Wave 2 illustrates an adult education ecosystem that has progressively matured. While the first monitoring phase highlighted the role of Erasmus+ in supporting basic inclusion, international openness and the reduction of local isolation, the second survey round shows a stronger orientation towards civic literacy, democratic participation and European common values. The learning offer has been enriched with curricula, tools and activities focused on media literacy, critical thinking, political rights, anti-discrimination education and community engagement. These elements suggest that the PDL priority is becoming increasingly embedded in the ordinary educational and training provision of beneficiary organisations.

At staff level, the impact is visible in the development of more complex professional competences. Educators, trainers and project staff are not only involved in delivering activities, but also in facilitating dialogue, building partnerships with civil society organisations, supporting learners' participation and translating European cooperation into local practices. In this sense, the PDL priority contributes to the emergence of professional profiles capable of combining educational work, civic facilitation, network-building and community engagement.

At learners' level, the evidence from case studies and interviews shows that the impact of Erasmus+ is not limited to the acquisition of specific civic contents. It also concerns self-recognition, confidence, relational openness and the perception of being able to participate in wider educational, social and European contexts. Learners are not only reached as beneficiaries of project activities, but are progressively recognised as subjects capable of narrating their experiences, interpreting social inequalities and contributing to collective reflection and civic life.

The analysis of additionality confirms that this transformation is strongly dependent on the Erasmus+ programme. For many organisations, especially small and community-based providers, European funding represents the enabling condition for developing civic-oriented projects, transnational partnerships and innovative educational and training tools. At the same time, Erasmus+ should not be interpreted as the exclusive generator of empowerment. Its impact depends on the interaction between European resources, local educational ecosystems, organisational commitment and the subjective transformative paths of learners.

From this perspective, Erasmus+ projects addressing participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement can be understood as civic infrastructures in formation. Their value lies not only in the activities they finance, but in the educational, formative and relational environments they make possible. These environments allow European values to be practised rather than merely declared, translated into concrete experiences of dialogue, storytelling, mobility, cooperation, participation and community engagement. The central challenge for the future is therefore to ensure that these infrastructures do not remain episodic, but become sustainable components of the Italian adult education ecosystem. In the Italian context, this challenge also has a life-course relevance, since civic participation, social belonging and community engagement are key dimensions of active ageing and of learning to live in a longevity society.

PART E – Conclusion and policy pointers

8. Conclusion and policy pointers

8.1 Conclusion

8.1.1 The accessibility and inclusiveness of the programme

The Civic Adult Education sector in Italy demonstrates a high degree of institutional heterogeneity, characterized by a structural predominance of Third Sector entities, including NGOs, foundations, and associations. This ecosystem is further supported by the significant participation of social enterprises and formal public institutions, such as the Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA). Longitudinal data indicate a successful process of access "democratization": the introduction of small-scale partnerships (KA122 and KA210) has effectively lowered barriers to entry, facilitating the active participation of micro and small organizations operating with 1 to 10 staff members. Geographically, the Erasmus+ programme functions as a catalyst for territorial convergence. Organizations in Southern Italy are increasingly leveraging these funding mechanisms to bridge the historical socio-economic divide with the North, primarily by establishing networks oriented toward social inclusion (Federighi, 2019a). Despite these advancements, persistent structural barriers remain, most notably the high administrative and organizational burdens placed on undersized entities and the logistical and familial constraints that inhibit adult learner participation.

8.1.2 Impact at organisation level

The empirical analysis confirms the absolute additionality of the Erasmus+ programme: in the absence of European funding, methodological innovation and transnational research initiatives within the Italian Third Sector would essentially not occur. A diachronic comparison reveals a shift from the intangible benefits observed in the first monitoring wave to a current phase of "pedagogical systematization". Beneficiary organizations demonstrate an enhanced capacity to translate transnational experiences into robust, tangible outputs, such as comprehensive curricula, training modules, digital tools, and dissemination products. Crucially, these intellectual outputs are systematically and permanently integrated into the organizations' daily educational offerings, ensuring long-term institutional sustainability.

8.1.3 Impact at staff level

Staff mobility is predominantly executed through structured learning environments, particularly courses, training, and job shadowing activities. The self-reported benefits have evolved from basic psychological and motivational revitalization to a marked enhancement of highly technical and methodological competencies. Educational personnel report measurable improvements in core pedagogical areas, specifically regarding digital transformation, diversity management, and inclusive methodologies. Furthermore, the data highlights the emergence of the "civic educator" profile: professionals who are now highly capable of facilitating community networks, guiding learners in media literacy, and promoting critical thinking.

8.1.4 Impact at learners level

Mobility initiatives successfully attract a demographically diverse user base characterized by marked female participation and the inclusion of highly vulnerable cohorts, such as adults with low educational attainment and migrants. Group mobility has proven to be an essential strategic mechanism for ensuring psychological

reassurance, mitigating travel anxiety, and overcoming linguistic barriers for these marginalized learners. While optimal participant satisfaction rates are consistently recorded, resulting directly from rigorous institutional protocols for pre-departure preparation and comprehensive linguistic support, it is necessary to analytically distinguish this subjective satisfaction from the structural learning outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Ockham IPS et al., 2023). Ultimately, the transnational educational experience functions as a 'civic rite of passage' that significantly contributes to a perceived transformation in self-esteem, enhances soft skills, and fosters a profound awareness of the individual's role within the European democratic space (De Greef, Segers, & Verté, 2010), though it should not be considered the sole catalyst for such individual empowerment.

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

The priority concerning "Participation in Democratic Life" (PDL) is extensively integrated across the Italian adult education sector. Key Action 2 (KA2) partnerships frequently address this priority directly to construct tangible civic infrastructures and advocacy tools. Conversely, Key Action 1 (KA1) mobilities generally pursue it as a secondary objective generated through intercultural exposure. These projects facilitate a profound pedagogical paradigm shift: rather than treating marginalized groups—such as migrants and young adults—as passive beneficiaries of compensatory education, they empower them as active agents of democratic change. Programmatic activities are heavily oriented toward developing critical thinking, media literacy, community activism, and socio-political understanding

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

The programmatic focus on democratic participation has triggered a systemic upgrade of the sector's learning offer. Organizations have stably introduced advanced civic literacy modules centered on political rights, the deconstruction of media misinformation, and European common values into their standard curricula. At the staff level, educators have acquired the advanced capacity to establish strategic partnerships with civil society entities, acting as community networkers. Analysis of programmatic additionality proves that the Erasmus+ infrastructure is the sole catalyst capable of sustaining these democratic empowerment initiatives; 93% of addressing organizations report that without European funding, these civic projects would not have taken place at all.

A distinctive contribution of the Italian report lies in connecting Erasmus+ adult education with the broader demographic challenge of longevity. In a country marked by advanced population ageing, adult education represents a strategic field for supporting active ageing, social participation and quality of life across the adult life course (World Health Organization, 2002; World Health Organization, 2015; Boffo et al., 2025; Boffo, 2022). The findings of this report suggest that Erasmus+ can contribute to this perspective by offering learning, mobility and cooperation opportunities that strengthen autonomy, confidence, civic engagement, intercultural openness and relational resources among adults, including older adults. This contribution should not be understood only in terms of individual participation in mobility, but also in relation to the educational, formative and relational environments that Erasmus+ projects make possible within organisations and local communities.

At the same time, adopting a longevity perspective requires a more critical understanding of access. Participation in Erasmus+ is shaped by socio-demographic

inequalities: age, gender, educational level, employment status, income, family responsibilities, care duties and territorial location all influence the real possibility of taking part in mobility and cooperation activities. For this reason, future programme development should not only increase the number of opportunities available, but also strengthen the support conditions that allow diverse adult profiles to participate.
From this perspective, Erasmus+ adult education can be read as part of a wider strategy for accompanying longevity and preparing individuals and communities for longer life trajectories. Its contribution to active ageing lies in the possibility of generating spaces of learning, participation, intergenerational exchange, community engagement and European citizenship. This is the specific interpretative value of the Italian case, where adult education, territorial networks and the longevity can be understood as interconnected dimensions of democratic and sustainable development.

8.2 Policy pointers

Based on the documented challenges and analyzed successes, the following strategic recommendations are outlined:

- **Administrative Simplification and Support for Micro-Organizations:** Given the demonstrated efficacy of grassroots organizations in intercepting broad local user bases, it is vital to continue simplifying bureaucratic procedures. The use of lump-sum funding and small-scale partnerships must be further incentivized to lower entry barriers for entities with limited administrative staff.
- **Incentives for Inclusive Mobility:** To address the logistical, occupational, and familial difficulties that inhibit the participation of vulnerable adult learners, the programme should implement more flexible financial and organizational support mechanisms. Furthermore, group mobility must be systematically promoted, alongside guaranteed, intensified support for linguistic preparation and mentoring (pastoral care).
- **Consolidation of the "Civic" Role and Output Transferability:** It is recommended to provide financial support for the transition of adult education organizations toward serving as genuine "territorial hubs" for active European citizenship. The scalability and dissemination of curricula related to media literacy and the development of critical thinking must be fostered, capitalizing on the newly acquired competencies of educators and the innovation generated by KA2 projects.

Annex 1 Mission statement RIA-AE network

RIA-AE Network mission statement

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

The impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners and on the field of adult education has been little researched to date. To better coordinate research activities on the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education and to enable the further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ programme, a transnational research network is being set up: the Network for Research-based Impact Analysis of the Erasmus+ Programme in Adult Education (RIA-AE Network).

The aims of the RIA-AE network

The RIA-AE network pursues the following objectives:

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

Procedure

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

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

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

Principles of cooperation

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

Values

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

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

#	Title	Methodology	Focus	Outcome (+ is positive impact)
1	*Erasmus+ 2024 Report* – INDIRE, 2025	Annual monitoring report based on programme participation, funding and mobility data.	Participation of Italian organisations in Erasmus+ Adult Education, with specific attention to mobility, cooperation partnerships and the consolidation of the sector	**+** The report shows a significant strengthening of the Adult Education sector within Erasmus+: 130 accredited Italian organisations, around EUR 9.6 million for mobility and cooperation, 2,697 staff mobilities, 1,326 adult learner mobilities, and 44 KA2 cooperation partnerships.
2	*Medium- and Long-Term Report on the Erasmus+ Programme* – INDIRE, 2025	Evaluation study based on surveys involving experts, beneficiaries and stakeholders from the Italian education system.	Medium- and long-term effects of Erasmus+ across Italian education sectors, including its role in organisational innovation, internationalisation and inclusion.	**+** Erasmus+ is perceived as a strategic driver of educational innovation. The study highlights positive effects on institutional internationalisation, innovation in educational practices, inclusion of disadvantaged groups and access to learning for people with fewer opportunities.
3	*EPALE Journal*, Issue 17 – "The futures of adult education", 2025	Thematic collection of scientific and professional contributions	Transformations in adult education, the role of local adult education institutions, especially CPIAs, and the future of lifelong learning in the context of digital and social transitions.	**+** The contributions highlight the growing strategic relevance of adult education institutions in lifelong learning systems and provide a broader interpretative framework for understanding the transformation of the sector. However, the issue does not provide direct quantitative evidence of Erasmus+ impact.

	EPALE Journal	Research agenda / call for scholarly contributions; not an empirical study in itself.	Evaluation of the impact of Erasmus+ in adult education and its effects on national education systems.	**+/gap** The call signals a growing and more structured research interest in Erasmus+ impact in Adult Education. It also confirms the need for stronger empirical evidence and more systematic impact evaluation.

Annex 3 Literature list

Boffo, V., Bertani, M., Bramanti, D., Chattat, R., & Formenti, L. (Eds.). (2025). *Accompagnare la longevità: Buone pratiche educative e formative per l'invecchiamento attivo*. Firenze University Press. https://doi.org/10.36253/979-12-215-0744-7.

Boffo V. (2022). Per avviare il discorso. Costruire l'ageing. In V. Boffo, Active Ageing: il ruolo dell'apprendimento permanente. *Epale Journal*, *12*, 9–16.

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

De Greef, M. (2021). *Inclusion measures within the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020 with respect to learning mobility of individuals*. EPRS.

De Greef, M., Hanekamp, M., Segers, M., Verté, D., & Lupi, C. (2012). *Learning in different contexts*. CINOP.

De Greef, M., & Poppelaars, M. (2018). *Educational trajectories as a social solution for vulnerable residents of North Brabant*. Artéduc.

De Greef, M., Segers, M., Nijhuis, J., & Lam, J. F. (2014). *Impact research language courses Language for Life by Stichting Lezen & Schrijven in the field of social inclusion and reading skills Part A*. Maastricht University.

De Greef, M., Segers, M., & Verté, D. (2010). Development of the SIT, an instrument to evaluate the transfer effects of adult education programs for social inclusion. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 36*(1-2), 42-61.

European Commission. (2015). *An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe*. Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

Federighi, P. (2019a). *Methodology for the analysis of adult education systems. Results and policy trends in Italy between 2014 and 2019*. Università degli Studi di Firenze.

Federighi, P. (2019b). *Research methodology in adult learning and education*. Firenze University Press.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Sage.

Hippel, A. von, & Tippelt, R. (2010). The role of adult educators towards (potential) participants and their contribution to increasing participation in adult education. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 1*(1-2), 33-51.

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 1997*(74), 5-12.

Milana, M. (2012). Political globalization and the shift from adult education to lifelong learning. *European Journal of Education, 47*(1), 103-117.

Nuissl, E. (1999). *Adult education and learning in Europe: Evaluation of the adult education action within the SOCRATES programme*.

Ockham IPS, Artéduc, & Institute for Innovation and Technology. (2023). *Impact measurement in Erasmus+ adult education: Methodological guide for the implementation of country surveys*. Institute for Policy Support.

Ockham IPS, Institute for Innovation and Technology, & Artéduc. (2025). *Impact measurement in Erasmus+ adult education: Methodological guide for the implementation of country studies - Second Survey Round (SR2)*. Institute for Policy Support.

Stein, D., & Valters, C. (2012). *Understanding "Theory of Change" in international development: A review of existing knowledge*. Justice and Security Research Programme, LSE.

World Health Organization. (2015). *World report on ageing and health*. World Health Organization. https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/186463.

World Health Organization. (2002). *Active ageing: A policy framework. World Health Organization*. https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/67215.

Annex 4 Short case study portraits

Case Study 1

1. General characteristics of the organisation
The organization is a "Type A" social cooperative (cooperativa sociale di tipo A). While it does not structurally integrate certified disadvantaged workers as a Type B cooperative would, its primary target audience consists of vulnerable, marginalized, and underprivileged individuals. The cooperative's activities heavily rely on the methodology of the "Theatre of the Oppressed" (Teatro dell'Oppresso) and the maieutic educational approach of Paulo Freire. In addition to European projects, Giolli Coop manages a two-year training school for adult learners, which has been active since 1994, attracting primarily educators, psychologists, teachers, and social activists.

2. Relevance of the project
The cooperative's European initiatives are highly relevant to the Erasmus+ horizontal priorities, particularly regarding inclusion, diversity, and active citizenship. Their projects focus broadly on anti-discrimination and empowerment. The interventions have an interdisciplinary approach addressing issues related to migration and LGBTQ+ rights, ensuring relevance for both direct beneficiaries and the professionals who support them.

3. Objectives
The primary objectives of the entity's projects are to combat discrimination and foster empowerment among marginalized populations . A key secondary objective is to provide methodological support, tools, and training for facilitators, social workers, and educators who work directly with these vulnerable target groups.

4. Implementation of the project
During the current Erasmus+ programming period (2021-2027), Giolli Coop has implemented approximately ten Key Action 2 (KA2) projects, operating both as a project coordinator and as a partner. A defining feature of their implementation strategy is a strictly horizontal and non-hierarchical coordination style. Even when acting as the lead partner, Giolli Coop encourages shared responsibility, requiring each partner organization to propose and guide specific activities. The cooperative also favors long-term, stable collaborations, repeatedly working with a trusted network of partners to ensure methodological alignment .

5. Impact at organisation, staff and learner's level

- **Democratic participation (intention and knowledge):** The cooperative's core methodology, the Theatre of the Oppressed, is inherently "political" (in the original sense of the word), as it actively takes a stance against injustice and discrimination. This approach organically attracts and trains individuals who are motivated to participate actively in democratic life and social movements.
- **Common values (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights) and a sense of European belonging:** By focusing transversely on anti-discrimination, migrant

support, and LGBTQ+ issues, the projects directly operationalize European values of equality and human dignity .

- **Civic engagement (volunteering, civic awareness and attitudes):** Adult learners trained by the cooperative (who are often educators or activists) transfer their acquired skills into their daily civic and professional environments, fostering broader community engagement.
- **Critical skills & media literacy (problem solving, organisation/decision-making collaboration):** Staff members have significantly enhanced their project management, conflict negotiation, and facilitation skills. The horizontal coordination model specifically challenges staff to develop advanced collaborative problem-solving skills, moving away from directive leadership toward co-creation.

6. Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)

The impact of the Coop's Erasmus+ projects extends well beyond the organization itself. The methodologies refined through European cooperation are systematically integrated into their local adult training school. Consequently, middle and high school teachers acquire transversal tools to manage classroom dynamics and promote inclusion, while local L2 Italian schools for foreigners and other social cooperatives directly benefit from the trained facilitators.

7. Added value of Erasmus+

Erasmus+ KA2 projects have provided the Coop with crucial opportunities for transnational methodological integration. For example, the cooperative has successfully blended its pedagogical Freirean approach with psychological methodologies brought by French partners. Furthermore, the continuous exchange of knowledge has functioned as vital capacity-building for the internal staff.

8. Success and fail factors

- **Success factors:** The establishment of reliable, long-term partnerships ensures a high degree of trust and methodological synergy . Additionally, the horizontal coordination model ultimately leads to better engagement and sustainable relationships among partners.
- **Fail factors / Challenges:** The horizontal, co-creative management style requires significantly more time for negotiation, alignment, and addressing diverse mentalities compared to a traditional, directive coordination approach.

9. Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme

While not explicitly requesting specific structural interventions from the National Agency in the provided transcript, the cooperative highlights that their democratic, horizontal approach to project management requires substantial time investments. Support structures that recognize and accommodate the extended timeframes required for genuinely co-creative coordination could further strengthen the impact of such projects.

Case Study 2

1. General characteristics of the organisation
The entity is a social promotion association (APS) focused on the use of storytelling methodologies in educational fields. Their expertise encompasses various forms of narration, including autobiographical writing, digital storytelling, video, photography, and artistic methodologies. The association engages a diverse range of target groups, including youth, adults, individuals with fewer opportunities, migrants, and people with disabilities.

2. Relevance of the project
The organization's projects are highly relevant to the Erasmus+ priorities of inclusion, active citizenship, and participation in democratic life. They utilize storytelling as a flexible tool for personal empowerment, civic engagement, and raising awareness about discrimination. Their initiatives often focus on creating "bottom-up" archives of popular stories, allowing marginalized voices to be heard and recognized.

3. Objectives
The primary objectives of the association's projects are to utilize narrative methodologies to foster social change and personal empowerment. Furthermore, they aim to build a sense of European identity and citizenship by connecting individual personal histories with broader European historical contexts.

4. Implementation of the project
During the current Erasmus+ programming period, Storie di Mondi Possibili has operated as both a coordinator (primarily in Key Action 2 projects) and a partner across various sectors. They also hold an Erasmus accreditation in the adult education sector. A key implementation strategy is creating synergies between different project actions, such as developing a methodological toolkit within a KA2 project and subsequently testing or applying it through adult learner mobility in a KA1 project.

5. Impact at organisation, staff and learner's level

- **Democratic participation (intention and knowledge):** Participation in transnational mobility exposes learners and staff to different political and social realities, fostering a deeper civic and political conscience.
- **Common values (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights) and a sense of European belonging:** Projects connecting personal narratives to European history have generated strong emotional responses and a concrete realization of European unity. Sharing experiences with citizens from other countries builds lasting relationships and a tangible European identity.
- **Civic engagement (volunteering, civic awareness and attitudes):** Initiatives like the "Volunteers of Stories" project explicitly encourage individuals to use storytelling to contribute positively to their society. Providing a platform for people to publish their stories stimulates continuous engagement and a desire to share their work with wider networks.
- **Critical skills & media literacy (problem solving, organisation/decision-making collaboration):** The organization has developed advanced digital

and media literacy tools, such as the "StoryApp" portal and related mobile application, which host over 1,200 stories of social change. Staff members have significantly improved their project management skills and their ability to navigate and manage cultural diversity.

6. Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)
The tangible outputs produced by the association, particularly the StoryApp portal, have demonstrated strong sustainability, as they are continuously utilized and populated by other independent European projects. Furthermore, the methodological toolkits and practices developed transnationally are successfully transferred to local environments and other organizations.

7. Added value of Erasmus+
The Erasmus+ programme has been instrumental in funding the creation of sustainable digital infrastructures like StoryApp. More importantly, the programme provides a crucial transnational dimension that enables the weaving of international networks and the exchange of practices, which would be exceedingly difficult to achieve without such European support.

8. Success and fail factors

- **Success factors:** The strategic synergy between different project actions (combining KA2 output creation with KA1 mobility testing) maximizes impact. The development of sustainable digital platforms ensures that project results outlive the specific funding period.
- **Fail factors / Challenges:** The current lack of a dedicated action for transnational adult learner cooperation (similar to the former Grundtvig programme) severely limits opportunities for adults to collaborate directly across borders. Bureaucratic barriers prevent many migrants residing in Italy from participating in mobility due to delays in obtaining or renewing residence permits. Additionally, adult learners who are employed face significant barriers to participation, as they often have to use their personal vacation days to attend mobilities.

9. Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme
The organization strongly advocates for the reinstatement of specific mobility actions that facilitate direct transnational cooperation among groups of adult learners. There is a need for national or European policies that grant adult workers paid educational leave to participate in mobility projects without sacrificing their personal vacation time. Finally, the National Agency or the programme could provide more systematic support to connect organizations working on similar social themes, helping them build "critical mass" to interact more effectively with institutions and influence policy.

Case Study 3

1. General characteristics of the organisation
It is a pure volunteer organization (ODV) based in Rome. It was founded in 2011 to assist inmates, their families, and to develop educational and training activities within the Rebibbia prison environment . Following third-sector reforms, the association broadened its scope to provide cultural education and training to various fragile adult populations, including former inmates, individuals with physical disabilities, and those facing economic disadvantages. The organization operates primarily through self-funding and the dedication of its volunteers, without relying heavily on regional funds.

2. Relevance of the project
The association's activities directly align with the Erasmus+ priorities of inclusion and diversity. By focusing on highly marginalized groups - specifically people with disabilities, former inmates, and the economically disadvantaged - the organization ensures that the programme reaches adult learners who typically lack access to international mobility and cultural enrichment .

3. Objectives
The core driving objective of volunteer organization is encapsulated in their motto: "more culture, more education equals less prison". Through their Erasmus+ projects, they aim to foster inclusion and provide surprising, life-enhancing experiences to disadvantaged individuals who would never otherwise expect to participate in international mobility. Additionally, they seek to open the horizons of prison staff by exposing them to different European correctional systems.

4. Implementation of the project
The organization obtained its Erasmus+ accreditation in 2024 and operates as a standalone coordinating organization for Key Action 1 (KA1) projects. They have recently implemented two main mobilities. The first was a staff mobility to Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, which included visiting two local prisons to observe their operations . The second was a learner mobility to Arrieta featuring a highly diverse group of six adults, ranging in age from 25 to 72, including individuals with disabilities and former inmates.

5. Impact at organisation, staff and learner's level

- **Democratic participation (intention and knowledge):** The organization actively participates in European democratic dialogue by advocating for the recognition of prison inmates as a specific disadvantaged category within European policies, as demonstrated during a Transnational Cooperation Activity (TCA) in Dublin .
- **Common values (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights) and a sense of European belonging):** Integrating learners with different vulnerabilities (e.g., physical disabilities alongside former inmates) has fostered a profound sense of unity, listening, and mutual care within the group, directly manifesting values of human dignity and equality.
- **Civic engagement (volunteering, civic awareness and attitudes):** The mobility experiences have generated significant buzz and a desire to

participate among the association's members and the wider prison community. Learners also build civic awareness by forming international networks and staying in contact with peers from other European countries.

- **Critical skills & media literacy (problem solving, organisation/decision-making collaboration):** Learners and staff improved their linguistic skills, with many expressing a strong desire to continue learning English and Spanish upon their return. Digital competencies were also enhanced, as some older learners or those previously without smartphones engaged in digital activities during the mobility. Staff acquired critical comparative knowledge by studying the Spanish penitentiary system.

6. Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)

Including an educator from the Rebibbia prison in the staff mobility generated a profound ripple effect; upon her return, the entire prison staff and inmate population became aware of the initiative, sparking widespread interest in participation. At the policy level, The organization plans to organize large dissemination events involving the Ministry of Justice to advocate for the institutional right of inmates to participate in educational mobility.

7. Added value of Erasmus+

The Erasmus+ programme provides the essential framework and funding that allow the organization to offer transformative international experiences to fragile adults who could never afford them otherwise. It also acts as a catalyst for institutional innovation, introducing international best practices to the traditionally closed and innovation-resistant Italian prison system.

8. Success and fail factors

- **Success factors:** The deliberate inclusion of highly diverse vulnerabilities within a single mobility group proved to be a major success factor, enhancing group cohesion and empathy. Internal organizational support, such as setting up a volunteer-led Spanish language course prior to departure, ensured participants were adequately prepared.
- **Fail factors / Challenges:** A significant barrier is the legal restriction on inmates, as only those with special permits can physically travel, making it extremely difficult to involve them fully in mobilities. Furthermore, the official Erasmus+ Online Language Support (OLS) platform was cited as cumbersome and dysfunctional, failing to provide adequate linguistic preparation for the learners.

9. Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme

The organization urgently requires the official European OLS platform to be fixed and made accessible, as its current state forces the association to organize internal, unfunded language courses. Moreover, there is a distinct need for programmatic and institutional support to officially classify prison inmates as a designated category of learners with disabilities or severe disadvantages, thereby facilitating their inclusion in future European mobility initiatives.

Case Study 4

1. General characteristics of the organisation
The entity is an association based in Palermo, Sicily, composed of 16 active associates with diverse professional backgrounds, including teachers, psychologists, and project managers. The organization has extensive experience with the Erasmus+ programme in both the school and adult education sectors, and also secures funding through CERV, banking foundations, and local municipalities. Their primary target audience consists of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and "young adults" ranging from 16 to 50 years old who require cultural and professional reskilling. Additionally, Idrisi is heavily involved in supporting local foundations with immersive and digital art exhibitions.

2. Relevance of the project
The organization's projects are highly relevant to Erasmus+ horizontal priorities, heavily focusing on social inclusion, environmental revitalization, cultural diffusion, and LGBTQ+ rights. A significant portion of their work focuses on engaging adult communities - particularly those facing socio-economic disadvantages - to sensitize them to European core values and provide them with essential digital competencies.

3. Objectives
The primary objectives of Idrisi's initiatives are to promote active European citizenship, tolerance, non-discrimination, and gender inclusion among marginalized adult populations. They also aim to innovate informal education by training educators on inclusive practices and by bridging the digital divide for adults who lack technological proficiency.

4. Implementation of the project
It implements its projects through a highly collaborative and horizontal internal structure; all 16 associates are fully informed and involved in the administrative and operational phases of the projects. Project execution typically begins with robust baseline research and analysis, which then translates into the creation of practical outputs such as guidelines, manuals, interactive virtual museums, and immersive digital platforms. They also prioritize working with international partners who strictly share their values and operational ethos.

5. Impact at organisation, staff and learner's level

- **Democratic participation (intention and knowledge):** Transnational cooperation exposes staff and learners to different European political and democratic systems, fostering a deeper understanding of democratic functionalities. The organization is currently planning a project dedicated specifically to explaining European politics and democratic participation to citizens using digital communication.
- **Common values (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights) and a sense of European belonging):** The projects consistently build a strong sense of European citizenship, encouraging participants to put aside local political differences and work as a unified European people . Initiatives focusing on LGBTQ+

inclusion have successfully generated increased awareness and reduced hate within target communities.

- **Civic engagement (volunteering, civic awareness and attitudes):** Projects stimulate high levels of active community involvement. For example, local populations actively participated in retelling the history and envisioning the economic revitalization of their territories during the "ASTRA" project on post-mining areas. They also engaged dozens of youths in local civic street art initiatives, such as creating a "wall of legality".
- **Critical skills & media literacy (problem solving, organisation/decision-making collaboration):** The organization has successfully developed immersive platforms and geodatabases. Through tailored training, adult learners - including parents and teachers who were initially hesitant about technology- significantly improved their digital literacy and changed their attitudes toward digital immersion.

6. Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)

The organization's outputs have demonstrated significant multiplier effects. The "ASTRA" project was adopted by a major school in Palermo to be replicated across other mining towns in Sicily, successfully engaging hundreds of adults in local conferences . Inclusive education toolkits, developed in partnership with entities like the French Ministry of Education's Réseau Canopé, were rapidly and widely adopted by the local teaching community. Furthermore, Idrisi amplifies its dissemination by participating in "Coro per Palermo" a local network comprising 30-40 different associations.

7. Added value of Erasmus+

The primary added value of the Erasmus+ programme is the opportunity for profound international cooperation. It allows staff and learners to step outside their native cultural contexts, level up their competencies by interacting with international peers, and gain a broader, comparative perspective on how different European countries tackle similar societal challenges.

8. Success and fail factors

- **Success factors:** A major success factor is the organization's transparent internal communication; because all associates share administrative and project knowledge, internal bottlenecks are effectively eliminated. Another key factor is the careful, proactive selection of international partners based on shared inclusive values.
- **Fail factors / Challenges:** Geographical isolation presents a significant structural barrier, as traveling from Sicily to other European destinations requires substantially more time and logistical effort. Additionally, the lack of continuous, face-to-face interaction between target groups from different countries - due to distance and budget limitations - hinders deeper international integration.

9. Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme

The organization strongly recommends that the Erasmus+ programme and the National Agencies structure future calls to explicitly fund and expand transnational mobility opportunities for adult learners, such as NEETs and unemployed adults. Enabling groups of adult learners from different countries to physically meet and

train abroad - rather than limiting mobility primarily to staff or school students - would dramatically enhance the programme's impact on European citizenship and social development.