The Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No. 1288/2013)

European Implementation Assessment

STUDY

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Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit
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The Erasmus+ Programme  
(Regulation EU No. 1288/2013)  

European Implementation Assessment  

In October 2015, the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) of the European Parliament requested to undertake an implementation report on the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No. 1288/2013). Dr Milan Zver (EPP, Slovenia) was appointed rapporteur.

Implementation reports by EP committees are routinely accompanied by European Implementation Assessments, drawn up by the Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit of the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value, within the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services.

Abstract

This European Implementation Assessment has been provided to accompany the work of the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education in scrutinising the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme.

The Erasmus+ programme for Union action in the field of education, training, youth and sport was launched on 1 January 2014 and will run until 31 December 2020. It brings together seven successful programmes which operated separately between 2007 and 2013 (the Lifelong Learning Programme, five international cooperation programmes and the Youth in Action programme), and also adds the area of sports activities.

The opening analysis of this Assessment, prepared in-house by the Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit within EPRS, situates the programme within the context of education policy, explains its legal framework and provides key information on its implementation. The presentation is followed by opinions and recommendations of selected stakeholders. A separate chapter is dedicated to the sport, which is the new element of the Erasmus+ programme.

Input to the EIA was also received from two independent groups of experts representing the Technical University of Dresden and the University of Bergen, and the Turku University of Applied Sciences.

- The first research paper presents implementation of Key Action 1 (KA1) – Learning mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth.

- The second research paper presents implementation of Key Action 2 (KA2) – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices in the field of education, training and youth.

The two research papers, containing key findings and recommendations, are included in full as annexes to the in-house opening analysis.
AUTHORS

- Opening analysis written by Dr. Anna Zygierewicz, Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit

- Research paper analysing the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme - Learning mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth (Key Action 1), written by Prof. Dr. Thomas Köhler from the Technical University of Dresden and Prof. Dr. Daniel Apollon from the University of Bergen

- Research paper analysing the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices in the field of education, training and youth (Key Action 2), written by Dr. Juha Kettunen from the Turku University of Applied Sciences

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Research paper by Prof. Dr. Thomas Köhler from the Technical University of Dresden and Prof. Dr. Daniel Apollon from the University of Bergen

Annex II: The implementation of the Erasmus+ programme - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices in the field of education, training and youth (Key Action 2)
Research paper by Dr. Juha Kettunen from Turku University of Applied Sciences
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DCI</td>
<td>Development Cooperation Instrument</td>
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<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>European Commission, Directorate General</td>
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<tr>
<td>DG EAC</td>
<td>European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>European Parliament, Committee on Culture and Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>EACEA</td>
<td>Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAEA</td>
<td>European Association for the Education of Adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAS</td>
<td>European Commission Authentication Service</td>
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<td>EDF</td>
<td>European Development Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>European Language Label</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMJD</td>
<td>Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates</td>
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<td>EMJMD</td>
<td>Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMMC</td>
<td>Erasmus Mundus Master Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPL</td>
<td>European Parliament, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENI</td>
<td>European Neighbourhood Instrument</td>
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<td>EPALE</td>
<td>Electronic Platform for Adult Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ET 2020</td>
<td>EU cooperation in education and training</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EUCIS-LLL</td>
<td>European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning</td>
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<td>EUROSTAT</td>
<td>Statistical office of the European Union</td>
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<td>FYROM</td>
<td>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
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<td>ICM</td>
<td>International Credit Mobility</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and communication technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>INI</td>
<td>Own-Initiative Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPA2</td>
<td>Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>KA1</td>
<td>Key Action 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>KA2</td>
<td>Key Action 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>KA3</td>
<td>Key Action 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLP</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFF</td>
<td>Multiannual Financial Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Member State</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OJ</td>
<td>Official Journey of the European Union</td>
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<td>OLS</td>
<td>On-line Linguistic Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>OMC</td>
<td>Open Method of Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Partnership Instrument</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>European Parliament resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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Introduction

Methodology of the Introduction

This introduction is based on an analysis of the Erasmus+ programme documents, including the regulation establishing the programme and the rules concerning the implementation, and the analysis of the implementation data and reports. The opinions and recommendations of selected stakeholders on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme were also analysed.

The EPRS peer-reviewed the opening analysis. In addition, the European Commission was requested to comment on the opening analysis.

The author would like to thank the different contributors for all the comments and recommendations.

Chapter 1. The place of the Erasmus+ programme in EU education policy

The importance of education is recognised within the European Union. The reference to education can be found in the Preamble to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), where it is stated that Member States are ‘determined to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge for their peoples through a wide access to education and through its continuous updating’.

Article 6 TFEU provides that the EU has competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States in certain specified areas, one of which concerns education, vocational training, youth and sport.

The basis of the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2014-2020 is Regulation (EU) No. 1288/2013 establishing the programme.

Article 4 of the Regulation defines the objectives of the programme as being to contribute to the achievement of:

1) the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, which are focused on:
   - resolving the problem of early school leavers by reducing the dropout rate;

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- increasing the share of the population aged 30-34 having completed tertiary education.

2) the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), including the corresponding benchmarks:

a) **strategic objectives:**
- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality with education and vocational training being more responsive to change and to the wider world;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training, by raising the levels of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, making mathematics, science and technology more attractive and strengthening linguistic abilities;
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship so that all citizens can continue to develop job-specific skills throughout their lifetime;
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training; in particular, individuals should be helped to become digitally competent and to develop initiative, entrepreneurship and cultural awareness;

b) **benchmarks:**
- at least 95% of children (from 4 to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education;
- fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science;
- the rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 should be below 10%;
- at least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education;
- at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning;
- at least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad;
- the share of employed graduates (aged 20-34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago) should be at least 82%.

3) the sustainable development of partner countries in the field of higher education;

4) the overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018): a) to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market and b) to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people;

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5) the objective of developing the European dimension in sport, in particular grassroots sport, in line with the Union work plan for sport; and

6) the promotion of European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), which are:

- respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

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4 Given the new competences of the EU in the area of sport, the role of Erasmus+ in this area will be broadly presented in chapter 4.
Chapter 2. Main rules of the programme

I - Structure of the programme

The Erasmus+ programme for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020 brought together seven programmes which were operating separately between 2007 and 2013, namely:

- the Lifelong Learning Programme\(^5\): Erasmus for higher education, Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training, Comenius for school education, Grundtvig for adult learning, Jean Monnet for promoting European integration;
- five international cooperation programmes: Erasmus Mundus\(^6\), Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, bilateral cooperation programmes in the field of higher education (with Canada, the United States, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea);
- the Youth in Action\(^7\) programme.

It also added sport as a new element (which had already been introduced in a preparatory phase since 2009). In addition, the Erasmus+ programme continues supporting the Jean Monnet activities.

Figure 1. Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020 and its predecessors

Source: European Commission: Slide 3 and Slide 8

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Based on the combination of best experiences from the previous programmes, Article 1 of the Regulation establishing Erasmus+, determines that the programme covers the following fields:

a) education and training at all levels, in a lifelong learning perspective, including school education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), international higher education (Erasmus Mundus), vocational education and training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult learning (Grundtvig);

b) youth (Youth in Action), particularly in the context of non-formal and informal learning;

c) sport, in particular grassroots sport.

Jean Monnet activities also form part of the Erasmus+ programme (see below).

In the field of education and training (Article 6), the Erasmus+ programme shall pursue its objectives through the following types of actions:

a) learning mobility of individuals;

b) cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices;

c) support for policy reform.

Ad a) Learning mobility of individuals (Article 7) may support:

- the mobility of students in all cycles of higher education and of students, apprentices and pupils in vocational education and training, which may take the form of studying at a partner institution or traineeships or gaining experience as an apprentice, assistant or trainee abroad. Degree mobility at Master's level may be supported through the Student Loan Guarantee Facility;

- the mobility of staff, within the programme countries, which may take the form of teaching or assistantships or participation in professional development activities abroad;

- the international mobility of students and staff to and from Partner Countries as regards higher education, including mobility organised on the basis of joint, double or multiple degrees of high quality or joint calls.

Ad b) Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (Article 8) may support:

- strategic partnerships between organisations and/or institutions involved in education and training or other relevant sectors aimed at developing and implementing joint initiatives and promoting peer learning and exchanges of experience;

- partnerships between the world of work and education and training institutions in the form of:
  - knowledge alliances between, in particular, higher education institutions and the world of work aimed at promoting creativity, innovation, work-based

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8 Referred to in Article 20.

9 Referred to in Article 24(1): EU Member States plus Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey.

10 The list of the programme countries is available at the Erasmus+ programme website.
learning and entrepreneurship by offering relevant learning opportunities, including developing new curricula and pedagogical approaches;

- **sector skills alliances** between education and training providers and the world of work aimed at promoting employability, contributing to the creation of new sector-specific or cross-sectoral curricula, developing innovative methods of vocational teaching and training and putting the Union transparency and recognition tools into practice;
- IT support platforms, covering all education and training sectors, including in particular eTwinning, allowing peer learning, virtual mobility and exchanges of good practices and opening access for participants from neighborhood countries;
- development, capacity-building, regional integration, knowledge exchanges and modernisation processes through international partnerships between higher education institutions in the EU and in partner countries, in particular for peer learning and joint education projects, as well as through the promotion of regional cooperation and National Information Offices, in particular with neighbourhood countries.

**Ad c) Support for policy reform** (Article 9) shall include the activities initiated at EU level relating to:

- the implementation of the EU policy agenda on education and training in the context of the OMC\textsuperscript{11}, as well as to the Bologna and Copenhagen processes;
- the implementation in Programme countries of EU transparency and recognition tools\textsuperscript{12}, and the provision of support to Union-wide networks and European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in the field of education and training;
- the policy dialogue with relevant European stakeholders in the field of education and training;
- **NARIC**, the Eurydice and Euroguidance networks, and the National Europass Centres;
- policy dialogue with partner countries and international organisations.

**Jean Monnet activities** (Article 10) are aimed to:

- promote teaching and research on European integration worldwide among specialist academics, learners and citizens, in particular through the creation of Jean Monnet Chairs and other academic activities, as well as by providing aid for other knowledge-building activities at higher education institutions;

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\textsuperscript{11} Article 2: Open Method of Coordination (OMC) means an intergovernmental method providing a framework for cooperation between the Member States, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives; within the scope of the Programme, the OMC applies to education, training and youth.

\textsuperscript{12} In particular the single EU framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).
- support the activities of academic institutions or associations active in the field of European integration studies and support a Jean Monnet label for excellence;
- support six European institutions 13 pursuing an aim of European interest;
- promote policy debate and exchanges between the academic world and policy-makers on Union policy priorities.

In the field of youth (Article 12) the programme pursues its objectives through the following types of actions:

a) learning mobility of individuals;

b) cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices;

c) support for policy reform.

Ad a) Learning mobility of individuals (Article 13) supports:

- the mobility of young people in non-formal and informal learning activities between the Programme countries; such mobility may take the form of youth exchanges and volunteering through the European Voluntary Service, as well as innovative activities building on existing provisions for mobility;

- the mobility of persons active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders; such mobility may take the form of training and networking activities;

- the mobility of young people, persons active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders, to and from partner countries, in particular neighbourhood countries.

Ad b) Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (Article 14) supports:

- strategic partnerships aimed at developing and implementing joint initiatives, including youth initiatives and citizenship projects that promote active citizenship, social innovation, participation in democratic life and entrepreneurship, through peer learning and exchanges of experience;

- IT support platforms allowing peer learning, knowledge-based youth work, virtual mobility and exchanges of good practice;

- development, capacity-building and knowledge exchanges through partnerships between organisations in Programme countries and partner countries, in particular through peer learning.

Ad c) Support for policy reform (Article 15) includes activities relating to:

- the implementation of the Union policy agenda on youth through the OMC;

- implementation in the Programme countries of Union transparency and recognition tools, in particular the Youthpass, and support for Union-wide networks and European youth NGOs;

- policy dialogue with relevant European stakeholders and structured dialogue with young people;

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13 The European University Institute of Florence; the College of Europe (Bruges and Natolin campuses); the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), Maastricht; the Academy of European Law, Trier; the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, Odense; the International Centre for European Training (CIFE), Nice.
- the European Youth Forum, resource centres for the development of youth work and the Eurodesk network;
- policy dialogue with partner countries and international organisations.

The Commission monitors the implementation of the EU youth policy based on established indicators.

The sport activities within the Erasmus+ programme are presented in chapter 4 of this introduction.

II – Budget of the programme

The overall budget for the new Erasmus+ programme totals EUR 14.7 billion (Heading 1). Additionally, to strengthen the international dimension of the programme, EUR 1.68 billion was added under Heading 4. The latter part of the programme budget comes from the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA2), the Partnership Instrument (PI) and the European Development Fund (EDF).

![Figure 2. The Erasmus+ budget division](source: Erasmus+ programme website in the UK)

According to Article 18.2 of the Regulation, out of the 8.8% dedicated to 'Other' (as in Figure 2):
- 3.5% will be spent on the Student Loan Guarantee Facility;
- 3.4% on operating grants to national agencies, and
- 1.9% to cover administrative expenditure.
The budget of the programme represents an increase of about 40% compared to the amount allocated to the education, learning and youth programmes for the years 2007-2013. At the same time, however, this represents a decrease in comparison to the initial proposal of the European Commission, in which the budget was planned to amount to EUR 17.29 billion under Heading 1 and EUR 1.81 billion under Heading 4.

The annual programme budget foreseen for 2016 for the EU Member States, countries belonging to the European Economic Area (EUR31), other countries participating in the programme (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Western Balkans countries) together with internal assigned revenues, amounts to EUR 2.229 billion, and will come from following appropriations:

- from the budget of the Union (EUR28) under Heading 1: EUR 1.69 billion;
- from the budget of the Union (EUR28) under Heading 4: EUR 247.17 million;
- arising from the participation of the EFTA/EEA countries: EUR 53.67 million;
- from the European Development Fund (EDF) (EUR28): EUR 15 million;
- from external assigned revenues arising from the participation of other countries in the programme (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Western Balkans): EUR 141.58 million;
- corresponding to internal assigned revenues from recoveries: EUR 73.72 million.

III - Basic rules concerning the implementation of the programme

1. Programme Guide and annual work programmes

The Commission prepared the Erasmus+ Programme Guide for potential applicants, meaning those who wish to be participating organisation or participants in the programme. The guide describes the rules and conditions for receiving a grant from the programme and has three main parts:

- **Part A** presenting the general overview of the programme, its objectives, priorities and main features, the programme countries, the implementing structures and the overall budget available;
- **Part B** provides specific information about the actions of the programme covered by the guide;
- **Part C** gives detailed information on procedures for grant application and selection of projects, as well as the financial and administrative provisions linked to the award of an Erasmus+ grant.

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15 Amendment of the 2016 annual work programme for the implementation of ‘Erasmus+’: the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport C(2016)1122 of 26 February 2016.

The Programme Guide forms an integral part of calls of proposal.

The financial arrangements under the Erasmus+ programme have been simplified in comparison to previous editions, *inter alia*, through the use of lump sums, the reimbursement on the basis of unit costs and the flat-rate financing. The rules of application were described by the Commission in a separate document\(^\text{17}\).

The Erasmus+ programme is implemented also on the basis of the *annual work programmes* adopted by the European Commission. As stated in Article 35 of the regulation establishing the Erasmus+ programme, each annual work programme shall ensure that the general objectives (Article 4) and specific objectives (Articles 5 - on education and training, Article 11 - on youth and Article 16 - on sport) are implemented annually in a consistent manner and shall outline the expected results, the method of implementation and its total amount.

### 2. Implementation bodies, decentralised and centralised actions

Article 27 of the regulation establishing Erasmus+ programme identifies the implementing bodies:

- the Commission at EU level;
- the national agencies at national level in the programme countries.

The programme countries established one (in most of the countries) or more (e.g. two in Ireland and Italy, three in Belgium and Germany) national agencies. The list of the agencies is available at the European Commission website.

In 27 partner countries (outside the EU), the national Erasmus+ offices are responsible for the management of the international dimension of the higher education aspects of the programme. The list of the offices is available at the EACEA website.

The actions of the Erasmus+ programme are divided into:

- *decentralised actions*, which are managed in each programme country by one or more national agencies appointed by their national authorities;
- *centralised actions*, which are managed at the European level by the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission and by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) located in Brussels.

The budget of the programme is divided amongst the actions, with approximately:

- 82% spent through decentralised actions;
- 18% spent through centralised actions\(^\text{18}\).

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\(^{17}\) The use of lump sums, the reimbursement on the basis of unit costs and flat-rate financing under the 'Erasmus+' Programme, C(2013)8550 of 4 December 2013.

\(^{18}\) 2014 annual work programme for the implementation of "Erasmus+", the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, C(2013)8193 of 27 November 2013.
3. Selection of best proposals

A crucial role in the choice of the proposals to be financed within the Erasmus+ programme is played by independent experts specialising in the field of education, training, youth and sport who peer-review proposals.

To ensure that the same standards concerning the peer review of proposals are applied in all national agencies, the European Commission prepared a *Guide for Experts on Quality Assessment*[^2016], which provides information on:

- the role and appointment of experts;
- the principles of the assessment;
- the assessment process in practice;
- information on how to assess the award criteria for each action and field.

General rules concerning the evaluation of proposals at the national level, as described in the guide for experts, are:

- the assessment and selection of grant applications is organised on the basis of a peer review;
- based on the experts' assessment, a list of grant applications per action and per field ranked in quality order is established, which serves as a basis for the national agency to take the grant award decision, following the proposal of the Evaluation Committee;
- experts are appointed on the basis of their skills and knowledge in the areas and the specific field(s) of education, training and youth in which they are asked to assess applications. Experts must not have a conflict of interest in relation to the proposals. To ensure their independence, the names of the experts are not made public;
- an application can receive a maximum of 100 points for all criteria relevant for the action (see table 1); in order to be considered for funding, an application has to score at least 60 points in total and score at least half of the maximum points for each award criterion.

The EACEA and national agencies organise their own pools of experts. The recruitment of experts to evaluate projects in the EACEA was opened in September 2013[^20] and corrected a year later. The call is open until the end of September 2020. Candidates must register under the European Commission Authentication Service (ECAS). National agencies open calls for experts nationally or internationally. The calls can be opened for short or long term. National agencies usually ask candidates for experts to register in their on-line databases or to send offers within the procurement procedures.


[^20]: Call for expressions of interest EACEA/2013/01 for the establishment of a list of experts to assist the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in the framework of the management of European Union programmes in the field of education, audiovisual, culture, youth, sport, EU aid volunteers, and citizenship or any other programmes delegated to the Agency, and *Corrigendum*. 
There were claims, e.g. from national agencies and organisations acting in the area of education and training, that Member State evaluation criteria for proposals are not sufficiently harmonised and should be improved.

There were also claims that most of the deadlines for applications fall at the same time. Some experts specialise in more than one field of education, training and youth, and therefore assess proposals in more than one Erasmus+ action. As a result, they suffer from periodical work overload, which may impact on the quality of the assessments. Additionally, some stakeholders claim that there should be more the one deadline per year (e.g. in adult education), which could also help to solve the problem.

### Table 1. Award criteria for projects evaluated at the national level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award criteria</th>
<th>Key Action 1</th>
<th>Key Action 2</th>
<th>Key Action 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation of higher education mobility consortia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobility projects in the field of Higher Education between Programme and Partner Countries</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobility projects in the fields of school education, vocational education and training, adult education and youth</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic partnerships in the field of Education, Training and Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structured Dialogue: meetings between young people and decision makers in the field of youth</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1) Corresponding criterion for higher education mobility consortia: “relevance of the consortium”

2) Corresponding criterion for higher education mobility consortia: “quality of the consortium activity design and implementation”

3) Corresponding criterion for higher education mobility consortia: “quality of the consortium composition and the cooperation arrangements”
Chapter 3. Implementation of the programme

Key findings

- The Commission data on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme are available only for 2014; the data for 2015 will be published later in 2016. However, part of the raw data for the implementation of the centralised actions for 2015 is available at the EACEA website.

- The success rate of applications in most of the Erasmus+ actions is relatively low, which can be related to insufficient budget compared to the high demand, and/or to the quality level of the proposals. The Commission data does not provide clear evidence concerning the quality of accepted proposals. The success rate in Key Action 1 was generally higher that in Key Action 2.

- In 2014, within Key Action 1 the biggest part of the budget (58%) was spent on projects in higher education, while within Key Action 2 the biggest part (36%) was spent on projects in school education.

I - Overall implementation of the programme

The European Commission published data on the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in 2014 in the Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report 2014 and the Erasmus Impact Study Regional Analysis. Both reports were published in January 2016. The data for 2015 is planned to be published in autumn 2016.

According to the report, in 2014, inter alia:
- over EUR 2 billion were distributed to support actions in education and training (69% of the budget), youth (10%) and sport (1%), as well as the other actions covered by the programme;
- above 650 000 individual mobility grants were offered for people to study, train, work or volunteer abroad (400 000 higher education and vocational students' exchanges, 100 000 volunteers and young people undertaking youth work abroad, 150 000 teachers, youth trainers and other staff who gained mobility grants for their professional development);
- 11 new Joint Master Degrees were set up with non-EU countries within the first year of Erasmus+, to be added to some 180 Joint Master Degrees and Joint Doctorates available previously under Erasmus Mundus;
- over 1 700 cooperation projects across the education, training and youth sectors, addressing key challenges such as early school leaving, the need to equip young generations with digital skills, and promoting tolerance and intercultural dialogue were funded;
- around 50 not-for-profit sports events, collaborations between sports bodies and grass-roots organisations, as well as the first EU Sport Forum, were funded;
- 212 projects were funded supporting the improvement of the excellence of European Studies programmes within the Jean Monnet Actions.

Table 2. Projects granted in Key Action 1 and Key Action 2 in 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KA1 and KA2</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Grant (million EUR)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KA1 - Mobility</td>
<td>15 951</td>
<td>1 191</td>
<td>647 694</td>
<td>57 825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA2 - Cooperation</td>
<td>1 732</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>172 681</td>
<td>9 823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>17 683</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 537</strong></td>
<td><strong>820 375</strong></td>
<td><strong>67 648</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3. Projects granted in Key Action 1 in 2014 in detail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KA1 - Mobility</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Grant (million EUR)</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Granted</strong></td>
<td><strong>Success rate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School education staff mobility</td>
<td>2 806</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>43.01</td>
<td>4 252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET learner and staff mobility</td>
<td>3 156</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>264.12</td>
<td>18 094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education student and staff mobility</td>
<td>3 620</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>600.82</td>
<td>3 620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education staff mobility</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9.92</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth mobility</td>
<td>5 749</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>125.70</td>
<td>29 851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-Scale Volunteering Events</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus+ Joint Master Degrees</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21.24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>32.51</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus Mundus Master Degrees</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>48.76</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other actions (OLS, ...)</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>44.19</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>15 951</strong></td>
<td>:</td>
<td><strong>1 190.61</strong></td>
<td><strong>57 825</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to the Commission’s report for 2014, in Key Action 1, the grants were distributed between the education and training sectors and youth in the following proportions:

- Higher education 58%
- Vocational education and training 25%
- Youth 12%
- School education 4%
- Adult education 1%
Table 4. Projects granted in Key Action 2 in 2014 in detail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KA2 - Cooperation</th>
<th>Projects Granted</th>
<th>Success rate</th>
<th>Grant (million EUR)</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships for School Education</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>19.49%</td>
<td>46 127 908</td>
<td>1 265</td>
<td>13 563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for Schools only</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>17.41%</td>
<td>78 272 387</td>
<td>2 566</td>
<td>93 351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>16.32%</td>
<td>45 764 442</td>
<td>1 289</td>
<td>8 238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>16.79%</td>
<td>42 016 082</td>
<td>1 046</td>
<td>17 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for Vocational Education and Training</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>22.75%</td>
<td>96 034 874</td>
<td>2 492</td>
<td>9 575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Partnerships for Youth</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>14.91%</td>
<td>30 033,152</td>
<td>1 165</td>
<td>16 948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transnational Cooperation Activities for Youth</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>6 938 693</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>12 957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transnational Cooperation Activities for other Sectors</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>774 281</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>1,732</td>
<td>17.90%</td>
<td>345 961 819</td>
<td>9 823</td>
<td>172 681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to the statistical annex to the Commission’s report for 2014, in Key Action 2, total amount of grant were distributed between the education and training sectors and youth in the following proportions:

- School education 36%
- Vocational education and training 28%
- Adult education 13%
- Higher education 12%
- Youth 11%

Table 5. Projects granted in Key Action 3 in 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KA3 - Policy</th>
<th>Projects Granted</th>
<th>Success rate</th>
<th>Grant (million EUR)</th>
<th>Average per project (EUR)</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Training</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>11 261 310</td>
<td>1 608 759</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1 934 009</td>
<td>1 934 009</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>13 195 319</td>
<td>1 649 415</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


General findings of the Commission’s report for 2014:

- KA1 – Learning Mobility of Individuals:
  - 66% of the total budget was granted to the KA1 projects;
- about 500,000 young people studied, trained, volunteered or participated in youth exchanges abroad;
- 150,000 staff members of educational institutions and youth organisations got the opportunity to improve their competencies by teaching and training abroad;
- some 180 Erasmus Mundus Masters Degrees/Joint Doctorates, initially funded under the LLP programme were financed under KA1, as well as 11 new Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees;
- On-line Linguistic Support (OLS) allowed 126,000 participants to assess their knowledge of the language in which they will work or study; 45% followed an OLS language course afterwards.

KA2 - Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices:
- over 1,700 projects, involving around 10,000 organisations and 160,000 participants in learning, teaching and training activities, and 13,000 more in transnational cooperation activities, received support (from the total amount of EUR 345.96 million) for enhancing the labour market relevance of education and training systems and for tackling the skills gaps Europe is facing. 65% of the projects produce intellectual outputs while in learning, teaching and training (LTTs), preference is given to short term learning, training and teaching activities;
- high demand from high quality applications in all fields, combined with the limited budget, resulted in a rather low success rate (18%);
- 79 capacity building cooperation projects with youth organisations in partner countries were financed, aiming at helping the modernisation and internationalisation of their youth systems;
- 10 knowledge alliances projects, which bring businesses and higher education institutions together to develop new ways of creating, producing and sharing knowledge, were selected amongst high competition (4% success rate) and granted EUR 8.4 million;

KA3 - Support to Policy Reform:
- 8 European policy experimentation projects were granted EUR 13.2 million with the aim to test innovative measures through rigorous evaluation methods;
- cooperation with international organisations was pursued in particular with the OECD on country analysis and with the Council of Europe in the field of human rights/citizenship education, youth participation, citizenship and social inclusion and dialogue between Roma communities and mainstream society;
- IT platforms such as eTwinning, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning (EPALE) or the European Youth Portal, and the VALOR project dissemination platform, were further developed and used to facilitate the communication within and about the programme and to promote the dissemination of its results.
Jean Monnet Activities:

- 212 projects, aiming at promoting excellence in teaching and research in the field of EU studies worldwide, were financed with a total grant of EUR 11.3 million;
- 65% of the applications concerned teaching and research with a vast majority concerning Chairs and Modules, while 25% were projects aiming at creating and applying new methodologies or spreading knowledge about the European integration process among a wider target audience;
- 7 institutions pursuing an aim of European interest received an operating grant for a total amount of EUR 3.8 million.

The regional analyses of the projects funded under the previous Erasmus programme show that:

- overall, at least 90% of Erasmus students in all regions participated in the Erasmus programme in order to experience living abroad, meet new people, learn or improve a foreign language and develop their soft skills; 87% did so in order to enhance employability abroad, which for 77% is more important than employability at home;
- former Erasmius students are half as likely to experience long-term unemployment than those who did not go abroad; and students in eastern Europe even reduced their risk of long-term unemployment by 83% by taking part in Erasmus;
- similarly, traineeships and work placements had a positive impact on finding a job - this was particularly valuable for students from countries in southern Europe, such as Italy and Portugal, where half of those training abroad were offered a position by their host company;
- overall, Erasmus students were not only more likely to be employed, but also more likely to secure management positions; on average 64% of Erasmus students, compared to 55% of their non-mobile peers, held such positions within 5-10 years from graduation; this was even more true for Erasmus students from central and eastern Europe, where around 70% of them end up in managerial positions; but
- lack of financial support prevented 53% of students in southern Europe and 51% in eastern Europe from taking part in Erasmus. Financial barriers are even higher for students from a non-academic family background: 57% in southern Europe and 54% in Eastern Europe of students from a non-academic family background do not participate in mobility for this reason. This is why additional financial support was provided to students from a disadvantaged background since the start of Erasmus+ in 2014.

One of the most striking finding of the analysis is the low success rate in most of the Erasmus+ programme actions. The low success rate can potentially lower the level of interest of applicants in future. The preparation of proposal is time-consuming and also often costly, which may be especially difficult for smaller applicants. The Commission suggests increasing the budget of the programme to allow financing a larger number of proposals. This would appear to be a reasonable recommendation, given that
the studies show that the impact of the projects on education, training and youth is significant, and especially important for organisations and project participants with less experience in international cooperation and in applying for grants supporting mobility. Nevertheless, more profound analysis of the reasons lying behind the low success rate is needed. The Commission report does not present information on the number of grant applications assessed by external experts above and below the thresholds, or on how many points a proposal had to receive to be financed in different actions and in different countries. This information would allow for a better diagnose of the reasons for the low success rates, and would enable steps to be taken to raise the level of applications, if necessary, and to better distribute funds in the Erasmus+ budget, both current and additional, if such are approved by the European Parliament.

The perception of the Erasmus+ programme among stakeholders is generally very positive, but there are still claims concerning, especially, the need for more simplification and harmonisation. As an example, the opinion of the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) on the Erasmus+ programme is presented with selected comments and recommendations which are as follow:

a. **Positive:**
   i. the Erasmus+ programme as a whole;
   ii. the increased budget of the programme;
   iii. the flat rate system and lump sums;
   iv. the trans-sectoral dimension of the programme.

b. **Negative:**
   i. the programme guide is generally perceived as being complicated, and some national agencies started to prepare simplified versions;
   ii. better harmonisation between national agencies is needed – there is a need for common implementation guidelines;
   iii. the increased bureaucracy (e.g. for adult education and for smaller projects);
   iv. the filling-in of the e-form tool is time-consuming;
   v. the lack of clear definitions (e.g. intellectual output);
   vi. the trans-sectoral dimension of the programme is positive, but in practice it does not work well, e.g. it is not possible any more within the Key Action 2;
   vii. the lump sums are appreciated, but they are considered as too small;
   viii. the overall project coordination is not covered by the administrative lump sum;
   ix. travel costs do not fully reflect the geographical realities;
   x. due to the decentralisation, Brussels-based European civil social organisations apply for funding through one of the Belgian National Agencies which made the situation more difficult for them and for other Belgian applicants.

Concerning the last claim, the Commission explained that additional funding was transferred to the Belgian agencies facing this problem; it should nevertheless be monitored if the Belgian organisations can successfully compete for grants with European organisations.
II - Adult education

Adult education actions (previously implemented within the Grundtvig programme) should address the challenges of the renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) included in the Council’s resolution of 28 November 2011. The aim of the Agenda, which is referred to in recital 18 of the regulation establishing the Erasmus+ programme, is to enable all adults to develop and enhance their skills and competences throughout their lives.

Based on the Programme Guide\(^{(21)}\), within:

1) **Staff mobility** the support is offered to:
   - teaching or training assignments, which allow staff of adult education organisations to teach or to provide training at a partner organisation abroad;
   - staff training, which allows the professional development of adult education staff in the form of: a) participation in structured courses or training events abroad; b) a job shadowing/observation period abroad in any relevant organisation active in the adult education field.

2) **Strategic partnerships** the support is offered to\(^{(22)}\):
   - activities that strengthen the cooperation and networking between organisations;
   - testing and/or implementation of innovative practices in the field of education, training and youth;
   - activities that facilitate the recognition and validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
   - activities of cooperation between regional authorities to promote the development of education, training and youth systems and their integration in actions of local and regional development;
   - activities to support learners with disabilities/special needs to complete education cycles and facilitate their transition into the labour market, including by combating segregation and discrimination in education for marginalised communities;
   - activities to better prepare and deploy the education and training of professionals for equity, diversity and inclusion challenges in the learning environment;
   - activities to promote the integration of refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants and raise awareness about the refugee crisis in Europe;
   - transnational initiatives fostering entrepreneurial mind-sets and skills, to encourage active citizenship and entrepreneurship (including social entrepreneurship), jointly carried out by two or more groups of young people from different countries.

According to the European Commission’s report on the implementation of Erasmus+ programme in 2014 and the statistical annex to the report, within:

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\(^{(22)}\) Presented Strategic Partnerships are not restricted to adult education but are equally applicable in e.g. VET or HE.
- **Adult education staff mobility** (Key Action 1):
  - the interest remains high;
  - the average success rate in 2014 was at the level of 18.5%, but it varied between national agencies from 86% in Norway, 75% in the German-speaking part of Belgium, 67% in Lichtenstein and 63% in Austria, to 2% in Turkey and 3% in Bulgaria;
  - 424 projects were granted (out of 2 296 submitted), with 5 593 adult education staff participations, and with an average funding of EUR 1 773 per participant;
  - 94% of participants were planning to undertake staff training abroad (participation in a structured course or job shadowing), while the other 6% planned to deliver teaching or training at partner organisations abroad;
  - 5 countries register more than half of all adult education staff participants: Germany, Poland, Turkey, France and Italy.

- **Strategic partnerships in the field of adult education** (Key Action 2):
  - the interest remains high;
  - the average success rate in 2014 was at the level of 16.3%;
  - 215 projects were granted (out of 1 317 submitted), with 1 289 organisations and 8 391 participants involved and with an average number of 6 partners per project;
  - 53% of partnerships are focused on short term learning, teaching or training activities and 94% of partnerships projects aimed to produce intellectual outputs.

The Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) was created for teachers, trainers and volunteers, as well as policy-makers, researchers and academics involved in adult learning, to facilitate the cooperation and the promotion of activities as well as the exchange of good practice. The available materials are organised according to five main themes: Learner Support, Learning Environments, Life Skills, Policy and Quality. EPALE is implemented by a Central Support Service and in 2014-2015 a network of 30 National Support Services in Erasmus+ Programme countries. In 2016 there were 35 EPALE National Support Services applications founded within the Erasmus+ programme.

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) prepared recommendations and a feedback document for the improvement of the Erasmus+ programme. The main suggestions of the EAEA are as follows:
- to allow larger-scale projects to be implemented at the EU level (via EACEA), as well as to allow bigger and European organisations to apply for funding at the EU level and not at the national level;
- to standardise the NAs’ information, selection and administrative procedures;
- to improve the participation of the partner countries in the programme and especially from the European Neighbourhood countries;
- to promote the programme in countries where level of participation is relatively low;
- **Staff mobility:**
  - to allow umbrella organisations to apply for funding on behalf of their member organisations and then administer the individual mobilities;
  - to reintroduce the database of approved training;
  - to introduce two (or three) application deadlines instead of one.

- **Strategic partnerships:**
  - to simplify the application procedure (which, while being universal for the whole programme, in the area of adult education is more complicated now that it was before);
  - to reintroduce the preparatory visits, which allowed organisations to know each other and to better prepare their applications;
  - to increase the budget for adult education within the Erasmus+ programme, as the budget decline and the new procedure for allocating funds for projects and the new formula for distributing funding across Member States, led to a significant fall in the number of transnational cooperation projects;
  - to standardise the definition of ‘intellectual output’.

The analysis of the adult education activities within Key Action 1 can be also found in Annex I.

### III – International dimension of higher education

#### 1. General rules

The international dimension is one of the biggest new elements of the Erasmus+. It brings together, under the supervision of the European Commission’s DG Education and Culture, several separate programmes (*inter alia*, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, Erasmus Mundus,) which were overseen in the previous financing period by other DGs, mainly DG Development.

The recent UNESCO Science Report showed that there has been a growth in the number of tertiary-level education students worldwide, rising from 1.1 million in 1985, to 1.7 million in 1995, 2.8 million in 2005 and 4.1 million in 2013.

According to the regulation establishing the Erasmus+ programme, ‘international’ relates to any action involving at least one *programme country* and at least one third country (*partner country*). Within the international dimension of Erasmus+ in the field of higher education, according to the Programme Guide, support is offered to:

- **Key Action 1:**
  - *International credit mobility of individuals and*
  - *Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees*
    - *promoting the mobility of learners and staff from and to Partner Countries;*

- **Key Action 2:** *Capacity-building projects in higher education promoting cooperation and partnerships that have an impact on the modernisation and internationalisation*
of higher education institutions and systems in Partner Countries, with a special focus on Partner Countries neighbouring the EU;

— Key Action 3: Support to policy dialogue through the network of Higher Education Reform Experts in Partner Countries neighbouring the EU, the international alumni association, policy dialogue with Partner Countries and international attractiveness and promotion events;

— Jean Monnet activities with the aim of stimulating teaching, research and reflection in the field of European Union studies worldwide.

In addition, other Actions of the Programme (Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Sectors Skills Alliances, and Collaborative Partnerships) are also open to organisations from Partner Countries in so far as their participation brings an added value to the project.

The presentation of the international dimension of the programme can be also found in Annex I. The examples of strategic partnership cooperation projects are described in Annex II.

**New rules** to attract non-EU students, researchers and trainees to the EU were approved by Parliament in May 2016, with the aim to make it easier and more attractive for people from third countries to study or do research at EU universities. Based on them, *inter alia*:

- students and researchers are allowed to stay in the Member State for at least 9 months after completing their studies/research to look for work or set up a business;
- students have the right to work at least 15 hours a week;
- researchers have the right to bring their family members with them and these family members are entitled to work during their stay in Europe;
- students and researchers may move more easily within the EU during their stay; in future, they will not need to file a new visa application, but only to notify the Member State to which they are moving; researchers will also be able to move for longer periods than those currently allowed.

**2. Funded projects**

According to the Commission’s *Erasmus+ Programme. Annual Report* 2014:

1) *Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees* (EMJMDs): within the call published in December 2013, 11 projects were selected, which involve the participation of 46 higher education institutions from 18 different Programme Countries and 437 participants. Success rate was at the level of 18%. Total grants awarded amounted to EUR 21.2 million.

In 2014 there were still 42 ongoing Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates (EMJDs) involving 246 organisations and still recruiting students or PhD candidates. A total amount of EUR 32.5 million was allocated to cover the ongoing EMJDs. Doctoral fellowships were awarded to:
- 80 PhD candidates from programme countries (including 11 fellowships awarded through the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey ‘window’) and
- 177 candidates from partner countries (including 5 fellowships awarded through a western Balkans ‘window’).

There were no new calls for EMJDs, as doctoral degrees have been part of the Horizon 2020 programme since 2014.

2) Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMCs): in 2014 there were 138 ongoing EMMC involving 750 organisations. A total amount of EUR 48.8 million was allocated to cover the ongoing EMMCs. Erasmus Mundus scholarships were awarded to:

- 452 programme country Master students (including 114 scholarships awarded through a geographic ‘window’, 17 for nationals of the FYROM or Turkey) and
- 927 partner country Master students (including 89 scholarships awarded through a Western Balkans ‘window’ and 45 scholarships awarded through a Syria ‘window’).

3) Jean Monnet Activities: within the total number of 219 projects awarded a grant, most were from Member States, but there were also 10 projects from Ukraine, 6 from Turkey, 4 from Belarus and Moldova, 2 from Serbia and 1 from Albania. From other regions there were 5 projects from China, 4 from the United States, 3 from New Zealand, 2 from Chile and 7 from seven other partner countries.

According to the EACEA data, in 2015 there was a rise in the number of projects from partner countries receiving grants:

- Jean Monnet Modules, Chairs and Centres of Excellence – for 181 granted projects, 93 came from partner countries and among them: 34 from Russia, 16 from the United States, 9 from Taiwan, 6 from Ukraine and 5 from Turkey;
- Jean Monnet Support to Institutions and Associations – of 14 projects awarded grants, 7 came from partner countries;
- Jean Monnet Networks and Jean Monnet Projects – of 66 projects awarded grants, 27 came from partner countries.

4) Credit mobility: according to the Commission data:

- the total budget for 2014-2020 amounts to EUR 761.3 million (coming from different funding for different world regions);
- the budget for 2015 amounted to EUR 121 million (of which EUR 68.8 million for neighbourhood countries and the Western Balkans) was almost entirely spent after two rounds of calls with only EUR 11 million remaining (out of which more than EUR 4 million in the United Kingdom);
- in 2015 among the total number of mobilities funded were: 1) 10 673 learners and 6 697 staff members incoming to the EU and 2) 3 242 learners and 4 505 staff members outgoing from the EU. The biggest number of participants was from Russia, with more than 3 000, Ukraine
Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013)

and Serbia, with more than 2 000, and China and Israel, with almost 1 500 for each country.

3. Impact of the Erasmus Mundus Master courses on participants

The Erasmus Mundus provides support with the aim to promote European higher education, to help improve and enhance the career prospects of students and to promote intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries (in accordance with EU external policy objectives in order to contribute to the sustainable development of third countries in the field of higher education) (Article 3 of the Regulation).

The implementation of the programme is undertaken by means of the following actions:

1) Erasmus Mundus joint programmes (masters and doctoral programmes) of outstanding academic quality, including a scholarship scheme;
2) Erasmus Mundus partnerships between European and third-country higher education institutions as a basis for structured cooperation, exchange and mobility at all levels of higher education, including a scholarship scheme;
3) Promotion of European higher education through measures enhancing the attractiveness of Europe as an educational destination and a centre of excellence at world level.

Mobility of successful students coming from programme and partner countries is financed under Heading 1. Successful students from other countries - partner countries - are financed under Heading 4.

The last Graduate Impact Survey which involved almost 1 500 graduates (71%) and students (29%) of the Erasmus Mundus Master Courses, showed that around:

- 90% of the participants were satisfied with the programme, with more than 65% extremely and very satisfied. Only 2.5% were clearly not satisfied;
- 81% of participants were satisfied with the quality of the courses offered at the host universities. Some fields were rated as particularly satisfactory, such as Health and Welfare (4.19 points out of 5 on the satisfaction scale), while others, such as the Humanities and Arts, as well as Social Sciences, Business and Law, were slightly less satisfactory (3.99 and 3.96 points respectively);
- 73% of graduates identified ‘contacts to potential employers’ as being the aspect most lacking in the programme, with ‘practical experience’ being the second (55%), ‘integration activities in the host countries’ (38.5%) as third, and ‘mentoring’ as fourth (36%);
- 59% of participants found their first job while studying or within 2 months after graduation and an additional 26% between the third and sixth month after graduation; only 15% looked for a job for longer than six months;

23 The Erasmus+ programme countries are the member states of the EU plus non-EU programme countries: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey.

24 Guidance note: Terminology used in Erasmus Mundus scholarship statistics.
- 59% of participants said that the field of their study matched best with their field of work;
- 93% of graduates believe that their language skills increased due to Erasmus Mundus, 67% of whom felt this increase to be very high or rather high.

Participants declared that the programme had the highest impact on their:
- intercultural competencies – 58.7%
- career – 43.5%
- subject related expertise – 33.7%
- personality – 26.3%
- attitude towards Europe and the EU – 20.1%
- private life – 9.9%

The Graduate Impact Survey also showed that the Erasmus Mundus programme is still not very well known in the programme and partner countries, even if it proved to be an efficient tool for improving labour market related skills as well as the linguistic skills and intercultural competencies of participants.

IV – Multilingualism

The significance of multilingualism for the professional and private life of Europeans is well-known and confirmed in several analyses and studies.

The language skills are a form of human capital as: 1) they are productive on the labour market through enhancing earning and employment; 2) they require costs – real costs as well as time and effort; and 3) they are embodied in the person.

The latest study (2016) on foreign language proficiency and employability prepared for the Commission showed that there is clear evidence that foreign language skills are a career driver – if they form part of a broader package of relevant (specific) skills. In combination with the right educational background and relevant work experience, foreign language skills provide access to jobs in international trade and services for which they are a prerequisite.

The study also showed that one third of employers experience difficulties in filling positions as a result of a lack of applicants’ foreign language skills. Two thirds of these difficulties are due to insufficient foreign language levels of job applicants, one third is due to the inability of finding suitable candidates with proficiency in a particular language.

As for the importance of different languages, the study showed that English is by far the most important language in international trade and the provision of services. Over four in five employers interviewed and three quarters of advertised online vacancies stating that this was the most useful language for the jobs discussed/reviewed in all sectors and in almost all non-English speaking countries. For a fifth to a quarter of employers a language other than English is the most

useful foreign language. At the EU level, the three languages other than English mentioned most often are German, French and Russian. The most cited second most useful languages are German, Russian, English, French, Spanish and Italian, with no single language having a clear majority.

The significance of multilingualism was recently highlighted in the May 2014 Council conclusions on multilingualism and the development of language competences. The Council pointed out that linguistic diversity is a fundamental component of European culture and intercultural dialogue, and that the ability to communicate in a language other than one’s mother tongue is acknowledged to be one of the key competences which citizens should seek to acquire, as well as the fact that language competences contribute to the mobility, employability and personal development of European citizens, in particular young people (...). The Council also agreed that the EU and the Member States should assess progress in developing language competences and that assess could be funded by the Erasmus+ programme.

According to the Programme Guide:

- **Key Action 1:** linguistic support is available for the language used by participants for studying, carrying out a traineeship or volunteering abroad in the framework of long-term mobility activities. The support is mainly offered via the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support (OLS), as e-learning offers advantages for language learning in terms of access and flexibility.

The language assessment is compulsory for Erasmus+ mobility participants with German, English, Spanish, French, Italian or Dutch as their main language of instruction, work or volunteering (with the exception of native speakers). In future, OLS should be covered all languages. The assessment is undertaken by participants before mobility with another assessment to be carried out at the end of the mobility period to monitor progress in language competences. The assessment lasts approximately 40-50 minutes and consists of 70 questions: grammar - 20 questions; vocabulary - 15 questions; key communicative phrases - 15 questions; listening comprehension - 10 questions; reading comprehension - 10 questions. The participant can then participate in the OLS language course; The analysis of the OLS can be found in Annex I.

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27 Ibidem.
- **Key Action 2**: Strategic Partnerships in the area of language teaching and learning are encouraged, in particular: innovation and good practices aiming to promote language skills including e.g. teaching and assessment methods, development of pedagogical material, research, computer assisted language learning and entrepreneurial ventures using foreign languages. Funding for linguistic support can also be provided when necessary to beneficiaries of Strategic Partnerships who organise long-term training and teaching activities for staff, youth workers and learners;

- National competitions in the programme countries can be organised - on a voluntary basis regular (annual or biennial) by National Agencies, as regards the European Language Label (ELL) awards; the ELL award should function as a stimulus to exploit and disseminate the results of excellence in multilingualism, and promote public interest in language learning.

The Commission decided to also support the integration of migrants with their multilingualism policy. Their ‘Multilingual Families’ project aims to preserve the linguistic treasure of immigrants living in the EU and families with linguistically diverse parents. The project provides support by answering the questions: Why should we support continuing use of the family language? What can we do to support them and how? The project provides support materials to teachers, immigrant groups and all relevant stakeholders. Many of the resources produced are available in more than 20 languages so as to allow the widest possible dissemination.

The importance of multilingualism in the life of Europeans was also demonstrated by reports of the Eurobarometer and Joint Research Centre. The main findings of both reports are presented below.

The 2012 Eurobarometer report ‘Europeans and their languages’ shows that:

- the most widely spoken mother tongue in the EU is German (16%), followed by Italian and English (13% each), French (12%), then Spanish and Polish (8% each);
- 54% of Europeans are able to hold a conversation in at least one additional language, 25% are able to speak at least two additional languages and 10% are conversant in at least three;
- the five most widely spoken foreign languages are: English (38%), French (12%), German (11%), Spanish (7%) and Russian (5%);
- at a national level English is the most widely spoken foreign language in 19 of the 25 Member States where it is not an official language;
- 44% of Europeans say that they are able to understand at least one foreign language well enough to be able to follow the news on radio or television and an equally 44% say that they are able to read a newspaper or magazine article in a foreign language;
- 88% of Europeans think that knowing languages other than their mother tongue is very useful;
- 84% of Europeans agree that everyone in the EU should be able to speak at least one foreign language;
- 72% of Europeans agree that people in the EU should be able to speak more than one language in addition to their mother tongue;
- 67% consider English as one of the two most useful languages for themselves, followed by German (17%), French (16%), Spanish (14%) and Chinese (6%);
- 98% of Europeans consider mastering other foreign languages as useful for the future of their children;
- 34% of Europeans lack motivation to learn foreign languages, 28% lack time, for 25% it is too expensive and 19% felt discouraged by not being good at languages;
- 44% prefer subtitles to dubbing when watching foreign films or TV programmes.

The Joint Research Centre’s 2015 report on languages and employability shows that in the EU:
- 36% of Europeans know one foreign language, 21% know two foreign languages, less than 10% know three or more foreign languages and 34% do not know any foreign language;
- the younger the age groups, the higher the number of languages known and the proficiency level reported;
- the number of languages known increases with the level of educational attainment;
- around 25% of adults who know one or more foreign languages know at least one of them at the proficient level;
- English, German and French are the most widely known foreign languages in Europe;
- in the EU24, there is a positive relationship between knowing English and Russian and the likelihood of being employed for the entire population (25-64) surveyed and also for distinct age groups: 25-40 and 41-64;
- in the EU24, being proficient in English is positively associated with being employed only for the 25-40 age group and knowing German has a positive association with employment status for the 41-64 age group.

V – Conclusions

- The perception of the programme by participating organisations, participants and stakeholders is generally very good.
- However, they call for more simplification in the procedures (especially in the area of adult education and school education) and in the documents (especially in the Programme Guide), as well as more standardisation between National Agencies, especially because these agencies are responsible for implementation of more than 80% of the Erasmus+ programme. Many actions have already been undertaken by the Commission which may improve the implementation.

The Commission explained in June 2016, that ‘for 2016, a general overhaul of the grant agreements used across all Erasmus+ actions has been conducted to reduce the complexity and length of the documents. The Commission is currently conducting an analysis for the next generation of technology to be used for
application forms in Erasmus+. More flexibility and better user friendliness are key goals of this exercise’.

The Commission also explained that ‘strengthening the network of National Agencies, their cooperation and exchange of best practices has been jointly identified by the NAs and the Commission as one of the priorities to improve the implementation and management of the programme. A number of so called "business" meetings organised by the National Agencies have been either held or proposed and a staff training event has taken place in Portugal in April 2016 with the support of the Commission. The network of officers for Transnational Cooperation Activities is becoming increasingly active in the fields of school education, adult education and vocational education and training’.

- Stakeholders are also generally very satisfied with the decentralisation of the Erasmus+ programme, although in some actions more centralisation could be profitable. For instance, it would allow European organisations to apply for grants at the European and not at the national level, which makes access to funding for smaller applicants more difficult.

- The low success rate of applications is a striking problem in the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme. To solve the problem, it may be necessary to raise the budget of the Erasmus+ programme. But at the same time, further monitoring is necessary to ensure that only proposals of a very high quality are financed under the programme.

On 17 June 2016, the Commission explained, that ‘concerning school education (Ka2), the Commission supports strengthening the funding for this action. A strong budget increase (25% more compared to 2016) is proposed for 2017 Call for proposals. According to the data on selections 2014 and 2015, the level of quality of applications is very good and in most countries many more good projects (scoring over 80% at quality assessment) could be funded with additional money’.

- The temporary overloads in the work of external experts evaluating proposals should be examined with possible change of the deadlines for applications or the extension of its number, if possible. The simplification of the assessment forms and their better adjustments to the application forms could also be helpful.

- The Commission’s study showed very positive correlation between students’ mobility and the employability of students with mobility experience; this is an important factor in combating the high level of youth unemployment.

- Given the importance of multilingualism in the life of the EU citizens, and especially in raising the employability of young people, more effort should be made to promote and support multilingualism in the Erasmus+ programme.
Chapter 4. Sport

Key findings

- Sport is important in the lives of Europeans. It is important from the point of view of their health and leisure - 41% of Europeans exercise or play sport at least once a week. But it is also important from the economic point of view, as sport contributes to economic growth and employment in Europe.

- Sport became a new EU competence in 2009, when the Lisbon Treaty entered into force.

- According to the Commission’s report, the preparatory phase of sport in 2009-2013 activities (preparatory actions 2009-2013, approved by the European Parliament) brought very positive results and prepared the future Erasmus+ Programme in an efficient way.

- Data on the implementation of the sports activities for 2014-2016 show high interest from applicants in the Erasmus+ programme, but the success rate has been relatively low during the two first years of implementation (2014-2015).

- The involvement of organisations per country differs considerably.

- The first European Week of Sport (EWoS) was organised in the second week of September 2015, and the second EWoS will be organised during the same period in 2016.

I – Background to sport activities in the EU

1. Legal and political background

Sport became a new competence of the European Union when the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in 2009. Together with education, vocational training and youth, the EU competence in the area of sport (under Article 6 of TFEU) is to support, coordinate and supplement actions of the Member States.

Article 165 of TFEU defines the role of the EU in the area of education, vocational training, youth and sport. In the domain of sport, the EU shall contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking account of the specific nature of sport, its structures based on voluntary activity and its social and educational function. Furthermore, EU action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in sport, by promoting fairness and openness in sporting competitions and cooperation between bodies responsible for sports, and by protecting the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen, especially the youngest sportsmen and sportswomen.
The European Court of Justice has had a role in empowering sport activities in the EU. It has dealt with several case studies in the area of sport, with – probably the most well-known – Bosman case from 1995, concerning freedom of movement for workers and freedom of association, and in this case the freedom of movement of football players.

Based on the new EU competences, the Commission can now initiate actions leading to promotion of sport at the EU level and to develop the European dimension in sport. However, the Commission activities in the domain of sport started earlier.

A White Paper on Sport (COM(2007) 391) was published by the Commission on 11 July 2007. The document focused on the societal role of sport, its economic dimension and its organisation in Europe. In this document, the Commission proposed to enhance the role of sport in education and training by making health-enhancing physical activity a cornerstone of its sport related activities and by taking this priority better into account in relevant financial instruments, inter alia: the Youth in Action and the Lifelong Learning Programme. The Youth in Action and the Lifelong Learning programmes were the predecessors of the Erasmus+ programme. The Commission also suggested that:

Promoting participation in educational opportunities through sport is thus a priority topic for school partnerships supported by the Comenius programme, for structured actions in the field of vocational education and training through the Leonardo da Vinci programme, for thematic networks and mobility in the field of higher education supported by the Erasmus programme, as well as multilateral projects in the field of adult training supported by the Grundtvig programme.

The White Paper was accompanied by Commission staff working documents, one of which presented the ‘Pierre de Coubertin’ action plan (SEC(2007) 934). This was intended to guide the Commission in its sport-related activities in the coming years.

Developing the European Dimension in Sport is a communication published by the Commission in January 2011 (COM(2011) 12) which outlined an EU policy agenda for sport. In the first paragraph it referred to the above mentioned ‘Pierre de Coubertin’ action plan, underlining, that almost all actions had been completed or were being implemented. The document defined the first priorities of the EU for sport and identified actions to support them.

2. Eurobarometer surveys

Eurobarometer has commissioned three public surveys dedicated to sport:
- Special Eurobarometer (2004): The Citizens of the European Union and Sport, Nr 213
- Special Eurobarometer (2010): Sport and physical activity, Nr 334
- Special Eurobarometer (2014): Sport and physical activity, Nr 412

According to the latest Eurobarometer study, from 2014:
- 41% of Europeans exercise or play sport at least once a week;
- 48% do some form of other physical activity (such as cycling, dancing or gardening) at least once a week; 60% walk for at least ten minutes at a time on four or more days a week;
- generally, men are more likely than women to exercise or play sport: 45% of men do so at least once a week, compared with 37% of women; meanwhile, 37% of men never exercise or play sport, compared with 47% of women; the difference between men and women is strongest in the younger age groups: 74% of men aged 15-24 exercise or play sport at least once a week, compared with 55% of women in the same age group;
- generally, citizens in the northern part of the EU are more physically active - the proportion that exercises or plays sport at least once a week amounts to: 70% in Sweden, 68% in Denmark, 66% in Finland, 58% in the Netherlands and 54% in Luxembourg, while at the other end of the scale, Bulgaria (78%) and Malta (75%) have large proportions of respondents who never exercise or play sport at all;
- 74% of EU citizens say that they are not members of any club;
- 62% engages in sport or physical activity to improve health, 40% to improve fitness, 36% for relaxing and 30% for having fun;
- 42% points a shortage of time is by far the main reason given for not practicing sport more regularly, 20% - lack of motivation or interest, 13% - having a disability or illness and 10% points that it is too expensive;
- 76% agrees that in their local area there are opportunities to be physically active, and the majority of EU citizens (74%) think that their local sport clubs and other providers offer them such opportunities.

3. Eurostat statistics

Eurostat published the Sport statistics compact guide in 2016, according to which, inter alia:
- the share of persons attending live sporting events in 2011 ranged from 57.7% in Slovakia, 53.5% in Luxembourg and 52.9% in Finland to 14.3% in Turkey, 19.3% in Romania and 26.4% in Bulgaria;
- 1.562,8 thousand persons were employed in the sports sector in 2014, of whom one third (538 000) were persons with tertiary education (levels 5-8);
- the average employment in the sports sector in 2014 in EU-28 amounted to 0.72% of total employment and varied from 0.12% in Romania and 0.4% in Greece to 1.54% in Sweden and 1.27% in Finland;
- the consumption expenditure of private households per year in 2010 varied from EUR 9.334 in Bulgaria and EUR 9.623 in Romania to EUR 33.219 in Austria and EUR 31.264 in Belgium (for further details see Eurostat sport_pcs_hbs database).

The study on the contribution of sport to economic growth and employment, prepared for the Commission in 2012, showed that the role of the sports sector in the European economy is important, and three specific sectors were pointed out as being particularly important in enhancing the size of the sports industry: 1) tourism, 2) fitness and the media and 3) education.
4. Preparatory actions and work plans for sport

Before sport become part of the Erasmus+ programme, preparatory actions and special events in the field were undertaken from 2009 to 2013. Two reports on actions and events were published by the European Commission: *Towards an EU Funding Stream for Sport: Preparatory actions and special events 2009-2011* in 2012, and updated *Preparatory actions and special events 2009-2013* in 2014. According to the latter report:

The European Parliament initiated the Preparatory Actions and Special Events in the field of sport implemented between 2009 and 2013. The budget of EUR 37 million funded 88 projects aimed at tackling cross-border threats such as doping, match-fixing, violence and intolerance; promoting grassroots and traditional sports; encouraging good governance, volunteering, gender equality, mobility and dual careers of athletes; and at supporting social inclusion and health through sport. The first results presented at the 2011 EU Sport Forum in Budapest were impressive and the new, high quality projects launched each year confirm that we are on the right track.

Work Plan for Sport (2011-2014)

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States resolution on a European Union Work Plan for Sport for 2011-2014 was published in June 2011 (2011/C 162/01) and established following guiding principles in the sport field for 3 years:

- to promote a cooperative and concerted approach among Member States and the Commission to delivering added value in the field of sport at EU level over the longer term,
- to align the existing informal structures with the priorities defined in this Work Plan,
- to give impetus and prominence as appropriate to Commission actions in the field,
- to address transnational challenges using a coordinated EU approach,
- to promote the specific nature and contribution of sport in other EU policy domains,
- to work towards evidence-based sport policy.

Work Plan for Sport (2011-2014) in short:

3 Priorities:  
- The societal role of sport  
- The economic dimension of sport  
- The organisation of sport

6 Expert Groups:  
- Anti-doping  
- Good governance in sport  
- Education and training in sport  
- Sport, health and participation  
- Sport statistics  
- Sustainable financing of sport

Report from the Commission on the implementation of the European Union Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014 (COM(2014) 22), published in January 2014, showed that:

Overall, activities carried out under the Work Plan led to very good results in the defined priority areas. This is confirmed by the consultation: The vast majority of Member States agreed that the Work Plan had a positive impact for the sport sector in their country (24 MS) and that it was of relevance for the development (24 MS) and for the
Implementation (19 MS) of sport policy at national level. The Work Plan generally met the expectations of the governments (25 MS), focused on the right priorities (25 MS) and led to fruitful outcomes for policy processes (24 MS). This positive assessment was generally shared by sport stakeholders. Member States valued less positively the influence of the Work Plan on sport policy processes outside the EU (16 MS).


The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States resolution on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017) was published in June 2014 (2014/C 183/03) and established following guiding principles in the sport field for 3 years:
- to promote a cooperative and concerted approach among Member States and the Commission to delivering added value in the field of sport at EU level over the longer term;
- to address transnational challenges using a coordinated EU approach;
- to take into account the specific nature of sport;
- to reflect the need for mainstreaming sport into other EU policies;
- to work towards evidence based sport policy;
- to contribute to the overarching priorities of the EU economic and social policy agenda, in particular the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- to build on the achievements of the first EU Work Plan for Sport;
- to complement and reinforce the impact of activities launched under the Erasmus+ programme in the field of sport.

Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017) in short:

3 Priorities:  
- Integrity of sport
- The economic dimension of sport
- Sport and society

5 Expert Groups:  
- Match-Fixing
- Good governance
- Human Resources Development
- Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA)
- Economic Dimension

The future EU Work Plan for Sport should be negotiated in 2017 under the Maltese Presidency.

II – Selected documents of the European Parliament

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the role of sport in education (2007/2086(INI)) in November 2007. In the document, the EP reaffirmed the EU’s legitimate interest in sport, in particular its social and cultural aspects, as well as the educational and social values that sport transmits such as self-discipline, challenging personal limitations,

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28 Erasmus+: Sport Info Day, presentation by Yves Le Lostecque, Head of Unit, sport policy and programme Unit, European Commission DG EAC
solidarity, healthy competition, respect for opponents, social inclusion, opposition to any form of discrimination, team spirit, tolerance, and fair play.

In the report on the European dimension in sport (2011/2087(INI)) which was adopted in February 2012, the EP underlined the importance of sport for 35 million amateurs as well as the economic value of sport. The EP also, inter alia:

- called for good governance in sport, with zero tolerance for corruption in sport;
- stressed the need to fight against doping, and urge Member States to treat trafficking in illegal performance-enhancing substances in the sports world in the same way as trafficking in illegal drugs; and
- called to refuse access to stadiums to supporters who have displayed violent or discriminatory behavior and to create a coordinated approach in setting and enforcing sanctions against them.

In its resolution on match-fixing and corruption in sport, adopted in March 2013 (2013/2567(RSP)), the European Parliament, inter alia:

- asked the Commission to develop a coordinated approach to the fight against match-fixing and organised crime, to include coordinating the efforts of the main stakeholders.
- urged the Member States sports organisations to establish a code of conduct for all staff and officials which includes: (i) a clear prohibition on manipulating matches, (ii) the associated sanctions (iii) a ban on gambling on own matches; (iv) an obligation to report any approaches concerning match-fixing, coupled with an adequate whistleblower protection mechanism.

The Sport Intergroup conference on the accessibility of the Erasmus+ Sport for grassroots sport took place on 28 June 2016.

III – Sport in the Erasmus+ programme

1. General rules and actions

Base on Article 16 and 17 of the regulation establishing Erasmus+ (and in line with the general objective of the programme Erasmus+ and the Union work plan for sport), sport actions shall focus in particular on grassroots sport and shall pursue the following specific objectives:

a) to tackle cross-border threats to the integrity of sport, such as doping, match-fixing and violence, as well as all kinds of intolerance and discrimination;

b) to promote and support good governance in sport and dual careers of athletes;

c) to promote voluntary activities in sport, together with social inclusion, equal opportunities and awareness of the importance of health-enhancing physical activity through increased participation in, and equal access to, sport for all.

According to the regulation (Article 2):

- dual career means the combination of high-level sports training with general education or work;

- grassroots sport means organised sport practiced at local level by amateur sportspeople, and sport for all.
The objectives of cooperation within the sport chapter of Erasmus+ programme shall be pursued through the following transnational activities, which shall focus in particular on grassroots sport:

a) support for collaborative partnerships;
b) support for not-for-profit European sport events contributing to the objectives described above;
c) support for strengthening the evidence base for policy-making;
d) dialogue with relevant European stakeholders.

Actions in the field of sport are designed to promote participation in sport, physical activity and voluntary activities. They are also designed to tackle threats to the integrity of sport, promote dual careers for athletes, improve good governance, and foster tolerance and social inclusion, as well as contribute to the implementation of the European Week of Sport. According to the Programme Guide, actions in the field of sport should support:

- **Collaborative Partnerships**, aimed at promoting the integrity of sport (anti-doping, fight against match fixing, protection of minors), supporting innovative approaches to implement EU principles on good governance in sport, EU strategies in the area of social inclusion and equal opportunities, encouraging participation in sport and physical activity (supporting the implementation of EU Physical Activity Guidelines, volunteering, employment in sport as well as education and training in sport), and supporting the implementation of the EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes;

- **Small Collaborative Partnerships**, were introduced in a call for the first time in May 2016, offering the opportunity to conceive, implement and transfer innovative practices in different areas relating to sport and physical activity between various organisations and, including in particular public authorities at local, regional and national levels, sport organisations, sport-related organisations and educational bodies. The small collaborative partnerships have allowed to ensure the follow-up of the preparatory actions, voted by the European Parliament in 2013 (for instance, support to the traditional sport and games).

- **Not-for-profit European sport events** granting individual organisations in charge of the preparation, organisation and follow-up to a given event. The activities involved will include the organisation of training activities for athletes and volunteers in the run-up to the event, opening and closing ceremonies, competitions, side-activities to the sporting event (conferences, seminars), as well as the implementation of legacy activities, such as evaluations or follow-up activities;

- **Strengthening of the evidence base for policy making through studies**; data gathering, surveys; networks; conferences and seminars which spread good practices from Programme Countries and sport organisations and reinforce networks at EU

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29 EACEA

30 Commission webpage on Sport in Erasmus+

31 Erasmus+ Programme Guide and Addendum, op.cit.
level so that national members of those networks benefit from synergies and exchanges with their partners.

The Sport actions are centralized. Their implementation is managed at a European level by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) located in Brussels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Collaborative partnerships</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- projects related to the European Week of Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- projects not necessarily related to the European Week of Sport</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Small collaborative partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-for-profit European sport events</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- events organised during the European Week of Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- events not necessarily organised during the European Week of Sport</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Centralised actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Budget for Sport activities**

The budget for the Sport activities amounts for 1.8% of the total budget of the Erasmus+ programme; which is almost € 266 million for 7 years. Budget in 2014 amounted to: 22.3 M€, in 2015 – 22.9 M€ and in 2016 – 34.1 M€.

According to regulation (Article 18.2e), no more than 10% of the budget for sport may support not-for-profit European sport events involving several programme countries.

The Sport activities may leverage supplementary funding from third parties such as private undertakings.

In 2016, the budget will be divided in equal parts between following 4 areas:
- 25% HEPA and dual careers;
- 25% anti-doping, match fixing;
- 25% violence, racism, volunteering, good governance;
- 25% social inclusion and equal opportunities.

3. **Selection of best proposals**

Each proposal may receive maximum 100 points. Only proposals which received at least 50% for each award criterion and reached the minimum total score of 60 points can be considered for funding from the programme.

**Award criteria**:
- Collaborative partnerships and Small Collaborative Partnerships:
  - Relevance of the project (maximum 30 points);
  - Quality of the project design and implementation (maximum 20 points);
  - Quality of the project team and the cooperation arrangements (maximum 20 points);
  - Impact and dissemination (maximum 30 points).
- **Not-for-profit European Sport Events**
  - Relevance of the project (maximum 30 points);
  - Quality of the project design and implementation (maximum 40 points);
  - Impact and dissemination (maximum 30 points).

### IV – Implementation of Sport activities

1. **Applications received and selected in 2014 -2016**

#### 2014:

The initial budget for the two rounds of calls was EUR 16.6 million.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Success rate</th>
<th>Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>received</td>
<td>selected</td>
<td>Total (million EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-for-profit European Sport Events 2014</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-for-profit European Sport Events 2015</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative partnerships in the sport field</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15 221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 477 45 9% 20 376 - 341


According to the Commission data, in 2014 there were 335 partners in the selected 39 applications of collaborative partnerships, who represented as followed:

- Sport Federations/Leagues/Clubs 118
- Higher Education Institutions & Research Centres 97
- Public bodies (national, regional and local) 44
- General NGOs 42
- Sport NGOs 33
- Others 22

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32 Prepared based on the data of the European Commission and the EACEA

33 Presentation: *Erasmus+ Sport, Call for proposals 2014 - Statistics*, Luciano Di Fonzo, EACEA, Brussels, 27 January 2015
The biggest number of applications (118) was submitted from Italy, out of which 12 of were selected. Next was Poland with 35 applications submitted and 2 selected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics covered by applications</th>
<th>Collaborative partnerships in the sport field</th>
<th>Not-for-profit European sport events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applications received</td>
<td>Applications selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance social inclusion, equal opportunities, volunteering and participation in sports</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU physical activity guidelines</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Week of Sport</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to contain violence and tackle racism and intolerance in sport</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU principles on good governance in sport</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight against doping at grassroots level</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight against match-fixing</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EC, DG EAC

2015:

The budget for the two rounds of calls was EUR 16.8 million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Deadline for submission of applications</th>
<th>Applications selected</th>
<th>Total grant (million EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative partnerships in the sport field</td>
<td>January 2015 1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative partnerships (EU Guidelines)</td>
<td>May 2015 2)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7 783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative partnerships (Other topics)</td>
<td>May 2015 2)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-for-profit European sport events</td>
<td>January 2015 1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 2015 2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>18 845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EACEA

1) related to the European Week of Sport 2015 only
2) not related to the European Week of Sport 2015

According to the Commission data 34, in 2015 there were 380 partners in the selected 40 applications of the 2nd round of collaborative partnerships, who represented as followed:

- General NGOs 113
- Sport Federations/Leagues/Clubs 93
- Sport NGOs 86

34 Presentation: Information from the Commission, Council Working Party on Sport, Brussels, 26 October 2015
Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013)

- Higher Education Institutions & Research Centres 50
- Public bodies (national, regional and local) 28
- Others 10

2016:
The budget for the two rounds of calls with deadlines in 2015 was EUR 27.4 million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Deadline for submission of applications</th>
<th>Applications selected</th>
<th>Total grant (million EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative partnerships in the sport field</td>
<td>January 2016 1)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 2016 2)</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small collaborative partnerships</td>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-for-profit European sport events</td>
<td>January 2016 1)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 2016 2)</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EACEA

1) related to the European Week of Sport 2016 only
2) not related to the European Week of Sport 2016

2. European Week of Sport (EWoS)
The European Week of Sport aims to promote sport and physical activity across Europe. The Week is for everyone, regardless of age, background or fitness level. With a focus on grassroots initiatives, it will inspire Europeans to #BeActive on a regular basis and create opportunities in peoples’ everyday lives to exercise more. The EWoS is organised on 2nd week of September with an official opening, a Flagship event and 4 focus days of events, each day with a focus theme.

2015
The first European Week of Sport was organised from 7 to 13 September 2015. The Flagship event took place on 9 September in Brussels and its theme was: ‘The role of sport in promoting tolerance and open societies in Europe’. The European Week of Sport was organised around 4 Focus Days: 1) Education environment, 2) Workplaces, 3) Outdoors and 4) Sport Clubs & Fitness centers.

10 EWoS Ambassadors supported the Week in 2015:
- Clarence Seedorf (NL), former football player
- Marie Bochet (FR), skier
- Danka Bartekova (SK), skeet shooter
- Steven Gerrard (UK), football player
- Caroline Wozniacki (DK), tennis player
- Tapio Korjus (FI), javelin thrower
- Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner (AT), mountaineer

35 The Commission’s website on Sport.
In December 2015, the Commission published report on the implementation of the European Week of Sport 2015. According to the report:

- the flagship event, organised in the form of a conference, gathered some 250 participants (i.e. sport stakeholders, selected networks, policy makers, EWoS Ambassadors, practitioners);
- 9 European partners of the Week organised conferences, fora, events or sport activities, in Brussels, Paris or Turin (which was the European Capital of Sport in 2015);
- a big achievement of the Week was the number of local events: over 7000, with a variety of sport and physical activities:
  - individual sports (archery, tennis, etc.);
  - team sports (football, handball, basketball, etc.);
  - group classes (yoga, zumba, salsa, etc.);
  - outdoor physical activity (running, cycling, Nordic walking, etc.);
  - new trend sports (cross-fit, air squash, pana football, etc.);
- at national level, participating countries appreciated the degree of flexibility to organise their national activities - 77% was in favour of keeping this flexibility;
- 93% of EWoS key players used the EWoS promotional materials put at their disposal by the European Commission;
- the dedicated website (http://ec.europa.eu/sport/week) was visited over 20,000 times between 1 and 14 September 2015;
- many more tools were developed for the communication campaign around the Week, e.g. template posters, banners, Facebook covers, website banners, a communication handbook, 3 videos (a mini-documentary, an inspirational movie and an animated clip). Example of promotional materials is presented above.

2016

The 2016 European Week of Sport will start on 10 September 2016 with a flagship event organised on 15 September 2016. The concept of the EWoS will remain the same as in 2015. The main objective will continue to be promoting participation in sport and physical activity. We will continue to raise awareness about the numerous benefits of both. The main campaign elements established in 2015 will remain in 2016, including key messaging and visual branding of the Week.

The overarching campaign theme for the European Week of Sport remains “#BeActive”. As in 2015, the implementation of the 2016 European Week of Sport will be supported through specific funding under Erasmus+: Sport.

All Member States except for Sweden have decided to participate in the EWoS.

3. Opinion and recommendations of the EOC EU Office

The EOC EU Office prepared the assessment of the implementation of Sport activities in the Erasmus+ programme after the first call for proposals in 2014. The analysis revealed that the programme did not fully reach the objective of developing grassroots sport in Europe.

The EOC EU Office consulted stakeholders, including local and regional actors in Member States, on their view regarding the possibilities for grassroots sports in the Erasmus+ programme. Many considered that the administrative burden and other requirements currently outweighed the possible benefits. In call of proposal in 2014, limited number of grassroots sport clubs was involved as partners in the selected projects.

The EOC EU Office prepared some recommendations for future calls to enhance the participation of grassroots sports:
- limit the required number of partners;
- allow volunteering as a source of own contribution;
- encourage the setting up of projects with smaller budgets;
- reduce the administrative and financial burden;
- announce the selection results as early as possible;
- finalise the grant agreements before the actual start of the project.

---

36 Assessment of Erasmus+ Sports, Background paper No 3, February 2015 and Erasmus+ Sports Programme, Recommendations for future calls for proposals: How to ensure the participation of grassroots sports?
V – Conclusions

- There is a noticeable interest from various organisations in applying for grants under the Erasmus+ programme. Monitoring of the types of participating organisations should be continued, however, especially to ensure that grassroots sports organisations have sufficient access to funding.

- The analyses show that physical activity is beneficial to EU citizens and that support from the EU budget is important.

- Nevertheless, stakeholders claim that more simplification is needed in the programme to enable greater participation of grassroots sports organisations and better achieving the goal of developing grassroots sport in Europe.

- The focus on grassroots sport is clear in the Erasmus+ Regulation, even if more emphasis could be put in this area.

- While the access of grassroots sports organisations to the Erasmus+ Sport funds is already possible at this stage, the Commission might consider further simplifications in order to ease the access of these organisations to Erasmus+ Sport.

- Looking at the positive legacy of the Sport Preparatory Actions 2009-2013, the Commission could be invited to assure their follow-up.

- Building on the positive results of the first edition of the EWoS, and – hopefully – positive results of the second edition of the EWoS to take place in September 2016, the Commission could be invited to develop the concept and to promote the participation of even more organisations and Member States.

- Due to fact that the annual European Week of Sport, organised in the second week of September, coincides with the European Parliament session in Strasburg, the Commission has declared that it will seek to organise the main events in Brussels as from 2017 in ‘non-collision’ time[^37].

[^37]: Request of MEP Hannu Takkula (ALDE, Finland) of 30 March 2016 (E-002528-16) concerning the coincidence of the European Week of Sport with the European Parliament plenary sessions in Strasbourg, both in 2015 and 2016. The Commission answer (E-002528/2016) of 27 May 2016, including the information that ‘when considering a possible new date, the Commission will take account of the need to avoid the plenary session in Strasbourg, as far as possible, so as to ensure that the European Parliament and its members can fully participate in this initiative’.
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Anex I

The implementation of Erasmus+ Programme - Learning mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth (Key Action 1)

Study by
Thomas Köhler
and Daniel Apollon

Abstract

The focus of this study is on assessing the strengths, weaknesses, perceived opportunities and threats of the implementation of mobility for individuals in the field of education and training, as well as youth in Erasmus+ Key Action 1, as well as relevant aspects of interaction between these sectors. The authors favour a case-based approach and prioritise a global educationalist perspective, while including, when and where necessary, organisational and logistic factors, and macro-data. Where case studies and data are readily available, the authors have compiled these and combined key findings with knowledge gained from e.g. interviews with National Agencies. As a result, policy recommendations contain demands and suggestions for improvement in the implementation of several aspects of Key Action 1.

Beyond the recommendations included in the different chapters, chapters 13 and 14 deal with “concluding remarks” and “key findings and recommendations”.

AUTHOR
This study has been written by Prof. Dr. Thomas Köhler, TU Dresden (Germany), and Prof. Dr. Daniel Apollon, University of Bergen (Norway), at the request of the Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit of the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value, within the Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services (DG EPRS) of the General Secretariat of the European Parliament.

LINGUISTIC VERSIONS
Original: EN

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Manuscript completed in July 2016
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Key surveys and reports

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Surveys and studies of mobility in the school sector

Surveys and studies of mobility in Vocational Education and Training

Surveys and studies of mobility in Adult Education

Surveys and studies of mobility in the Youth Sector

**PART II Implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Empirical Investigation**

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Framing conditions to be introduced in the implementation report on the Erasmus+
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2. Responses to the five main questions

Experiences with Erasmus+ mobility in the different sectors

Background of respondents (selected extracts)

Respondents’ experiences with mobility (synopsis)

Views of the respondents on the implementation of Erasmus+

Difficult start

Political framing in Europe and beyond

Organisational and financial aspects

Organisational aspects

Financial aspects

Aspects that need further attention or intervention

Integration into the curriculum and promotion of Erasmus+ knowledge

Language related aspects

User criticism and evaluation aspects

Knowledge about official target figures among respondents

Statistics of different origin and with different scope

3. Key Findings extracted from the interview material

Key findings I: experiences with mobility

SO recommendations (maxi-maxi)

Time dimension

SWOT compared with scoreboard indicator methods

Use of SWOT approach in interviews and panels

User criticism and evaluation aspects

Integration into the curriculum and promotion of Erasmus+ knowledge

Background of respondents (selected extracts)

Respondents’ experiences with mobility (synopsis)

Views of the respondents on the implementation of Erasmus+

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User criticism and evaluation aspects

Knowledge about official target figures among respondents

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PE 581.414

54
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Acronyms

AE  Adult Education
ALDE  Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
ALTE  Association of Language Testers in Europe
BIBB  Bundesinstitut für Berufliche Bildung
BMBF  Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung
CEDEFOP  Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle
CEFR  Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DAAD  Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
DG  Direction General
DG EAC  European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture
EA  Executive Agency
EEA  European Economic Area
EACEA  European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
ECHE  Erasmus Charter for Higher Education
ECTS  European Credit Transfer System
ECVET  European credit system for vocational education and training
EFTA  European Free Trade Association
EHEA  European Higher Education Area
EIF  European Investment Fund
EILC  Erasmus intensive language course
EMJMD  Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees
EQAVET  European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQF  European Qualification Framework
ESIB  The National Unions of Students in Europe
ESU  European Students’ Union
ET 2020  EU cooperation in education and training
EULF  Legal framework of the European Union
EUPARL  European Parliament
EURIDYCE  European network on issues to European education systems
EUROSTAT  Statistical office of the European Union
EVS  European Voluntary Service
EVSI 5  Eurostudent V Synopsis of indicators
HE-NA  National Agency (NA) in charge of Higher Education (HE)
HEI  Higher Education Institution
ICM  International Credit Mobility
ICT  Information and communication technology
IIE  Institute of International Education www.iie.org
IND  Industry (sector)
IPR  Intellectual Property Rights
ISCED  UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education
IVET  Initial vocational education and training
KA1  Erasmus+ Key Action 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KMK</td>
<td>Kultusministerkonferenz</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLP</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning Programme</td>
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<td>MLG</td>
<td>Multilevel governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOOC</td>
<td>Massive Open Online Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAU</td>
<td>National Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLF</td>
<td>National legal framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMG</td>
<td>New modes of governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OER</td>
<td>Open Educational Resource</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OLS</td>
<td>Online Language Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIU</td>
<td>Senter for internasjonalisering av utdanning/ Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>STUD</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWOT</td>
<td>SWOT Analysis, Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOWS</td>
<td>TOWS Analysis, Analysis of Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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Executive Summary

The European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) has launched an own-initiative report on the Implementation of the Erasmus+ programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013) (2015/2327(INI)). In view of the upcoming report this study analyses the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme within the scope of the learning mobility of individuals in the field of education, training, and youth (Key Action 1) and the interaction between the sectors (Article 6.1.a and article 12.a of the Regulation EU No 1288/2013).

This study has been conducted close to the end of the first implementation phase of Erasmus+ (2014-2020). The fundamental references for these study are the Education and Training 2020 EU Strategy (EAT 2020) and Regulation EU No 1288/2013 which establish the general principles and regulatory basis for the implementation of Erasmus+. The research took place from mid-April to mid-June 2016. This study offers an external and independent perspective on Key Action 1 which addresses primarily the mobility of individuals. As the Commission (DG EAC) launched an evaluation of Erasmus+ to run from May 2016 to the end of 2017, the authors of the present study have maintained an analytical distance to the views expressed by the Commission.

New challenges, but is the response adequate?

New challenges and possible threats have emerged or persisted since the launch of Erasmus+: the financial crisis, the refugee crisis, political tensions in some member states, a tenacious labour market crisis in several member states, evolving and challenging patterns of learning and professional global mobility, possible Brexit, new cultural tensions, terrorism, and armed conflict in close vicinity of the EU. All this threats and challenges place new demands on European societies in general, and more specifically on the various mobility programmes under Erasmus+ Key Action 1.

Publicised simplification, but at which cost for individuals?

The Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) has integrated all former programmes in the previous Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) in the domains of Education, Training, Youth and Sport. The programme now embeds an international dimension that is funded by different external action instruments.

This integration has been and is widely publicised by the Commission as representing a “significant simplification”, e.g. in statements such as “We are continuing our efforts to further simplify the programme implementation by reducing unnecessary bureaucracy for the beneficiaries.”

The message conveyed in this study is that not all measured progresses (there is indeed evidence of such progresses in the patterns and volumes of mobility), and simplifications of the management and organisation of Key Action 1 (there is undeniably evidence of an efficient streamlining of many operations and procedures), necessarily guarantee the overall success of the implementation, if one chooses to consider all the facets that make up a good learner, citizen, and professional.

Hence, many of the potential beneficial side-effects of the mobility of individuals in education and training are not easily and not solely apprehended by measures of volumes, patterns of displacement, and formal recognition (indeed, such first-order outcomes, are, no doubt, crucial indicators of progress). Being knowledge-seeking, skill-
seeking, and experience-seeking individuals, mobile learners, teachers, trainers and workers choose to go abroad and interact in unfamiliar environments with other people, to learn, teach, experience, and reflect. Actions, sub-actions, programmes, regulations, are to be understood as elements of an infrastructure that are meant to be just enablers, not drivers.

Objectives

The focus of this study is on assessing the perceived and observed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the implementation of mobility of individuals in the field of education and training, and youth in Erasmus+ Key Action 1. Particular attention is given to novel initiatives and services, e.g. Online Linguistic Support (OLS), Master Loans, and Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM). This study highlights also important development within Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Scope

The study addresses the various sectors targeted in Key Action 1 as well as the actions addressing these sectors:

1. in the field of education and training:
   - mobility of higher education students and staff (programme countries and partner countries)
   - mobility of VET learners and staff
   - mobility of school staff
   - mobility of adult education staff
   - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree
   - Erasmus + Master Loans

2. in the field of youth:
   - mobility of young people and youth workers

Interaction between the different sectors is also examined

Methods

This study is based on the analyses of regulations, data and available reports. It presents case studies from different sectors of education, training and youth. The authors have also conducted surveys and interviews with official actors, Erasmus+ teams in local institutions, selected National Agencies, the Executive Agency EACEA, National Authorities, e.g. Ministries, and The Directorate-General Education and Culture.

It provides a qualitative appreciation, where possible underpinned by quantitative or qualitative data, of the implementation of Key Action 1 focusing on the achievements and side-effects of the implementation.

The authors use a case-based approach in a global educationalist perspective, including, when and where necessary, organisational and logistic factors, as well as macro-data. Where both case-studies and data are readily available, the authors have compiled these and have combined key findings with knowledge gained from e.g. interviews with implementing bodies and beneficiaries. The authors have endeavoured to draw an up-to-date and valid picture of the various activities organised under Key Action 1, in a global educationalist perspective.

Furthermore, this study uses a SWOT methodology (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to organise the findings and offer the readers a platform for further recommendations. All findings are interpreted as external environmental factors,
positive (Opportunities) or negative (Threats), or as internal factors, positive (Strengths) or negative (Weakness). External and external factors are then related to each other. Best practices are highlighted, as well as severe problems in the implementation of Key Action 1.

As a result, policy recommendations contain demands and suggestions for improvement in the implementation of several aspects of Key Action 1.

Guiding questions

- Are the objectives and targets of the programme met?
- In which ways does the programme enhance the mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth?
- How does the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1 help to raise knowledge and skills of participants?
- How does Key Action 1 contribute to promoting foreign language skills?
- How does the programme contribute to develop e-skills?
- How are labour market needs correlated with educational efforts in Key Action 1?
- How does the interaction between different sectors of education and training and youth work?
- How does the global dimension of the programme work?
- Does the programme rise innovativeness?
- How are budget allocations and grant amounts related to the quality of projects?
- How satisfied with the programme and its implementation are (selected) participants? What would they change?
- How satisfied with the programme and its implementation are (selected) national agencies and the EACEA (when involved)? What would they change?
- Which groups are better or worse represented in the Erasmus+ Key Action 1 compared with LLP?
- What are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the new structure of the Key Action 1?
Chapter 1: Introduction

The European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) has launched an own-initiative report on the Implementation of the Erasmus+ programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013) (2015/2327(INI)). In view of the upcoming report this study analyses the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme within the scope of the learning mobility of individuals in the field of education, training, and youth (Key Action 1) and the interaction between the sectors (Article 6.1.a and article 12.a of the Regulation EU No 1288/2013).

The focus of this study is on assessing the strengths, weaknesses, perceived opportunities and threats of the implementation of mobility of individuals in the field of education and training, and youth in Erasmus+ Key Action 1. Specifically, the authors address the mobility of individual in the sectors of Education and Training and Youth, as well as relevant aspects of interaction between these sectors. The authors favour a case-based approach and prioritise a global educationalist perspective, while including, when and where necessary, organisational and logistic factors, and macro-data. Where case studies and data are readily available, the authors have compiled these and combined key findings with knowledge gained from e.g. interviews with National Agencies and stakeholders. As a result, policy recommendations contain demands and suggestions for improvement in the implementation of several aspects of Key Action 1.

1. Implementation of Key Action 1, simplification of efforts

   Implementation model

Erasmus+ is implemented decentrally through the National Agencies in the programme countries and centrally through the Executive Agency EACEA. Key Action 1 deals with the mobility of individuals in the field Education, Training and Youth, including the Student Loan Guarantee Facility, Joint Master degrees, Master courses/Joint Doctorates, Large Scale Voluntary Services and Online Linguistic Support. The National Agencies implement the mobility actions in Key Action 1 through indirect management: mobility actions. EACEA manages the following actions under Key Action 1: Joint Master degrees, Master courses and Joint Doctorates, Large-scale European Voluntary Service.

   Simplification, but at which price?

“We are continuing our efforts to further simplify the programme implementation by reducing unnecessary bureaucracy for the beneficiaries.”38.

The Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) has integrated all former programmes in the previous Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) in the domains of Education, Training, Youth and Sport. The programme now embeds an international dimension that is funded by different external action instruments. This integration has been and is widely publicised by the Commission as representing a “significant simplification” compared with LLP. The magic term used repeatedly in various legal and promotional

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documents of the EU, “simplification”, is indisputably more palatable than its less appealing sibling “structural rationalisation”.

In a sense, all kinds of structural rationalisations in organisations tend to oppose processes, values, transactions, and practices to results and efficiency. Whichever term is used to characterise the managerial changes which Erasmus+ embodies in comparison with the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), such changes entail processes which must necessarily replace not only procedures and rules, but also values and emotions tied to practices that are programmed to disappear or to be repurposed. Promoters of such change-oriented processes may also be tempted to offer less laudatory narratives about previous structures, i.e., the Lifelong Learning Programme, which is now defunct. It may be tempting to sell the story about simplifying the implementation of Erasmus+ as a rejuvenation cure, or as a pure product of necessity that is needed in order to mobilise sufficient energy to achieve the new ambitions of Erasmus+. However, whichever rationale is chosen, there may be a price to pay before the expected benefits may be reaped. The main cost may not be directly observable through measuring the sheer volume of budget means activated, or by counting and locating the millions of individuals enrolled, or by monitoring the level of formal recognition of stays abroad. A more pernicious side-effect of simplification may be the unintended but very real increase of the perceived power distance between individuals, users, learners, teachers, youth, etc. and European institutions. The main message underlying this study is that not all measured progresses necessarily guarantee the overall success of the implementation, if one contemplates all the facets that make up a good learner, citizen and professional.

Paraphrasing Dan Hill’s widely disseminated and profusely cited essay on the smart city, one could consider that the whole of Erasmus+, like a city, is made of all its architects, builders, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Erasmus+ was not primarily created to produce frameworks, rules and regulations, or administrative infrastructures. The primary raison d’être of Erasmus+, and the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1, is to let learners, teachers, educators, trainers, workers and youth come together, to acquire and exchange knowledge, to open oneself up for new professional environments, to immerse in cross-cultural experiences, and acquire both informal and formal skills, and, in a deeper sense, to quote Paul Ricoeur, ‘to experience oneself as another’.

As a consequence, many of the potential beneficial side-effects of the mobility of individuals in education and training are neither easily nor solely apprehended by measures of volumes, patterns of displacement, and formal recognition (indeed, such first-order outcomes, are, no doubt, crucial indicators of progress). As knowledge-seeking individuals, mobile learners, teachers, trainers and workers choose to go abroad and interact in unfamiliar environments with other people, where they also learn, teach, experience, and reflect. Actions, sub-actions, programmes, regulations, are to be understood as elements of an infrastructure that are meant to be just enablers, not drivers, to reuse Hill’s key concepts. The structures, processes and procedures that characterise Key Action 1 should be approached and studied as a side-effect of people and culture, rather than well-oiled, or inversely, malfunctioning mechanisms.

Akin to the smart city vision defended by Dan Hill, the ultimate vision in this study sets the focus not only on first-order outcomes in the implementation of Key Action 1, but, also on the second-order outcomes, which are potentially more interesting for the long-term impact of Erasmus+ and its potential successors.
Smartening the infrastructure enables citizens to make informed decisions

"The city is its people. We don’t make cities in order to make buildings and infrastructure. We make cities in order to come together, to create wealth, culture, more people. As social animals, we create the city to be with other people, to work, live, play. Buildings, vehicles and infrastructure are mere enablers, not drivers. They are a side-effect, a by-product, of people and culture. Of choosing the city.

The smart city vision, however, is focused on these second order outcomes, and often with one overriding motivation: efficiency. Yet the city’s primary raison d’être is to be found amidst its citizens. If we look there, we find that there is more, much more, to urban life than efficiency. In fact, many of those primary drivers are intrinsically inefficient, or at least at a tangent to the entire idea of efficiency. Can a city be “smart” and inefficient at the same time? Perhaps this is a fundamental question, un-voiced by smart city advocates. We might argue that smartening the infrastructure enables citizens to make informed decisions, and this is certainly true. But the infrastructure’s output is hugely limited—it might speak to patterns of resource use, but gives us little detail or colour in terms of those original starting points for the city, which tend to be qualitative rather than quantitative, slippery, elusive, transient, subjective.

So to see the city as a complex system to be optimised, made efficient, is to read the city along only one axis, and hardly a primary one at that.”

Dan Hill (2013). ‘Essay: On the smart city; Or, a 'manifesto' for smart citizens instead’

It may be timely therefore to emphasise the difference between an efficient and a smart implementation. An efficient implementation, considered as functional implementation mechanisms, is no means a guarantee for a smart implementation that encourages, e.g. mobile learners and educators, to make informed decisions.

2. Context of the study
Ongoing and future evaluations of Erasmus+

This study has been conducted close to the end of the first implementation phase of Erasmus+ (2014-2020). The fundamental references for these study are the Education and Training 2020 EU Strategy (EAT 2020) and Regulation No 1288/2013 which establish the general principles and regulatory basis for the implementation of Erasmus+. The planning, interviews and authoring took place during a short period (mid-April to mid-June 2016) with limited resources. The ambition of this study is not to replace ongoing or future parliamentary evaluations of the programme, but primarily to offer members of the European Parliament external and independent perspectives on Key Action 1. It is the hope of the authors that this study, its Key Findings and Recommendations, will enable informed decisions.

As the Commission (DG EAC) launched an evaluation of Erasmus+ which will run from May 2016 to the end of 2017, the authors of the present study have endeavoured to maintain an analytical distance from the views expressed by the Commission. The targeted readers of this study are members of the European Parliament, specifically members of the CULT committee, who on behalf of the citizens of member states, may take initiatives to maintain or modify the regulations for the programme.
New economic and political contingencies

New challenges and possible threats have emerged since 2013: the financial crisis, the refugee crisis, political tensions in some member states, persisting even increasing labour market crisis in several member states, evolving patterns of learning and professional global mobility, possible Brexit, new cultural tensions, and the armed conflict in Ukraine. All this challenges place new demands on Erasmus+ in general, and on the various mobility programmes under Key Action 1.

3. Scope of the study

The research that has led to this study is based on the analyses of regulations, data and available reports. It presents case studies from different sectors of education, training and youth. It is also based on surveys and interviews with official actors, Erasmus+ teams in local institutions, selected National Agencies, the Executive Agency EACEA, National Authorities, e.g. Ministries, and The Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

It provides a qualitative appreciation, where possible underpinned by quantitative or qualitative data, of the implementation of Key Action 1 focusing on the achievements and side-effects of the implementation. Best practices are highlighted, as well as severe problems in the implementation of Key Action 1.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that have or may have consequences for the implementation of the mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth address the various actions in Key Action 1:

1. in the field of education and training:
   a. mobility of higher education students and staff (programme countries and partner countries)
   b. mobility of VET learners and staff
   c. mobility of school staff
   d. mobility of adult education staff
   e. Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree
   f. Erasmus + Master Loans

2. in the field of youth:
   a. mobility of young people and youth workers

3. Interaction between different sectors is also be examined

Guiding questions

The authors have formulated some initial guiding questions for the research, which are listed below. As the methodological approach has not enforced a strict structured questionnaire approach, but has endeavoured to allow and encourage the respondents to contribute with additional views, documents, and fresh narratives, these questions have functioned mainly as catalysers for the various individual interviews and panel discussions.

Guiding questions for the research

- Are the objectives and targets of the programme met?
- In which ways does the programme enhance the mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth?
• How does the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1 help to raise knowledge and skills of participants?
• How does Key Action 1 contribute to promoting foreign language skills?
• How does the programme contribute to develop e-skills?
• How are labour market needs correlated with educational efforts in Key Action 1?
• How does the interaction between different sectors of education and training and youth work?
• How does the global dimension of the programme work?
• Does the programme rise innovativeness?
• How are budget allocations and grant amounts related to the quality of projects?
• How satisfied with the programme and its implementation are (selected) participants? What would they change?
• How satisfied with the programme and its implementation are (selected) national agencies and the EACEA (when involved)? What would they change?
• Which groups are better or worse represented in the Erasmus+ Key Action 1 compared with LLP?
• What are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the new structure of the Key Action 1?

This study includes recommendations for amending Regulation No 1288/2013.

4. Structure of the study

Part I: “Introduction and Methodology” includes the current Chapter 1: “Introduction”.

Chapter 2: “Structure and Methodology” describes a case-based approach which provides the empirical basis for this study. When and where needed, organisational and logistic factors, as well as macro-data are included in the analysis. Where both case-studies and data are readily available, the authors have compiled these and have combined key findings with knowledge gained from e.g. interviews with implementing bodies and beneficiaries. The authors have endeavoured to draw an up-to-date and valid picture of the various activities organised under Key Action 1, in a global educationalist perspective.

The authors adopt a mixed-methods approach which combines conceptual considerations from social science literature, empirical data from research about e.g. learner mobility, statistics from various sources, and own field material collection. Data from different research publications and official sources provide a reference background and a context of interpretation for the narratives that have been collected from various actors.

Furthermore, this study uses a SWOT methodology (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to organise the findings and offer the readers a platform for further recommendations. All findings are interpreted as external environmental factors, positive (Opportunities) or negative (Threats), or as internal factors, positive (Strengths) or negative (Weakness). External and external factors are then related to each other, e.g. the impact of delays in budget allocations (Threat) on the ratio of grant applications funded (low ratio=Weakness).

Evolving and formulation recommendations has involved the following steps:
1. Highlighting key findings
2. Organising the findings in a SWOT analysis
3. Formulating recommendations, taking into consideration the dimensions described below

Part II: “Implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Empirical Investigation” is identical with Chapter 3: “Synthesis from interviews and panels” in which the authors present in a thematised form the research data compiled from the interviews and panels that were conducted as the empirical part of this study. Guided by the structure of the Interview Grid (attached in the Annex) a series of interviews and panels have been completed involving mainly respondents in Europe, but also as well beyond Europe. This chapter contains several subsections, which introduce and organise the main data in a systematised and integrated way. The authors integrate in this chapter the data and narratives collected from independent panels and interviews within a common topical framework, the views and conclusions of various stakeholders are collated. Finally, the authors extract, correlate, and possibly contrast issues of major and minor importance. The interpretation and use of the material presented in this chapter, however, is performed in subsequent chapters in this study.

Part III: “Implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Mobility of Individuals in the Field of Education and Training” addresses the legal, managerial, and sectoral implementation of Key Action 1.

Chapter 4: “Implementation Structure” analyses the implementation model that governs Key Action 1 with specific attention given to the regulatory concepts of “Implementation Level” and “Implementation Bodies”, and introduces as well the analytical notion of “implementation mechanisms”. The authors then embark upon a critical discussion of the linkage between Bodies, Levels, and ‘mechanisms’. Particular attention is given to describing the transformation of the rather simple implementation model applicable to Key Action prescribed in Regulation No 1288/2013 into a complex equation involving ‘interaction mechanisms’ between implementation bodies, implementation levels, the 3 Key Actions, and various stakeholders. The ideological tenets of the fully institutionalised model enforced by the Commission for the implementation of Erasmus+, labelled by the authors The ’No Support Given to Individual Participants’ Ideology, is interpreted in light of current theories about multi-level governance.

The evolution of “Free Movers” in European Higher Education, students from all over the world who organise their study abroad on their own, without participating in an exchange program, is presented as a test case for negative side-effects of the uncompromising institutionalised approach adopted in Key Action 1.

This chapter closes with a criticism of the implementation model of Key Action 1, where the authors argue that the fully institutionalised approach is certainly quite efficient from the perspective of the Commission and of central and decentral system actors, e.g. DG EAC and National Agencies, but may nevertheless reduce individuals and groups to disenfranchised beneficiaries with shrunken opportunities to interact directly with EU institutions. A strong argument is made for reappraising the institutionalisation model in Key Action 1.

The authors then analyse various issues linked with the dual implementation system for Erasmus+ as centralised and decentralised implementation. The role and position of National Authorities, National Agencies and possible inherent tensions between the
central and decentral implementation sequences are examined. The views and communication practices of the Commission are summarised and commented from a critical perspective highlighting unwanted side-effects. Problems caused by high expectations of budget increases, e.g. grant amount discrepancies, are addressed. Various claims by the Commission that Key Action 1 contributes to attenuate social biases in higher education mobility are reviewed in light of possibly conflicting evidence.

Chapter 5: “Mobility of School Staff” applies the analytical and critical approach expounded in the previous chapter to the mobility of school staff. Erasmus+ has brought to an end significant efforts deployed earlier in LLP (Comenius) to encourage e.g. school class exchanges. The ideology and rationale underlying such an abrupt policy change from LLP to Erasmus+ is described and discussed, again, in the critical perspective of New Institutionalism and questions are raised whether the elimination of regular school class exchanges in Key Action 1 is an over-interpretation of the regulatory framework. Also, the impossibility in Key Action 1 for individual teachers, or group of teachers, to apply for mobility is reviewed as a possible obstacle to innovation and change-makers in school. The high success of eTwinning is commented on.

Chapter 6: “Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff” provides background knowledge, e.g. about recent trends in global student mobility and analysis of several aspects addressing the mobility of students and higher education staff in Key Action 1. Major trends in global student mobility are arranged in a SWOT matrix to help readers relate global mobility trends to higher education student mobility in Key Action 1. Novel aspects of Key Action 1 that target higher education are reviewed in light of the specific objectives of Regulation No 1288/2013 for this sector. Benchmarks efforts are commented on as well as budget allocations for higher education mobility. User criticism and parliamentary criticism of the new terms imposed by the Commission for teaching assignments in higher education institutions are presented, as well as the views of the Commission. The novel aspects of Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM, including and planned budget use, are reviewed. Claims about improved recognition rates are also discussed.

Chapter 7: “Mobility of VET Learners and Staff” addresses recent developments in initial vocational education and training (IVET) and general vocational education and training (VET), e.g. internationalisation and development of mobility, as illustrated by the German iMove initiative. The status and role of Erasmus+ Scoreboards by Eurydice and Cedefop is subject to a critical discussion in view of the fact that information about the scoreboards is, as of writing, rather limited.

Chapter 8: “Mobility of Adult Education Staff” reviews the organisation in Key Action 1 of Adult Education mobility, which under Erasmus+ is very similar to the approach chosen for the school sector, in term of the transition from LLP, and relative to the goals of the programme. The strategy adopted in the Adult Education sector is to move towards a more institutional approach. Adult Learning Organisations are expected to function as applicants.

Chapter 9: “Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)” covers the rather complex transition from Erasmus Mundus Master courses (EMMCs) under the LLP programme to its successor the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) programme. The authors review the brief evolution of Join Masters since 2014 and raise various critical issues, including feedback from various interviewees, that highlight a low
interest for Joint Masters in many Programme Countries and HEIs. The framing conditions that may have led to the observed low volume of Joint Master applications are examined from the perspective of the design of Joint Masters, considering institutional resistance against joint degrees in many HEIs. The chapter closes with a SWOT analysis and recommendations.

Chapter 10: “Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility” analyses the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility (hereafter called ‘Master Loans’). After a short introductory descriptive section highlighting budgetary aspects, historical aspects situating the debate about portable loans and grants for mobile students in Europe in a broader socioeconomic context is discussed. The views of the Commission as well as the arguments from critiques of portable EU-loan-schemes are presented and discussed. This chapter closes with key findings, a SWOT classification and final recommendations.

Part IV: “Implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Mobility of Youth and Workers”

Chapter 11: “Mobility of individuals in the Field of Youth” opens with a situational snapshot organised as a SWOT matrix. It combines findings collected from the 2015 EU Youth Report (YR2015) and from the European Commission's 2015 Education and Training Monitor (ETM2015) and Youth National Reports to summarise external and internal aspects affecting the Youth sector. The authors then review the incorporation of Youth In Action in the Erasmus+ Programme, reviewing the current implementation in light of the simplification efforts deployed by the Commission. Various critical issues and criticisms, including parliamentary criticism, are examined with regards to possible side-effect of the implementation of the youth activities in Key Action 1. The case of the proliferation of National Agencies, as it is the case in Belgium and Germany, is highlighted as an issue. The consequences of the new “Inclusion and Diversity Strategy” for the Youth related activities in Key Action 1 are discussed in light of the financial crisis and refugee crisis, and the views of the Commission reviewed. The status of the European Youth Voluntary Service (EVS) including criticism from a European MP, is discussed. The Commission’s views on the potential for improvement of the Youth related activities in Key Action 1 is reviewed.

Part V: “Interaction between Sectors in Erasmus+ Key Action 1”

Chapter 12: “Online Linguistic Support (OLS) Services” offers a detailed and occasionally incisive coverage of the newly launched Online Linguistic Support (OLS) Services. The replacement of the decentralised Erasmus intensive language courses (EILC) under LLP by online, centrally managed linguistic support is reviewed critically. The original tender and current implementation is studied by the authors to raise critical questions about the need for the currently practised system. Questions are raised about the financial arrangements between the private consortium that owns the core engine of OLS, the pricing of licences, the need for licences at all, and the fact that OLS is a privatised system closed for independent scrutiny from the language testing research community and citizens. Various statements originating from the Commission and other stakeholders claiming evidence that mobility candidates who have used OLS have improved their foreign language proficiency are reviewed. Also, the lack of documented compliance with the open ALTE standards for language testing (ALTE Q-Mark) is discussed. The usage volumes of OLS licenses is examined and the realism of target numbers questioned. Early user criticisms and response from the Commission is given.
ample coverage. The Chapter closes with a SWOT analysis followed by recommendations.

Chapter 13: “Conclusions” addresses various issues, e.g. socioeconomic and political contingencies that may impact the implementation process of Erasmus+. The authors review a series of measures have been adopted or are envisaged, targeting inclusion of people from all backgrounds. Such measures apply specially to field of Youth, where an additional focus has been set on less privileged people. The case of the attribution of 100 000 OLS licences to refugees is discussed in light of the findings in Chapter 12. Other aspects commented in this chapter are unemployment and labour market needs, violent radicalisation, possible Brexit, sectoral differences and the value of integrating all sectors into one programme.

Annexes offer a full bibliography of academic and institutional sources with URL to published documents. The readers will find the Interview Grid used by the authors and the questions submitted as part of the DG EAC and EACEA Interview panel at the end of this section.
Chapter 2: Structure and Methodology

**KEY METHODS**

- This study adopts a mixed-methods approach as it combines conceptual considerations from social science literature, empirical data from research about e.g. learner mobility, statistics from various sources, and own data collection.

- A case-based approach prioritising a global educationalist perspective provides the empirical basis for this study. When and where needed, organisational and logistic factors, as well as macro-data will be included in the analysis.

- Where case-studies and data are readily available, the authors have compiled these and have combined key findings with knowledge gained from e.g. interviews with implementing bodies and beneficiaries.

- This study uses a SWOT methodology (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). All findings will be interpreted as external environmental factors, positive (Opportunities) or negative (Threats), or as internal factors, positive (Strengths) or negative (Weakness).

- External and external factors will then be related to each other, e.g. the impact of delays in budget allocations (Threat) on the ratio of grant applications funded (low ratio=Weakness).

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1. SWOT style methodology

This study is empirically driven, in that it aims at combining survey data, knowledge of the regulatory framework at a European and national levels, with interview material from a variety of stakeholders and beneficiaries of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 activities. The authors use a SWOT methodology\(^3^9\) to classify and aggregate interview material with background data. Accordingly, insights collected from various sources exploited in this study to produce a meaningful situational analysis.

**Internal vs. external factors**

As illustrated by Figure 3 the SWOT analysis distinguishes between internal factors (e.g. strengths and weaknesses observed during the transition phase from the LLP and Youth in Action Programmes to the Erasmus+ Programme in 2014; observed gaps in communication between National Authorities and the Commission in some countries; or, decrease in the volume of submissions of applications to particular activities), and

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\(^{39}\) Weihrich (1982); Ifediora, C. O., Idoko, O. R., and Nzekwe, J. (2014). “These more contemporary approaches to strategy formulation are developments of the internal appraisal of SWOT analysis rather that a replacement for it. The advantage of SWOT analysis or the TOWS matrix is its attempt to connect internal and external factors to stimulate new strategies. Hence resource and competency-based planning can enrich SWOT analysis by developing the internal perspective whilst keeping internal and external perspectives in play simultaneously. Rather than seeing SWOT analysis as an outdated technique therefore it is possible to see it as a firm foundation for resource and competency-based planning.” (Dyson, 2003)
*external factors* (e.g. evolution of the labour market, the migrant and refugee crisis, uptake of the Bologna process in universities).

FIGURE 3: THE FOUR FACTORS OF SWOT ANALYSIS

![SWOT Analysis Diagram](https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/swot-analysis.php)

**Internal factors**

**Strengths**

*Strengths* are all aspects, legal, logistic, financial and human, which contribute or will contribute to achieve the goals set by the Union for Key Action 1, including the goals expressed by intermediary actors and beneficiaries. Such strengths may be directly measurable, e.g. the number of teachers on mobility move, self-assessed e-skills of individuals. Strengths may equally be non-measurable experiential dimensions, e.g. the motivation of individuals or groups to engage in Erasmus+ activities, representations about organisational efficiency in National Agencies, etc. *Assumed strengths*, that is the capacity of individual or institutions to deliver task assumed by planners, may not be identified as *actual strengths* in the context of execution. Strengths are also broadly defined *resources*, e.g. intellectual, organisational, socioeconomic and political, empowering individuals or groups to respond to challenges and deliver tasks, e.g. non-formal or formal skills, linguistic proficiency of mobility candidates, degrees of freedom of actors at various levels. Each *actor*, an individual or collective, is considered to have a perimeter of action (Crozier, 1977; Crozier & Friedberg, 2014) where resources can be used, under constraints, and with varying degrees of freedom.

**Weaknesses**

*Weaknesses* are such internal factors, e.g. objective or subjective aspects that impede the achievement of the goals set by the European Union for Erasmus+ Key Action 1. Such weaknesses may be linked with observable factors, e.g. legal framework, the organisation, the logistics, or budgetary aspects, or with not directly measureable factors, e.g. cultural aspects, and diverging interpretation of the context of implementation. Lack of skills, or inadequate coordination of virtual and physical mobility may be seen as

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40 Source: [https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/swot-analysis.php](https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/swot-analysis.php)
equally crucial weaknesses as budget shortage. Also, legal, logistic, financial and human aspects pertaining to Implementing Bodies that may concur to prevent the goals set by the Union for the action to be achieved are weaknesses. Such weaknesses may be directly measurable, e.g. observed imbalance in the ratio of outbound vs. inbound mobility candidates in a country or in a sector, defective monitoring of actions, incomplete or unreliable statistics, lags in decision-making at various levels, or poor linguistic skills of mobility candidates. Weaknesses may be qualitative characteristics of individual or collective actors, e.g. low motivation of targeted users, resistance in crucial organisations, etc. Assumed weaknesses, i.e. weaknesses assumed by planners, may not be actual weaknesses in the context of execution.

External factors

“Threats may and opportunities may be found in different areas, but it is advisable to carefully look for the more common ones which may be categorized as economic, social, political and demographic factors, products and services, technology, markets and, of course, competition. As mentioned above, the analysis of these factors must not only pertain to the present but, even more important, the future environment.” (Weihrich, 1982, p. 10)

Opportunities

Opportunities are external aspects of the environment that any implementation process may or may not take benefit of. Such external aspects are considered as affordances that need to be activated. Usually activation of opportunities requires changes in regulatory frameworks, budget allocations, or communication strategies. Transformation of opportunities into actions may require cultural adaptation, for example, an increase in unemployment rates in certain socioeconomic categories or occupational sectors may boost the demand for individual mobility in a reskilling perspective. Opportunities may be structural and enduring, or limited in time and space. All aspects of a measurable increased demand for training may be taken into account to constitute an opportunity. Opportunities that are not exploited may turn into Threats, e.g. a strong demand for mobility that is not matched by corresponding grant volumes may turn into negative attitudes towards Erasmus+ and become an effective threat to the implementation, in that it will require intensified efforts to reconnect to citizens.

Threats

Threats are conditions external to the programme structure and intended beneficiaries that may arise in the environment within which the implementation of ERASMUS+ Key Action 1 operates. Such conditions may together with, or independently of, existing weaknesses endanger partial or comprehensive aspects of the implementation. Threats may be unexpected contingencies, e.g. the refugee crisis, economic crisis, visa restriction, corruption scandals, surge of violent radicalism, or armed conflicts in the neighbourhood regions that may threaten the success of the operation in given sectors or geographical areas. Threats may also be well-studied long-term trends that gain momentum during the programme period and may create weaknesses, e.g. a drop in foreign language education in secondary education in some countries, a tenacious recession, on-going social conflicts, etc.
Assembling the SWOT puzzle to produce a situational analysis

“SWOT analysis can thus be seen as an injection into an on-going process rather than a process per se. SWOT analysis has an old fashioned feel about it but is a framework which has stood the test of time and can readily incorporate ideas from newer approaches such as resource and competency-based planning and scenario development. [...] This is crucial in ensuring that significant weaknesses and threats are not overlooked, and that the potential of the organisation is fully realized” (Dyson 2003, p. 9).

The observed strengths will be matched with opportunities, and the observed weaknesses will be matched with threats, spanning four dimensions as shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: The SWOT dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal factors</th>
<th>External factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Opportunities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus all characterisation of actors, resources, and perimeters of action, as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats need be related to each other following four dimensions:

- **SO** dimension: Strengths in relation to Opportunities.
- **ST** dimension: Strengths in relation to Threats.
- **WO** dimension: Weaknesses in relation to Opportunities.
- **WT** dimension: Weaknesses in relation to Threats.

As Weihrich noted, “the conceptual model provides a good framework for identifying relationships, but it can become a complex process when many factors are being identified.” (1982, p. 12). Such advanced version of the SWOT methodology has been developed by Weihrich as the TOWS method. Dyson explains that “in the TOWS matrix, Weihrich’s more ambitious development of the SWOT approach, the various factors are identified and these are then paired e.g. an opportunity with a strength, with the intention of stimulating a new strategic
While the authors of this study are well aware of the potential of the TOWS matrix, this study does not ambition to perform an exhaustive collection of all possible factors pertaining to the implementation of Key Action 1, but it operates on a careful selection of salient factors, that is, such factors that are considered (1) measurable, or (2) corresponding to perceptions of the implementation as expressed by diverse actors and beneficiaries. As the time frame and team resources for this study have been limited, the authors have not investigated all possible interactions but selected crucial factors with the informants. As a consequence, this study does not utilise the full toolbox of Weihrich’s TOWS analysis, but concentrates on its core, the SWOT analysis, as the vocation of this exercise is not to propose future strategies, less policies, for the Commission or National Authorities, but to produce a situational analysis of the achievements and failures of the implementations of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 and, where appropriate, to formulate recommendations. Such recommendations address partial aspects of the implementation and should not be read as a compound strategy.

2. Construction of assessment and recommendations

The various findings, background data, and narratives collected through interviews and panels are combined by the authors to explore the tensions between the observed or interpreted Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that may apply to the various actions and sectors in Key Action 1. Evolving and formulation recommendations has involved the following steps:

1. Highlighting Key Finding,
2. Organising the findings in a SWOT analysis,
3. Formulating recommendations, taking into consideration the dimensions described below.

WT recommendations (mini-mini)

The aim of mapping WT strategy is to make recommendations that will aim to minimise both Weaknesses and Threats. A typical case is the Threat posed by stagnating or delayed budgets allocations to mobility grants and the structural impossibility, in this setting a Weakness, to respond to an increase of demand for popular grants, an Opportunity that is not seized. WT strategies chosen by either the Commission or National Authorities may consist in enforcing defensive measures to prevent backlash among potential beneficiaries, e.g. convincing potential applicants to postpone mobility or, introducing preselection procedures. If an Implementing Body, e.g. a NA is experiencing both external threats, e.g. severe economic crisis or, unfavourable educational climate, and internal weaknesses, e.g. human resource shortage or organisational inefficiencies, then it may be in a precarious position, and intervention from governing bodies may be necessary. WT strategies chosen by actors may be defensive, e.g. limiting damages, or offensive, overturning the situation.

WO recommendations (mini-maxi)

The dual aim of WO strategy is to minimise the Weaknesses and to maximise the Opportunities. For example, a National Agency or school may have precisely identified promising opportunities, e.g. many staff members willing to engage in mobility, but there may exist organisational or legal obstacles preventing them from taking advantage of the available human potential. WO counterstrategies may be designed to address directly
observed weaknesses, or circumvent these by engaging in cooperation with other actors unhindered by such weaknesses. A typical WO implementation case, is the institutionalisation in Erasmus+ of school staff mobility. In the former LLP Programme individual teacher could apply for mobility grants. Under Erasmus+ this is not possible anymore, as only the school or their governing bodies may apply. It may function well in many schools, but in some schools, innovation-oriented staff may be blocked by e.g. school leaders that oppose such activities. Inherent Weaknesses in school leadership may be amplified by structural constraints (institutionalisation of grant applications) that become negative external factors, Threats, and block Opportunities (proactive staff).

The ST strategy (maxi-mini)

The aim of ST strategy is to identify the strengths in the organisation that can address the threats in its environment. A productive strategy is to exploit the strengths to minimise the threats. This strategy is based on the strengths of the organisation that can deal with threats in the environment. The aim is to maximise the strengths and minimise the threats where possible.

SO recommendations (maxi-maxi)

This is the last problematic dimension to address, insofar as Opportunities and Strengths usually, but not always, match well. SO strategies search to maximise and take benefit from both Strengths and Opportunities.

Time dimension

In forecasting studies analysts deal with three TOWS matrices: past, present and futures (e.g. short term, and long term). In this study we deal only with three dimensions: the past defined as the LLP Programme period, the present defined as the 2014-2016 period and future being defined as the time window 2017-2020 corresponding to the remaining Erasmus+ programme period.

SWOT compared with scoreboard indicator methods

As the European Union, the Commission and the European Parliament has favoured a scoreboard methodology that takes advantage of Eurostat data. Scoreboards in the EU exploit information, usually statistical tables, and aggregate information from all the Member States, with available statistics from external sources. These scoreboards build upon meticulously formulated and designed ‘indicators’, frequently combining collection of descriptors into composite indicators. The European Innovation Scoreboards\(^1\) and the recent Innovation Union Scoreboard\(^2\), as well as the evolving EU Mobility Scoreboard\(^3\) build upon a rather simplified set of “key factors” that are supposed to influence e.g. in the case of the Mobility Scoreboard young people’s


motivation and ability to study or train abroad. E.g., “The Mobility Scoreboard focuses on five key factors that influence young people’s motivation and ability to study or train abroad. It reveals that these factors vary significantly between Member States – and that no single country scores highly on all measures of their “mobility environment”.” Scoreboards function primarily as policy planning tools for the European Union and National Authorities, and more peripherally as source material for media and societal actors. As such scoreboards tend to rely extensively and exclusively on statistical sources, they allegedly do not operate on the basis of any particular ideology, governance method, nor do they endeavour to provide functional descriptions of compound socioeconomic problems (e.g. they do not explain how unemployment and housing crisis for young people in Spain may be related to outbound student mobility in this country). Moreover, the methodology, choices, and considerations leading to the final scoreboard tend to remain, in most cases, rather opaque with parsimonious provision of source, except the statistics. SWOT methods may be accused of operating with the same kind of cuisine with data, but have nevertheless the distinct advantage to offer critical analysts a framework to debate, criticise the findings underlying the SWOT analysis, but also to explore interconnections between of internal and external factors. Furthermore, SWOT methods produce a situational analysis which, given sufficient time and resources, may integrate scoreboard indicators. Stakeholders and decision-makers may use SWOT analysis to improve strategies and propose measures to address weaknesses in the institutional setting or external threats, using existing strengths and taking advantage of opportunities.

Use of SWOT approach in interviews and panels

In the initial phase of this study, SWOT analysis has involved compiling lists of such strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats observed or perceived by different informants, with supporting documentation where available. It has been a priority for the design of interviews and panel sessions to map how the respondents understood the connections between different strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding all or some aspects of Key Action 1. The intervention style of interviewers, e.g. choice to intervene at incisive moments, has also been guided by such considerations. Simplified, each contribution of each informant, an individual or collective, has been compiled in typical 2 x 2 summative SWOT matrices.

In Table 7 below the reader will find an example of a SWOT matrix analysis a summarised situational analysis of a fictional institution:

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3. Qualitative research process

The implementation of Erasmus+ is still a very fresh phenomenon to scrutinise. This speaks in favour of choosing a qualitative approach using a selection of respondents to express their views on various activities and procedures in Key Action 1. The authors are fully aware that this approach has clear limitations, but yet, defend the view that using single cases or narratives as theoretical pillars is a valid scientific approach in such settings. The qualitative data that have been collected, are both of a reactive and non-reactive type, i.e. data may have been collected with or without knowledge of a certain target audience. The interview target group has been guaranteed anonymised representation of the individual respondents to protect their privacy and integrity.

In both cases, however interview data has been processed and interpreted in order to identify key principles of configuration, which are typical for a specific thematic relevant to the implementation of Key action 1. In the case of a central Key Action 1 activity, e.g. the development of individual mobility under the Erasmus+ framework, stakeholders are dispersed all over Europe and even beyond. Our first choice has been, in this case, to identify a suitable research sample consisting of relevant stakeholders. As a matter of fact, our guiding idea has not been to use any previous quality indicators for selecting a particular sample, but rather to secure the coverage of a given sector within Key Action 1.

Both authors are well aware with the thematic area covered through this study, in their own practice and as well through their study of documents produced under the auspices of Erasmus+ and by others. The authors have also capitalised on their knowledge of other
national and international education and mobility programmes. All this mix of previous knowledge, research and professional practice experience has been used as a resource for the field work. Generally, it can be expected that due to harmonised European policies in the sectors covered by Key Action 1, similar structures and stakeholders might be found in each of the EU member states to an extent. Therefore, the authors took the decision to focus primarily on stakeholders representing a specific Key Action 1 sector than on stakeholders identified by their national embedding. Of course, such decision may be criticised for putting aside differential national patterns and configurations.

Another important aspect guiding the selection of particular respondents has been to integrate the positions and experiences of not only central stakeholders in Europe (which belong to the Programme countries) but as well stakeholders outside the educational sector, i.e. respondents from public administration and industry. Furthermore, the authors decided to include an additional perspective represented by stakeholders or actors from outside Europe. In such cases where respondents or panels represented more than one Key Action 1 sector or had multiple professional experience, the interaction did not explicitly focus on the target group itself. Nevertheless, their participation is of course central in all narratives collected from the various respondents.

In order to close the interview cycle, all transcribed interview texts have been handed over to the respondents after each session by one of the two researchers. All the respondents have accepted that the transcribed text could be used or quoted as part of this study, and most of them performed some corrections to the submitted interview transcripts. Afterwards, all validated texts where aggregated following the topical structure of the Interview Grid. This editing process involved cutting the narratives in smaller items that would address these questions, and combining these fragments into core statements representing more than a single respondents or panel.

The next step was to use the answers, categories, or even elements of the narratives, for triangulating relevant aspects of the implementation of Key Action, i.e., combining empirical findings with theoretical insights, i.e. theories about governance, and also with the data selected from official statistics and from various authors. This mixed methods methodology of combining different data sets with the case studies considered as a very powerful opportunity for deconstructing and reconstructing recent mobility practices.

**Interviews and workshops**

The research is based on a narrative data collection, with supporting documentation provided occasionally by respondents. The fieldwork underlying this study has involved almost 20 different sessions that have been structured either as individual interviews, or as panels or workshops gathering a group of persons, but following essentially the same procedure (see Table 8 below). In some cases, the interviews were conducted by email or telephone instead of a face-to-face session whereas all panels were completed face-to-face.
Table 8: Individual, interviews, panel interviews and workshops held April-June 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution type</th>
<th># of respondents</th>
<th>Individual Interview, Workshop or Panel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIU</td>
<td>Bergen</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDEFOP</td>
<td>Thessaloniki</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAAD</td>
<td>Bonn</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UiB</td>
<td>Bergen</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEPIE</td>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KD</td>
<td>Oslo</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NAU</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEC</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG Pro</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>AU</td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUD IFBBD</td>
<td>Dresden</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUD AAA</td>
<td>Dresden</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YSU GS</td>
<td>Yogyakarta</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUD</td>
<td>Frankfurt / Main</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHD</td>
<td>Linz</td>
<td>AU</td>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Interview Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG EAC</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>BE</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
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<td>KG</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>4+3</td>
<td>Interview Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAAD</td>
<td>Bonn</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>NA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIEMENS</td>
<td>Erlangen</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interview Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Strasbourg</td>
<td>FR</td>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview Workshop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Data sources, surveys and studies

Mixed methods research approach

While, as stated earlier, this study is empirically driven, it is also inspired by the mixed method research approach\(^{45}\) in that it aims at combining survey data, Eurostat data, reports from various agencies, knowledge of the regulatory framework at a European and national level, with interview material from a variety of stakeholders and beneficiaries of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 activities above.

Data from different research publications and official sources have been used to provide a reference background and a context of interpretation for the narratives that have been collected from various actors of the system, e.g. students, Erasmus+ coordinators in institutions, teachers, planners, employees of the Commission etc. E.g. it would have been difficult for the two authors to offer a meaningful interpretation of the various narratives about Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM) without having a plausible estimation of current trends in global student mobility. In the spirit of methodological eclecticism, the authors have collected and integrated such data, not with the intention to offer “objective evidence” but rather to offer a resource for debating the

\(^{45}\) See Teddlie, C. and Tashakkori, A., 2011.
Key Findings and Recommendations included in this study. That said, the authors have endeavoured to draw an up-to-date and valid picture of the various activities organised under Key Action 1.

**A patchy landscape**

The authors have compiled a comprehensive list of references to surveys, reports and academic work relevant to this study (close to 200 items). The references have been organised by period (1998-2016) and Key Action 1 sector. The picture that emerges from this exercise is that most studies reviewed offer general mappings of patterns of mobility in the various sectors covered by Key Action 1 or impact studies, but frequently with limited applicability for analysing implementation aspects in Key Action 1. An important part of the literature reviewed by the authors during the initial phase of this study applies to higher educational mobility, whilst fewer contributions cover e.g. the Youth sector, and the organisation of mobility in member states. There is also a shortage of comparative studies mapping the practices of National Authorities and National Agencies.

A few meta-studies, e.g. Bonnet (2012a and 2102b) offer limited synthesis of earlier research but do not address novel aspects of Erasmus+. There are a few independent surveys covering all or several sectors of Key Action 1, but these surveys have limited geographical coverage, or are outdated, or are emanating from the European Commission or the European Parliament. There is indeed a problematic shortage of academic interest for studying in-depth Erasmus+, and as a consequence, very little independent research covering the LLP to Erasmus+ transition during the period 2013-2015.

**Key surveys and reports**

A non-exhaustive compilation of relevant reports and surveys, and work programmes covering the period 2011-2016 is listed below:

4. **Archimedes (2016).** *The effects of international mobility on Estonian educational staff. A survey on the effects of the short-term mobility within the European Lifelong Learning Programme.* (Survey carried out in February and March 2011).


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46 References are available in the Annex.
Surveys and studies of mobility in higher education
A few studies covering the period 2006-2012 provide important background knowledge to detect new developments that may have taken place in the 2014-2016:


- Bonnet, A. (2012a). La mobilité étudiante Erasmus. Apports et limites des études existantes. This study commanded by the French Erasmus Agency carries out a limited survey of existing literature and reports on student mobility in the LLP Programme.

Surveys and studies of mobility in the school sector
A few recent meta-studies and studies may throw light on the institutionalisation of school staff mobility under Erasmus+:

- In another meta-study, of particular relevance for setting in context the transition from LLP to Erasmus+ school staff mobility Bonnet, A. (2012b). La mobilité individuelle des élèves, un chaînon manquant dans l’analyse d’impact de la mobilité des jeunes reviews existing reports on the mobility of school learners.


Surveys and studies of mobility in Vocational Education and Training


**Surveys and studies of mobility in Adult Education**


**Surveys and studies of mobility in the Youth Sector**

• European Commission (2015). ‘Situation of young people in the EU’, COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

PART II
Implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Empirical Investigation
Chapter 3: Synthesis from interviews and panels

Introduction

This chapter is based upon the research data compiled from the interviews and panels that were conducted as the empirical part of the assessment. Guided by the structure of the Interview Grid a series of interviews and panels have been completed involving mainly respondents in Europe, but also as well beyond Europe. Whereas a list of interview sessions was presented in Chapter I, the Interview Grid is attached in the Annex to provide insight in the methodology applied and the sample of informants. The current chapter, with its 5 subsections, introduces and organises the main data in a systematised and integrated way. Integrating independently conducted panels and interviews within a common topical framework will enable the authors to extract, correlate, and possibly contrast the views and conclusions of various stakeholders, and hopefully distinguish between issues of major and minor of importance. The interpretation and use of the material presented in this chapter, however, will be done in subsequent chapters in this study.

Framing conditions to be introduced in the implementation report on the Erasmus+ Programmes’ Key Action 1

The interview was usually completed in a rather private atmosphere in a 1:1 (expert to informant) situation. In cases where respondents preferred a group meeting a panel has been organised with only one interviewer interacting with a group comprising between 4 and 12 respondents participating simultaneously. In the following synthesis, there is however no separation of the individual answer provided in order to ensure an anonymous treatment of individual opinions. Indeed, the overall data aggregation does not intend to profile respondents individually. Moreover, our goal is to aggregate the findings on a sectoral or issue-focused basis.

The preferred approach during interviews and panels was to take brief notes using the Interview Grid as presented in the Annex. The sectoral and topical structure of the Interview Grid constitutes also the core structure for this chapter. However, whereas needed and desirable, the researchers asked the respondents to record the conversations for further information processing. The signature of a release form by the respondent(s) was required, otherwise no recording would take place. Only the two authors of this study are authorised to access the recordings. The interview transcripts are kept in an anonymised and encrypted file format with separate encrypted keys to identify the respondent(s). At project completion, or at latest 31 December 2016, the key files and recordings will be destroyed. No respondents are cited by name in this study. Furthermore, the informants signed a form devised to meet our ethical requirements, stating that: (1) all information will be held confidential by the experts, (2) participation is voluntary and may stop at any time without explanation given, and (3) that the experts do not intend to inflict any harm.
It was expected that each interview session would last between 30 and 60 minutes and respondents should be briefly oriented about the purpose of this study in a brief introduction, before they started to report about their experiences with Erasmus+ Key Action 1 in a rather open narrative way. However, in average, individual interview sessions lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, while panel sessions lasted between 180 and 240 minutes.

Respondents used their native language where applicable, including French, German, Norwegian and English. To ease the processing of multilingual material, all interviews and panel data were translated into English to enable the authors to include excerpts in this chapter. In most cases the respondents received a transcript of their statements in English language for correction and approval. The interview situation itself was used to pinpoint important aspects of the research in a Delphi-like manner, i.e. respondents were invited to comment on the notes taken by the researchers.

The processing of the interview material follows a qualitative approach, and may not necessarily use all aspects of the narrative produced by the respondents, i.e. researchers will select only those sequences they consider meaningful for the present study. Selected interview sequences have been translated into English language when necessary.

1. Responses to the five main questions

Introduction to the: Erasmus+ Key Action 1 supports mobility in the education, training and youth sectors and aims to bring long lasting benefits to the participants and the organisations involved.

Experiences with Erasmus+ mobility in the different sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Which are your experiences with mobility in the education, training and youth sectors?</th>
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Background of respondents (selected extracts)

Interviewees and panellists had been asked to describe their background in relation to the educational mobility. From the answers, the following statements had been selected:

- “My first experience in educational mobility dates back the late 1980s as I went as a student to France. I was studying French, Literature and Russian and went self-financed to Russia and further places. I remember then that Erasmus was not as developed as it is today. There was not as much information available as there is


48 The SWOT codes S, W, O, and T in the right column of the Interview Grid should be read as: S=’Strengths’, W=’Weaknesses’, O=’Opportunities’, and T=’Threats’. They are used during and after the interviews to categorise statements according to the SWOT methodology (see the original layout of the Interview Grid in the Annex)
today. I remember that had no real help from my University or other institutions to organise my stay abroad so I had to manage by myself. This is the kind of experience I have integrated in my current job as responsible for Erasmus+ at the Faculty of Humanities at the University.”

- “She is employed at the University in the field of internationalisation/student mobility and has since worked with various aspect of learner and teacher mobility. She has also worked during a period for the National Agency where she has been responsible for Erasmus programmes. Now, she is working full time with Erasmus+ mobility at the University as a central coordinator. She has experienced the transition phase from the ‘old’ Erasmus programme to Erasmus+ and is able to convey experience from the transition phase and the implementation phase from 2014 - is one of the persons who possesses the broadest and most detailed knowledge about the implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 at her University.”

- “We act as the responsible authority for implementing Erasmus+ in the country.”

- “Concerning Erasmus N.N. is expert since the program started – even in LLL, working as well as an expert for EACEA continuously and as an international officer / recruiter for UK colleges. A typical activity is the collaboration in Youth with UK colleges and the EU partnering institution in order to develop a suitable curriculum which allows sending students abroad and ensuring reliable quality of such measure. Another aspect was sending students into abroad work experiences. As mobility funding has been used to arrange Youth conferences, in the earlier Youth mobility periods with people form Twin towns.”

- “I have been Higher Education – Erasmus coordinator of a university for about 20 years with special focus on Key Action 1.03 and 1.07, i.e., I know 3 EU mobility programmes.”

- “I have worked at the Social Science faculty at the University, then as Erasmus coordinator in the central administration. I have left my function as Erasmus coordinator during the transition period from Erasmus to Erasmus+. I am presently managing International Credit Mobility (ICM) at the University and is currently interfacing my domain of activity closely to the Erasmus+ programme.”

- “The respondent works as the coordinator of an international graduate school in an Asian State university that regularly sends students to Europe to participate in either doctoral or master level training.”

- “We are the internal team of professional education specialists serving a globally operating enterprise in defining and conduction training for technical staff.”

- “I am working as CEO of a network of public administration and deal as well with the coordination of (continuous) training activities.”

Respondents’ experiences with mobility (synopsis)

New aspects
First of all, the transition from the Life Long Learning Program LLP to Erasmus+ is reported having not been as easy as expected – for example: “For me there is not marked difference. It is basically the same approach to student mobility. However, thinking more about it, I find that Erasmus+ is more complicated, and that LLP was more flexible. There is much more complicated paperwork in Erasmus+, application processes go slower and it is more procedure-oriented.” For example, the current Learning Agreement is more challenging in Erasmus+
than in the LLP Programme. It is now a two-step process, while it was a single-step
process under LLP. “Under LLP you needed only a mobility project with recognition. When this
was done, the student was good to go. Now under Erasmus+, you need a mobility project + a list
of course at home + a list of course at the host institution and a firm contract.” This leads to
serious critique: “All this is not necessary. It makes the process unnecessarily more demanding.
There are too many signatures to add to documents. This has been discussed with colleagues from
other faculties in the University and they all agree to criticise the complication of the new
Erasmus+ mobility package.” Indeed, when asked for new aspects about mobility under the
Erasmus+ program respondents mention the Learning agreement as a central concern
and state that “New with Erasmus+ is the new LA with a pre-mobility recognition acceptance
which means a new effort and perhaps less flexibility.” In their opinions students “shall more
easily combine the international experience as part of the local programme”. However, some
concern is expressed concerning the opportunity to collect “additional experiences on both
subject and culture, which should be valued more as the European dimension needs a serious
personal experience.”

Strategic positions

Usually a Ministry of Education is acting as National Authority for Erasmus+ and “has
enforced a full delegation of all implementation responsibilities to a public National Agency in
charge of Higher education”. The National Authority “adopts a system perspective, which
means that it delegates functions and decisional powers to the National Agency regarding
Erasmus+ activities (except Youth programmes).” It also monitors “closely the developments of
Key Action 1 through frequent contacts e.g. with higher education institutions, educational
directors in the school sector.”

As well, a strategic approach is chosen in the HEI which means that a focus on specific
university needs is developed from a global perspective – for example the Erasmus
Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) “has been developed centrally and the local partners at
the departments were involved in a 2nd step for defining specific realisation measures. Thus there is
a serious administrative effort much higher than a small college can deal with where only one
person handles all issues by her or himself. Specific is a central versus decentral differentiation at
the larger university while as well internships are run by an independent Leonardo office that
cares for several universities.” Concerning relations with the National Agency, a respondent
mentions that they often “have no regular contacts with the National Agency in. It is the
Section for International Relations in my university which is in touch with them, and which
organises internal coordination meeting.”

At the beginning of the new program there was a huge demand for information from
users when Erasmus+ was launched in 2014. A National Agency in charge of higher
Education had the choice between two alternatives at the beginning of 2014: the first
alternative was “to refrain from disseminating partial information until all information was
made available by the EU, a choice which would have led to obvious problems e.g. a temporary
decline in EU funded mobility from and to the country”, while the second alternative, “which
we went for, was to disseminate as much information as we could, in order to address as soon as
possible frustrations among our users.”

In some cases, this starting phase went along with a strategic choice “to diffuse all readily
available information using all our communication channels, e.g. our Website, newsletters, and
information meetings with institutional actors in Higher Education, primary and secondary
education, VET and Adult Education. The general perception at HE-NA and among our users is
that we initialised the implementation process quite early despite partial shortage of information”.

PE 581.414
Recent observations emphasise that the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility “works very well in the country. Fortunately, outgoing German students are well interested in all states/regions in the Erasmus+ and beyond”. Yet there are differences reported between incoming and outgoing mobility, which is in some cases, intended (more incoming). While some regions are stronger in out (Northern Hemisphere, Latin America, and Russia etc.), there is no data yet for differentiation of subjects so far.

One respondent describes a “danger of moving mobility (for free movers) into the institutional model” which would, as a side-effect, empower the governments currently exhibiting autocratic tendencies to implement mobility arrangements selectively i.e., giving priority to students with certain ideological orientations or promoted by ideological networks: “I know that Hungary and Turkey are being very selective whenever they get a chance (casual but reliable talks with students and teachers).”

Specific aspects of mobility target groups in HEI, Public administration and industry

“PhDs educated at our university who have applied for ERC (European Research Council) starting grants have a low success rate, because of their “prior lack of mobility”. There is therefore an obvious connection between failure to obtain ERC grants and the low mobility track-record of applicants from our university. Another reason may be the strong occupational and financial terms for PhDs, e.g. in Norway: “a common explanation is rather paradoxical: most universities and national PhD candidates are recruited competitively in doctoral programmes and received a 3-year or 4-year grant and a status as employee at the university, including quite attractive salaries.” Such exceptional conditions for place some national PhDs enrolled in official doctoral programmes (excluding incoming quota PhDs from developing countries) in a clear privileged situation, compared with the vast majority of foreign PhD candidates for postdoc grants.

In industry, the main goal of participating in organised mobility is to “strengthen the development of the right competencies to serve customer requirements and needs in the respective industry world-wide in the best possible way.” The engineering degree addresses different competence levels and tends to overlook the available diversity, and as a result being an "engineer" from Germany does not represent any particular brand. The current ideal is to be an engineer graduated from a University of Applied Sciences. A differentiation of the quality of engineering education does not matter very much in Europe, but degrees from outside Europe may be of different (sometimes, lower) quality. However, there are very different initial levels of vocational training out (skilled workers versus technicians versus BA versus MA).

The institutional interest for professional development of public administration staff, as reported in an interview, is to “ensure an educational experience with contemporary issues after many years of work experience in order to stay open and up to date on an international dimension.” Such is realised without Erasmus+ funding in UK, Sweden, Germany (Berlin) and partly in the USA and Canada. The interviewee underscores that “personal interest is crucial in order that best development happens when people work in a different cultural and institutional context.”

Supporting technologies and measures

To some extent, the mobility activities need to be supported by specific measures and technologies in order to allow both, efficient administration and, also, systematic consultancy addressing the European dimension. Among all noteworthy activities, some main activities were mentioned:
the Erasmus Pro Initiative by the European Parliament which “has been started in order to investigate the extension of mobility in Initial Education and Training (IVET) to 6 months at least instead of currently 3 weeks only, which is a promising expectation especially for Vocational Education and Training (VET). “

- the so-called European tools for mobility, the European Qualifications Framework and all accompanying tools like Euro Pass, European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), and European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

- the inventories of mobility measures in the various EU Member States labelled as “mobility scoreboard” which include a mobility scoreboard for initial vocational education and training (IVET), existing since 2015 as scoreboard for both, Erasmus+ and MOVE and online in December 2016 via Cedefop and a similar scoreboard in the sector of Higher education already in 2012 by Eurydice.

Views of the respondents on the implementation of Erasmus+

2. How has the implementation of Erasmus+ KA1 been initiated during the start phase 2014-2016?

In the next section of the interviews and panel, respondents were asked to discuss their perception of how the implementation of the new Erasmus+ KA1 had been initiated during the start phase 2014-2016

Difficult start

When asked about their experience about the start phase of the implementation of Erasmus+ KA1 (2014-2016) respondents focused not only on the overall program, but also on national or local activities. Furthermore, the special partnership with the national agencies was usually perceived as fruitful, e.g. “cooperation with DAAD is fine, timely and well developed information and as well open for local experiences”.

Especially the “new strategic partnerships launched under the Erasmus+ programme Key Action 2 is perceived as a new dimension in our university”. There is a growing interest to engage in such cooperation in the university at different levels, as the institution, in which the respondent was employed, has not been participating in large co-operative programmes earlier, apart from e.g. intensive programmes. But respondents mention as well that there is “a growing pressure from policy and a general positive climate in the institution contributing to develop strategic partnerships.”

Another interviewee dwells on experiences dating back to 2014 recalling that “the transition phase to Erasmus+ in 2014 was rather chaotic. The mobility team at the and in HEIs all over Europe experienced a huge flow of information from the EU and the NA. We did not receive crucial information from the EU, nor the NA did (and could not always assist us). Not before June/July Autumn semester 2014 it was possible to go back to normal (this applies particularly to the implementation of Interinstitutional Agreements, Learning Agreements and Grant Agreements). Overall we used around 1 year to implement satisfactorily the legal and administrative structure of Erasmus+ ICM in our university. We have also used more time to adapt to KA2.”
Even though most voices are critical, some express a different and quite positive perception: “The change from LLP to Erasmus+ has not been brutal in any aspect from my position. Most mobility schemes were indeed effective before Erasmus+, e.g. PhD mobility was possible, we had Staff Exchanges, etc. Perhaps the central Educational Administration has another opinion. From our position there is not much difference.”

However, the overall situation was differently perceived, at the beginning the Erasmus+ started delayed with information about practical implementation: “2014 has been a catastrophe”. Thus in average the transition process from Erasmus to Erasmus+ in 2014-2015 is described as “a road paved with many difficulties” as the new instruments from student and teacher mobility started to be implemented, several shortcomings and obstacles emerged quickly, “which added significant burdens to the individuals responsible to implement the new mobility framework.”

For a large HEI with approximately 800 contracts this was not manageable, especially when considering specific process needs like summer vacations need to be considered (then students and staff are abroad) and realisation became almost impossible: “As a consequence, the number of mobilities went down but now (2016) the program is working well.”

Administrative Efforts
Another concern is the increased administrative and statistical effort: “In comparison, the administrative effort in Erasmus ( LLP) compared with the new Erasmus+ effort has grown quite a lot - learning agreements are more comprehensive, two reports by students (one online survey and an experience report) were introduced additionally.” However, one may find a positive feedback as well “Thanks to a close and high-quality cooperation with the NA, our university was able to overcome the initial implementation obstacles. As the new framework Spring 20145 and Autumn 2014 was not totally implementable, the NA allowed us to ‘patch’ by applying the old Erasmus rule while waiting for better instruments. However, the communication overhead was rather huge during this period.”

As well it seems that implementation activities are still “under construction” when respondents report that access to online reporting is new (the online mobility tool) and is about starting only during 2016. Still, “there is no opportunity for producing our own statistics on the basis of those data, but the local University has its own management program (“Move on”) to administer which is financed by the local university itself” (German enterprise with new British hub / there is another software by an Austrian company). Online Linguistic Support (OLS) management is organised by another portal (which is not linked with Move on), students register themselves.

Usually larger Educational actors employ specialized staff dealing with the mobility: “All in all, there is a group of persons that handle the different efforts (1 fulltime coordinator, 1 50% mobility officer, a part time contract for IT Admin, further staff for admin with 40% for detailed programs e.g. staff mobility)”

National coordination and institutional specialisation
To some extent national specifications are interesting, i.e.: “New [to us] is the horizontal approach in Germany with 4 different stakeholders, but fortunately all institutions are located in Bonn, incl. the national Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung BMBF) as coordinating National Authority. Inter-sectoral collaboration has improved but has still usual limitations. Interaction between NAs, DG EAC works well via
BMBF as coordinating national authority, most of the publications etc. is integrated, joint approaches can be developed (for example concerning migrants).” What is noteworthy as well is that “from the HEIs perspective there is no interaction between sectors observed so far. An exception might concern VET-related programmes due to their linkage between teacher training and vocational education institutes.”

Typically, the Ministry of Education has enforced a “full delegation of all implementation responsibilities to non-public HE-NA”. Seen as a whole, the Erasmus+ phase stretching from 2014 to 2016 amounts to a “strengthening of a vertical delegation model in the implementation of Erasmus+ and other mobility and cooperation programmes in the educational sector in the country”. The general perception at responsible HE-NA and among their users is that they “initialised the implementation process quite early despite partial shortage of information. Already the implementation of sub-actions managed by other organisations, which are now part of our Erasmus+ mandate”. The mandate was given to HE-NA already in 2006, with one notable exception, the Leonardo programme that remains managed until the end of 2013 by another institute. It is as well usual that a HE-NA does “not have regularly scheduled planning meetings with the Ministry but tends to organise meetings with it when new implementation phases call for close communication, for example as so-called dialogue meetings”. Meetings are used to improve work programme’s content: “Harmonisation happens via two meetings annually and numerous consultative working groups of all NAs work is a fine but important measure and Erasmus projects are often warmly welcomed by the recent staff.”

Concerning Erasmus+ there is a serious concern that the micromanagement done by the National Agencies is problematic because of the additional bureaucracy and its, in the opinion of the interviewee, unnecessary influence (“Here the question is: why is it done in this way?”) As well from Erasmus (LLP) to Erasmus+ “improvements in the practice are not as easily visible but the higher level of micromanagement needed makes it harder to complete it” (i.e., the applications or concrete actions) – for example the ECHE application itself is a challenge for smaller educational institutes. Eventually the “diversity of institutions is reduced compared to the previously high institutional diversity when this rather been encouraged.”

Concerning motivation for institutional participation in mobility it is said that “an important development in Higher Education in the country is the adoption of budgetary incentives for institutions depending on participation in Erasmus+”.

Specific aspects of the programme with regards to the target audiences
Given the management structure for the implementation of Key Action 1 (from DG EAC to National Authorities, then to National Agency, to Institution, and to Student), the mobility team at the respective university “can report positive experiences in linking upward to the NA, and downward to faculties and departments at the respective university”. There is little direct contact with the Ministry and none with DG EAC, except for events at the invitation of the NA. Information from NA may arrive late, not due to malfunctioning in the NA, but due to late arrival of information to the NA from the EU. Occasionally the NA “does not know either”.

Based on Marie Curie PhD mobility from and to the respective university, the ratio of inbound versus outbound mobility “is strongly in disfavour of our university’s candidates and strongly in favour of inbound mobility candidates”. The last planned inbound versus outbound Marie Curie PhD mobility ratio from sample faculties was: “Psychology 10/3; Natural Sciences 32/3; Law 5/1; Humanities 5/1; Social Science 5/1; Medicine-Dentistry 20/3”.


“Students report frequently wrong data to the EU and nothing is done neither to secure the quality of the feedback, nor control the veracity of the reporting. There is a need to improve the quality assurance of the student feedback to the EU.”

The possibility to have two mobility stays abroad under Erasmus+, as opposed to one stay under LLP is a very positive innovation. Respondents experience “more demand in higher education for practice-oriented mobility – internships, work placements, at all faculties”. Recognition of international qualifications requires review by national authorities. For the industry the challenge is a renewed competency assessment, i.e. “what role rankings play by the company in the selection decision for a university by students and the selection of students”. Significant are industry specific qualifications (for specific training) and the use of test methods for detecting certain dispositions. As well the industry education specialists “need to understand what is the role of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) or other qualifications frameworks and how to identify skills as starting points of an assignment in the Qualifications Framework not only on a purely formal structure?”

“All EU budget allocations for the implementation of Erasmus+ in the country have been used, e.g. in higher education”. Some respondents report having additional budget resources they may use for meeting the demand for state funds to finance education. Another respondent states that “the current focus is on staff mobility in higher education. However, all budget means are already used”. School staff mobility is also limited by budget constraints. “We have also a current focus on Knowledge Alliances and Strategic Partnerships, but this is not part of Key Action 1.”

There were expectations linked with the Commission’s announcement of a 40% budget increase for Erasmus+: “We attend budget meetings in Brussels about Erasmus+. We attended also diverse meetings with the Commission during the transition from LLP to Erasmus+. However, since we are an EFTA and not EU country, the Ministry is not participating in budget negotiations with the Commission. There some amount of frustration in the Ministry due to the fact that it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which communicates with the EU, but not the Ministry of Education”. The respondent from the National Authority feels that they are “on the side-line of the central processes which affect Erasmus+. We get the bill from Brussels, but we do not take part in the central decision-making.” To deal with this situation the National Agency has regular meetings under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to keep abreast with the recent developments. “All negotiations about Erasmus+ are managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs” and such negotiations deal only with the amount of administrative costs. “The effects of the fluctuation of the national currency relative to the EURO is part of the equation that needs to be solved” while national projections are based on the EU’s Programme proposal adopted in 2011 or 2012, “which offered commitments but no firm payments for running the programme”. Currently budget allocations and expenses incurred for Erasmus+ are adjusted according to the yearly GDP level. “So the issue, from the perspective of the government is: do we want to pay the bill or not?”

Political framing in Europe and beyond

Higher Education benefits indeed from a more flexible and less limiting regime, i.e. the Erasmus+ Charter, “after a Higher Education Institution signs it, is not evaluated again but accepted largely as is”. While the intention is to create networks pooling together strong partners, “neither the NA nor, most of the time, HEIs have the capacity to assess the quality and
sustainability of these networks. Nevertheless, the NA carries out every year an internal quality check of applications for mobility grants.”

The NA supports very much the fact that Erasmus+ is building on two pillars: mobility schemes and cooperation. However, it is observed that “the conditions set by the EU Commission for the diverse sectors targeted by Key Action 1 are unequal. The Higher Educational sector enjoys a high degree of flexibility and formalities are reduced to a strict minimum. However, other sectors, e.g. primary and secondary education, VET School, Adult Education (AD) and Youth are submitted to a much more control-oriented regime. This may create practical obstacles for mobilising e.g. schools, companies, teachers, workers and ultimately learners. The VET sector are experiencing a higher degree of flexibility with the implementation of the VET Mobility Charter”.

Global international networks in industry have “no specific usage of Erasmus+ because of non-European heritage.” However, there are specific programmes by a national organization for senior managers among Australia, USA and Canada. Within such programmes “Overall, only part of the contact (some time) is dealing with international mobility.”

**European Policy Dimension**

In practice, the implementation model of Erasmus+ follows a dual sequence. The first sequence – the decentralised sequence – of tasks goes through the National Authorities to the National Agencies (which need though to comply with internal control rules set by the Commission), and from the National Agencies to institutions and to the ultimate beneficiaries, e.g. mobile grant holders. The second sequence – the centralised sequence – is for parts of the Erasmus+ Programme that cannot or should not be decentralised, and is managed centrally from the Commission, through DG EAC acting with and through its Executive Agency (EACEA). In the opinion of a panellist from DG EAC,

“there may be pragmatic reasons to wish to reorganize aspects of the implementation, in particular decisions to recentralise, or conversely, decentralise activities. Reorganisation may be an option in case of substantial increase of budget appropriations to Erasmus+ and subsequent amplification of activities. However, this is not likely to happen, as the Council and the Parliament have instituted a double implementation system (centralised and decentralised modes). The approach of DG EAC is to keep at a national level the implementation of aspects that are closest to end-users. For large-scale actions like mobility or cooperation that involve a large numbers of potential grass-root activities, the approach is to manage these actions centrally through the Executive Agency.”

“Seen from the perspective of the Commission, there is a clear logic underlying this system, which should be maintained more or less as it is today. There is a well-functioning network of 60 National Agencies. The Commission has a positive feedback about the way the National Agencies manage the allocated funds within the framework of the financial regulations for Erasmus+. From a purely mechanical perspective, the current implementation structure works fine. In the opinion of DG EAC this works well for the beneficiaries as this approach is the closest possible to end-users.”

There are also other actions which are either smaller actions or which may not make sense to spread among many countries, and there are actions which have a
high political interest for the Commission, and can be managed more efficiently by the Executive Agency. It is the appreciation of the DG EAC that the dual approach described above is both cost-effective and politically appropriate. However, when and if the Programme budget is or will be increasing, as announced, it may make sense, hypothetically, given the money allocated to for every member state, to decentralise further activities to the national level. Usually such reallocations of responsibilities occur between two programmers, but not at mid-Programme stage. Concretely, if the limited budget increased dramatically and a realistic substantial increase of the volume of mobilities funded under Key Action 1 could be implemented, it would nevertheless not be legally feasible for the Commission to recentralize or decentralize activities, as DG EAC is bound to implement all aspect of the Programme in line with legal regulations, which prescribe very clearly what should be managed centrally and what should be managed decent rally. Substantial reorganisation is, in the experience of DG EAC, not an internal issue to discuss at this stage, as DG EAC is satisfied with the current implementation regulations. National Agencies are operating only at a national level, and deliver what the Commission expect from them. They have an obligation to deliver quantitative and qualitative results. As of today, DG EAC has no indications emanating from beneficiaries that the National Agency system may pose problems. There have been only occasional difficulties which have been solved. E.g. a temporary suspension of a Programme in Greece in the Youth sector only was enforced.

Such problems, however, are very rare in the history of Erasmus+ and former Programmes, as they occur once or twice in one or two Programme countries within a whole Programme period. In the case of Greece, the nature of the problems that have been addressed do not justify revising the global implementation model of Erasmus+

Some criticism has been voiced by European MPs that the DG EAC or the Executive Agency is not close enough to people. DG EAC has also received criticism from users requesting that the treatment given by the National Agencies should be more homogeneous and that recentralisation of services and procedures would secure fair treatment.

However, DG EAC defends the view that the current implementation model offers the best possible distribution of tasks and functions. Moreover, there are no financial means, nor resources to recentralize activities.”

Migration and the cut-off with Switzerland
It is described that the new special needs focus of Migration can be adopted as a cross-sectoral approach, i.e. Erasmus+ opens for possibilities to address the recent needs can be addressed – what happens indeed. However, “the recent effort of up to 400 million EUR is not addressed directly even though it would be possible”. Fortunately, many intercultural issues addressed in other projects can be re-used.

Another concern is that Switzerland has officially resigned from Erasmus. However, exchanges go on as the Swiss-European Mobility Programme is still functioning; mobility support is provided by the Swiss partner universities.
As well, it is argued in a neo-institutionalist manner, concerning socialisation and European integration, that the “Re-institutionalising will neither be serving the goal of promoting European integration through mobility because socialisation into European values happens through direct contact with the EU in institutions”. In other words, there is almost no opportunity left for applying directly and getting grants, corresponding with EU institutions, and experiencing their impartiality and sense of the rule of law, contracting with EU institutions, working in EU-funded activities that facilitate contact with EU institutions etc.

Organisational and financial aspects

3. Which aspects of the allocation of financial means may contribute to or inhibit the implementation of KA1? How has your institution in organisational and financial aspects contributed positively or negatively to the implementation of Erasmus+ KA1?

- eLearning and distance learning?
- Budget issues?

When asked about their experiences with financial, organisational and online learning aspects, respondents did comment many details, which are sorted below into organisational versus financial, whereas the first synopsis includes statements about the online learning aspects as well as visa affairs and migration aspects.

Organisational aspects

“With Erasmus+ we experience as National Authority that managing the communication with Brussels and the National Agency is a challenge. We have a huge responsibility to implement and monitor Erasmus+ in the country, but we do not take part in the governance of the Programme. The flow of decisions and key information goes directly from Brussels to the National Agency, and not to the National Authority.” Respondents have to take the “responsibility for the whole setup”. In retrospect, under LPP, the National Authority occupied a much more central position in the national governance of the Programme. These recent developments, focusing on the DG EAC – National Agency communication are linked with new monitoring rules enforced Commission. “This has created to some confusion in the National Authority. By all means, our relation to the National Agency and the Commission is constructive. However, it is worth stating that, today, the flow of communication goes from Brussels to the National Agency”. As a consequence, while the communication between the Commission and the National Agency is satisfactory, it is “not sufficiently inclusive between the Commission and the National Authority”.

“Erasmus+ means much more administrative effort.” This is the main finding on the administrative dimension in all the sectors – but does not only focus on statistics but moreover on communication and information needed to reach and mobility the target groups. For example, it is described:

- “The university should spend more efforts, because it is not completely clear why students are not especially interested.” Obviously, there are limitations in certain disciplines like teacher training studies where students have a strong focus on local or national markets. Most mobile students are those who already move to a different city in the country when beginning their studies. Linguistic and intercultural competency is high in economics, philosophy, languages, but some engineering departments show very low interest. Recognition is partly still an issue in motivation for mobility.
• “Lasting commitment to accept a high number of incoming students and PhD candidates in our university irrespective of low outbound mobility.” PhD mobility is not handled directly from the administration, only post-doc mobility, as PhD mobility is mainly delegated to project coordinators, e.g. leading scientist. The PhD coordinator in our university comes into function only after the selection has taken place and is responsible for handling incoming PhDs from abroad. “Our university has rejected a proposal to impose a mandatory 3-6 months stay abroad for doctoral programme PhD candidate despite several attempts. There is a requirement to secure full funding in our university before accepting inbound PhD mobility candidates.”

• “The approach in our university is multi-instrumental, as we tend to combine in the best possible ways a varied spectrum of agreements, financial and legal resources to offer student and PhD candidates attractive mobility packages.” Erasmus+ KA1 is an important but not the only instrument used. The university also tends to integrate student and research mobility together, where possible.

• Respondents explain having succeeded to manage a large spectrum of mobility instrument ranging from ‘simple’ bilaterally agreed student mobility (e.g. with a university in New Zealand) to complicated packages combining Erasmus+ ICM (student and teacher exchanges), bilateral agreements, research cooperation, institutionally funded PhD mobility and e.g. curriculum development. For example, programmes and frameworks complementary to Erasmus+ Key Action 1 in Norway are the EURASIA Programme, UFORSK, SPIRE Seed money, etc. Erasmus+ KA1 also contributes to open up new areas for mobility e.g. Tunisia, and Canada while mobility from Cameroon is covered by national and local money. “So, in some cases Erasmus+ ICM is the core engine, in other cases Erasmus+ ICM is complementary.”

• In one case it is described that there is an unresolved tension between the long-term goals for student mobility in a university and the financial, legal and administrative environment within which Erasmus+ ICM operates. i.e.: “As Erasmus+ is functioning currently Erasmus+ ICM contracts offer only a 1-year window for grant allocations. Every year calls for new grant packages are issued from the EU (approximately 2 Mio € each year), however the ICM contracts have a 24 months’ horizon, while the beneficiaries can opt for an 18 months or 24 months long project period with the National Agency.” Obviously the financial, legal and administrative dimensions need to be harmonised better, as this leads to too much uncertainty for the main beneficiaries of these grants, and can demotivate HEIs, particularly outside the EU-EEA. Additionally, Erasmus Mundus had/has a 3 years’ project duration, while Erasmus+ ICM has a shorter duration. This is bewildering for all stakeholders.

• In an Asian university, the interviewee states that “overall, some Joint Degrees Programmes (Joint Masters, Joint PhDs) implemented are well managed from both, the European and the Asian side”.

• One of the universities interviewed manages quite efficiently to encourage applicants to keep in the race for ICM grants. The politically motivated imbalance in allocation of Erasmus+ mobility budgets between various partner country regions, and comparatively low level of grant allocations to regions and countries with whom the university cooperates has a long and rich cooperation history.
(e.g. East Africa, South Africa) diminishes the attractively of Erasmus+ ICM among solid international actors in the university employing an interviewee.

Unavoidable lags in the allocation process reduce further the time window available to students and teachers involved in Erasmus+ ICM. The start of activities does rarely coincide precisely with the start of the grant period, which quite frequently, as it takes time to mobilise all partners and students, tends to stretch past the end of the grant period.

“There is a general understanding among the ICM team in the university that the EU does not want too big partnerships. This creates in many cases problems for the university, as we need to engage in cooperation with many partners.”

Evaluation of Erasmus+ ICM applications at national level are handled very differently from country to country in Programme countries: “It is difficult to see the logics of evaluation of applications which target the same countries, as each application may get totally different evaluators and there is no synergy at evaluation stage to pick the most promising projects region wise or country-wise”. E.g. in France and Norway the National Agencies evaluate applications under different conditions. There is a need to clarify such issues for each country and at EU level.

**Visa affairs and migration aspects**

A positive sign is that in another case former obstacles due to immigration regulations for mobile students coming to the country have been removed recently. E.g. strict rules requiring incoming students to document a minimum personal cash reserve prior to getting visa and stay permit in the country have been removed for non-EEA students. As well, a National Authority considers “that developing complementary national initiatives in synergy with Erasmus+ is very important for the Higher Education sector in the country. It has communicated new initiatives targeting refugees and migrants, which have been taken by heads of state. However, nothing has concretised yet.”

Regarding the Youth Programme activities (former Youth in Action under LLP) there is an “intense discussion going on, as the EU wants a unique National Agency dealing with all sectors, while the Ministry of Children and Equality wants a separate National agency for Youth.”

**Online learning aspects**

eLearning and distance learning are seen as highly relevant issues in the new funding lines. i.e. Online Linguistic Support (OLS) services for language learning and testing. As well the programme management in the respective university is completely online – which plays a huge role for those who are funded and as well for the management and administration of mobility activity.

Even though webinars are used often, “virtual mobility, however, no replacement for physical mobility” and blended virtual and physical mobility, i.e. including virtual methods before, during and after physical mobility, is preferred. As a number of Key Action 2 projects address eLearning and blended learning topics, they could contribute to evolve new variants of blended mobility.

In another case, an interviewee states that “eLearning and distance learning is not an issue, as there are no specific offers.” However, most of the information for students used is online
and digitally available. A highly advanced course is the international online group work in business informatics.

“We are developing the concept of ‘internationalisation at home’ as part of our general strategy for Higher Education. Virtual schemes will then contribute to support our goal to increase mobility in higher education in the country. The EU, through Erasmus+, formulates clear objectives to increase mobility in Europe and elsewhere. Promoting virtual mobility with the same intensity may counteract physical mobility. This relationship needs to be reflected over more critically.” However, “even though online learning is very useful it is always only a part of overall and not a replacement of it.”

Some respondents are rather enthusiastic when stating that “eLearning and virtual mobility is the future of education but students still need to meet physically”. Here it is suggested that it might be interesting to compare the U.S.A. and Australia linkages of the EU education versus other commercial national programmes.

Also, from a global academic perspective (i.e. concerning mobility between Asia and Europe) respondents express their interest for “using a Virtual mobility” which currently implemented only and, to a limited extent, as shared video lectures including scholars abroad. Yet, especially “for students from another continent this form of mobility helps quite a lot preparing physical exchange in a better quality.” Given the explosion of Skype conferencing in professional and private spheres, this is hardly a revolutionary breakthrough.

The role of digitisation and virtual mobility need to be estimated more systematically. In industry, it is explained that “here it is also about remote services, industry 4.0”. Important are job-related flexibility, individual acquisition of knowledge and the role of knowledge transfer. Digital Learning in the form of web-based training and eLearning are perceived as increasingly important. The problems that remain is e.g. the cost of linguistic adaptation (cp. the translation in 6 languages in OLS). In addition, online collaboration is only slightly accepted when it is recorded, as recording and global diffusion, e.g. on YouTube, challenges cultural values and raise concerns about e.g. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and integrity. The efforts to be deployed to allow professional media production would be humanly and financially arduous. In contrast with ‘heavy’ professional production, e.g. MOOCs, TedTalk-like settings, online cooperation is more event based (and is used in a peer-to-peer context, in supervision, restricted workshops, etc.), e.g. in a webinar manner. The recommended conclusion from vocational and adult education in industry is that e-learning should “serve those requirements which prove economically viable employees who seek challenges and are not to be frustrated.”

**Financial aspects**

Technically it is confirmed that the “budget [allocated to mobilities] is generally quite clear but, still, there are concerns regarding the transfer of money to the partners by the National Agency to the coordinators… However, such means that the NA may save efforts, but problems may arise for smaller partners (if those smaller partners do not know how much is available). As well, it seems that a main effort goes into the production of confirmation sheets and collecting bills instead of focusing on the real action”. A respondent adds: “So the question arises if collecting bills is the focused EU policy instead?”

With regards to the expectation linked with announcements of the Erasmus+ budget increase, a respondent from DG EAC mentions that
“the European Commission has communicated very much about the 40% budget increase from LLP to Erasmus+ but this increase has not yet materialised (nevertheless in an interviewed university the Erasmus+ budget has improved for both teachers and students). The Commission has made full use of the budget appropriation for Erasmus+ in all concerned activity sectors. There are clear positive indicators: e.g. the overall number of mobilities has increased since the start of Erasmus+ in 2014 and new services, which were not provided under LLP, e.g. Online Language Service (OLS), have been added. The key message from DG EAC is that despite a limited increase in the budget, the Commission has managed to increase the number of outputs of the various Erasmus+ Actions in all sectors, combined with improvement of the quality for the beneficiaries.

When looking into the figures in detail it shows that according to the planning of the Erasmus+ budget framework, the budget in the first three years of the Programme remains comparable to its predecessors. While there has been no decrease in the amount of allocations, there has been no significant increase of the budget for use in Key Action 1. From 2014 to 2016, the KA1 budget has increased by 2%. However, for School Education KA1 shows a marked increase compared to the LLP Comenius In-Service Training action: from ca. 27 million EUR in 2013 to approximately 40 million EUR in 2014.

Indeed, the decision to spread the 40% increase over the duration of Erasmus+ Programmes (7 years from 2014 to 2020) is a key factor for the evaluation of the implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 for the period 2014-2016 and for projections of future activities from 2017 to 2020. External factors, e.g. the financial crisis in Europe and elsewhere, have played a role in the decision not to give a substantial increase of the budget before 2017. This leaves Erasmus+ with an increase of 2% to 3% every year for 2014-2015 and, possibly, 12%-13% more in the remaining years. The Commission has communicated frequently and proactively with the European Parliament to explain the implications of the budgetary policy for the Programme for implementing activities, as well as implications for short-term planning and long-term projections.”

However, since Erasmus+ delivers only a part of the financing needed for international educational mobility, it is obvious that “there is more request for budget allocations due to the number of applications in Europe (2.5 times higher) and internationally (4 times higher)”. Thus from individual perspective Erasmus was and is always seen as additional financing (not full financing) as comments collected illustrate this clearly:

- In Spain, the National Agency states: “For example, complementary funds from the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport for Erasmus+ Higher Education student mobility for the academic year 2015-2016 have been increased by 33,33%. As in the past years, national co-funding is not entrusted to the National Agency but it is directly managed by the Ministry itself. However, the main objective of the funding changed as from the 2014 call with the aim of increasing the number of participants, since the new grants in the Programme Guide offered a higher amount, which resulted in a significant decrease of the total number of awarded student mobility activities by the National Agency (-

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49 In a subsequent comment forwarded to one of the authors, following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016 at DG EAC, a representative from DG EAC comment the statements in this paragraph: “This is correct overall. However, for School Education KA1 shows a marked increase compared to the LLP Comenius In-Service Training action: from ca. 27 million EUR in 2013 to ca. 40 million EUR in 2014.”
25.76%) in the 2014 call. Moreover, the national call sets out quality criteria, such as, academic performance and a minimum language proficiency equivalent to a B2 level of the CEFR in the language of instruction. The amounts of the Ministry grants are 100 EUR higher than the ones set by the National Agency from European funding. It is expected that more than 12,300 students will benefit from this call. If one adds the number of student mobility activities awarded by the National Agency (33,283) the potential number of the awarded student mobility activities in the academic year 2015/2016 (over 45,000) will be significantly higher than in the previous call (around 40,000).” Also, “As well, students may receive additional grants from Autonomous Communities (Regional Governments) and from other sources, either public or private.”

- At an Asian university, obstacles to mobilising professional and students are mainly limited availability of funding in form of grants or scholarships. Usually both grants from national and international programs are used for sending students abroad to Europe, however not including Erasmus+ finances.

- Another aspect is the situation of inbound coming students to Norway with Erasmus+ mobility grants, where the NAs in the home country of the incoming student decides about the size of the grant for Norway. Here the receiving country does have no influence on the grant size for these students. “Indeed, under LLP, we operated with maximum grant sizes in VE, which could be, if necessary, be cut until 50%, while under Erasmus+ the Commission has not set a lowest limit for the grant there is no lower limit for such cuts.”

- Sometimes no loans are financed (as it is not allowed), but in other national programmes a financing scheme for a whole M.A. and B.A. programme loans is offered.

Another aspect is the integration of the financial support into the nationally different financial schemes, concerning for example:

- The grant situation for VET mobility may illustrate some aspect of the financial mechanisms that are used to support the mobility of apprentices under Erasmus+ in Germany. Here mobility grants for apprentices have undergone an 80% cut. The reason invoked by the German National Authorities is that these apprentices keep their salary while on mobility stay. The remaining 20% of the grant allocation is considered then as a “supplementary financial contribution to additional expenses incurred while being abroad”. However, such cuts have not been enforced in Norway where apprentices today receive the full grant. Nevertheless, “an internal discussion is going on in the NA whether such cuts should be practiced in Norway too. This apparent generosity can be explained by the fact that there is a satisfactory funding situation in Norway for VET mobility”.

- The same situation applies to student mobility in Higher Education. Norway has one of the most generous financing schemes for studying at home and abroad. It is administered by the National Fund for Financing Studies which grants loans and stipends to students. “A regular outbound student in Norway (regular means: enrolled in a Norwegian HEI with full right to be financed by National Fund) obtaining an Erasmus+ mobility grant will keep his or her basic financing (loan and stipend) while being abroad.”
• For outbound Spanish HE students the calculation principle used for fixing the grant amount to foreign HEIs is the level of funds allocated to the Spanish NA and the expected number of mobilities. That decision is taken according to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide: “The amounts will be defined by the NA in agreement with the National Authority. Since the start of Erasmus+ grant amounts have been stable during the three call for proposals”.

• “Payment of grants from the EU is not effectuated before August, well after the candidates have left for the host HEI. The NA issues a grant confirmation letter in May, but thanks to the financial willingness of our university the money is advanced and paid in time to the outbound student.”

• In the case of Germany for example the highest amount of subsistence is spent for those teaching staff who opted for HE in Germany.

The following statement from an interviewee can be used a conclusion:

“We are very enthusiastic about Erasmus+ Global Mobility Programme and Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM). Earlier, our university welcomed many incoming students receiving grants based on bilateral agreements. These grants were often not sufficient to offer these exchange students decent living conditions in our city. As a consequence, our university has decided in 2015 not to use Erasmus+ ICM grant for outbound students, as these have quite good financial terms through the National Fund for Financing Studies while only inbound student to our university will be awarded Erasmus+ Global Mobility grants. Moreover, given the high cost of living in this country, the allowance allocated to administrative expenses has been ceded to the incoming students in 2015 and we hope to keep up doing this in 2016.”

Aspects that need further attention or intervention

4. Which new aspects, internal or external, will call for new initiatives, awareness, or political intervention?
• Demands and suggestions for improvement?

In a next section of the interviews and panels respondents were asked to discuss new aspects of the Erasmus+ program they observed internally or externally which would call for new initiatives, awareness, or even political intervention. Such should as well be the opener for addressing new demands and deliver suggestions for improvement of the action and the respective measures.

Integration into the curriculum and promotion of Erasmus+ knowledge

Respondents did explain first that

“A more open consideration of mobility as additional phase in Higher Education degree programs should be given. The more an inclusion into the regular studies is forced the more such might become an elite activity. A general integration of an ‘abroad-semester’ would be principally possible but is logistically and economically a huge effort. Yet not all students would be able to use such international mobility due to their competence. All in all, a more strategic approach would be most perfect – for example internship versus abroad in one semester or modules etc. in the case of one department, an obligatory international mobility has been stopped by the respective students.”
A staff training seminar\textsuperscript{50} pointed out several weaknesses relative to the language proficiency requirements for outbound students from the 12 participating HEIs. E.g. there was a high degree of uncertainty among participants concerning how the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) should be integrated in the linguistic tests. “There was yet a consensus that many students have poor linguistic skills at mobility start. It was agreed at EUNSTS that the next step would be the further analysis of Key Action 1 during the local Staff Training which would be sent to the EC on behalf of the Network.”

Respondents endeavour also to

“motivate the school owner (e.g. the municipalities in primary education, and the province for secondary education and VET to promote Erasmus+ mobility (as well as other programmes) e.g. in school, secondary education institutions and vocational education institution. NA decided during the LLP period that only the institutional owner, e.g. municipality or region, could be the formal applicant of mobility grants on behalf of the institutions involved.”

\textbf{Separation of the education sectors in Erasmus+}

“Separation of the education sectors is useful – even though collaboration is wished and positive, i.e. the horizontal aspect did lead to much administrative work which doesn’t fit the capabilities of all the sectors representatives.”

Still further decentralisation should be supported (Key Action 2 Capacity Building in Higher Education, Key Action 1 Joint Master Degrees) and as well the mobility budget and especially decentral project budget (Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships) should be enlarged further, but as well the structural funding needs to be financed.

Even though respondents in education sectors show weak awareness of the neighbouring sectors opportunities and functioning, the cooperation between HEIs and industry is growing rapidly, and there is a huge interest in internships (Erasmus+ helps a lot regarding employability).

\textbf{Administrative procedures}

“There is a clear need to introduce more flexibility in all aspects of grant preparation and application processes”. Administrative procedures and requirements need particularly to be simplified, so that users may not opt out altogether from Erasmus+ mobility in primary, secondary, adult education, and VET. In VET not all applicants do document the same level of competencies and previous mobility. “Therefore, in order to obtain a VET Mobility Charter an institution is required to have fulfilled three mobility projects involving VET mobility before being awarded a VET Charter, which is decided by the Commission.”

“The country should impose some basic requirements for outbound mobility at PhD level for doctoral programme PhD candidates”. Erasmus+ PhD mobility is reported to be part of the solution. Legal pressure or incentives – no final policy has been adopted but the EU “should resolve obvious disparities in Erasmus+ mobility grant sizes”. For example, Norwegian outbound students to Spain receive substantially higher grants, than incoming Spanish

\textsuperscript{50} ERASMUS+ UTRECHT NETWORK STAFF TRAINING SEMINAR (EUNSTS) held at UiB 21-23 October 2015
students, despite the fact that cost of living in Norway is significantly higher than in Spain.

“Recognition of international qualifications requires review by national authorities”. From the industry’s perspective remains the question as the new competency assessment is, “what role rankings play by the company in the selection decision for a university by students and the selection of students. Significant are an industry specifics of the qualifications (for specific training) and the use of test methods are used for detecting certain dispositions?” Furthermore, it is still unclear what is the role of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) or other qualifications frameworks and how one may identify skills as starting points for an assignment in the Qualifications Framework.

**Language related aspects**

“Testing of language skills of outbound students has been and is still, and will probably always be a problem as external factors limit the efficiency of the procedures.”

| “The current “spring-scenario” illustrates this point: we register candidates for outbound mobility in February. The candidates for departure in August get a feedback on acceptance, selection in February. Final acceptance is sent in March mid-late February with indications given to the student about which HEIs they can apply for. Meanwhile, there is an official requirement that the candidate must prove at least a B2 language proficiency level in the host country teaching language. However, the proficiency test issued by the EU\(^51\) is not released before June after the student has left. The NA want to have the test licenses much earlier but does gain acceptance. As a consequence, the student takes e.g. a language course in June, long time after arrival. OLS has the responsibility for language testing. There is need to improve the scheduling of language tests. The Autumn Semester is the most negatively affected, while things work somewhat better for the Spring Semester. There is an antagonism in the system because the OLS-licenses follow the allocation of the annual assignment for projects in Key Action 1, which are given to the institutions in May-June for the following academic year. This means students leaving for exchange in autumn semester cannot be tested until June at the earliest.”
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 |\(^51\) http://erasmusplusols.eu|
User criticism and evaluation aspects

“Of some interest is the validation of early stage developments through abroad experience and detection of new approaches and technologies. Even though much is possible online the face-to-face-experience is much more comprehensive.”

The main goal of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 for higher education has been to remove barriers to mobility, e.g. remove financial constraints, language barriers, or lack of recognition. Additionally, the Commission is deploying efforts to increase the recognition of stays abroad for all targeted sectors, not only higher education. An additional goal is to add flexibility to Staff Mobility in higher education. E.g. the Commission has removed the 5 days’ constraints of LLP and reduced the minimum duration of staff exchange to 2 days, while keeping the minimum 8 hours of teaching to ensure impact of this action. User criticism of the staff exchange regulation in Erasmus+ (minimum 8 hours of teaching and 2 days abroad) has been expressed, e.g. university teachers say they cannot consider teaching a minimum 8 hours during as part of two days stay exclusive travel time. Moreover, criticism has been voiced concerning the underfunding of real travel (flat rates are used), stay and subsistence expenses for plane travels in Europe and elsewhere. Many teachers in HEIs fear they may have to pay an important part of the expense incurred to carry out teaching assignments abroad from their own pocket. Not all higher education institutions have financial means to or are willing to add funds on top of the Erasmus+ mobility grant.

The Commission will evaluate staff exchange in higher education and consider these aspects. It maintains, however, the view that a real flexibility has been introduced by reducing the minimum duration of stays abroad for staff from 5 to 2 days. A similar flexibility has been introduced for higher education student traineeships, where the minimum duration has been reduced from 3 to 2 months. The intention of such a reduction was to address the situation in some disciplines, e.g. medicine, where students are bound by their local curriculum. Again the objective has been to increase the accessibility to the programme, to not exclude any discipline. This new regime may or may not be optimal in all cases. However, such decisions are guided by the awareness that Erasmus+ has limited resources. Key Action 1 is financing between 15% and 50% of the number of applicants for mobility grants in higher education. So the recurrent issue is: “where is it wise to use resources in order to get more impact on the users?” Erasmus+ cannot fund all mobility in higher education and other sectors. The Commission allocates therefore money where it expects the best impact.”

52 The call for tender for the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation (covering all the fields) has been launched on 29 January 2016 and closed on 15 March 2016. The study will start end of May 2016 to finish end of 2017.
Knowledge about official target figures among respondents

5. Which early knowledge about the realism of the official target figures (individual, institutional beneficiaries; regions; sectors) can be learned from that experience?

Erasmus+ starting phase and continuous operation can be estimated by statistics. Yet it is expected that those statistics are not always complete of accessible especially when established first time or for a completely renewed measure. Thus participants in reviews and panel who have first-hand experience with their different institutions to discuss the realism of the official target figures. As well the question was addressed what can be learned from that experience.

Statistics of different origin and with different scope

A first insight is that besides the European level statistics “There are local statistics because besides Erasmus there are many more (bilateral, Fulbright, DAAD, etc., some without financing).” In Germany the DAAD was offering national statistics, but such doesn’t exist anymore “which is unfortunate – because it has been a benchmarking background. EU statistics are not specific enough.” It would be fine have statistics which could be re-worked locally. The central administration can encourage and promote, but not impose policies to improve mobility: “As our university has a decentralised management structure; it is difficult to impose quantitative and qualitative targets for Erasmus+ mobility at faculty and department level.” There is no obligation to fulfil target volumes for mobility, as opposed to targets for lectures and scientific publications.

Eurostat provides only statistics. Thus further insight such can be linked as qualitative Information. “Comparative data (trans- or international) is always wished by the EU member states.” However, it should be noticed that Eurostat has not been allowed to build a new survey (by introducing new indicators to be collected Europe-wide) and that it has not been possible to identify such indicators about mobility in published surveys.

“The focus of the mobility scoreboard of CEDEFOP is on the qualitative side of mobility because quantitative date in the form statistics comes already form the Eurostat, in order to learn conditions for mobility country by country as well as to show ways for future improvement.” It can be used in order to identify policy-making stakeholders around IVET learners, especially EU Policy, national level policy, educational institutions, and unions who may define suggestions for reforms of the sector.”

Usefulness of the data available

Respondents say that the question concerning the validity of the data available “cannot yet to be answered clearly because reliable data only will become available in early autumn 2016 for 2014.” Overall, transparency has improved – which is positive. Especially comparative (national and European) data helps even though the administrative efforts needed to exploit such data are much higher. In some countries “Erasmus/Erasmus+ data is sometimes the only internationalisation indicator in HEIs – i.e. a very positive and highly valuable source!).” When it comes to mobility for school and pre-school children and staff, the users report that they experience a high degree of quite detailed control of all aspects of the foreseen mobility, e.g. they need to supply detailed information about the destination for mobility
stays, the number of mobility days, about the number of participants, about the length of
stays, the educational content, etc.

“While such systematic quality control is generally desirable, the National
Agency does not have the necessary personnel and resources to assess in-depth
all aspects, e.g. pedagogical approaches. Given limited resources we choose to
evaluate more the consistency and relevance of arguments provided by
applicants, than in-depth aspects of the educational offer. It may be a less optimal
approach, but the approach chosen is still useful. We address the formal
limitations imposed by the current Erasmus+ procedures, by organising project
start and mid-term workshops for these sectors.”

Interest in data for target stakeholders outside Erasmus+

- From the industry’s perspective, “Lack of mobility options are a starting point for a
  higher value of national competence assurance. Eventually high transfer costs and legal
  arrangements become important - social and tax costs are relevant as well. Not only
globally but also in Europe the conditions for mobility have become more complex (still
possible by with higher administrative and regulatory efforts). Willingness to move in
new employees is examined - but nowadays only in relation to the actual current activity
requirements while earlier more appropriate experience was required.”

- An interviewee outside the EU states that “from outside Erasmus+ one does not have
  knowledge of such, but a result of the [present] interview would eventually that one
takes a new look at official target figures. In that sense the interview itself is an
intervention, i.e. reactive.”

- “Of course the integration of all sectors is nice but it is not sure that a balance
  participation of all institutions is guaranteed which is perhaps critical. The lots of
  new statistical data collected should not function as a barrier. Very useful are the
  compendia and reports of previous projects to identify both expertise of certain
  institutions / stakeholders and eventually as well start with copy-pasting
  successful activities instead always start concepts anew.”

2. Key Findings extracted from the interview material

Key findings I: experiences with mobility

This section summarises key findings regarding the experiences and views of
interviewees about mobility in the education, training and youth sectors. Their
statements reproduced verbatim (but translated) and reformulated indirectly or
summarised reflect to some extent their practical knowledge frequently illustrated by
suitable sample cases.

Transition from LLP to Erasmus+ is usually seen as a difference, but some of the
respondents feel it is mostly the same (“For me it is basically the same approach to student
mobility”). However, Erasmus+ is mostly experienced as being more complicated because
of administrative efforts, for example the Learning Agreement and the statistics are more
challenging etc.

Larger institutions that were asked indicate that they usually follow a strategic approach
in implementing mobility, which is as well followed by an administrative specialisation
that is need to handle processes in a suitable quality. It seems indeed that a certain critical size is needed to develop an efficient approach toward international mobility. As well, on a national level, a differentiation of stakeholders can be found when the National Authority adopts a system perspective and a certain set of institutions shares the responsibilities across educational sectors and in relation to the political dimension. This, however, creates a certain complexity, which is a challenge for part-time activities as well as for smaller institutions. By that, it comes out that international educational mobility is an area, which needs a highly profiled qualification. Such qualification of mobility experts seems however be rather experienced on the job and not by being trained systematically. Here, perhaps, a new qualification pattern is needed in all respective educational sectors.

Even though it is the NAs’ governmental role to encourage mobility in education and training in the country, there is an awareness in NAs that mobility is not only a topic for Erasmus+, especially with regards to the linkage between mobility, industries, and global perspectives. However, such often freely designed mobility patterns, which are not so easily assessed by statistics, are endangered as the institutional model would empower the governments currently exhibiting autocratic tendencies.

Mainly among the European level stakeholders and the NAs, there is a detailed awareness of the need for supporting technologies and measures. Other stakeholders are mainly using those opportunities and sometimes describe that it is difficult or impossible to specify data for managing their mobility processes. The upcoming instruments like the mobility scoreboard are until now neither available nor know for local stakeholders. In most cases, those are not able to integrate their sectoral activity in a wider, overarching educational mobility framework.

**Key findings II: the implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 during the start phase 2014-2016**

When asked about their experience with the implementation of Erasmus+ KA1 been initiated during the start phase 2014-2016 respondents focus on both, the overall program and the national or local activities and confirm that “the transition phase to Erasmus+ in 2014 was rather chaotic.”

Obviously, this goes along with special partnerships are usually perceived as fruitful. Especially the “new strategic partnerships launched under the Erasmus+ programme Key Action 2 is perceived as a new dimension in our university”. There is a growing interest to engage in such cooperation.

The mobility team in this university and in HEIs all over Europe experienced a huge flow of information from the EU and the NA, with a lack of crucial information from the EU, and the NA. Even though most voices are critical, some express a different and quite positive perception: “The change from LLP to Erasmus+ has not been brutal in any aspect from my position. Most mobility schemes were indeed effective before Erasmus+, e.g. PhD mobility was possible, we had Staff Exchanges, etc. Perhaps the central Educational Administration has another opinion. From our position there is not much difference.”

Another concern is the increased administrative and statistical load: “In comparison, the administrative effort in Erasmus (LLP) compared with the new Erasmus+ effort has grown quite a lot - learning agreements are more comprehensive, two reports by students (one online survey and
an experience report) were introduced additionally.” However, one may find a positive feedback as well, i.e. “Thanks to a close and high-quality cooperation with the NA, our university was able to overcome the initial implementation obstacles”.

Overall, it seems that implementation activities are still under construction when respondents report that access to online reporting is new (online mobility tool) and is about to starting only during 2016. Usually larger Educational actors employ specialized staff dealing with the mobility.

To some extent, national specifications in relation to national coordination and institutional specialisation are interesting. Typically, the Ministry of Education has enforced a “full delegation of all implementation responsibilities to non-public HE-NA”. Seen as a whole, the Erasmus+ phase stretching from 2014 to 2016 amounts to a “strengthening of a vertical delegation model in the implementation of Erasmus+ and other mobility and cooperation programmes in the educational sector in the country”.

What is noteworthy as well is that “from the HEIs perspective there is no interaction between sectors observed so far. An exception might concern VET-related programmes due to their linkage between teacher training and vocational education institutes.”

Concerning motivation for institutional participation in mobility, it is said, “an important development in Higher Education in the country is the adoption of budgetary incentives for institutions depending on participation in Erasmus+”

When investigating the political framing in Europe and beyond it is obvious, that Higher Education benefits indeed from a more flexible and less limiting regime. E.g. the Erasmus+ Charter, after a Higher Education Institution signs it, is not evaluated again but accepted largely as is. While the intention is to create networks pooling together strong partners, neither the NA nor, most of the time, HEIs have the capacity to assess the quality and sustainability of these networks. Nevertheless, the NA carries out every year an internal quality check of applications for mobility grants.

The NA supports very much the fact that Erasmus+ is building on two pillars: mobility schemes and cooperation. However, it is observed, “the conditions set by the EU Commission for the diverse sectors targeted by Key Action 1 are unequal. The VET sector are experiencing a higher degree of flexibility with the implementation of VET Mobility Charter”.

Globally international networks in industry have “No specific usage of Erasmus+ because of non-European heritage.” However, there are specific programmes by a national organisation in many countries, mostly with a strong linkage to the workplace and “overall only part of the contact (some time) is dealing with international mobility.”

Further on there are many specific aspects of the program perceived by different target audiences, which are not listed in detail here.

**Key findings III: administrative and management aspects**

Respondents’ have collected experiences with different administrative and management aspects, including specifically the financial, organisational and online learning
dimension. All there are quite relevant for the functioning of Erasmus+ but can be described in separate perspective.

A first organisational aspect the role of the National Authority that is managing the communication with Brussels and the National Agency, a challenging responsibility especially during the implementation of Erasmus+ in the country. It is said that “in retrospect, under LLP, the National Authority occupied a much more central position in the national governance of the Programme. These recent developments, focusing on the DG EAC – National Agency communication are linked with new monitoring rules enforced Commission”. Overall, the relation of the National Authority to the National Agency and the Commission is constructive.

“Erasmus+ means much more administrative effort.” This is the main finding on the administrative dimension in all the sectors – but does not only focus on statistics but moreover on communication and information needed to reach and mobility the target groups. There is evidence of local profiles as politically motivated imbalances in allocation of Erasmus+ mobility budgets between various partner country regions, and comparatively low level of grant allocations to regions and countries with whom the university cooperates.

Visa Affairs and migration aspects recently deserve attention as well. However, a positive sign is that in another case former obstacles due to immigration regulations for mobile students coming to the country have been removed recently. E.g. strict rules requiring incoming students to document a minimum personal cash reserve prior to getting visa and stay permit in the country have been removed for non-EEA students. As well, a National Authority considers “that developing complementary national initiatives in synergy with Erasmus+ is very important for the Higher Education sector in the country”.

Financial aspects can be fits seen as a technical issue and here it is confirmed, “Budget is generally quite clear but a concerned exists regarding the transfer of money to the partners by the National Agency to the coordinators.” However, such means that if the NA does save effort but problems for smaller partners might occur (if those smaller partners do not know how much is available). “As well, it seems that a main effort goes into the production of confirmation sheets and collecting bills instead of focusing on the real action. So the question arises if collecting bills is the focused EU policy instead?”

More globally, respondents mention that the European Commission has communicated very much about the 40% budget increase from LLP to Erasmus+ but this increase has not yet materialized (nevertheless in an interviewed university the Erasmus+ budget has been improved for both teachers and students). There are clear positive indicators: e.g. the overall number of mobilities has increased since the start of Erasmus+ in 2014 and new services, which were not provided under LLP, e.g. Online Language Service (OLS), have been added. The key message from DG EAC is that despite a limited increase in the budget, the Commission has managed to increase the number of outputs of the various Erasmus+ Actions in all sectors, combined with improvement of the quality for the beneficiaries.

However, it shall be mentioned that Erasmus+ (like Erasmus) does deliver only a part of the financing needed for international educational mobility. It is obvious that there is more request for budget allocations due to the number of applications in Europe, reported in one case 2.5 times higher, and globally (in Partner countries) reported 4 times
higher. Thus from an individual perspective, Erasmus was and is always seen as additional financing (not full financing) as the information collected demonstrates that:

- There are complementary funds from the national Ministries;
- Non-European partners in adult and academic education use further financing schemes;
- The grant situation for VET mobility may illustrate some aspect of the financial mechanisms used to support the mobility of apprentices under Erasmus+ in some cases where mobility grants for apprentices have undergone an 80% cut because these apprentices keep their salary while on mobility stay.

“We are very enthusiastic about Erasmus+ Global Mobility Programme /Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM). Earlier, our university welcomed many incoming students receiving grants based on bilateral agreements. These grants were often not sufficient to offer these exchange students decent living conditions in our city.”

E-Learning and distance learning are seen as highly relevant issues in the new funding lines – for example OLS for language learning and testing. As well, the programme management in the respective university is completely online – which plays a huge role for those who are funded and as well for the management and administration of mobility activity.

Even though webinars are used often, the virtual mobility is however, no replacement for physical mobility.

**Key findings IV: new aspects of Erasmus+ or need for political intervention**

In a next section of the interviews and panels, respondents were asked to discuss new aspects of the Erasmus+ program they observed internally or externally which would call for new initiatives, awareness, or even political intervention. Such should as well be the opener for addressing new demands and deliver suggestions for improvement of the action and the respective measures.

A first issue is the improved promotion of Erasmus+ knowledge and the integration of respective mobilities into the curricula. Respondents did explain first, “A more open consideration of mobility as additional phase in Higher Education degree programs should be given. The more an inclusion into the regular studies is forced the more such might become an elite activity. A general integration of an ‘abroad-semester’ would be principally possible but is logistically and economically a huge effort. Yet not all students would be able to use such international mobility due to their competence. Overall, a strategic approach would be perfect – for example, the respective students have stopped internship versus abroad in one semester or modules etc. in the case of one department an obligatory international mobility.”

Another important concern is the separation of the education sectors. Some respondent argue that a separation of the education sectors is useful – even though collaboration is wished and positive, i.e. the horizontal aspect did lead to much administrative work, which does not fit the capabilities of all the sectors representatives. In such way further decentralisation should be supported – concerning especially the Key Action 2 topics of capacity building in Higher Education and the Key Action 1 Joint Master Degrees and as well the mobility budget and especially decentral project budgets in the Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships.
Even though respondents in education sectors show weak awareness of the neighbouring sectors opportunities and functioning the Cooperation between HEI and Industry is growing rapidly, huge interest in internships (Erasmus+ helps a lot in comparison to real employment).

Administrative procedures are often requested when respondents confirm a clear need to introduce more flexibility in all aspects of grant preparation and application processes. Altogether procedures and requirements need particularly to be simplified, so that users may not opt out altogether from Erasmus+ mobility in primary, secondary, adult education, and VET. In VET, not all applicants document the same level of competencies and previous mobility.

Still recognition of international qualifications is an issue, which requires review by national authorities. From the industry’s perspective, how a new competency assessment may function, is perceived as relevant issue. E.g. it is relevant for industry to know what role public rankings are playing when a student decides to go to a specific university. Also, industry-specific qualifications (i.e. specified training) and the use of test methods for detecting certain dispositions are important. The role of the EQF other qualifications frameworks in the context of sector overarching mobilities and how skills are identified as starting points for an assignment is still highly relevant, but not well understood.

Language related aspects may be seen as a special category with a special profile. Respondents explain that testing of language skills of outbound students has been and is still, and will probably always be a problem as external factors are limiting the efficiency of the testing and feedback procedures.

Concerning Online Linguistic Support (OLS) it is mandatory that all students must pass a linguistic test. However, in some university reviewed some students have been confused and have misunderstood the requirements for the test.

Finally, the opportunities for user criticism and mechanisms of evaluation are discussed. Here respondents explain their “interest in a validation of early stage developments through abroad experience and detection of new approaches and technologies”. Because the main goal of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 for all education sectors has been to remove barriers to mobility, e.g. financial constraints, recognition of stays abroad for all targeted sectors, but as well the flexibility to staff in mobility has been questioned.

Moreover, criticism has been voiced concerning the underfunding of real travel (flat rates are used), stay and subsistence expenses for plane travels in Europe and elsewhere. Many teachers in HEIs fear they may have to pay an important part of the expense incurred to carry out teaching assignments abroad from their own pocket. Not all higher education institutions have financial means to or are willing to add funds on top of the Erasmus+ mobility grant.

The intention of the simplifications introduced by the Commission with regards to teacher exchanges in Higher Education was to address situations in some disciplines, e.g. medicine, where students and teachers are bound by their local curriculum. This new regime may or may not be optimal in all cases. However, such decisions are guided by the awareness that Erasmus+ has limited resources. In any case, the European Commission reports that it allocates budgets where it expects the best impact.
Key findings V: realism of the official target figures

Erasmus+ starting phase and continuous operation can be estimated by statistics. Yet it is expected that those statistics are not always complete of accessible especially when established first time or for a completely renewed measure. Thus participants in reviews and panel who have first-hand experience with their respective institutions discuss the realism of the official target figures. As well, the question was addressed: “What can be learned from this experience?”

Statistics of different heritage and with different scope and a first insight is that besides the European level statistics “There are local statistics because besides Erasmus there are many more” and sometimes the NAs do not offer national statistics anymore “which is unfortunate – because it has been a benchmarking background. EU statistics are not specific enough.” Still in some countries Erasmus/Erasmus+ data is sometime the only internationalisation indicator in HEIs – i.e. a very positive and highly valuable source!). I would be fine to have a statistic, which could be locally re-worked.

Eurostat provides only statistics. Further insight can be linked as qualitative information. “Comparative data (trans- or international) is always wished by the EU member states.” As well it is needed to mark that Eurostat has not been allowed to build a new survey (by introducing new indicators to be collected Europe-wide) and was not able to identify such indicators about mobility from the already surveys and the new scoreboards are not yet available. Overall, there is a lack in statistic in many levels and qualities.

“Of course the integration of all sectors is nice but it is not sure that a balance participation of all institutions is guaranteed which is perhaps critical. The lots of new statistical data collected should not function as a barrier. Very useful are the compendia and reports of previous projects to identify both expertise of certain institutions / stakeholders and eventually as well start with copy-pasting successful activities instead always start concepts anew.”

Another aspect is the validity of the data available. Respondents say that it “is not yet clearly to be answered because reliable data will become available only in early autumn 2016 for 2014.” Overall, transparency has improved – what is still very positive, especially comparative (national and European) even though the administrative effort is much higher.

While such systematic quality control is generally desirable, the National Agency does not have the necessary personnel and resources to assess in-depth all aspects, e.g. pedagogical approaches. Given limited resources, we choose to evaluate more the consistency and relevance of arguments provided by applicants, than in-depth aspects of the educational offer. It may be a less optimal approach, but the approach chosen is still useful.

As well, there is serious interest in data for target stakeholders outside Erasmus+ by the industry whose perspective mobility is first across regions, only for the management globally. Lack of mobility options are a starting point for a higher value of national competence assurance. Eventually high transfer costs and legal arrangements become important - social and tax costs are relevant as well. Not only globally but also in Europe the conditions for mobility have become more complex (still possible by with higher administrative and regulatory efforts). Willingness to move in new employees is examined - but nowadays only in relation to the actual current activity requirements
while earlier experience that is more appropriate was required. Respondents from outside Erasmus+ do not have knowledge of such data and, this would be a possible effect of the interview, would take a new look at official target figures. In that sense the interview, it is an intervention, i.e. reactive.

3. Data from the sectoral specific questions

The following sub-chapter presents the answers from the sectoral specific questions. Respondents did select one of four sections that did fit best their experience with the Erasmus+ mobility activities. Usually respondents who did give answer are directly involved in one of those sectoral activities as part of their institutional profile, i.e. as educational institutions or labour market stakeholders.

This section has been suggested for short answers perhaps with 1-3 words only. However, respondents eventually discussed those questions as well in detail and produced answers that are more comprehensive. For some of the questions however almost no answers were given, which is described in the text briefly. In case there is a very detailed answer-section, this corresponds with a large interest in the respective question shown by many of the interviewees and panellists.

Sectoral specific questions I: Higher Education

Question: International Credit Mobility (ECTS)?

Answers:
- Erasmus+ PhD needs to be restructured. Complementarity between e.g. ERC starting grants, Marie Curie and Erasmus+ ICM needs to be improved significantly. There is specific critique towards the Learning Agreements (LA) that is a source of many frustrations:
  - The LA in its original, but also in its present form, appears to be rather impractical instrument, as many items appear to be superfluous.
  - The current Learning Agreements stipulate only minimum requirements, but additional requirements and options can also be added to the agreement. HB’s general impression is that the present situation, characterized by the fact that many departments and students do not use this opportunity, undermines the credibility of the Erasmus+ learner mobility among their primary users. The possibilities to assemble specific learning agreements that respond better to the needs of learners and department seem vastly underexploited by the institutions (departments and faculty) and the students.
  - Timing from students’ perspective is “difficult or impossible to fill in the LA properly before the start of the mobility. Some universities require corrections in order to do the payment.”
  - Finding information from students’ perspective is difficult as “The LA is too long and complicated. It is quite easy to make mistakes when filling it in.”.
  - Filling the Learning agreement from the students’ perspective is rather complicated: “The LA has three parts, before mobility, during mobility and after mobility. In the real life almost nobody uses the final part. A few do fill
in feeling it as an unnecessary work exercise. Actually many universities simply take it away.”
- Timing from HEI perspective is a challenge because the universities in Europe have different academic calendars.
- Measuring Workload from HEIs’ perspective takes a lot of time if it is to be done correctly.
- The document format is an issue of critique as “Sometimes there is no space for the signature. The first format in Erasmus+ was much too long. The new format has too little space for writing.” There is a need to change the layout in order to make it clearer, e.g. taking away footnotes.
- Although the HEIs tend to guarantee the recognition after staying abroad, the guarantee of recognition by home HEI is not as binding as it may seem.
- Suggestions for improvement of the Learning Agreement are:
  - An Online learning agreement is the way to go, as demonstrated: “There was one presentation of best practice of the LA. Masaryk University showed how a digitalisation of the LA can be done. They have designed an interactive document where all information is given electronically; it is saved and can be updated when necessary. It is an administrative tool that covers all need of information for the student and the administrator for planning the mobility and later the recognition and integration of the courses in the home degree.”
  - To remove the tables C and D (After mobility) from the LA, or alternatively, to make it optional; remove the ‘minimum requirement’ wording from the Guidelines. Instead a wording like ‘the LA can be adjusted to the needs of the institutions as long as the basic principles of the students as expressed in the Erasmus charter are maintained’.

- For the interinstitutional agreements no changes proposed, they seem to function as they are.

- Another issue of interest is the inbound /outbound ratio:
  - Difference is in most cases not a critical issue, as the institutions have often opted for as much flexibility as possible and can be interpreted as a strength to adapt to fluctuation in mobility.
  - Contrary to other countries, which endeavour to establish a balance between inbound and outbound mobility, it has not been a political issue.

- There is an increased interest for practice-oriented, internship mobility as well in HEI, going along with an increase of outbound students and more requests for information.

- The “ECTS User Guide” is “very good, all personnel involved in mobility in HEIs should read through this guide.”

- The integration of Bologna process with Erasmus+ ICM mobility is still problematic.

• There imbalances in courses awarding ECTS and experiencing problems in having these courses recognised at home, examples reported in the recent study can be found in various countries in- and outside the EU. Conclusion: recognition process between countries must be improved significantly. As well there is still a lack of awareness concerning Erasmus+ ICM outside the EU.

Question: Strategic potential?
Answers:
Absolutely yes, addressed! Erasmus has changed a lot over the last 20 years, but the rectorates doesn’t see it always – which is to be improved. Institution needs however to increase the staff working with internationalisation. Specific aspects are:
- The complementary use of Erasmus+ PhD mobility at University which is not (yet) a central theme.
- The enormous potential for inbound and outbound higher educational mobility in the country.
- Outbound PhD mobility as part of Erasmus+ has not taken off really.
- The strong demand for internship and work placement (stages) which is increasing.
- Cross-sector aspects that are not addressed - no involvement of SMEs in the respective mobility.

Question: Role of the Erasmus+ handbook?
Answers:
There are only a few comments on the handbook (“program guide”) which is seen as a chance but to comprehensive (due to horizontal integration). Thus respondents point on:
- Own guides for HEIs according to actions in Germany.
- Recommendation only for very special cases, when applying for specific projects.
- More important is the NAs guide (with only 50 pages).

Question: Obstacles to mobilising professional and students?
Answers:
There are a number of specific obstacles to mobilising professional and students mentioned:
- “Inbound mobility of PhDs to our university is high but outbound PhD mobility is too extremely low, i.e. there is a huge problem, as there is a significant imbalance between inbound mobility to university from abroad. University has been meeting structural issues at various levels, when attempting to boost the outward mobility of PhD candidate who are part of the official PhD programme at university.”
- There are local and national differences compared with universities in neighbouring countries in numbers of PhD level mobilities.
- Institutional mobility grants with better conditions than Erasmus+ ICM, e.g. Seed Money funds from the university have too few applications.
- Erasmus+ Teacher exchange is still low. “It has been and is difficult to motivate university teachers to engage in Erasmus+ exchange and ICM networking”. The general perception is that it involves too much work for the return value. Additionally, there has been until recently budget means in most
departments to invite guest lecturers, curriculum programme censors, and examiners from abroad.
- Some universities have a long-term planning horizon but many partnering HEIs do not have such a long-term planning perspective, and as a consequence react very late in the Learning Agreement process. This puts additional demands on human resources in the mobility teams.
- In some cases, most mobility candidates are Bachelor students (1st cycle) and much less 2nd cycle students (Master level).
- Often there are significant differences among faculties at the same university with regards to how student and teacher mobility is prioritised and practised. Some faculties invest time and resources in Erasmus+ ICM, other not, due to different management structures.
- Expenses incurred during Staff Mobility, e.g. teacher exchanges, are not adequately covered under Erasmus+. Some departments are granting extra money; other departments cannot afford to cover all expenses. As a consequence, teacher exchanges have not taken off satisfactorily.
- Moreover, the “basic requirement to teach a minimum of 8 hours is not received well among teachers, as this is not feasible in many cases. Overall teacher mobility has decreased because teachers do not have time to leave for a whole week.”
- The application process for obtaining outgoing Erasmus+ ICM mobility grants is still experienced as demanding and complicated for these students. Compliance to EU codes, the general Web based interface, are among other things recurrently mentioned as obstacles. Some universities have developed a local software interface that is meant to improve access to Erasmus+ mobility applications procedures.
- Mainly students from wealthy countries tend to have collected experiences abroad already during their vacation – and are therefore less interested in academic mobility while their home countries are preferred location for students from less wealthy countries.
- Suboptimal acquisition of foreign language skills prior to mobility stays abroad, and lack of language testing facilities still represent a potential obstacle to enrolment abroad. In case of less spoken languages, it may be a challenge identifying a training provider (it depends on the student’s initiative to acquire the necessary foreign language skills).
- Professionals: it seems that teachers are less interested in teaching abroad than previously.
- Teacher training students have a weak participation in study mobility. This is due to the fact that we do not have 1st cycle and 2nd cycle students which are the most favourable study phases to travel abroad. The majority of students want to integrate the teacher training colleges (ESPE) and when they integrate, they are no very mobile, because they have to pass special exams (concourse or Staatsexamen) which, again, makes studying abroad very difficult.
- As well in some disciplines is a larger share of older students, who frequently have a family to care for.
- Interestingly in some cases female students are more willing to travel abroad than males.
Question: How realistic are grant sizes and grant allocation mechanisms?

Answers:
- Money is not a problem for mobility at HEI in Norway for financing of outbound University students as the financial support through state grants and loans is excellent compared to most if not all EU-EEA countries. As well, in Germany grant selections and grant amounts for students are reported to be fine (grants have increase from 100 to up to 270 EUR). Allocation mechanism have become more difficult, as they are not flexible enough due to a very early and rigid definition. However, all over Europe, there are still problematic discrepancies in the amount of grant money allocated to Erasmus+ mobile students.
- Grant allocation often takes place in the grant committee at university. All students who are resident in the EU are eligible. Budgets are usually quite good and better than in the bilateral agreement. In those cases, where the demand for mobility grants exceeds the budget means allocated under Erasmus+, the university tries to match the demand by providing additional funding (budget means from the Ministry, the Region and other sources).
- The feedback from student about payment of the Erasmus+ grant is that everything takes place online. Payments happened much slower under LLP.

Question: Immediate innovative effects?

Answers: There are only a few answers on immediate innovative effects that mention:
1. Discussion about recognition has been triggered a lot – “Lisbon Convention” is addressed in more detail.
2. New transparency concerning all participants which come back aggregated 1 x p.a. or 1 x project.
3. OLS: The bilingual bilateral projects wherefore Erasmus+ offers a full packaged support - quite positive!

Question: Which knowledge do students have of the ideas of the Erasmus+ program and which aspects are perceived as most and less attractive?

Answers:
- Not for all respondents the students’ knowledge about mobility is an issue. However, it is argued that students are usually well informed, HEIs meet the needs to inform about the many opportunities. It seems that Erasmus is well known, i.e. attractive as well, independently of the bureaucracy. Students like the structured frame as well. Some students however prefer a more individual decision, which is only a minority.
- Another aspect is the selection of students for stays abroad. Here it is important to see if the candidate for mobility is the kind of person who constructs himself or herself. The professionalisation process in which the student engages, constitutes also an important factor for the selection of candidates - to choose a destination or a course applicants need to reflect on the mobility process and gather information. The HEI is providing follow-up measures.
Question: Virtual mobility?
Answer: There is only marginal awareness of Virtual mobility! Some discuss environmental quality, low emissions, and ‘green’ reforms on the political agenda in all domains in the country. Virtual mobility instruments, e.g. MOOCs and new platforms may contribute to replace aspects of physical mobility by virtual mobility, thus contributing to sustainable environment. There is however no serious discussion at all about the educational meaning of Virtual mobility.

Question: How are Joint Degree programmes (Joint Masters, Joint PhDs) implemented?
Answers: Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) are sometimes projected as part of new Masters. The current university presidency is very keen to boost internationalisation and may back the promotion of EMJMDs in the future. There is no resistance against joint degrees at University, on the contrary, as joint degrees may attract additional funding from University when enrolling in EMJMD. Challenging aspects are:  
- A lot of paperwork, which requires time and efforts - there is also a need for support to develop the project - i.e. too much hassle, too much work.
- No knowledge (very little knowledge if any about Erasmus+ KA1 EMJMD grants and conditions; this applies too to joint European PhDs and double degrees).
- Funding is rather small and there is a huge demand. Here, much more budget would be needed because of the high innovation potential of that.
- Too complicated to agree and add unnecessary administrative and human resource burdens to understaffed mobility team.
- Departments and teachers and students do not see immediate rewards in joining EMJMD programmes.
- Legal and administrative differences between partner and programme countries constitute major obstacles to implementing EMJMDs, which appear more as part of a political wish list, rather than a clear need and demand from HEIs.
- Not perceived as a weakness for HEI but the lack of attractiveness of e.g. JMDs is perceived at HEI as a weakness of Erasmus KA1.
- It is generally difficult to “sell” joint and double degrees to university.
- As teachers have to produce strict report on their teaching activities, the extra efforts to develop Joint Master Degrees or Joint PhDs or double degrees is not recognised as accountable teaching load in some departments - which leads to low motivation to accept such burden.

Question: Knowledge about EU loans to master students?
Answer: Not an issue because students who use loans are no local students anymore. As well there is no knowledge if eventually students use loans in order to finance their mobility to the respective university - as well it has just started. In some countries (Germany) no special need because no national bank is involved. In another country it is reported that money is not a problem for mobility at the University and overall.
Sector-specific questions II: (Vocational) Education and Training & Youth

**Question:** What is the role of the programme in E&T?

**Answer:**
Erasmus+ is extremely important Education and Training & Youth because of ideal opportunities that one does not get otherwise. Besides the educational and the cultural experience there is a very strong social and linguistic experience within all mobility. European Parliaments effort – policy is first than the programmes follow – via the 5 European Parliaments policy departments.

**Question:** How are the new and “old” aspects of Erasmus and Erasmus+ combined in the various E&T layers of KA1?

**Answer:**
Erasmus crosses the barriers between different sectors of education, between formal and informal education. Erasmus+ has simplified the process because of the unified approach. Important changes happen in 2 aspects: 1) procedures have been simplified as national agencies confirm and 2) work on the mobility scoreboard leads to see which areas of mobility are well implemented and which are less – for example Erasmus+ performs very well.

**Question:** How are labour market needs assessed and integrated?

**Answer:**
Usually recent skills should be addressed, very important. Via partnerships with industry this is addressed. In almost all countries VET + business sector links are real.

**Question:** Virtual mobility?

**Answer:**
Virtual mobility is no substitute for real mobility but may be used for continuing after ending the real mobility. In IVET virtual mobility is marginal because physical experience is typical. It still needs to be explored how it may function and which specific added value might arise. However, there are some early sample cases which may demonstrate innovative approaches of Virtual mobility.

**Question:** How are educational and cross-sector issues integrated?

**Answer:**
Sectoral borders are weakened now as well for diverse institutional partnership. Educational and cross-sector issues are not addressed in the statistical tools used for monitoring.

**Question:** Which specific knowledge can be gathered about mobility of school staff?

**Answer:**
School staff usually has knowledge of the particular sector but also about daily issues (supporting students in housing, care, safety etc.). A very big issue is still the recognition of learning experiences acquired abroad.
Question: How are Joint Degrees programmes (Joint Masters, Joint PhDs) implemented?
Answer:
In the Bologna context, Joint Degrees programmes are important but acceptance in practice seems to be limited.

Question: Knowledge about loans for joint / abroad degrees?
Answer:
Usually Europeans receive loans but internationals from outside Europe don’t.

Question: How are Sustainability Issues identified and addressed by projects and implementers?
Answer:
There is no doubt about sustainability. Most participants feel the usefulness of mobility, i.e. there is a wide institutional acceptance if the financial or institutional framework is given. Yet it happens that not always a stable (sustainable) project is developed because the single project it is often an extra income for the institution. Thus there is a likelihood the institution will go for new activities instead of continuing the precious activity on their own funds.

Sector specific questions III: Adult Education

Question: What is the role of the programme in the field of Adult Education?
Answer:
In the field of Adult Education there is a special interest in continuous education master programmes.

Question: How are labour market needs assessed and integrated?
Answer:
The labour market needs do not mean any regulatory requirements, only concerning compliance topics (safety, etc.). Overall user needs are core issue and always strongly linked with the work place and the individuals’ professional development on individual level.

Question: Virtual mobility?
Answer:
Even though online learning is very useful it is always only a part of overall and not a replacement of it.

Question: How are educational and cross-sector issues integrated?
Answer:
Cross-sector issues are of interest – especially with the state government, with a corporate sector training institute, with the NGO training sector. As well sharing (training) delivery of services with other sectors is an interesting option. Another aspect is the opportunity of quality insurance by cross-sector cooperation.

Question: Which specific knowledge can be gathered about mobility of staff in adult education?
Answer:
Cp. sustainability issues described below.

Question: How are Sustainability Issues identified and addressed by projects and implemented?
Answers:
• Usually the (training) institution does first design the material and afterwards does develop links with universities in order to search for approval and sustainability.

• Accreditation is an issue but works only in cooperation with universities (which was usually not continued by industry). However ex-university lecturers are used to deliver the lectures - but without linking to the universities (which is a cross-sector issue as well).

Key findings on the education-sectoral specific questions

The following aspects had been found with respect to education-sectoral specific questions but may be seen as a conclusion of key findings presented below.

Sustainability and innovative aspects:
• There is no doubt about sustainability. Most participants feel the usefulness of mobility, i.e. there is a wide institutional acceptance if the financial or institutional framework is given.

• However, there are still a number of specific obstacles to mobilising professional and students mentioned, including mainly the universities long-term planning horizon and the demanding and complicated application process for obtaining outgoing Erasmus+ ICM mobility grants for these students.

• There are only a few answers on immediate innovative effects that mention:
  o Discussion about recognition has been triggered a lot - the “Lisbon Convention” is addressed in more detail.
  o New transparency concerning all participants.
  o The feed-back from student on payment of the Erasmus+ grant is that everything takes place online. Payments happened much slower under LLP.
  o OLS: The bilingual bilateral projects wherefore Erasmus+ offers a full packaged support are very positive.

Online Learning:
• Virtual mobility is an unexplored challenge! Even though online learning is considered being very useful it is always only a part of overall and not a replacement of it – and almost completely misses consideration.

• Virtual mobility instruments, e.g. MOOCs and new platforms may contribute to replace aspects of physical mobility by virtual mobility, thus contributing to sustainable environment. There is however no serious discussion at all about the educational meaning of Virtual mobility.

Sectoral integration and accreditation:
• Erasmus crosses the barriers between different sectors of education, between formal and informal education, borders are weakened now as well for diverse institutional partnership. However educational and cross-sector issues are not addressed in the statistical tools used for monitoring. Mainly in VET and Adult Education cross-sector issues are of interest – especially with the state
government, with a corporate sector training institute, with the NGO training sector. This extends towards learning material as well.

- Accreditation of programmes and materials is an issue in all sectors but seems to work only in cooperation with universities.

Labour market and skills:

- Usually recent skills should be addressed, very important. Via partnerships with industry this is addressed and in almost all countries VET + business sector links are real.
- In the field of Adult Education there is a special interest in continuous education master programmes. Labour market needs could be assessed and integrated better but not by any regulatory requirements, only concerning compliance topics. Overall user needs are core issue and always strongly linked with the work place and the individuals’ professional development. Such may take place in a very highly individualised way.

Program structure and materials:

- The integration of Bologna process with Erasmus+ ICM mobility is still problematic. There imbalances in courses awarding ECTS and experiencing problems in having these courses recognised at home.
- Joint degrees programmes are important but acceptance in practice seems to be limited. There is concern about Joint Degree programmes (Joint Masters, Joint PhDs) due to administrative efforts and hurdles and the sometimes relatively small results.
- Erasmus+ PhD needs to be restructured. Complementarity between e.g. ERC starting grants, Marie Skłodowska-Curie and Erasmus+ ICM needs to be improved significantly.
- The Erasmus+ handbook is seen as a chance but too comprehensive (due to horizontal integration). Thus respondents point on own national guides for HEIs according to actions with only 50 pages.
- The Learning Agreement in its original, but also in its present form, appears to be rather impractical instrument, as many items appear to be superfluous.
PART III
Implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Mobility of Individuals in the Field of Education and Training

Chapter 4: Implementation Structure

1. Erasmus+ Key actions and interaction between implementation levels

Erasmus+ target groups
The analysis of the Implementation Model enforced in Key Action 1 should take into account as a fundamental framing condition the fact that Erasmus+ constitutes a massive programme when measured in terms of volumes of targeted individuals, groups and organisations. It is also a massive programme in terms of budget allocation. Erasmus+ targets for the period 2014-2020 than 4 million people, most of these distributed across the various sectors covered by Key Action 1 as displayed in Table 9 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall mobility opportunities</th>
<th>More than 4 million people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>Around 2 million students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education and training students</td>
<td>Around 650 000 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff mobility</td>
<td>Around 800 000 lecturers, teachers, education staff and youth workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer and youth exchange schemes</td>
<td>More than 500 000 young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations and institutions</td>
<td>Around 125 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9: Target number of participants for Erasmus+ (2014-2020)*

Source: European Commission

Considering that a mid-term evaluation started by the European Commission in 2015 to be completed the end of 2017 will assess the reality of these targets, and that a corresponding evaluation by the Parliament may be in preparation, the present study does not offer systematic impact analyses, but presents where necessary possible discrepancies between targeted numbers of participants and observed actual participations, insofar as it sheds light upon implementation aspects of Key Action 1.

54This is a non-legislative procedure of category CWP 2016 follow-up (MFF review) covering both the LLP actions and the current Erasmus+ actions, as described in European Commission (2016). ‘Erasmus+, The First year 26.01.2016’, MEMO/16/143 26 January 2016. p.13, “The results of the evaluation will be used to feed into the impact assessment for a possible successor programme for Erasmus+.” For a full description see European Commission (2015). ‘EVALUATION ROADMAP, Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+’.
The Implementation Model Governing Key Action 1

The basic equation: Levels, Bodies, Actions

With regard to education, training and youth, successive proposals from the Commission have stressed "a need for administrative simplification and for streamlining of actions and priorities as laid in successive regulations". Already from 2011 the simplification announced foreshadowed the implementation of Erasmus+. The Implementation Model for Key Action 1 concretises this need. For the purpose of this study, implementation aspects of Key Action 1 will be deconstructed in three distinct Implementation Entities:

1. Implementation Levels
   a. Individual Level
   b. Institutional Level
   c. Systemic Level, EU level and national level

2. Implementation Bodies
   a. the Commission, including The Executive Agency EACEA
   b. National Authorities including National Agencies

3. Implementation mechanisms, e.g. “Actions”, Erasmus+ Key Actions 1, 2 and 3

Each Key Action is intended to address one of the three Implementation Levels, e.g. the individual, institutional, or systemic level. The Implementation Plan of Key Action 1 in Erasmus+ is governed by a basic equation governing the flow of decisions and interactions between these Implementation Entities. As each Key Action has been established to target a specific Implementation Level, Key Action 1 has been programmed to target primarily the Individual Level. This basic equation is fairly simple.

The complex equation: interactions between Bodies, Levels, and Actions

In order to match the overall objectives of the ET 2020 roadmap as well as the evolving realities of states, organisations and institutions, this basic equation needs, however, to be expanded into a new more complex equation that includes interaction mechanisms (sometimes called “effects”). Such interactions mechanisms may target cross-level and/or cross-sector spill-over effects seeking to respond to the evolving priorities of ET 2020. For

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56 ibid, p. 4: “The Programme will reduce the number of activities supported. It will use more flat rate grants to increase efficiency; successful examples such as the lump sum grants for Erasmus student mobility will be widely used for mobility actions. National Agencies will no longer manage individual mobility and thereby reducing the administrative workload. The Programme will reduce the number of activities supported. It will use more flat rate grants to increase efficiency; successful examples such as the lump sum grants for Erasmus student mobility will be widely used for mobility actions. National Agencies will no longer manage individual mobility and thereby reducing the administrative workload. The National Agencies will become the main entry point for learning mobility activities, open to young people whether they participate as student, trainee or volunteer. The user-friendliness will also be enhanced for participating higher education institutions at international level, by the integration of disparate international cooperation programmes.”
example, the inclusion of a special mobility strand Capacity Building in Higher Education, or in Knowledge Alliance projects Key Action 2 is an interaction mechanism between the individual level (e.g. stays abroad for students and staff) and the institutional level (e.g. formal and practical cooperation between universities), and between Key Action 2 and Key Action 1.

Side-effects of internal vs. external mechanism

While the general implementation model for Key Actions (“the basic equation”) offers satisfactory readability for stakeholders and beneficiaries, the detailed implementation model (“the complex equation”) adds a significant amount of interwoven processes. When such interactions are internal mechanisms that channel and regulate decisions between Implementation Bodies, the most usual negative side-effect may be increased administrative overhead and operational costs. However, when external mechanisms become part of the interaction with applicants and individual beneficiaries, the ultimate readability of the Erasmus+ Programme may be hampered (see Figure 4 below). A possible maze of external mechanisms and bureaucratic particularisms proprietary to a call for proposals may also discourage many applicants from participating in and contributing to Erasmus+.

FIGURE 4: SPILLOVER EFFECT BETWEEN IMPLEMENTATION LEVELS AND ERASMUS+ KEY ACTIONS.

Ideological tenets of Erasmus+ and side-effects on Key Action 1

The “No Support Given To Individual Participants” Ideology

The Erasmus+ programme enforces an almost purist institutionalised approach to dealing with the mobility of individuals (as well as all other activities in all Key Actions

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58 ibid p. 3
of the Programme). While Regulation No 1288/2013 establishes only general principles for the implementation of Erasmus+, documents from the EU Commission are very clear about how the institutionalised approach in the regulation should be interpreted. E.g. preparing the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+, the Commission states rather directly that “under Erasmus+, no direct support is given to individual participants; all support is channelled through institutions, which distribute the support to their individual staff and/or learners.”

Variants of multilevel governance

Such approach in public administration, excluding direct contact or exchanges with end-users, e.g. learners or youth or staff members, or non-legal entities (e.g. schools) can be interpreted as a specific variant of multilevel governance models, studied since the 1990s in political science, and adopted by the EU as its official vision for public governance. Multilevel governance is conceived as an approach “based on coordinated action by the EU, the Member States and regional and local authorities according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in partnership, taking the form of operational and institutionalised cooperation in the drawing-up and implementation of the European Union’s policies”.

For the purpose of this study, the present authors will not engage in a detailed discussion of competing theories of multilevel governance (MLG), but offer a few remarks based the general scholarly debate about MLG that may shed light upon side-effects of the “fully institutionalised Erasmus+”:

- Multilevel governance builds upon the notion of levels, e.g. territorial levels, but also, levels of authority and jurisdiction. Subnational government constitutes an important dimension, but this is not necessarily the primary focus as the multilevel dynamics is thought as “centrifugal process in which decision-making is spun away from member states in two directions”, namely to the subnational as well as the supranational levels (Marks 1993, pp. 401-402). MLG organises the dispersion of authority away from central states to subnational and supranational.

- There are two, and possibly three types of MLG: Type 1 is rooted in the subsidiarity principle and “would foresee regional and local public actors cooperating with the higher levels in a variety of policy areas and public services broadly conceived. Regional and local government would act as a third territorial layer in EU policy-making. Where this level is lacking, efforts should be made to erect the necessary bodies in order to safeguard the effective application of EU laws and to organize input from civil society.” Type 2, “is characterised by

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59 Regulation No 1288/2013. See full reference further below.


task-specific (instead of general purpose) jurisdictions, intersecting memberships and a flexible design that is responsive to temporary need”. A possible Type 3 may evolve from Type 2, as “[i]n its more recent versions, the MLG discourse has begun to address more generally the diffusion of political authority into a less hierarchical and more network-like structure of EU policy-making; often portrayed as ‘new modes of governance’ (NMG).”

In conclusion, the leap from the hybrid governance model of LLP programme mixing institutional governance with user-centred dimensions (e.g. teachers and schools could apply for mobility grants under LLP), to the pure institutional governance model of Erasmus+ (e.g. teachers and schools cannot apply for mobility grants under Erasmus+ only their employers can) represents a decisive move towards a rather rigid variant of the Type 1 model.

Governance of Erasmus+ considered as a virtual organisation

It might be of interest to consider the idea that mobility participants in the field of education and training, in themselves, constitute a considerable virtual group or even a virtual organisation which has not yet been fully studied with regard to its independent institutional dimension. Moreover, the approach to mobility participants that is currently adopted by institutions, such as the EU, tends to consider these mobile individuals predominantly as members of their home institution, and much less as members of their host institution. However, from a contemporary governance research perspective, this huge group of Erasmus+ movers should be addressed as a virtual organisational entity as well (Snow et al., 1999; Lattemann & Köhler, 2005). Research about social networks stresses that the role of ‘weak ties’ like trust and meaning constitute crucial building blocks of online communication infrastructures, i.e. in social media. Such widely acknowledged findings about the power of ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973) would entail rethinking governance and communication, as well as encouraging institutions to develop additional measures. In the longer run, such a new type of awareness would offer a valuable platform for addressing challenging issues pertaining to European identity, European integration, and more specifically, an integrated European educational perspective. The network dimension described here would quite easily address cross-sectoral and virtual mobility aspects.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- With regards to Key Action 1 targeting the mobility of individuals in education, training and youth,
- Given the policies and principles laid down in EU regulations,
- Given the Implementation Model enforced in Erasmus+ involving tiers of administration within a hierarchy,
- Given that the new Implementation Model of Key Action 1 can accommodate private companies as partners or subcontracted service providers,
- Given that the new Implementation Model of Key Action 1 can accommodate legal entities, institutions or associations as applicants,
- Given that Key Action 1 targets the mobility of individuals but does not accommodate these individuals or informal groups of such individuals as applicants, partners, or more generally as *ipsa jure* actors of the system,
- Given a resulting *de facto* reduction of mobility applicants, who are citizens, end-users and customers, to Beneficiaries submitted to Implementation Bodies,
- The European Parliament may consider (1) assessing the appropriateness of the roles, rights and status of mobility participants in the current implementation of Key Action 1, and (2) finding ways to reinstate individual mobility participants or their representatives as real interlocutors.

Free Movers and Key Action 1 - a test case

The slow death of the Free Mover?

“Free Movers” are students from all over the world who organise their study abroad on their own, without participating in an exchange program. Table 10 below shows that “Free Movers” surveyed during the period 2012-2015 still constitute a significant proportion of the mobile student body.

There is still a strong diversity in the levels of attention and the treatments dispensed in Europe to potential Free Movers by countries and institutions. E.g. universities in the United Kingdom and Spain usually do not accept incoming Free Movers, while Swedish and Norwegian HEIs tend to welcome Free Movers on a national basis. E.g. in 2016, while many HEIs continue to accept Free Movers, e.g. HEC in Paris, some major HEIs, e.g. Freie Universität Berlin (see Box below) have stopped accepting *incoming* Free Movers and enforced a strict institutionalised model for incoming student mobility. Other universities, such as the University of Maastricht have abolished *outgoing* “Free Movers” mobility opportunities for their regular students from 2012.\(^{64}\)

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\(^{64}\) "From the academic year 2012-2013 the Free movers option will be abolished and it will no longer be possible to apply for study abroad as a Free Mover from 1 September 2011." p. 39, BACHELOR EDUCATION AND EXAMINATION REGULATIONS 2011-2012, SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS, MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY, Version September 2011, retrieved from [http://studentinfo.sbe.maastrichtuniversity.nl/Documents/OER/old/004.11I%20Bachelor%20EE R%202011-2012%20Sept%20Final%20ELEUM%20incl%20appendix.pdf](http://studentinfo.sbe.maastrichtuniversity.nl/Documents/OER/old/004.11I%20Bachelor%20EE R%202011-2012%20Sept%20Final%20ELEUM%20incl%20appendix.pdf).
Table 10: Free Movers vs. EU funded mobility in higher education in some member states.  
*Source: Eurostudent V*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Country</th>
<th>% Free Movers</th>
<th>% EU funded stays</th>
<th>Number of Students surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>2,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>40,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>36,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>4,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>14,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>2,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>3,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>6,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>19,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>1,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td><strong>20.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>57.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>135,666</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Side-effects of the full institutionalised model adopted in Key Action 1**

Considering the proportion of Free Movers in European HEIs (see Table 10 above) and the evolving practices in some institutions, a side effect of the fully institutionalised implementation of the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1 could lead to one of the two scenarios:

- HEIs may be pressed into the mould of EU-funded mobility agreements, with a resulting increase in demands for, e.g. mobility grants under Erasmus+ ICM, and a corresponding proportional decrease in the funded Erasmus+ grants as the increased demand would not be met by additional budget allocations.

- The total mobility of individuals in European HEIs may decrease as Free Movers may gradually be excluded or encounter serious administrative obstacles in home and host institutions, due to the general adoption by European HEIs of a fully institutionalised system.
SIDE EFFECT OF THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF MOBILITY:
‘FREE MOVERS’ MAY BECOME AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

“Every year, thousands of international students come to study at Freie Universität Berlin for a period of time in the context of an international study program. Exchange students can come to Freie Universität Berlin in the framework of different exchange programs: Direct exchange, Erasmus+, DAAD, Fulbright, and other programs.

Please note: it is unfortunately not possible to come to Freie Universität Berlin as a free mover! In order to be enrolled as an exchange student, your home university has to have a student exchange agreement with Freie Universität Berlin.”

Website of Freie Universität Berlin

“In Berlin it is rather complicated to find a university which accepts such adventurous partnership [Free Movers]. E.g. the largest of the four universities in Berlin Freie Universität Berlin does not accept [free movers]. By contrast, in Hamburg, Munich, Leipzig and many other cities, Free Movers come and go as they like, without guarantees [to have their studies recognised], but with the kind of autonomy every student desires”.

Website of Le PetitJournal.com, Online Journal for French-speaking expatriates

Influence of the Implementation Model of Erasmus+ on local institutions

Future monitoring of the treatment offered by European HEIs and their National Authorities to incoming and outgoing Free Movers may yield indicators of a possible evolution in Europe towards an exclusive institutional exchange agreement regime, progressively marginalising Free Movers (HEIs that operate with high tuitions and inscription fees for foreigners will, of course tend to welcome those “Free Movers” paying high fees). The systematic vertical institutional approach adopted by the Commission for the implementation of Erasmus+ may reinforce tendencies in HEIs to welcome incoming mobility only for those students who are enrolled in an exchange programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• The European Parliament may consider assessing the impact of enforcing a fully institutionalised organisation of the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1 on Free Movers.

• The European Parliament may consider initiating a policy dialogue with the European Commission and the National Authorities in Programme Countries to revitalise the Free Mover dimension in the mobility of individuals in higher education.

65 http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/studium/international/studium_fu/auslandssemester/

Concluding remarks and further recommendations

Shrinkage of the perimeter of action for mobility candidates

It is worth noting that from the institutionalised perspective of the Commission, in Key Action 1, the distance between decision-makers to mobility participants, e.g. learners and staff members, may be considered shortened. However, from the perspective of end-users, the political distance, measured by the norms of participatory democracy and of bidirectional diffusion of power (MLG Type 2 or Type 3 model), may not be reduced, but rather increased. Currently, individual mobility participants are no longer ipso jure interlocutors of the Commission, e.g. applicants, or the National Agency, but as illustrated by the case of school staff, are dependent of their employer or legal supervisors.

Individual mobility participants reduced to disenfranchised “beneficiaries”

As a consequence, the vertical institutionalised Implementation Model practised in Erasmus+ may have particular negative side-effects in Key Action 1 which target specifically the mobility of individuals. In this vertical-hierarchical institutionalised version of the multilevel governance model, the so-called notion of “Individual Level” is constructed as an administrative abstraction which is by no means synonymous with the broader concept of ‘individuals’ or ‘citizen’. Such institutionalised individual beneficiaries of e.g. mobility grants, are in a narrow sense neither ‘customers’ nor ‘citizens’ nor ‘users’ nor ‘partners’ in their full right. They are, in Key Action 1, endowed with limited privileges to negotiate with decision-makers and grant providers, as they are ‘designed’ as merely recipients of mobility decisions.

In such a multilevel hierarchy of decisional power, the targeted Beneficiaries may end being disenfranchised, rather than empowered individuals, despite possible personal satisfaction with the conditions of mobility. Furthermore, in actions addressing staff mobility and mobility of adults, the current implementation tends to offer mobility applicants and participants a very limited perimeter of action.

The European Parliament might want to “facilitate a debate about the foreseeable consequences of implementing a strategy based on large contracts run through intermediary bodies. It is highly unlikely that the European Commission will stray from the path towards fewer and much bigger grant contracts that it has been following for at least a decade and obviously wants to systematise in the new proposal for the years 2014-2020. Very large contracts run by intermediary organisations make the programme(s) even less accessible to ordinary citizens, increase the distance between the Union and those individuals who actually design and implement projects on the ground or participate in them, and would lead to the EU becoming barely visible behind the institutional and national bureaucracies actually dealing with applicants. The European Parliament should consider having an in-depth debate with the Commission on these vital issues, even though such a debate is unlikely to open the way to a different course and philosophy in the running of EU programmes in the short term.”

Recommendation No 9, Erasmus For All, p. 32

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67 Rejection of project selections or individual grant applications assessed by National Agencies can be contested by the persons concerned according to the law of that Member State.

Need for reappraising the institutionalisation model in Key Action 1

As a result, the current fully institutionalised approach adopted for the implementation of Key Action 1 may unacceptably limit opportunities for individuals and informal groups (groups that are not legal entities, e.g. a local group of teachers), benefitting from mobility, to initiate disruption and innovation processes, e.g. inducing local change in schools or society upon return. The idea of EU funded mobility empowering individuals to seek and obtain funding for going abroad, despite occasional organisational resistance, needs therefore serious reappraisal by the Parliament.

A fully institutionalised model, as currently practised in Key Action 1, may ease the work of the Commission and National Authorities, but at the price of keeping end-users in organisational moulds that may inhibit sociocultural and professional change.

The mobility of individuals and the practices of autocratic states

An additional danger of forcing mobility (e.g. limiting opportunities for Free Movers) into a MLG Type 1 model (the institutional model) would be to empower governments currently exhibiting autocratic tendencies\(^69\) to implement mobility arrangements selectively, giving priority to students with certain ideological orientations or in ideological networks.

\(^69\) Thanks to prof. Hakan Sicakkan, Dept. of Political Science, University of Bergen and ISP, Paris for bringing to our attention the challenges posed by autocratic states. On the consequences of the growing problems related to the growing number of autocracies in Europe, see i.e. Kelemen, R. and Orenstein, M. (2016); Brouillette, A. (2014; and Ágha, A. (2016).
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Future evaluations of the implementation of Erasmus+ in general, and of Key Action 1 in particular, may assess the appropriateness of external and internal interactions between (1) Implementation Levels, (1) Implementation Bodies, and (2) Key Actions, as well as possible undesirable side-effects on Applicants and Beneficiaries.

- The European Parliament may consider assessing to which degree the enforcement of multilevel governance in the Erasmus+ Programme in general, and in Key Action 1 in particular, contributes to increasing the distance between the targeted beneficiaries of the Programme, e.g. mobility participants, and the decision-makers.

- In view of alternative, more networked, less hierarchical types of multilevel governance, the European Parliament may consider alternative more flexible implementation mechanisms for Key Action 1.

- In view of the systematic choices made by the Commission to institutionalise the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1, and end supporting individual mobility participants, the European Parliament may consider reinstating individual access to mobility in Key Action 1.

- The European Parliament may consider regularly monitoring in Programme countries the practices of autocratic governments relative to the selection of individuals for mobility stay in Key Action 1.

2. Implementation Bodies

Implementation model prescribed by Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013

In light of the critical discussion above, this section will deal more specifically with the Implementation Bodies of Erasmus+ and highlight aspects that have direct bearings on Key Action 1. The European Parliament and European Council have instituted (Article 27)\(^70\) two Implementing Bodies: the Commission at Union level and the National Agencies at the national level in Programme countries. The National Authority in a Programme country designates the National Agency. How a National Authority manages the National Agency remains a prerogative of the National Authority. However, each National Authority shall provide the Commission with an “appropriate ex-ante compliance assessment that the National Agency complies” with stipulated Union regulations\(^71\), and “as

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well as with the Union requirements for internal control standards for national agencies and rules for the management of grant support.”

Role of National Authorities

“The National Authorities' (NAU) role is to supervise and monitor the NAs in the aspects of the programme management and implementation. The official communication takes place at different stages during the programme management lifecycle. The NAU co-signs the NA annual Work Programme, designates the Independent Audit Body which audits the NA’s Yearly Report, proceeds with their own regular monitoring and cooperation schedule with the NA (described in the NA’s Work Programme), submits the October report on the implementation of EC’s/auditors’ recommendations by the NA and any other relevant comments on the NA activities reported in the NA’s Yearly Report.”

Monitoring of National Agencies

Asked to indicate where the monitoring procedure of National Agencies by DG EAC are described, a representative from DG EAC commented to the authors that there exists no single document which integrates all monitoring procedures:

National Agencies are monitored by DG EAC through the following instruments:
- reporting requirements by NAs to DG EAC (mainly the annual reporting) as specified in the contractual framework;
- supervisory visits organised by DG EAC at NA and NAU/IAB level (risk-based selection per year);
- financial audits organised by unit EAC-R2 (and outsourced to external auditor) on a number of NAs (about 10 per year) (random selection per year);
- meetings organised with NAs: two NA directors' meetings per year;

72 See also: Parliamentary questions E-000941/2015, Answer given by Mr Navracsics 11 March 2015 on behalf of the Commission: “The Commission has defined a set of obligations to ensure the proper management of Erasmus+ by the National Agencies, and provides control of the National Agencies by various means. After the designation of a National Agency, each Member State has provided the Commission with an ex ante compliance assessment. Every year all the agencies present an activity report and financial report which are analysed by the Commission. These reports include information on the compliance of the internal control system and procedures implemented by the agencies.

For the Erasmus+ programme, the reports of the National Agencies are accompanied by an audit opinion issued by an independent audit body designated by the Member State. This opinion focuses on the financial reporting and the functioning of the internal control systems and procedures of the agencies. On an annual programme, the Commission also performs monitoring visits to a sample of National Agencies. These visits are intended, among other things, to verify the compliance of procedures implemented by the agencies. In addition, financial audits are performed on a sample of National Agencies each year by auditors appointed by the Commission. Therefore, the Commission considers that a monitoring system for observations and the implementation of recommendations, resulting from these controls, is in place.”


73 Communication from a representative from DG EAC following the Panel Interviews conducted 4 May 2016 at DG EAC.
various working groups with NAs on different topics;
o currently it is ad hoc, structured approach to be developed.”

The current monitoring status of National Agencies has been communicated by a representative of DG EAC to the authors:

“The NA performance assessment and the assurance level is based on the assessment of the Yearly Management Declarations, Yearly Reports, Independent Audit Opinions and NAU Reports. Following the 2014 assessment, there was an acceptable assurance on 59 National Agencies (including the Switzerland NA in charge of LLP and Youth in Action), partial assurance for the Spanish NA in charge of the Education and Training field and no assurance for the Greece NA competent in the youth field. Currently, we are in the process as of the 2015 assessment and the final results will be known in the autumn/winter 2016. Throughout the year, the NAs are monitored as regards their follow-up of open recommendations made by EAC. Overall, the NAs have been performing well, and there is currently no threat of suspending the programme in any country.”

Centralised and decentralised implementation

In practice, the Implementation Model of Erasmus+ follows a dual sequence. The first sequence – the decentralised national sequence – of tasks is delegated through the National Authorities to the designated National Agencies, which need to comply with internal control rules set by the Commission. Tasks and responsibilities are delegated further from the National Agencies to institutions and to the ultimate beneficiaries, e.g. mobile grant holders. The second sequence, the centralised sequence, regroups activities within the Erasmus+ Programme that cannot or should not be decentralised, and need to be managed centrally from the Commission, through DG EAC acting with and through its Executive Agency (EACEA), when and where required. In the Erasmus+ Programme, The Executive Agency is fully integrated in DG EAC, while in previous programmes this executive function would be contracted, e.g. to an external organisation74. The rationale underlying this dual sequence is both political, E.g. the need to involve Programme countries in the implementation of Erasmus+, and practical, e.g. it would be impossible to manage mobility grants centrally. There are also political reasons, some of these not always immediately evident to the general public, to keep some activities centralised, e.g. such initiatives that are political priorities for the Union.

Analysis of the Commission’s organisational model for Key Action 1

Demands from users have been voiced occasionally requesting that the treatment offered by the National Agencies to applicants in Key Action 1 should be more homogeneous and that a centralisation of services and procedures would secure fair treatment. The authors of this study have also collected expressions of concern relative to discrepancies between Programme countries in the practice and standards for the evaluation of Erasmus+ ICM applications. These are just a few introductory examples of critical views articulated by system actors, applicants, and beneficiaries. Considering also that critical views have been articulated by European MPs underscoring that DG EAC or the Executive Agency is not close enough to people, a description and analysis of the views

74 I.e. The Socrates, Leonardo & Youth Technical Assistance Office was part of the ETAPE Consortium with a contract to assist the European Commission in the technical management of the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes.
expressed by representatives from the Commission relative to the Implementation of Key Action 1 would yield a useful basis for comparison with various perceptions gathered from stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The previous analysis of multilevel governance may, together with perspectives from New Institutionalisms, contribute to more balanced appraisals of the underlying construction of the ‘mental organisation’ that is reflected by the official narratives and practical moves of the Commission concerning Key Action 1.

The Commission’s narrative about the Implementation of Key Action 1

Panel interviews with the Commission addressing the implementation of Key Action 1 were conducted in May 2016\(^{75}\). The analysis of the views expressed during this session shed light on how central institutional actors in DG EAC construct a personal and organisational rationale for maintaining the current status quo with regards to the Implementation of Key Action 1. A summarised presentation\(^{76}\) of the implementation narrative follows:

- In the view of the participating Commission representatives, there may be pragmatic reasons to acknowledge that there are aspects of the implementation that may call for decisions to recentralise, or conversely, decentralise current activities. E.g. reorganising parts of Key Action 1 may be an option to consider in the eventuality of a substantial increase of Erasmus+ budget decided by the Parliament. As such an increase would result in the intensifications of activities targeting the mobility of individuals the human and financial and logistic resource of Implementation Bodies would require upscaling.

- Supposing that the Erasmus+ budget will be increasing from 2017, it may make sense, hypothetically, given the money allocated for every member state, to consider decentralising further some activities to the national level. However, such reallocations of responsibilities, i.e. delegation of new tasks to National Agencies or, conversely recentralisation to DG EAC / EACEA occur normally between two programmes, as it has been the case in 2013-2014 for the transition from LLP to Erasmus+. Such reallocations do not take place historically at mid-programme stage. Again, such changes are not likely to happen for regulatory reasons.

- There are additional operational and organisational arguments that may speak against profoundly modifying the status quo of the Implementation Model of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 (and other Key Actions, as these are functionally integrated). Should the Parliament and the Council amend the original regulations and instruct the Commission to recentralise activities and responsibilities in Key Action 1 that are currently delegated to National Authorities and their National Agencies, logistic and organisational constraints would still limit the Commission’s capacity to deliver the Programme with the required level of quality and responsiveness.

- Considering these constraints, the current position of the Commission (as voiced by DG EAC) is to keep at a national level the implementation of such activities that are

\(^{75}\) Conducted by one of the authors 4/5/2016 with participation of several representatives of DG EAC

\(^{76}\) Statements listed are not verbatim statements but summative narratives reformulated by the authors.
Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013)

closest to end-users. Mobility and cooperation actions that involve large numbers of grass-root activities are decentralised. This is a logical approach because (1) the large number of applications makes it impractical, if not impossible, to manage centrally, and (2) the National Agencies are closer to the beneficiaries and better placed to support them. Seen from the perspective of the Commission, there is a clear logic underlying this system, which should be maintained more or less as it is today.

- The present implementation of Key Action 1, incorporating tasks and responsibilities that are delegated through National Authorities to the National Agencies, as repeatedly underlined by the panel, practices a form of public governance that offers the shortest possible path to end-users, save dealing directly with them.

- There is also, in the view of the Commission, a well-functioning network of National Agencies. By May 2016, the Commission has a positive appreciation of the management by National Agencies of allocated funds within the framework of the financial regulations for Erasmus+. National Agencies are operating only at a national level, and deliver what the Commission expect from them. National Agencies have an obligation to deliver quantitative and qualitative results. From a purely administrative and logistic perspective, the current delegation of tasks and responsibilities to National Agencies functions satisfactorily. As of today, the DG EAC has no indications emanating from beneficiaries that the National Agency system may pose severe problems.

- Occasional problems have occurred that have been solved, e.g. a temporary suspension of a programme in Greece in the Youth sector was enforced recently while new solutions were found. Such problems, however, are very rare in the history of Erasmus+ and former Programmes, as they occur once or twice in one or two Programme countries within the duration of a whole Programme period. In the case of Greek Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (INEDIVIM) the nature of the problems that have been addressed do not justify revising the global implementation model of Erasmus+. Further comment forwarded to the authors from a representative from DG EAC: “For the Greek case, it should be noted that it was also the National Authority that was malfunctioning: the NAU did not succeed in delivering the 2013 Declaration of Assurance to DG EAC on time and also the NAU was unable to properly monitor and supervise the NA in 2014 and 2015 as requested in our Guidelines for the Erasmus+ Programme.”
There are also other actions which are either smaller actions or which may not make sense to spread among many countries, and there are actions which have a high political interest for the Commission, and can be managed more efficiently by the Executive Agency.  

Overall, the key message from DG EAC is that the dual approach described above is both cost-effective, and politically and humanly appropriate.

Interpreting the narrative from the perspective of New Institutionalism

The views of the Commission summarised above can be interpreted in light of new institutionalism, a theory in organisational sciences that analyses mental and formal institutional homogeneity. “Theories of new institutionalism are particularly useful in explaining (lack of) policy change, since they focus on how and why institutions originate, persist and evolve, and on the processes of institutional reproduction and institutionalisation.”

New institutionalism is historically influenced by Max Weber’s iron cage theory about the institutionalisation process, but replaces earlier focus on formal aspects of bureaucracies and institutions by the deconstruction of narratives, shared mental models, and modes of actions. A crucial insight of both ‘old’ and ‘new’ institutionalism is that organisations tend historically, to become more homogeneous without necessarily becoming more efficient or accountable to their users. In this internal solidification process organisations tend to become focused on their own survival. Efforts to establish robust legitimacy contribute to maintain internal cohesion and define symbolic and formal perimeters delimiting appropriate from inappropriate moves and discourses. Constructions of the world of users (or beneficiaries, or citizens) tend to be developed as internal narratives in a self-referencing institutional environment, rather than as true reflections of the reality “out there”.


LACK OF CHANGE IN INSTITUTIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

- New Institutionalism highlights how and why lack of change is frequently the ruling opinion in organisations. Source: Vijge (2012), pp. 157-159:

- **Path Dependency**: “Institutional context, which is inherited from the past, influences developments and pushes these along so-called ‘trajectories’”.

- **Locked-in Syndrome**: “Path-dependent developments necessarily [do not always] mean ‘virtuous’ progress, but can instead also lead to inefficient, unintended or ‘vicious’ outcomes”.

- **Only One Future Option**: “Once ‘inefficient’ structures are institutionalised, they influence the trajectories or institutional developments and make the move towards other—possibly more efficient—structures more difficult and costlier”.

- **Iron-Caging Actors**: “Institutions influence not only actors’ choices but also the interactions between actors, since institutions are the main fora in which political debates or conflicts take place.

**Less virtuous outcomes of virtuous implementation processes in Key Action 1**

In light of insights gained from new institutionalism, and with regards to the discussion in the previous section of this chapter, the implementation model developed by the Commission for Key Action 1:

1. may or may not be cost-efficient (cost analysis is not within the scope of this study);
2. may be efficient, but chiefly from the perspective of the institutional environment;
3. may not respond optimally to the broader vision of decentred, network-like, less hierarchical multilevel governance (Type 2 and Type 3 MLG model);
4. may not contribute in the perception of stakeholders, e.g. learners, youth, workers, or educational staff, to reduce the distance to decision-centres;
5. may choose approaches for current and future evaluations of Erasmus+ and Key Action 1 that are too path-dependent;
6. may be subject to becoming locked-in in a particular institutionalised vision;
7. may be dependent on fresh, external input to envisage a broader set of future paths for the mobility of individuals under Key Action 1;
8. may tend to influence, more than it may be democratically appropriate, interactions between various actors and stakeholders.
Furthermore, the re-institutionalisation process witnessed in Key Action 1 may serve the short-term objectives of the Commission and of ruling authorities in Programme countries, but will neither be serving the sociocultural goal of promoting European integration through mobility because socialisation into European values happens through direct contact with the EU institutions. Such crucial socialisation may involve e.g. teachers or groups of teachers applying directly for mobility grants, applicants and stakeholders interacting with EU institutions and experiencing models for impartial treatment, encouraging mobility candidates and participants to acquire a sense of the rule of law by applying for grants, contracting directly with EU institutions which may also offer productive channels for engaging in structured negotiations and acquiring transferable skills to local environments.

**RECOMMENDATION**

In light of the Commission’s view that it is not possible nor realistic to modify thoroughly the Implementation Model of Erasmus+ in 2017, the European Parliament may consider exploring legal and practical needs and opportunities for changing the centralised and decentralised Erasmus+ Implementation Model.

3. **Public communication about general budgetary aspects with relevance to Key Action 1**

**Communication practices of the Commission about the Erasmus+ budget**

The final signature by the European Parliament and the Council 11th of December 2013 fixed a very ambitious budget for the Erasmus+ Programme. Since then, The Commission has been communicating intensively the message about the 40% budget increase from LLP to Erasmus+, conveying the impression to users and actors in the field that such increase would unleash a considerable increase of activities in all sectors addressed by Key Action 1.

For example, the widely diffused promotional brochure “Erasmus+ 2014-2016 What’s in it for education, training, youth and sport?” states that the Erasmus+ Programme has a “total budget of €14.7 billion, representing a 40% budget increase”. In the same vein, former Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou responsible for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth stated in a speech to the European Parliament 19 November 2013 that

“The €14.7 billion budget agreed today is nearly 40% higher than current levels. It means that we will be able to provide grants for more than 4 million young people and others to study, train, work or volunteer abroad. ... The budget increase we have secured represents a massive expansion of the world’s biggest and best mobility programme, and we should all take pride in that achievement.”

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The key message about budget increase was that it would unleash an unprecedented increase in the volume and quality of mobility in Europe and elsewhere. The targeted 4 million mobility participants are detailed further by Commissioner Vassiliou in the same speech:

“Erasmus+ will provide more grants across the board. For example, it will support:

- 2 million higher education students and 650 000 vocational training students;
- 800 000 teachers, trainers, education staff and youth workers will be able to teach or train abroad;
- More than 500 000 young people will receive grants to volunteer abroad or take part in youth exchanges;
- 200 000 Master’s level students will benefit from a new loan guarantee;
- 125 000 organisations and institutions expected to benefit.”

The foreseen increases in mobility have since been communicated by DG EAC, i.e., in a brochure dated 30 January 2014 which predicts 20% more mobility for higher education students and a 6% increase in the number of mobilities for VET learners by 2020.84

To illustrate the impact of this communication offensive, Germany-based ICEF Monitor, relying exclusively on the 2016 annual work programme for the implementation of ‘Erasmus+’85 (direct quotation in italic), presents in an almost panegyric style the announced increase in mobilities as near sensational:

“Under an expanded funding formula, participation in the Erasmus+ European student mobility programme more than doubled in 2014. 500 000 students and 150,000 educators received funding for training, study, and volunteering abroad that year. The programme has been shown to have significant effects on the employability of participants. This is especially true for programme alumni in Eastern Europe, whose risk of long-term unemployment was reduced by 83%, and Southern Europe, where mobile students were half as likely to experience long-term unemployment.... Erasmus+ has a total budget of €14.7 billion (US$16.4 billion) and a newly released report for 2014, the first full year under the new programme, confirms total spending of €2.07 billion (US$2.3 billion) over the year, with two-thirds of that total (or about €1.2 billion) allocated to mobility programmes. That concentrated spending led to a dramatic increase in European student mobility in 2014. Nearly 650,000 people participated in training, study, or volunteering abroad, including roughly 500 000 students and trainees and 150 000 teachers and educators who had “the opportunity to improve their competencies by teaching and training abroad.” The majority of Erasmus+ participants come from six EU countries: Germany (11.6%), France (10 %), Spain (9.3%), Poland (8.2%), Italy (7.3%), and Turkey (5.3%).”86

22/10/2015.


86 ICEF (2016). Erasmus+ participation doubles in 2014; boosts youth employment, ICEF Monitor report 12 February 2016. The same kind of uncritical coverage may be found November 21, 2013 in the Times Higher Education article ‘Horizon 2020 and Erasmus budgets approved’.
The Commission’s narrative about the Erasmus+ budget situation

One of the authors of this study collected the views of representatives from the Commissions about the budget situation. A narrative describing several aspect of the budgetary situation of Erasmus+ in May 2016 follows.87

- Given previous and repeated announcements that the Erasmus+ budget would grow by 40% over the 2014-2020 period88 to a total of €14.7 billion, the reality is that, by May 2016, according to DG EAC, *this increase has not yet materialised fully*. According to the planning of the Erasmus+ budget framework, the budget for the first three years of the Programme remains comparable to its predecessors. While there has been no decrease in the amount of allocations, there has been no significant increase of the budget for use in Key Action 1. From 2014 to 2016, the KA1 budget has increased by 2%. However, for School Education KA1 shows a marked increase compared to the LLP Comenius In-Service Training action: from ca. 27 million EUR in 2013 to approximately 40 million EUR in 2014.

- External factors, e.g. the financial crisis in Europe and elsewhere, have played a role in the decision not to give a substantial increase of the budget before 2017.

- This leaves Erasmus+ with an increase of 2% to 3% every year for 2014-2015 and, possibly, 12%-13% more in the remaining years.89 In December 2015 DG EAC communicated to the Erasmus+ Committee a projection of the budget allocation between sectors and Key Actions until 2020. The figures provided are purely indicative as many factors may influence the allocation decisions until the end of the programme (policy priorities, mid-term review of the multiannual financial framework, absorption capacity…). However, this projection clearly shows from 2017 an important increase of the yearly EU budget (+17% total budget, +16% total KA1). “The Commission intends to substantially increase the allocation to pillar actions of the programme, notably the mobility projects within Key Action 1 (about 165Mio€ more)”.90

- The Commission has communicated frequently and proactively with the European Parliament to explain the implications of the budgetary policy for the Programme for implementing activities, as well as implications for short-term planning and long-term projections.91

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87 Statements listed are not verbatim statements but summative narratives reformulated by the authors.


89 Source: Panel Interview with representatives from DG EAC 4th May 2016

90 “In 2017, thanks to the budgetary authority support to the programme, the Erasmus+ budget is expected to sharply increase for the first year since the programme has started (14% or circa 280Mio€ as compared to 2016). In line with the budgetary profile of the MFF 2014-2020, this increase is meant to be repeated over the rest of the programming period (over 10% per year).” (Reference in Note 91).

• The Commission has made full use of the available budget appropriations for Erasmus+ in all targeted activity sectors. In light of this high demand, National Agencies as in previous years have used more than 99% of the programme funds.

• There are in clear positive indicators: e.g. the overall number of mobilities has increased since the start of Erasmus+ in 2014, e.g. around 660 000 students and staff received mobility grants in 2015, 10 000 more than in 2014. “On substance, 2017 is expected to be a year of relative continuity on content, however - for the first time – with a substantial increase in the budget.”

• New services which were not provided under LLP, e.g. Online Language Support (OLS), have been added.

• The key message from DG EAC is that despite a limited increase in the budget, the Commission has managed to increase the number of outputs of the various Erasmus+ Actions in all sectors, combined with improvement of the quality for the beneficiaries.

4. Grant level discrepancies

Examples in this section are from Higher Education but are applicable to other sectors in Key Action 1.

Socio-Economic selectivity of Student Mobility

Conclusions and recommendations from the 2006 survey are still valid

The theme of social-economic selectivity and sensitivity of both general and EU-funded student mobility is a recurring theme in surveys and academic research on learner mobility in Europe and elsewhere.

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92 Source: Panel Interview with representatives from DG EAC 4th May 2016.

93 Source: Panel Interview with representatives from DG EAC 4th May 2016.
Earlier studies have already surveyed the economic conditions of mobile students, considering not only financial resources available to individuals before and during mobility, but also taking into account the broader picture offered by correlating financial data to socio-economic and educational background of their parents. Souto et. al. (2006) compared reproduced in 2005 earlier studies carried out in 2000, to conclude that there was a high degree of consistency between the two surveys with regards to the demographic characteristics of respondents. While the authors observed that “there seems to have been some progress in attracting people from less well-off backgrounds in the last five years” they noted nevertheless that “such trends are less well reflected in parental background by level of education” (pp. iv-v). The conclusion of Souto et al. that the role of the grant allocation system enforced during the 2000-2006 period to address social disparities, remained minor as it was mainly “a necessary financial supplement for mobility that did to some extent cover the extra costs of studying abroad”, covering near 100% of additional cost compared with 80% in 2000. Moreover, there was an increase of 10% of students suffering additional expenses in relation to their stay abroad was observed in the 2006 study.

The key findings of Souto et al. (page v) offer a platform for assessing possible improvements regarding social selectivity in mobility enrolment in Key Action 1:

“There are still important socio-economic barriers in relation to take-up of the programme. A large proportion of students reported their parents to have an economic status above the average in their country, although a change in the profile of programme participants can be observed from the 2000 survey, with more students from average and below-average economic background participating in the programme than before.”

Eurostudent V 2012 - 2015 confirms that social selectivity is still an issue

Our analysis of subsequent survey data from the Eurostudent IV (2008-2011) and Eurostudent V surveys support the conclusions of Souto et al. regarding social selectivity in enrolment in student mobility. The two Eurostudent surveys collected data about student mobility (including EU and non-EU funding sources) indicate that social selectivity remains an issue across the two periods, suggesting that the socio-economic patterns of enrolment should be part of the agenda in future assessments of Key Action 1.

Although, for 2012-2015, combining Eurostudent V data with GDP data for 201494 for some Programme countries, one can observe a clear pattern showing that countries with low GDP (e.g. under 80% of EU average) have a high proportion of student mobility funded by EU grants, which would suggest that EU-funding has an overall bridging effect (see Figure 5 below).

Educational selectivity in mobility enrolment

However, extending the data analysis to include the parents’ education background introduces strong nuances. Using the ISCED categorisation of educational level of the student’s parents\(^95\), an educational background equality index \((r)\) was used by the authors based on the ratio of students’ background enrolling for studies abroad with parents from low ISCED educational background compared with students with parents with a high ISCED educational background \((r= \text{high/low})\)^96. Analysis of the distribution of \(r\) for mobility participants shows that social selectivity still is an important contextual variable for assessing Key Action 1:

- High upward educational mobility \((r \leq 1)\) is only attested a few countries, e.g. Latvia, Sweden, and Germany.\(^97\)
- Only in a few countries with high above EU average GDP, Nordic countries, The Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland there is a low percentage (under 25\%) of students who do not experience insufficient financial insecurity, and do not report expecting significant financial obstacles to mobility.
- With the exception of Nordic countries, there is a high percentage (higher or equal to 50\%) of countries in which students are dependent on support from their

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\(^96\) \(r = a/b\); \(a=\) percentage of students with parents with high ISCED level 5 to 6, \(b=\) percentage of students with parents with low education background ISCED level 0 to 2.

\(^97\) Eurostudent IV (2008-2011): Latvia \((r=0.3)\), Sweden \((r=0.9)\), Germany \((r=1.0)\). Eurostudent V (2012-2015): \(r\) is calculated using the social background equality for all students, mobile or not, average of \((\text{father’s } r + \text{mother’s } r)/2\).
parents, family, or partner for their mobility. In some countries students are extremely dependent (more than 70%) on such support, e.g. Slovak Republic (90%), Italy (84.4%), Czech Republic (81.5%), Switzerland (80.8%), Austria (78.8%), Croatia (76.9%), The Netherlands (74.4%), Germany (74%), France (72.1%).

Recommendations

The conclusion and recommendations of Souto et al. from 2006 are neither outdated nor invalidated by new grant allocation policies in Erasmus+ Key Action 1 from 2014. While the new grant location system implemented in Key Action 1 may have some positive effect on the financial disparities noted above, major challenges remain to be addressed in this area.

The conclusions of Souto et al., pp. v-vi, i.e., that “barriers to take-up of the programme are not only economic but truly socio-economic”, may therefore be paraphrased to formulate further recommendations addressing social selectivity in Key Action 1:

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The European Parliament may consider restructuring the budget for Key Action 1 to enable the mobility of people who now cannot take part in it due to financial reasons.
- The European Parliament may consider measuring this against the administrative costs of setting up schemes that take into account the economic background of students.
- The European Parliament may consider initiating a more nuanced allocation of funds by home and host country that would also encourage the participation of a wider socio-economic spectrum of students in the programme since these aspects still have an impact on the financial situation of students due to differences in the cost of living that is not fully offset by the current distribution of grants.

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98 Eurostudent V (2012-2015), Variable: ‘Sources of funding for realised enrolment abroad, parents/family/partner, all students under mobility’.

99 Reproducing Souto et al., pp. v-vi

100 These findings and conclusions support the recommendations of 2012 EHEA Mobility Strategy “Ensuring that different groups of students have similar opportunities of becoming internationally mobile and thus of reaping the benefits of international student mobility is therefore an important goal of higher education policy-makers. In fact, the ministers responsible for higher education have promised to ‘give extra attention and opportunities to under-represented groups to be mobile’” (EHEA Mobility Strategy, 2012, p. 3 cited in EVSI5, p.186)
Analysis of the Commission’s position concerning grant amounts

The interview material gathered for this study confirms that while, some mobility participants declare to be satisfied with the grant levels\textsuperscript{101}, some students and local Erasmus+ staff members report criticism about perceived grant discrepancies between countries. Real or perceived, such grant size discrepancies may generate or reinforce social selectivity, e.g. in Spain\textsuperscript{102} where mobility candidates from more affluent social categories in large Spanish urban areas may afford to go abroad, while students from rural areas, whose parents have a modest income, would be de facto disqualified. There are indications that National Agencies enforce grant allocation decisions quite differently from country to country and from sector to sector in Key Action 1.

In VET mobility, Germany has cut all grants to apprentices by 80% leaving only 20% to the mobility candidate to cover extra expenses since these persons are considered to receive already a salary. In Norway, by contrast, such cuts do not happen, and these candidates receive the whole grant, because in the view of the authorities, there is enough money available in national budgets to allocate a maximum grant amount.

While it is not within the scope of the study to offer a systematic analysis of the geography and distribution of grant allocations across sectors in Key Action 1, it is sufficient to comment that the combined effect of the principles laid down by the Commission and the grant allocation practices enforced by the National Agencies, may not be understood fully by stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Panel interviews with the Commission addressing among other themes grant disparities in Key Action 1 were conducted in May 2016\textsuperscript{103}. The analysis of the views expressed during this session shed light on how central institutional actors in DG EAC construct a personal and organisational rationale for maintaining a status quo with regards to the grant allocation system under Key Action 1. A summarised presentation\textsuperscript{104} of the implementation narrative follows:

- In the former LLP programme there was a maximum grant sum depending on the destination country. The National Agencies had the freedom to fix the level, without any minimum. It led to wide discrepancies between the grant allocated across the countries but also within the countries where flexibility was given to

\textsuperscript{101} Frequently, these student, e.g. French outbound students, do not distinguish sharply between the Erasmus+ grant portion and additional private, institutional, and regional grants and support.

\textsuperscript{102} E.g. the authors collected reactions about alleged low grants allocated by the Spanish National agency to Spanish students outbound to high cost host institutions, i.e., "Norwegian students outbound to Spain get more grants than the Spanish students incoming to Norway, despite much higher costs of living in Norway". National agencies in host countries, i.e. Norway, and Erasmus+ contacts, i.e. France commented they knew but could not do anything because it was the Spanish National Agency that has decided to cut the grant amount for Spanish students.

\textsuperscript{103} Conducted by one of the authors 4/5/2016 with participation of several representatives of DG EAC.

\textsuperscript{104} Statements listed are not verbatim statements but summative narratives reformulated by the authors.
beneficiaries, e.g. to incoming Spanish Students and to outbound Norwegian students. There was a lack of clear criteria under LLP for fixing the size of grants.

- The Erasmus+ methodology to fix the level of unit costs is described in the Commission Decision C(2013)8550105.

- The level of these unit costs is going to be analysed in the context of the Mid-Term Evaluation review of Erasmus+. Depending on the results of this study, grant levels might be adapted where needed as from the 2018 call.

- Erasmus+ has, according the Commission, enforced more transparent norms for deciding the size of grants across Europe support across Europe. This is why a certain flexibility has been kept in the Erasmus+ grant levels, but much more reduced than under LLP and according to clear and transparent criteria. For example, the following changes have been introduced for higher education student grants in Erasmus+:
  - They are fixed at national level (except in 6 countries106 where HEIs can adapt the grant level taking into account their regional funding) within a limited range fixed at EU level (new in Erasmus+: introduction of a minimum level of 150€/month) according to 2 criteria:
    - the available level of national or regional co-financing (which is substantial e.g. in France, Germany or Spain)
    - the volume of demand for grants, (e.g. the demand for Erasmus+ grants is much higher in Spain than in the UK)
  - These limited ranges for grant amounts take into account the difference in living costs between the sending and receiving country.
  - To make the programme more accessible, additional financial support is awarded to:
    - students from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds
    - students and staff with special needs
    - students from outermost countries and regions/overseas territories

- The Commission has considered the possibility to standardise the grant amounts in every European country. However, the consequences of such a move would, in the view of DG EAC representatives, have been negative, as a resulting higher level of grants would divide by two or three the number of students who may benefit from Erasmus+ support.

- A survey conducted in France by Agence Erasmus+ concludes that the representativeness of Erasmus+ mobile students reflects the general profile of the student population in France. Such survey results strengthen the view of DG EAC that the proportion of Erasmus+ grant receivers is the same as in the total population. Moreover, the Erasmus+ mobility scoreboard suggests that the Programme makes a positive difference in term of representativeness of mobility candidates relative to the general student population.

105 European Commission (2013). ‘The use of lump sums, the reimbursement on the basis of unit costs and the flat-rate financing under the “Erasmus+ Programme C(2013)8550 of 4 December 2013’.

106 For France, see: https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F15077
Additionally, National agencies have a legal obligation since 2014 to publish the grant sum before the academic year, even before the students apply for mobility grants.

There are, meanwhile, 6 countries, among them France and Germany, have granted universities the liberty to decide the grant level. In every case, the level fixed by the National Agencies is to be published before the students are allowed to apply for Erasmus+ mobility. The student should know before applying how much they can get.

Erasmus not truly for everyone? Parliamentary criticism of grant amounts

Similar criticism has been voiced on 9 October 2014 in the Parliament in a Question for written answer to the Commission Rule 130 by MP Andrej Plenković (PPE) that the “amount of money provided to students going abroad to participate in Erasmus remains very low when viewed against the cost of living in some of the Member States. According to Commission data, the average amount of financial assistance per student in the 2012-2013 academic year was EUR 253 per month. Former MEP Doris Pack concluded back in 2013 that Erasmus was not truly ‘for everyone’, as only those with additional financial support could participate. She also stated that Erasmus+ would, despite her best efforts, remain a programme for the ‘financial elite’.”

In an answer given 10 December 2014 by Mr Navracsics on behalf of the Commission the argument of a greater social selectivity in Erasmus+ compared with the LLP Programme is rejected as it is claimed that the differences in cost of living are taken into account: “The Commission has made efforts to ensure that the new Erasmus+ programme is more accessible and inclusive for higher education students. The grants for mobility are increased from previous levels and they take now account of the difference in living costs between the sending and receiving countries. Additional financial support is available for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. Such students may receive a top-up grant of between EUR 100 and 200 per month in addition to the basic Erasmus+ grant upon the decision of the national authorities. Students with special needs can benefit from specific support and may get their full eligible real cost related to their mobility period abroad reimbursed. Moreover, students from geographically distant programme countries, or from the outermost regions of EU Member States, receive higher grants for individual support and a separate travel grant taking into consideration their remoteness. Higher grant amounts are also fixed to support students travelling from or to partner countries outside the EU. Linguistic support has also been reinforced with a new online linguistic platform to facilitate the participation of students who have not had the opportunity to develop the necessary foreign languages skills.”

The Commission claims in the written answer reproduced above that differences in the size of grants may not introduce significant social biases between Programme countries.

Further comments from DG EAC\textsuperscript{108} refers to the case of France to support the claim that Erasmus+ fund of student mobility has a positive impact on existing social biases:

“DG EAC has indications that differences in the size of grants may not introduce significant social biases between Programme countries, in particular with the new additional top-up (between 100 and 200€/month) that is allocated on top of the basic grant to students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background. E.g. in France a survey run by Agence Erasmus+ shows that representativeness of Erasmus+ mobile students reflects the general profile of the student population in France [the French ministry provides a specific financial support for those French Erasmus+ students coming from a disadvantaged socio-economic background]. Such survey results strengthen the view of DG EAC that the extension of this best practice to all Erasmus+ programme countries [with the specific Erasmus+ top-up grant for students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background] will contribute to ensure that the proportion of Erasmus+ grant receivers is the same as in the total population.”

“In 2015, a survey conducted by the French Agence Erasmus+ covering 362 HEIs in France shows that “47% of grant holders who are selected on social criteria and who went abroad received financial support from Erasmus+. The proportion of grant holders receiving Erasmus+ financial support (35%) is higher than the national average of grant holders on social criteria in French higher education (28%)”\textsuperscript{109}.

Reference is made to students with special needs, long distance travel support, linguistic support (OLS). It is furthermore claimed that the grant amounts are taking into account the cost of living, but it is not reported if the calculation principles underlying these amounts have a sufficient levelling effect on the financial autonomy of beneficiaries.

Concluding remark

The gap noted between, on one hand, the public position defended by the Commission in the Parliament, together with the narrative collected during the Panel interview with representatives from DG EAC and, on the other hand, available surveys commented in this chapter, raises questions. Whereas earlier and more recent surveys, e.g. Eurostudent V, suggest strongly that social selectivity remains a social obstacle to mobility, the Commission supports publicly the view that the implementation of the grant system in Key Action 1 counteracts such undesirable trends.

\textsuperscript{108} forwarded to the authors as an edited version of the transcripts following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016 at DG EAC.

RECOMMENDATION

The European Parliament may consider assessing in greater depth and width the implications of the policies of Commissions and the practices of National Agencies with regards to grant amounts with special regards to reproduction of socio-economic disparities in Europe.
Chapter 5: Mobility of School Staff

1. Key Action 1 offers only institutionalised school staff mobility

Key Action 1 concerns only the mobility of staff in the school sector. There are no provisions in Key Action 1 activities targeting the school sector to offer mobility opportunities to learners.

As this was the case in the LLP Programme of the Comenius Action Individual Mobility of pupils that was launched in 2010, Erasmus+ has brought to an end significant efforts deployed earlier to encourage e.g. school class exchanges.\textsuperscript{110} The Comenius sub-programme targeted “all levels of school education, as well as the individuals involved, including pupils, teachers, local authorities, and education institutions, among others.”\textsuperscript{111} The ideology and rationale underlying such an abrupt policy change from LLP to Erasmus+ has not been submitted systematically to the appreciation of stakeholders, neither it has debated in depth and width in the media nor in national professional arenas, prior to the adoption of Regulation No 1288/2013 of 11 December 2013 establishing Erasmus+ and Article restricting implicitly mobility in school sector to staff\textsuperscript{112}. A close reading of the Comenius related portions of Regulation No 1288/2013 reveals some ambiguities about the systematic exclusion of Comenius-type mobility for learners from 13 years of age.

Only in Key Action 2, provisions are made to include pupils on short-term visits or exchanges in School-only Strategic Partnerships, but only in such cases where the exchanges contribute to deliver the project’s outcomes, e.g. to promote linguistic skills and intercultural awareness.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{110} Cp. the study of Bonnet (2012b) about individual mobility of learners in schools.


\textsuperscript{112} Article 17 applies to the issues raised in this Chapter: “It is necessary to strengthen the intensity and extent of European cooperation between schools, and of the mobility of school staff and learners, in order to address the priorities set out in the Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools for the 21st century, namely to improve the quality of school education in the Union in the fields of competence development and in order to improve equity and inclusion within school systems and institutions, as well as to reinforce and provide support for the teaching profession and school leadership. In this context, the strategic targets on reducing early school leaving, improving performance in basic skills, and improving participation and quality in early childhood education and care, should be prioritised along with targets reinforcing the professional competences of school teachers and school leaders, and improving the educational opportunities for children with a migrant background and those at a socio-economic disadvantage.”

\textsuperscript{113} “ Long-term mobility of staff, the short and long-term mobility of pupils as well as the blended mobility of adult learners can be supported under Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships” Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2016 Version 2 p. 33.
RECOMMENDATION

The European Parliament may consider assessing to which degree the Commission’s policies allowing almost exclusively school staff mobility LLP in Key Action 1, and not any more school class exchanges, as it was the case in Comenius, faithfully addresses all aspects of the Comenius dimension expressed in Regulation No 1288/2013.

Institutionalisation of school staff mobility in Key Action 1

Rationale

The strategic priorities of the schools are much more prioritised under Erasmus+ and replace previous teachers-based initiatives under LLP. Under Erasmus+ teacher-based initiatives to enrol in staff mobility depends on the approval of the school leadership or school owners.

In order to clarify the question “Are the ‘strategic priorities of schools’ described at a European level?”114, the Commission’s understanding of the notion of ‘strategic priorities for schools’ was forwarded to the authors in a comment provided by a representative from DG EAC:

“The focus on the strategic development of the school was introduced in Erasmus+ to ensure that individual mobilities have an impact not only on the person in question, but on his or her home institution, thereby promoting the international capacity of the institution and the quality of the teaching offered. The institution should be actively involved and invested in the project. This is why schools must submit a European Development Plan in their application. This plan should reflect the institution’s own competence development needs and plans. There are therefore no priority topics or subjects defined on the European level, because the objective is to activate school leaders and the schools as organisations, and encouraging activities that are in line with the needs of each particular school.”

The most important change from the previous programme is the introduction of an institutional model which accepts only application from the institutions, e.g. from the schools provided they are legal entities, or from the ‘school owners’. The institutional applicant may apply for grants financing a variety of mobilities for their staff. This is a major difference compared with LLP, which accepted individual applications from teachers. Where the authors of this study see a clear ideology (discussed in another chapter), the representatives from the Commission interviewed 4 May 2016 stress that, besides ideology, there are also a very practical reasons to adopt this approach, e.g. “the administrative effort involved in processing thousands of applications for a few hundred euro each could not be justified.”115 In Erasmus+, institutions are invited to respond to specific calls that deal with specific mobilities.

In some countries, e.g. Norway, the institutionalisation of school staff mobility proposals has been systematised to the point that not even schools can apply for teacher mobility grants (since schools are not legal entities), but only the school owner, e.g. the county or

114 Additional question submitted to DG EAC following the Panel held on 4 May 2016.

115 Comment on the Panel transcripts following the Panel Interview with DG EAC 4 May 2016 forwarded to the authors.
the municipality\textsuperscript{116}. The Commission supports this approach, as some schools do not supposedly possess the necessary experience and skills to write and submit potentially successful applications. The Erasmus+ strategy for schools is about building competence in the school as a whole, including staff mobility under Key Action 1. The consequence is that Erasmus+ offers a wider spectrum of mobilities within schools, e.g. including possible participation from school leadership, in order to improve the international capacity of the whole institution, as well as the teaching and learning offered by the institution. The Commission has opted therefore for applications from institutions as opposed to individual application from teachers.

**Possible negative effects of institutionalised mobility on local change-makers**

While this may serve the outlined strategic goals for the school sector, the implementation of new institutional model described above may generate new obstacles to mobility for innovative teachers in such schools where the leadership is not interested in or competent in international mobility, and in regions or municipalities where school staff mobility is not prioritised due to various formal regulations or work-force constraints. As a result, some teachers now may encounter local or regional obstacles, that were not equally present under LLP\textsuperscript{117}, when trying to obtain grants for staff mobility from Erasmus+.

The institutional model operates on the two implicit beliefs that, firstly, the innovation potential of Erasmus+ staff mobility is appropriately recognised by the school leadership or by school owners and, secondly, that innovation affecting positively staff and learners in schools can be unleashed from within governing or managing bodies. This approach to innovation (more *driving* than *enabling*) contravenes the general view that innovation in organisation does not necessarily requires consensus, but indeed requires frequently disruptive intervention.

\textsuperscript{116} This statement was part of the interview transcript following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016 with representatives from DG EAC. A clarification was sent later by a representative of DG EAC to the authors stating: “This mixes up two issues: 1 – in some countries, schools are not legal entities, and therefore need to register their application with reference to the legal entity they are affiliated to, usually the local authority. This is just an administrative issue, and does not impact the school’s possibility to apply on their own behalf. 2 - the Commission, based on consultations with the National Agencies, has from the 2015 call introduced the possibility for Consortium applications in KA1 School Education. This entails that local authorities can apply on behalf of a number of schools, rather than each school applying individually. This may be useful for smaller schools with limited capacity and experience. The Commission does not however favour one procedure over the other. From the Commission’s point of view, what is important about the "institutional approach", i.e. applications by institutions rather than individual teachers, is that the activities are linked to the school’s competence development needs and the results will impact the institution as a whole.”

\textsuperscript{117} This has been commented further by a representative from DG EAC in a communication to the authors: “While under LLP, it was to some extent easier for teachers to participate despite an uninterested or negative school leadership, they did nevertheless encounter similar obstacles – difficulties to take time out of the classroom to take part in European mobility, lack of recognition of the competences obtained, etc.”
RECOMMENDATION
The European Parliament may consider granting staff members in schools (and staff in other sectors) the right to apply individually or collectively for mobility grants under Key Action 1.

2. Funding of staff mobility

There is overall a significant interest for such staff mobility, which is not met in the current budget situation. Some respondents have mentioned that there may be differences in the approach to school staff mobility among the National Agencies in different countries which may affect the funding patterns. E.g. smaller countries are able to fund a much larger percentage of mobility applications than larger countries.

Threats originating in insufficient funding following increased demand for staff mobility

Current budget availability has also bearings on the success rate of staff mobility applications. As noted in the Youth sector, increased demand for grants in the school sector may lead to a drop in the funding ratio. If the success rate becomes too low, schools will not reapply. For the school institution an application represents a serious investment in time and collective involvement. Increased demand for staff mobility may become a budget issue.

Views expressed by the Commission

Panel interviews with the Commission covering the implementation of school staff mobility Key Action 1 were conducted in May 2016. The analysis of the views expressed during this session shed light on how central institutional actors in DG EAC construct a rationale for addressing possible increased demand for school staff mobility within available budgetary constraints. A summarised presentation of the implementation narrative follows:

- To deal with such eventualities, DG EAC reported that the Commission had intensified contacts with the National Agencies in these matters, providing them with forecasts about which kind of funding results can be expected in the future.

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118 When submitted this statement a representative from DG EAC has commented in a communication to the authors: “I am not aware of any differences in the National Agencies’ approach which affect the percentage of applications funded. There is indeed great variation in the "success rate", i.e. funding percentage, between NAs. But this is a function of different levels of demand compared to budget. In turn, this variation in demand may have very different national explanations, ranging from the availability of national professional development schemes, the national mechanisms for recognition, the rules and systems in place for enabling teachers to travel abroad during the school year, etc. The Commission does not have the basis for analysing these different national factors.”

119 More detailed overview can be found in Annex 2.3 of Erasmus+ Annual Report 2014.

120 Conducted by one of the authors 4/5/2016 with participation of several representatives of DG EAC.

121 Statements listed are not verbatim statements but summative narratives reformulated by the authors.
Some European MP’s have already asked the Commission why some countries are exhibiting a low rate of funding of school staff mobility.

There are discrepancies in application success rates across countries. These discrepancies are not exclusively related to the size of the population in these Programme countries, but may be linked to the level of support in national regulations for school staff going abroad.

E.g. in some countries, teachers may be forced to take from their holidays; otherwise their stay abroad would not be authorised by their employers.

The national systems for professional development of teachers may also introduce new obstacles, as some countries, grant professional credits to teachers staying abroad, while other do not reward international staff mobility. Such issues were already observed as part of a survey carried out towards the end of the LLP programme period.

These discrepancies have been monitored country by country.

From the perspective of DG EAC, Key Action 1 for schools has been very unproblematic. The transition from LLP has been working very nicely without any major obstacles.

There are yet remaining challenges in terms of contents of mobility that need to be addressed. Still a large percentage of staff mobilities are mobilities are very short and consist of participation in courses, whereas the Commission would like to see an increase in job shadowing and teaching assignments in partner institutions. National Agencies have an important role to play in supporting and promoting these types of mobility.

A further increase of funded staff exchange projects until 2020 is advanced.

There is a need to exploit further possibilities for job shadowing of school staff in institutions abroad and enrich the content of mobilities.

Parliamentary criticism of the implementation school staff mobility

Criticism has been voiced against what is considered to be a complicated application procedure that may lead to a drop in staff exchange partnership being funded. E.g. in a Question for written answer submitted 23 July 2015 by MP Herman Winkler (PPE) it is noted that, in Germany,

“To take just one example, the number of German schools involved in partnerships dropped from 585 in 2013 to just 180 in 2014. In 2015, it already looks likely that many applications for well thought-out projects will have to be rejected because the Erasmus+ programme is so oversubscribed. The programme

122 A comment forwarded after reading the transcripts of the Panel Interviews held 4 May 2016 by a D.G. representative clarifies and expands this statement: "The Commission has not conducted any surveys on this issue in the context of Erasmus+. The success rate in the various countries can be read from Erasmus+ statistical reports, and is published in Annex to the Erasmus+ Annual Report. The Commission does not have the basis for analysing obstacles in specific countries. The impact study conducted on LLP Comenius In-Service Training concluded that most of the teachers had not encountered significant obstacles, but identified "finding a replacement during the training period", "gaining approval from their organisation", "lack of recognition of the training as working time/loss of holidays" as obstacles met by some."
Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013)

has a budget of EUR 16 million, but I have seen figures that put the total cost of projects for which applications have been received at over EUR 64 million.”

In the answer given by M. Tibor Navracsics on behalf of the Commission this drop 25 September 2015 is attributed to the fact that “The Erasmus+ and the previous Lifelong Learning programme (LLP) have different structures” and that the “[t]his implies that the project budgets are higher, leading to the selection of fewer projects.” Presenting the latest numbers of funded staff exchanges for the school sector in Germany, M. Navracsics defends the decrease from LLP by emphasizing the relative increase from 2014 to 2015:

“Nonetheless, in 2015 the National Agencies scrutinised more closely the budget of the proposed projects. These rationalisation efforts together with a budgetary increase for school education have proven to be successful: preliminary data show that approximately 250 German schools have been selected, which represents an increase of 38% compared to 2014.”

Funding of school mobility projects under Key Action 1

More than 5600 schools have received Staff Mobility funding in 2014 and 2015. Table 11 provides a list of project allocations by country for 2014 and 2015.

Increased interest for job-shadowing in the school sector

There are indications, based on feedback from National Agencies, of an increased demand for job-shadowing and teaching assignments in the school sector. Job-shadowing is becoming a popular type of mobility (around a fifth of the total mobilities) that may offer benefits for the future of the schools as a whole, especially when it ties the partner schools in a lasting relation and promotes exchanges. As regards development, the Commission does not have reliable data yet mapping the evolution of job shadowing in this sector. “In 2014, no distinction was made in the data at application level between structured courses and job shadowing, and the 2016 data is still incomplete. The 2015 data shows that the activities in awarded applications consist of 77% structured courses/training events, 21% job shadowing and 2% teaching assignments.”


125 In a comment forwarded to the authors by a representative of DG EAC following the Panel Interviews held 4 May 2016, a representative from DG EAC states:”The Commission does believe it is an activity which has a lot of potential for impact both on the competence development of the individual and on the schools involved, and an activity which especially supports the exchange of good practice between schools in Europe.”

126 Comment forwarded by a representative from DG EAC to the authors following the Panel Interviews held 4 May 2016.
Table 11: Schools having receiving Erasmus+ mobility funding in 2014 and 2015.
Budget allocation per Programme Country to Staff Mobility in Schools 2014-2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2014 TOTAL (EUR)</th>
<th>2015 TOTAL (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
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<td>792 230</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>653 131</td>
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<td>716 910</td>
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<td>530 062</td>
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<td>Estonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
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<td>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>42 629 340</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EU Commission (Highlighted difference in red stand for decrease and green stand for increase).

Contribution of eTwinning to fostering school staff mobility

The implementation of staff mobility in Key Action 1 could not be fully appraised without considering the physical staff mobility in context with the Key Action 2 eTwinning sub-action\textsuperscript{127}, launched in 2005, which offers online partnering opportunities for school teachers complementary to staff mobility in Key Action 1. The eTwinning sub-action promotes school collaboration in Europe through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by providing support, tools and services for schools.

\textsuperscript{127} Cassells, Gilleran, Morvan, et al. (2016).
“eTwinning offers a platform for staff (teachers, head teachers, librarians, etc.), working in a school in one of the European countries involved, to communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share and, in short, feel and be part of the most exciting learning community in Europe.”\textsuperscript{128}

The eTwinning Portal\textsuperscript{129} is the main meeting point and workspace for the action. The Portal provides online tools for teachers to find partners, set up projects, share ideas, exchange best practice and start working together, immediately using various customised tools available on the eTwinning platform. The most recent statistics from March 2016 highlights that, “available in twenty-eight languages, the eTwinning Portal now has the involvement of nearly 371 597 members and over 44 449 projects between two or more schools across Europe.”\textsuperscript{130}

Table 12 below shows the evolution of participation in eTwinning from 2005 to 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered users</td>
<td>11 186</td>
<td>38 041</td>
<td>125 455</td>
<td>301 944</td>
<td>378 982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project participants</td>
<td>2 141</td>
<td>7 524</td>
<td>15 479</td>
<td>24 641</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49 270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 670</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39 688</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered schools</td>
<td>8 031</td>
<td>25 719</td>
<td>67 450</td>
<td>138 566</td>
<td>159 384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2015, 6 000 eTwinning teachers took part in a survey\textsuperscript{132} investigating how eTwinning is affecting participating teachers’ professional practice and professional development. Summarised findings are listed below:

- 75\% of teachers reported that students are more involved in project work through eTwinning.
- Three-quarters of teachers surveyed report that their students are more involved than ever before in project work as a result of taking part in eTwinning.
- Nearly as many teachers (72\%) state that they now engage students in small group work more than they did before, allowing them to work on collaborative problem solving.
- 92\% of teachers reported that eTwinning has had a moderate or large impact on student motivation.
- According to teachers, the greatest impact eTwinning has is on student motivation, with 9 out of 10 teachers declaring that the project has had a moderate or large impact on this area.

\textsuperscript{128} See Dóminguez Miguela (2007).

\textsuperscript{129} www.etwinning.net

\textsuperscript{130} https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/discover/what_is_etwinning.htm


\textsuperscript{132} Kearney and Gras-Velázquez (2015).
The project has also impacted the way in which students interact with one another, with 87% of teachers reporting that eTwinning has had a moderate or large impact on improving personal relations among students.133

Chapter 6: Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff

This chapter provides background knowledge, e.g. about recent trends in global student mobility and analysis of several aspects addressing the mobility of students and higher education staff in Key Action 1.

1. General characteristics of Key Action 1

Three of four actions target higher education

Key Action 1 is designed to be the main instrument to promote and implement the mobility of learners, youth and workers in Erasmus+. Three of the four Actions supported in Key Action 1 are targeting the higher education sector:

- Mobility projects in the field of education, training and youth,
- Large scale European Voluntary Service events,
- Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, and
- Erasmus+ Master Loans.

Activities addressing the mobility of student and staff

In Key Action 1 the mobility of students can be one of, or a mix of the two following activities:

- a study period abroad at a partner higher education institution (HEI);
- a traineeship (work placement) abroad in an enterprise or any other relevant workplace.

The mobility of staff can be one of, or a mix of the two following activities:

- teachings in any subject area/academic discipline at a partner higher education institution (HEI);
- training periods at a partner higher education institution (HEI).

Old and new ingredients

Actions targeting higher education in Key Action 1 combine activities and concepts inherited from the former Programmes (but incorporating important modifications), with new activities. Two actions, International credit mobility of individuals and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) under Key Action 1 target the mobility of learners and staff from and to Programme and Partner Countries. Erasmus+ Master Loans is a new sub-action for students in Programme countries. Online Linguistic Support (OLS) has been launched in 2014 as a new service and is still under development.

133 Retrieved from
2. General trends in student mobility worldwide

The implementation of the mobility of students and staff in the Higher education sector inscribes itself in a global dynamic characterised by a constant and substantial increase in the total volume of student mobility. A concise presentation of the global trends in the higher education sector will serve to analyse the relevance of the implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 to address global opportunities and threats in student and staff mobility.

Global Trends in student mobility

- Global mobility of students in higher education has more than doubled in volume from 2001 to 2014 (increase from 2.1 million to 4.5 million students).
- In terms of sheer volume, the USA remain a clear winner in 2001 and in 2014.
- Expected volume of global student mobility will be approximately 6 million by 2020 and 8 million by 2025. The ratio inbound/outbound volume of international students is clearly in favour of inbound mobility in the USA (Project Atlas & UNESCO 2012).
- In 2014, the proportion of students choosing the USA as a host destination for studies abroad has decreased by 6%.
- Recent increase in the volume of inbound students from 2013 to 2014, show a steady increase outside the EU: USA (+10%), Canada (+13.1%), New Zealand (+12.1%), Australia (+9.2%). EU countries exhibit a more modest evolution, e.g. Norway (+8.1%), Germany (+6.8%), The Netherlands (+3.8%), United Kingdom (+2.6%), France (+1.3 %). Decrease is observed, e.g. in Denmark (-2.7%).
- China and Canada emerge has a key destination in 2014 (8%) with potential for further increase.
- Targeted Erasmus+ higher educational mobility by 2020 (2 million individual) may represent 1/3 of global mobility.
- The increase in the volume of global student mobility from 2001 to 2014 is accompanied by a tendency towards a more diversified geographical distribution of host countries.
- The United Kingdom remains a European winner from 2001 to 2014 with regards to volume and proportion of foreign students (11%).
- In 2014 the USA are a clear winner with regards to the proportion of international students in the total student population in the country (24%), and are followed by the United Kingdom (12.5%), China (=9.5%) and Australia and Canada (=7%).
- In the EU, France and Germany have a relatively high proportion of international students, close to 8%. The rest of EU-EEA countries have a low proportion of international students, e.g. Ireland, Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, all under 4%. Arab States, Central and Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, South & West Asia, East Asia, and Central have a much higher ratio of outbound than inbound mobility.

Evolution of host destinations for mobile students from 2001 to 2014

This section provides incomplete, but exploitable data about the evolution of the global distribution of student mobility in 2001 and 2014 (see Table 13 below). Measured and projected volumes of global student mobility student for the period 1975-2025\(^{135}\) are added in graphical and in tabular formats in FIGURE 6 below. The unesco survey of the global flow of tertiary-level students compares countries of destination and origin for 2013\(^{136}\).

Table 13: Global distribution of mobile students in 2001 and 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host destinations</th>
<th>Percent distribution of students</th>
<th>2001 n=2.1 million</th>
<th>2014 n=4.5 million</th>
<th>Increase or decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>*+5%.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>*+4%.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Project Atlas 2015 (* estimated percentage)


The estimated global student volume in 2020 will reach a realistic volume of 6.7 million students, the Erasmus+ objective to fund the mobility of 2 million mobile students, if it is achieved, will address approximately 29% of all student mobility worldwide. By all means, this estimation is imprecise, as the duration of the mobility and amount of formal recognition is not taken into account. Nevertheless, the EU targets for 2020 compared with global projections bear witness of the global ambitions of Erasmus+ and substantiate the high demands made on Key Action 1.

3. SWOT analysis of student mobility during the period 2012-2015

The Eurostudent IV (2001-2011) and Eurostudent V (2012-2015) data sets were analysed together with the interpretations given in [EVSI5]137. Also data sets cited earlier in this chapter were used to compare findings. Data analysis of variables addressing internationalisation (mobility) in Eurostudent V was performed to produce additional SWOT insights. Some findings were compared with Eurostudent IV to detect evolutions. A reduced set of statements highlighting Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats was retained when considered relevant for shedding light on the implementation of the mobility of students in higher education under Key Action 1. The SWOT analysis presented below organises these findings. As the SWOT Matrix is quite big, the S, W, O, and T dimensions will be not presented in tabular format.

**Strengths**

**Enrolment, volume, distribution**

- Western Europe has almost 3 times more inbound than outbound students.
- The rate of enrolment in studies abroad increases globally.
- The UK has the highest percentage of international students in the EU.

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137 [EVSI5]: Hausschildt (ed.), Gwosić, Netz et al. (2015). Direct citations from EVSI5 are reproduced between quotes in the SWOT matrix in this section. Other statements may originate from EVSI or from the authors’ data analysis.
Growing number of students in some countries who have not been abroad, but planned to go in 2012-2015.

**Mobility above 30 years of age**
- In a few countries, especially in North Europe, the mobility rate remains high in the subgroup of students 30 years old, ≥ 10%, in the Nordic countries, France, Estonia.

**Foreign language courses**
- The share of students whose domestic study programme is mainly taught in a foreign language is more than 20% in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden.

**EU funding**
- EU programmes are used by more than half of the students who study abroad temporarily in Eurostudent V, at least 80% in Lithuania, Slovenia, Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic.

**Master students**
- A high proportion of master students have been enrolling for mobility in some countries more than 25% in Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, and Norway have been abroad during their studies.

**Recognition**
- A high proportion of students (≥ 60%) e.g. in the Netherlands, Lithuania, Finland, Denmark, France, Ireland report returning with credits fully recognised after their studies abroad.
- In 19 out of 26 Eurostudent V countries, more than 70% of students who gained credits during an enrolment abroad had them either fully or partly recognised upon return.

**Few obstacles and burdens**
- A high proportion of students do not experience or expect personal obstacles to their stay abroad.
- Separation from partner, children, friends is not a problem in many EU countries.
- A high proportion of students enrolling for mobility do not experience a lack of personal drive in most EU countries (>70%).

**Mobile disciplines**
- There are disciplines which show a stable tendency to recruit high proportions of students for mobility abroad and in some case an increase: Humanities and Arts; Engineering in FR, SE, DK, EE, SI, IT.

**Financial aspects**
- A high proportion of students who enrol for studies abroad are not utilising their family for funding their mobility in a few countries, i.e. less than 60% in Malta and Nordic countries.

**Internship / Work placement**
- A high proportion of students enrolled abroad are engaged in internship or work placement (≥25%) DE, RO, AT, FR, PL, NL, CZ)."
Employability
- “Evidence is mounting that international mobility during studies may have positive impacts on students’ personality development and later employment prospects.”

Weaknesses

Enrolment, volume, distribution
- There are still EU and EEA countries with a low percentage of international students in 2012-2015 (< 5%, e.g. IE, NL, DK, NO).
- There is a high proportion of students who have not been enrolled abroad and do not plan to go in some countries, i.e. ≥70% in AT, LV, IT, SK, IE, NL, PL.

Mobility above 30 years of age
- Except in a few countries, the mobility rate decreases considerably in the subgroup of students 30 years old or above.

Foreign language courses
- The share of students whose home study programme is mainly taught in a foreign language is less than 5% in Malta, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Croatia, Slovenia and Ireland. In most Eurostudent V countries, less than 10% of students are enrolled in a study programme which is taught in a foreign language.

Foreign language skills
- The share of students having realised a language course is rather low in most countries.

Master students
- A low percentage (<15%) of master students have been enrolling for mobility in some countries, i.e. in IE, CZ, CH, LT, LV, PL, HR, SK.

Recognition
- Bologna style recognition of learning outcomes is still a problem in some countries. In Hungary, less than 35% get recognition after their studies abroad.

Social selectivity
- “Across Europe, there are primarily three groups underrepresented in temporary enrolment: students from low education background, students with delayed transition into higher education and older students.”
- “In all countries but Armenia, Serbia, and Ukraine, the share of students who have studied abroad is higher among students with higher education background than among students without higher education background.”

Internship Work placement
- “The share of students having realised an internship is rather low in most countries”.

Mobile disciplines
- Foreign enrolment rates also differ by field of study. They tend to be particularly low among students of teacher training and education science.

Recognition
- Some countries have high percentages (≥20%) of students returning home with no credits earned during enrolment abroad (last stay), e.g. in Italy (44%).
- “Partial recognition is rather common in Croatia, Slovakia, and Hungary. In Sweden, Croatia, Russia, Hungary, Ukraine, and Armenia, at least 15% of
students who earned credit during their enrolment abroad did not have their credits recognised.”

Obstacles and burdens
- A high proportion of students who have been enrolling for mobility in some countries experience or expect personal obstacles to their study abroad, e.g. in Hungary.

Financial aspects
- A high proportion (≥60%) of students are utilising their parents as source of funding for mobility, e.g. in SK, IT, CZ, CH, AT, HR, RO, HU, NL, FR, SI, LT, PL, EE, LV, IE.

Opportunities
Enrolment, volume, distribution
- The number of students pursuing studies abroad continues to surge.
- The rise in internationally mobile students reflects growing university enrolment around the world.
- “Judging by the share of students who plan to go abroad, the potential to further increase the foreign enrolment rate seems to be particularly high in Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.”
- Regional hubs not only attract a share of the global population of mobile students but are becoming favoured destinations for students within regions.
- In some countries there are more studying abroad than at home, e.g. Andorra, Bermuda, Luxembourg, Montserrat, San Marino, Seychelles).
- The overall context of mobility has changed (mix of host and sending countries).

Internationalisation at home, virtual mobility
- “Internationalisation at home may not only be an alternative to physical mobility, but it can also be regarded as a preparation for later physical mobility.”

Foreign language skills
- There is an evolution towards decreased expectations of linguistic obstacle and an increase in self-reported foreign language proficiency from 2008-2011 to 2012-2015 (more than 5%) is reported in, e.g. MT, RO, CH, LV, EE.
- Most Programme and Partner countries have a high proportion (≥75%) of students enrolled abroad who are able to speak English or another first foreign language for English native speakers.
- A high proportion (≥ 50%) of students have been enrolling for mobility who do not experience or expect linguistic obstacles.

Financial aspects
- A high percentage (≥60%) of students in some countries perceive sufficient financial security (low percentage of perceived insufficient financial insecurity), i.e. in all EU-28 countries except FI, LV, DE, HU, IE, PL (data from IT, PT, UK, BE missing).

Threats
Enrolment, volume, distribution
- “The share of students enrolling abroad temporarily without a programme is comparatively high (at least 40%) in Italy, Malta, Sweden, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russia, and Serbia.”
• There is a growing competition for students from emerging regional destinations that may offer more affordable and culturally-relevant programmes of study.
• A high percentage (≥60%) of students in some countries have not been enrolled abroad and do not plan to go abroad.
• Students from Sub-Saharan Africa, who are the second most mobile, are staying closer to home.
• “New destination countries and regional hubs are competing for a share of the revenue and intellectual capital of internationally mobile students.”
• “Despite considerable shares of students still planning to study abroad temporarily, the potential foreign enrolment rate is lower than 50% in all countries but Armenia, Georgia, and Montenegro. In Austria, Finland, Italy, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden, the share of students still planning to study abroad is less than twice as high than the share of students who already studied abroad.”

Obstacles and burdens
• “The most critical obstacles to studying abroad are the additional financial burden and the separation from partner, children, and friends. [...] Judging by unweighted cross-country averages of student shares considering aspects (quite) big obstacles, the most critical of the selected barriers are the associated additional financial burden (63%) and the separation from partner, children, and friends (47%). These are followed at a much lower level by insufficient foreign language skills (29%), expected problems with the recognition of credits gained abroad, and a lack of information provided by the home institution (each 22%).”
• “The separation from partner, children, and friends is considered a (quite) big obstacle to enrolment abroad by relatively large shares of students (at least 59%) in Poland, Estonia, Malta, Finland, and Norway.”

Financial aspects
• “Public sources and means from parents, family, or partner tend to be the primary sources of funding for enrolments abroad.”
• “In the large majority of countries, the share of students who utilised means from their parents, family, or partner to fund their enrolment abroad exceeds 60% [...] This share is even higher than 80% in Slovakia, Russia, Italy, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland.”

Social selectivity
• “As previous research has shown [...] access to international student mobility is socially selective.”
• “The differences regarding planned foreign enrolments tend to be even larger than those regarding realised foreign enrolment periods.”
• “The social selectivity of international student mobility is also visible regarding internships and language courses.”

Foreign language skills
• “The share of students regarding insufficient foreign language skills as a (quite) big obstacle to an enrolment abroad is relatively high (at least 49%) in Ireland, Poland, Hungary, and Georgia and relatively low (less than 15%) in Malta, Denmark, Switzerland, and Sweden.”
Information

- “A lack of information provided by the home institution is a (quite) big obstacle for comparatively large shares of students (at least 35%) in Ireland, Croatia, Poland, Hungary, and Georgia.”

4. Novel aspects of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 in higher education

Specific objectives for higher education in Regulation No 1288/2013 applicable to Key Action 1

The implementation of Key Action 1 in higher education should be analysed in light of the general objectives for this sector stipulated by Regulation No 1288/2013:

- To “enable at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds to have completed tertiary or equivalent education” (Preamble, §5 with reference to Europe 2020 Strategy);
- To “make a knowledge-based Europe” (Preamble, §6);
- “to enhance the quality of higher education in pursuit of European objectives and the attractiveness of the Union as a study destination” (Preamble, §8);
- “to support mobility, equity and study excellence on a pilot basis, a Student Loan Guarantee Facility to enable students, regardless of their social background, to take their Master’s degree in another country to which participation in the Program is open (the ‘Programme country’).” (Preamble, §11);
- “The Student Loan Guarantee Facility should be available to financial institutions which agree to offer loans for Master’s studies in other Programme countries on favourable terms for students.” (Preamble, §11);
- “Member States should endeavour to adopt all appropriate measures to remove legal and administrative obstacles to the proper functioning of the Programme. This includes resolving, where possible, administrative issues that create difficulties in obtaining visas and residency permits” (Preamble, §12)\(^{138}\);
- “improved transparency and recognition of qualifications and competences” (Article Preamble, §25);
- “the grants to support the mobility of individuals should be adjusted to the living and subsistence costs of the host country.” (Preamble, §40);
- “to enhance the international dimension of education and training, in particular through cooperation between Union and partner-country institutions in the field of [...] higher education” (Article 5.1.d);
- “to improve the teaching and learning of languages and to promote the Union’s broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness” (Article 5.1.e).

5. ET 2020 Benchmarks relevant to Key Action 1

A new EU ET 2020 benchmarking target addressing learning mobility in higher education has been defined, stipulating that a minimum of 20% of higher education graduates in the EU should have fulfilled a mobility period abroad, leading to a minimum 15 ECTS while spending at least 2 months abroad. This benchmark is still under development and will be released in later in 2016. Together with other benchmarks in education and training this and other relevant benchmarks\textsuperscript{139} may be integrated in future monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the three Actions relevant for the higher education sector in Key Action 1. Table 14 below shows relevant benchmarks adding EU average, as well as highest and lowest percentages in 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eurostat ET 2020 benchmarks</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning mobility in higher education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“An EU average of at least 20% of higher education graduates should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad, representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits or lasting a minimum of three months.”</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>To be released in 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tertiary educational attainment</strong></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The share of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lithuania (57.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment rates of recent graduates</strong></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The share of employed graduates (20-34 year-olds) having left education and training 1-3 years before the reference year should be at least 82%.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Malta (95.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Waiting for the publication of Eurostat benchmarking data, other surveys, in the meantime, provide a historical comparative platform about student mobility in Programme countries. E.g. the Eurostat data set “Student mobility in tertiary education, by

\textsuperscript{139} EU benchmarks indicators, retrieved from: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/eu-benchmarks/indicators


\textsuperscript{141} European Commission (2016). ‘Tertiary educational attainment by sex, age group 30-34’, Eurostat benchmark, Table. See also: European Commission (2016). ‘More and more persons aged 30 to 34 with tertiary educational attainment in the EU…’, Europe Education Indicators 2020, 81/2016, 27/04/2016.
country, 2012”\textsuperscript{142} covers inbound and outbound mobility in EU-28 countries, and Eurostudent V (2012-2015) covers some EU countries with important omissions (e.g. Belgium, United Kingdom, Spain) while including Partner Countries and Regions (e.g. Ukraine and Russia).\textsuperscript{143}

Statistics on student and staff mobility for the final in January 2016 year (2013-2014) has been released\textsuperscript{144} of the former Erasmus programme for higher education, which formed part of the umbrella Lifelong Learning Programme. The data reveals that a record number of students (272,000) and staff (57,000) took part compared to any previous year. Spain, Germany and France remained the three most popular destinations for Erasmus students to study or training abroad in 2013-2014.

6. Budget allocation for higher education mobility

\textbf{FIGURE 7: 2014-2020 BUDGET ALLOCATION (\texteuro{}14.7 MILLION) WITH A BREAKDOWN OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING BUDGET BY ACTIONS.}

\begin{figure}[ht]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure7.png}
\caption{Percentage total budget Erasmus+ (\texteuro{}14.7 billion)}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: European Commission}


\textsuperscript{143} Eurostudent V survey, Variable group ‘K1-K22’ address international mobility for the period 2011-2015.

Activities addressing the mobility of students and staff in higher education receive the largest share of budgetary means in Erasmus+ (See Figure 7 above). Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 allocates (Article 18) 43% to Higher Education, amounting to 33.3% of the total budget, more than 10 times the budget amount devoted to Adult Education and Training, almost 3 times the budget devoted to School Education (11.6% of the total budget) and Youth, and almost twice the budget devoted to Vocational Education and Training (see Figure 8 above). An additional €1.68 billion is allocated to actions with third countries through the external action budget.

7. Staff mobility in higher education

Criticism of the new teaching assignment conditions by higher education teachers

In Erasmus+ pre-2014 minimum requirements for teaching stays has been reduced from 5 to 2 days while keeping the minimum 8 hours of teaching. However, user criticism of the new staff exchange regulation in Erasmus+ has been voiced since 2014:

- While a minimum “package” combining 8 hours of teaching and 2 days abroad may seem reasonable, university teaching staff who have been consulted in several countries state that they, in view of the increased teaching and administrative load in their home department, can neither consider teaching a minimum of 8 hours during as part of two or three days’ stay abroad (exclusive travel time), nor spread these 8 hours within a longer period, e.g. a week.

- Furthermore, regular grievances have been expressed by teaching staff in HEIs concerning, in their experience, wildly underestimated amounts (carefully
termed “support” and not “reimbursement”) for plane travels in Europe and elsewhere between 500 and 3999 km. These flat support amounts, it is argued, are not reflecting the real ticket prices. Many teachers in HEIs fear they may have to pay an important part of the expense incurred to carry out quite demanding teaching assignments abroad from their own pocket. Besides, not all higher education institutions have additional financial resources to contribute with, or are willing to cover the remaining costs of travel, stay and subsistence for mobile staff.

Parliamentary criticism of teaching assignment conditions

Additional parliamentary criticism of the new rules for teaching mobility in HEIs has been voiced in a Question for written answer to the Commission Rule 130 by MP Tonino Picula (S&D) 6 January 2015 who criticises the claims from the Commission that the new Staff Mobility system under Erasmus+ represent a significant simplification and states that

“Some of the new provisions have exactly the opposite effect and make their mobility more difficult. One of these provisions is that lecturers in higher education institutions who apply for staff mobility programmes must teach a minimum of eight hours a week in the institution into which they are coming as guest lecturers (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, p. 39). For lecturers coming from less prestigious universities who wish to use the mobility programme to acquire new skills and improve their work, this provision often restricts access to the more prestigious and better quality institutions because of the difficulties encountered in finding an institution that would be able to give them this number of teaching hours per week.”

This criticism has been rejected in the answer given 4 March 2015 by Mr Navracsics on behalf of the Commission, stating that

“When devising the programme rules, the Commission made use of the experience of National Agencies and practitioners under the previous Erasmus programme. They reported that the minimum duration of 5 days for staff mobility was too long and represented a barrier, especially for smaller institutions facing problems to replace staff during that period. Therefore, Erasmus+ reduces the minimum duration from 5 to 2 days in order to make it more accessible. At the same time the requirement for teaching was adjusted to a minimum of 8 hours per week, instead of 5 as in the previous programme, to ensure a higher impact.”

and suggesting that

“Lecturers who would like to focus on acquiring new skills and improving their work methods may consider the option of staff mobility for training. This activity supports professional development through training events or job shadowing at

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145 Erasmus+ Programme Guide p. 46.


higher education institutions or any other relevant organisation abroad. Furthermore, teaching and training activities can be combined during a period abroad.”

Position of the Commission regarding teaching assignment conditions

The new rules for teaching exchanges higher education in Key Action 1 was discussed during the panel interviews with the Commission May 2016\(^\text{148}\). The narrative presented by several representatives maintained the view that the new rules regulating teaching assignments abroad offered additional simplicity and flexibility. The arguments presented during the panel interviews are summarised below:

- It is an additional goal in Erasmus+ to *add flexibility to Staff Mobility* in higher education.
- The reduction of the minimum period of stay from 5 to 2 days while keeping a minimum of 8 hours of teaching assignment is to ensure the impact of the action.
- This change has been the result of wide consultations across HEIs, networks of HEIs and staff representatives prior to the design of Erasmus+\(^\text{149}\).
- The Commission will evaluate staff exchange in higher education as part of the Erasmus+ evaluation\(^\text{150}\) and consider these aspects. It maintains, however, the view that a real flexibility has been introduced by reducing the minimum duration of stays abroad for staff from 5 to 2 days.
- A similar flexibility has been introduced for higher education student traineeships, where the minimum duration has been reduced from 3 to 2 months. The intention of such a reduction was to address the situation in some disciplines, e.g. medicine, where students are bound by their local curriculum. Again the objective has been to increase the accessibility to the programme, and not to exclude any discipline.
- This new regime may or may not be optimal in all cases. However, such decisions are guided by the awareness that Erasmus+ has limited resources. Key Action 1 is financing between 18% and 53% of the number of applicants for mobility grants in School, Adult, VET, higher education and Youth\(^\text{151}\). So the recurrent issue is: where is it wise to use resources in order to get more impact on the users?
- Erasmus+ cannot fund all mobility in higher education and other sectors. The Commission allocates therefore money where it expects the best impact.

\(^{148}\) Conducted by one of the authors 4/5/2016 with participation of several representatives of DG EAC.

\(^{149}\) this comment about previous consultations was forwarded to the authors by a representative of DG EAC after the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016 at DG EAC.

\(^{150}\) The call for tender for the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation (covering all the fields) has been launched on 29 January 2016 and closed on 15 March 2016. The study will start end of May 2016 to finish end of 2017.

\(^{151}\) Success rates are reported the *Erasmus+ Annual Report 2014*. 
Concluding remarks

As commented in a previous chapter, well-intended, virtuous path-dependent processes in organisations, e.g. the Commission, do not lead necessarily to virtuous progress, but can instead also lead to inefficient, unintended or even ‘vicious’ outcomes. The case of the new rules for teaching assignments abroad may reflect such tendencies. While the simplification and flexibilisation of higher education staff mobility allow e.g. a mix of teaching and training activities, the new rules for teaching assignments may have only a partial positive effect on teachers in higher education, as some staff members experience that these new rules are introducing new practical obstacles.

8. New aspects of Erasmus+ in higher education – the view of the Commission

Following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016, a compound view of new aspects of Erasmus+ has been forwarded to the authors by a representative from DG EAC. The quantitative information, views and the construction of the narrative displayed in Table 15 below reflect solely the view of the Commission:

Table 15: 2014 preliminary results a new Erasmus+ actions and services in higher education.  
Source: DG EAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>New in Erasmus+ for Higher Education – KA1</th>
<th>2014 preliminary results from users(^\text{152}):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better Accessibility</td>
<td>Grant amounts are based on a transparent and coherent system, taking into account the difference in living costs between the sending and receiving country. They are fixed at national level (except in 6 countries where HEIs can adapt the grant level taking into account their regional funding). <strong>Additional financial support</strong> is awarded to: students from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds; students and staff with special needs; students from outermost countries and regions/overseas territories.(^\text{153})</td>
<td>Participants so far include: More than 10 000 disadvantaged students with grants of more than 6 million €; More than 800 students and staff with special needs; More than 2 000 mobile students from outermost countries and regions/overseas territories; More information on page 20 in <em>Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2016, v2</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Linguistic support</td>
<td>New Online Linguistic Support providing assessment of language skills before and after mobility and online tutored courses. As from this summer, OLS to be made available to refugees with More than 365 000 students have assessed their language skills, 150 000 have followed on-line courses. Mobility brings an average user up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{152}\) These results which have been communicated to the authors by DG EAC are based on reports from National Agencies, beneficiaries and students/staff from the 2014 Erasmus+ call (still ongoing).

Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>New in Erasmus+ for Higher Education – KA1</th>
<th>2014 preliminary results from users(^\text{154}):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Quality</td>
<td>Reinforcement of quality framework with new Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), inter-institutional agreements, and learning agreements(^\text{154}).</td>
<td>About 85% of Erasmus+ students now receive full recognition for studies abroad (compared to 73% in 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Flexibility through new possibilities</td>
<td>Opening of mobility to countries outside of Europe. Minimum duration of student traineeships and staff training reduced to make the programme more accessible to a wider range of participants. A combination of virtual and short term physical mobility (called blended mobility) are promoted under Higher Education Strategic Partnerships (KA2 SPs).</td>
<td>Proportion of traineeships has increased from 22% to 26% in the first call of Erasmus+ vs last year of LLP. About 20% of Strategic Partnerships include blended mobility, with over 4 000 participants so far.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RECOMMENDATION**

- The European Parliament may consider assessing the practical and financial conditions that would allow staff members in higher education to carry out teaching assignments abroad without additional personal or local costs.
- The European Parliament may consider stimulating internationalisation at home among higher education staff, adding internationalisation funds, in order to stimulate teachers in HEIs to combine virtual mobility with physical mobility, to prepare, carry out and follow-up physical mobility.

9. Erasmus+ Exchanges and Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM)

**Budgetary sources**

Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility is a new element in Erasmus+. It is financed by the External Relations budget, and by various other financial instruments, e.g. the Neighbourhood Development Programme\(^{155}\) and European Development Fund\(^{156}\) (see Table 16 below). ICM is amplifying several aspects inherited from the former programme’s Erasmus mobility. The ICM budget is apportioned region-wise.

**FIGURE 9: SPILT OF TOTAL BUDGET BY PROGRAMME COUNTRY.**

Source: European Commission\(^ {157}\)

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\(^{155}\) GLOBSEC (2016). *European Neighbourhood Development Programme.*


\(^{157}\) European Commission (2016). ‘Erasmus+ Key Action 1: Higher education student and staff mobility between Programme and Partner Countries (International Credit Mobility) Results of the 2015 Call’, Document forwarded to the authors by DG EAC following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016.
Targeted volume of mobile students and staff

2015 was the first selection year for Erasmus+ ICM. The budget for ICM was not allocated earlier, due to late allocation from External Relations and the European Development Fund. However, even with this delay, all the funds that are meant to be spent will be spent.

So instead of spending it in 7 years the Commission will spend ICM appropriations it in 6 years, pursuant to a request from the Parliament. Furthermore, there are precise projections until the midterm evaluation. On a longer term (towards 2020) the Commission has produced adjusted projections including some flexibility to address contingencies.

In an answer given 18 April 2016 to a question for written answer to the Commission Rule 130 by MP Ilhan Kyuchyuk (ALDE) submitted 23 February 2016, Mr Navracsics links Erasmus+ ICM to Joint Master Degrees in Key Action 1, and to the Capacity Building in Higher Education Action in Key Action 2:

“From 2015-2020, around 30 000 credit mobility participants will be funded each year. Erasmus+ also funds around 2 000 scholarships per year for joint Masters degrees, 75% of which are reserved for non-European nationals. The Programme supports the modernisation of higher education around the world via its ‘Capacity Building in Higher Education’ action, encouraging sustainable links between institutions located in European and partner countries; around 140 projects are funded each year.”

It is not possible to provide a general interpretation of the imbalance between incoming and outgoing mobility in the various regions in the table above. However, these imbalances have a meaning which should be interpreted for each region in order to detect underlying factors that cause these disparities, in the Eastern Partnership region.

First selection round
The call for the first selection round for 2015 call was launched in October 2014 and the selection took place round June 2015. Table 17 below displays the results:

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157 European Commission


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Table 17: Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility, first selection round 2015.
Source: European Commission

| Inbound students and staff to Europe | 15,071 |
| Inbound students and staff to Partner countries | 6,774 |
| Total mobility | 21,845 |
| Distribution student / staff ratio | 60%/40% |

Planned budget use for Erasmus+ ICM

The planned budget use for Erasmus+ I will operate with roughly equal allocation for each annual call from 2015 to 2020 (there was no call in 2014). The main budget sources (IPA2, ENI, DCI, PI, and EDF) are expected to contribute with roughly equal contribution to all calls from 2015 to 2020.

Table 18 below structures, summarises and displays planned annual ICM call offering a breakdown by call, budget source and Partner Region.

Table 18: Planned budget use for Erasmus+ ICM. Source: European Commission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PER YEAR</td>
<td>121,329,835</td>
<td>123,689,628</td>
<td>125,646,171</td>
<td>128,129,704</td>
<td>130,021,420</td>
<td>127,857,983</td>
<td>756,674,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st call</td>
<td>22,354,886</td>
<td>22,787,792</td>
<td>22,573,596</td>
<td>22,326,915</td>
<td>22,440,800</td>
<td>23,219,000</td>
<td>135,702,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd call</td>
<td>56,535,399</td>
<td>57,039,624</td>
<td>57,705,628</td>
<td>58,853,186</td>
<td>59,118,872</td>
<td>55,443,310</td>
<td>344,696,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd call</td>
<td>26,439,440</td>
<td>26,675,247</td>
<td>26,986,712</td>
<td>27,523,381</td>
<td>27,647,632</td>
<td>25,928,712</td>
<td>161,201,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th call</td>
<td>19,970,216</td>
<td>20,148,325</td>
<td>20,383,580</td>
<td>20,788,936</td>
<td>20,882,786</td>
<td>19,584,453</td>
<td>121,758,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th call</td>
<td>10,125,743</td>
<td>10,216,052</td>
<td>10,335,336</td>
<td>10,540,869</td>
<td>10,588,455</td>
<td>9,930,145</td>
<td>61,736,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th call</td>
<td>29,221,730</td>
<td>29,944,481</td>
<td>30,890,847</td>
<td>32,299,118</td>
<td>33,325,193</td>
<td>33,766,040</td>
<td>189,447,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA2</td>
<td>17,213,950</td>
<td>17,639,709</td>
<td>18,197,194</td>
<td>19,026,779</td>
<td>19,631,220</td>
<td>19,890,914</td>
<td>111,599,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENI</td>
<td>4,842,298</td>
<td>4,962,064</td>
<td>5,118,886</td>
<td>5,352,248</td>
<td>5,522,278</td>
<td>5,595,330</td>
<td>31,393,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>5,598,033</td>
<td>5,736,491</td>
<td>5,917,787</td>
<td>6,187,570</td>
<td>6,384,137</td>
<td>6,468,590</td>
<td>36,292,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>1,567,449</td>
<td>1,606,217</td>
<td>1,656,980</td>
<td>1,732,520</td>
<td>1,787,558</td>
<td>1,811,205</td>
<td>10,161,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>13,171,820</td>
<td>13,917,730</td>
<td>14,476,100</td>
<td>14,650,486</td>
<td>15,136,555</td>
<td>15,429,634</td>
<td>86,828,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCI</td>
<td>5,318,162</td>
<td>5,599,770</td>
<td>5,824,429</td>
<td>5,894,592</td>
<td>6,090,162</td>
<td>6,208,081</td>
<td>34,935,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>5,642,612</td>
<td>5,941,400</td>
<td>6,179,765</td>
<td>6,254,210</td>
<td>6,461,710</td>
<td>6,586,823</td>
<td>37,066,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA &amp; Canada</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia Industrialised</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf countries</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>2,257,045</td>
<td>2,376,560</td>
<td>2,471,906</td>
<td>2,501,684</td>
<td>2,584,684</td>
<td>2,634,729</td>
<td>14,826,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDF</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,294,118</td>
<td>5,647,059</td>
<td>6,000,000</td>
<td>6,352,941</td>
<td>6,705,882</td>
<td>30,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

160 Data source: European Commission (2016). ‘Erasmus+ Key Action 1: Higher education student and staff mobility between Programme and Partner Countries: Results 2015 Call, First Round’.

161 Document forwarded by DG EAC to the authors following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016.
9. Current views and prospects of the Commission regarding mobility in Higher Education

Regarding Erasmus+ ICM

Panel interviews with the Commission addressed, among other aspects of Key Action 1, Erasmus+ ICM were conducted in May 2016. A summarised presentation of the implementation narrative follows:

- The concrete evolution of Erasmus+ ICM (and other activities in Key Action 1) will depend on the results of the midterm review of Erasmus+.
- The Commission hopes the Parliament will not cut, but will increase the budget for Erasmus+.
- Even if the experiences collected from ICM selections are fresh, as they are spanning from June 2015 to May 2016, there are indications that ICM has raised the interest of universities. Some regions, in particular non-European regions, have shown more interest than others. The interest from particular regions has followed known historical and cultural patterns, e.g. France has had no problem in turning towards North Africa, and Poland has been turning naturally towards Eastern Europe. Moreover, there are countries with which universities want to cooperate anyway, so ICM may function as useful complement. There is generally a lot of interest for outbound mobility to Latin America, North America, China, industrialised Asian countries, but relatively less interest in working with the European Neighbourhood regions or Western Balkans.
- The size of the budgets to be absorbed is actually a reflection of the importance of the regional strategies for these regions applicable to the higher education sector. I.e., within the Western Balkan regional programme, there is a lot of money allocated to higher education which is reflected by a relatively large budget for Erasmus+ ICM for this region.
- Some expectations could not be met among potential applicants, as the Commission had played down the fact that the first budget as a whole was not large, allowing merely 150 000 ICM mobilities between Europe and the rest of the world. To address this situation, the Commission worked very hard with the National Agencies to promote the regions, which were thought to need information.
- There is an uneven distribution of inbound versus outbound mobility between countries and regions is perceived and managed differently in various institutions and countries. Some institutions may advocate an open attitude saying “No problem accepting students from these countries, but our students do not want to go to these countries”. Other institutions may reach for optimal balance between incoming and outgoing mobility. There is some heavy imbalance in terms of outbound vs. inbound mobility. DG EAC considers that

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162 Conducted by one of the authors 4 May 2016 with participation of several representatives of DG EAC.

163 Statements listed are not verbatim statements but summative narratives reformulated by the authors.
universities don’t need a 50/50 ratio between inbound and outbound. With the exception of certain regions, the Commission is using cooperation money and a lot of these funds require more inbound than outbound mobility. But in many regions there is no requirement to have this equity between inbound and outbound.

- It is a bit difficult at this stage of ICM to address systematically observed imbalances in inbound / outbound after one year of Erasmus+ ICM. The Commission is just starting to get the result from the second year. The Commission has been spending all the allocated funds the first year for something that was new. It is necessary to allow a latent ICM market to develop. At this stage the Commission proposing opportunities to universities, which are offered to develop mobility and cooperation that may not be part of their traditional landscape. In 2016 monitoring results may give indications if this approach should be pursued. ICM represents a product that not everybody was fully aware of. It may take time for operators in higher education to join the ICM vision, and envisage sending student to places and institutions that were outside the institutional and cultural horizon.

- During initialisation period of ICM, the first year of Erasmus+, the universities may have started with staff exchanges, as those travelling staff may have set the ground for looking how they select the students. For each country the Commission has a picture of what is going on.

- It is a policy choice that the Commission wants everybody to go everywhere, and for the first year it has worked. It was not an obvious thing because sending Spanish students to Latin America would not have been a problem, but sending the same students to less obvious destination would have been a problem. ICM is opening opportunities for universities, way beyond what they would have had in mind.

Regarding the recognition of Learning Outcomes – ECTS Credits

- Recognition of ECTS credits during and after mobility is another obstacle to be overcome. Erasmus+ has introduced new Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), new inter-institutional agreements with universities, and new Learning Agreements, among other things. The goal of the Programme is to institute transparency: students who go abroad and benefit from Erasmus+ grants should know how many ECTS credits they will be awarded before leaving their home institution.

- There are indications of improvement of recognition rates. From 73% recognition in 2013, the rate has increased to about 85% of total credit recognition in 2014-15, the first call under Erasmus+.

Following these statements, the authors asked DG EAC to substantiate these claims and provide a description of the method used for calculating the recognition rates (and if available obtain for the 2014-2016 period tabular data broken down by home / host country describing rates of recognition). A comment was forwarded to the author stating:
“The statement has been made public on p. 20 in the Erasmus+ annual report\textsuperscript{164}. The results come from the analysis of the Erasmus+ reports (EU survey) that students submit centrally after their mobility. It takes into account the feedback of the students for whom the recognition process was finalised. Details by country are not public, but they vary from 70\% up to 94\%.”

In order to improve further these recognition issues, DG EAC has launched or is going to launch the following initiatives:

- Publication of the ECHE (Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education) monitoring Guide\textsuperscript{165} to support Erasmus+ National Agencies in monitoring the implementation of the Charter by their Higher Education Institutions.
- Launch of the “ECHE: Make it work for you” tool in the second half of 2016 in order to involve key people (e.g. rectors, Erasmus+ coordinators, international office staff) in active reflection on how to improve their international strategy by self-evaluating their current practices with respect to what they have promised in applying for the ECHE. The tool will provide access to case studies to improve their own practices.
- Development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) targeted at HEIs and NAs on how to best implement ECTS and ECHE principles.”

Regarding the improvement of integration between local and international students at some European universities

THE CASE OF GERMAN TEACHER TRAININGS STUDENTS’ HESITATION TOWARD MOBILITY

| Teacher training students in Germany are among those who are less willing to enrol for studies abroad. Further analysis of the context of mobility in German Teacher Training Colleges seems to be a structural issue in teacher training mobility as students feel that specific recognition of modules studied abroad is considered rather difficult. Students tend to avoid mobility because they feel that the contents taught abroad do not fit exactly their local needs. Such attitudes correlate rather well with the rather high orientation of teachers and authorities toward the local job market for teachers. |

Parliamentary criticism has been voiced addressing tendencies observed in some universities to “run programmes exclusively for Erasmus+ students, thereby isolating them from local students at the same university”. In his answer given on behalf of the Commission 20 January 2016 Mr Tibor Navracsics “acknowledges the fact that the integration between local and international students at some European universities should be improved”, and refers to enhancements brought to the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) and to the fact that the “monitoring of its implementation have been strengthened in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme.” He underlines further that “All higher education institutions commit to comply with the ECHE to be eligible for funding through the Erasmus+ programme. Two of the principles (1) of the


ECHE are to fully integrate incoming students into the institution’s academic and social activities, as well as to provide appropriate mentoring and support arrangements for mobile students.

A large number of European universities go even beyond these principles and have embedded the concept of ‘internationalisation at home’ in their core missions. By making programmes and courses accessible, both to local and international students together, the objective is to ensure interactions between them, not only for the benefit of the international students, but also for the local students who are not taking part in mobility.

The Commission carefully monitors the implementation of the ECHE principles, which includes collecting direct feedback from Erasmus students: 94% rate the degree of their integration with local students as ‘good’ or ‘very good’.  

Chapter 7: Mobility of VET learners and Staff

The call for the Erasmus+ Vocational Education and Training Mobility Charter has been published on 22 December 2014. Since then, Vocational Education and Training (VET, while the term “Technical and Vocational Education and Training” – TVET – is often used in an overlapping way) institutions from the EU Programme countries could apply for becoming registered under the Erasmus+ programme. Through it, the European Commission aims to strengthen strategic approaches and quality in mobility in vocational education and training. One of the main objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme is to increase quality mobility within VET and support the European internationalisation of VET organisations in the Erasmus+ Programme countries.

However, the VET Mobility Charter is not exclusive in that sense that there is no obligatory participation in Erasmus+ VET Mobility. Indeed, VET mobility in the Erasmus+ Programme is also open to new types of institutions and smaller institutions and as a matter of fact to such applicant institutions which may not wish to be accredited with the VET Mobility Charter, but which, nevertheless, would like to participate in transnational VET mobility. The mobilities will be subsequently handled by the respective National Agencies, which are differently profiled all over Europe.

1. Approximation of potential mobility patterns in VET from an institutional perspective

What is the current status of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Vocational Education and Training Mobilities? First of all, it is necessary to point out that in the area of VET there are a large variety of stakeholders. In order to address most widely such diversity of stakeholders, the eligible participants may come from a rather varied combination of organisations, as displayed in Table 19 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TVET organisations</th>
<th>public</th>
<th>private</th>
<th>labour market</th>
<th>training sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TVET school/institute/centre</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enterprises (including social enterprises)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social partner or other representative of working life, including chambers of commerce, craft/professional associations and trade unions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public body at local, regional or national level</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research institutes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foundations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school/institute/educational centre</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-profit organisation, association, NGOs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career guidance, professional counselling and information services</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVET policy bodies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

One may conclude that the TVET training stakeholders from the vocational education and training sector and TVET labour market stakeholders, including both public TVET organisations and private TVET organisations. Indeed, there is a large variety and almost every combination can be found as the table above shows.
However, there are national differences about the systematic integration of different stakeholders into TVET. E.g. in German speaking countries, it is common to combine schools with enterprises (following the so-called dual system), whereas in English-speaking countries the school-based approach predominates. Often enough however TVET takes place as part of the employment, i.e. vocational learning happens on the job more or often in a less systematized way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning mobility in initial vocational education and training (IVET)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“An EU average of at least 6% of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational education and training (IVET) qualification should have had an IVET-related study or training period (including work placements) abroad lasting a minimum of two weeks, or less if documented by Europass.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to illustrate the political perception, the following brand new statement is presented completely. Ms. Thyssen on behalf of the European Commission (E-016075/2015) gave it on 2 February 2016 as an answer:

“The Commission would like to note that the figure of three million students who have studied abroad with the help of the Erasmus programme has been achieved over a period of 26 years (1). This figure should not be compared to the number of vocational students and apprentices who have participated so far in the Erasmus+ programme, which started only in 2014. In the vocational mobility projects of 2014 and 2015 about 235 000 vocational learners, including apprentices have already taken part or will participate. Compared to the annual average of the previous Leonardo da Vinci programme (2) this is an increase of about 100% (3). The available funds for vocational mobility will support work placements abroad for about 650 000 vocational students by 2020. Current demand is about twice the number of available grants.

The Commission manages further initiatives to increase the number of apprenticeships outside Erasmus+. The Youth Guarantee supports Member States in their efforts to help out-of-work young people progress into education, employment or training, including apprenticeships (4). The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (5) strengthens the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships in Europe. A pilot project initiated by the European Parliament will test what can be done to increase the number of long-term work placements abroad for apprentices (6).

These initiatives are complemented by the European Pact for Youth, a business-led initiative with the support of the Commission, which includes a target to establish at least 100 000 new good quality apprenticeships, traineeships or entry-level jobs before the end of 2017.”

When taking into account the role of mobility in VET it becomes obvious that such variety may, on one hand, constitute a barrier against organising mobilities. However, in the other hand, this variety could be a very positive trigger for collecting different experiences and evolving new insights. So what is the recent perception of typical stakeholders and their actors about mobility in the VET sector?

**Findings on the implementation of TVET in Erasmus+ from the interviews**

Several noteworthy findings shedding light on the implementation of TVET in Erasmus+ and beyond were collected from the interviews. The authors found that Erasmus+ is considered being extremely important for both sectors, Vocational Education and Training and Youth. The respondents emphasised that Key Action 1 offered such ideal opportunities that trainees usually could not get otherwise, due to the relatively stronger local orientation of the TVET sector compared to, e.g. the Higher Education sector.

Besides the educational and the cultural experience that trainees may acquire, interviewees report a very strong social and linguistic experience within all such mobility. The European Parliaments effort – policy is first than the programmes follow – is completed via the five European Parliaments’ policy departments.

As well, it is reported that Erasmus+ crosses the barriers between different sectors of education, between formal and informal education. Erasmus+ has, in light of the interviews that have conducted, simplified the process because of the unified approach chosen in Key Action 1.

Another aspect that emerges from the interview material is the linkage with industry, for which the need for developing skills that address the most recent evolutions are of paramount importance. The feedback from interviews is that the partnerships with industry address such need most relevantly. In almost all countries reviewed by the authors, the collaborating of the VET and business sector links has become reality.

There are still weaknesses reported in the area of virtual mobility. Even though virtual mobility clearly does not constitute a substitute for physical mobility it might, various virtual schemes may be adopted for continuing and completing experiences after completion of stays abroad. The experiences reported by respondents confirm earlier indications that, in Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET), virtual mobility remains marginal because physical mobility is the norm. Therefore, there is still a need to explore how virtual mobility may function and which specific benefits may be obtained from combining virtual and physical mobility. There are currently rather early stage sample cases available for research and evaluation, which may demonstrate innovative uses of Virtual Mobility in initial VET, so-called IVET, but do not reach a wide audience.
### The case of the internship program of a private non-profit TVET school

As a free educational institution, the visited TVET Academy for training offers in three cities throughout Germany, together with an Adult Education Academy and a University of Applied Sciences a portfolio of professional and academic and lifelong education offerings in different sectors with relevance for TVET and adult education:

- Vocational grammar school and technical college,
- General and life-long education,
- Further education,
- Academic Programs.

In addition, in the field of VET, an international component of four weeks is offered with support of the Erasmus+ Programme. About 120 trainees recruited from several vocational categories travel either to the UK (London) or to Ireland (Dublin) once each year. To run these activities the institute has founded its own office in London for supporting both trainees and trainers in London and Dublin.

What is the learning experience trainees did collect during the 4 weeks abroad? The management of the school report that especially the socio-cultural dimension is perceived as profitable while the specific vocational benefits would remain rather low. The two quotes from the trainees’ own reports illustrate these issues:

**About the subject:** First, the trainee describes several specific tasks he did complete. Then he says, “I especially enjoyed the entire working atmosphere, the very friendly colleagues and superiors, the versatile functions and high learning factor this special tasks in the field of medical courier.”

**On the culture:** “I would commit myself now not in a special highlight, because everything had its charms and little uniqueness. The St. Patrick’s Day was of course in itself very interesting to see but also walks and hikes in nature and on the coast were absolutely great, especially the fact that we really were extremely lucky with the weather.”

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### Consideration of TVET mobility in the European Parliament

Maragall (2015, p. 9) describes, that the introduction of Erasmus+ meant a “major step forward for mobility as a concept across the European higher education area”. However, this author highlights the fact that “mobility is less prevalent in vocational educational training (VET) while the previous programme, Leonardo, successfully completed a first phase of establishing a programme of simultaneous work and study exchanges for participants in countries other than their countries of residence”.

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In order to respond effectively to such challenges, Maragall suggests identifying and implementing two essential features:

1. the implementation of mobility “must be fully shared between each country’s educational systems and productive sectors”, “offer maximum flexibility so as to adapt to very different realities”, and be directly interpreted in its meaning for “ensuring employability and social integration”;

2. the consideration of the highly complex situation of the target groups which are “objectively the hardest to overcome”.

CEDEFOP presented in its 2014 *Analysis and overview of national qualifications framework developments in European countries* the status quo of the National Qualification Framework’s (NQF) implementation, described as being a “modest start” and could outline two findings:

“the NQF developments and implementation take time and need to be seen as a long-term and iterative process, where existing education and training systems and the frameworks are gradually and progressively aligned with each other; common understanding of concepts and deeper cultural change are developed; NQF developments are as much about facilitating participation and commitment of stakeholders as they are about introducing technical and conceptual solutions.” (p. 45).

How does such observation correspond with the implementation of mobility in the TVET sector specifically and educational mobility in general? A first conclusion is that the observed diversity is causing barriers for a direct linkage of educational institutions directly as they do not directly fit in expectation, organizational structure and target audience. Indeed, transfer of staff or mobility of learners is much more complicated when there is no clear relation between the institutions in collaborating countries. As well, and this is the second conclusion, this observed structural deficit correlates with the individual perception learners, who, when interviewed, state that their locally valid curriculum does not match with the corresponding curriculum at their mobility target institution. Institutional disparities make such consideration even more challenging. I.e. the situation in Spain and Germany illustrate institutional incompatibilities: in Spain, most of the technical colleges are listed and accepted as HEIs, while in Germany, even transfer within one educational sector is often a challenge due to different regulations in the 16 local states (Länder).

Overall, the finding described above confirm what has been suggested by “The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education”, as motion for a resolution in 2016 (statements below selected from Chambon, pp. 3-9):

- that occupations linked to vocational education and training (VET) have the necessary flexibility to be carried out anywhere,
- mobility in the context of VET is one of the important tools in the fight against unemployment,
- expresses concern that Erasmus+ is viewed by young people primarily as a programme for students in higher education,

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• increase the visibility of VET programmes in order to remove cultural barriers,
• underlines the key importance of recognition across Member States of learners’ achievements and acquired skills and competences,
• considers that mobility in VET encourages occupational and not just academic mobility,
• notes that the European resources allocated to Erasmus+ and VET programmes are not proportional to the numbers or needs of the potential beneficiaries of the mobility offered by these schemes,
• calls on the European Commission to provide up-to-date statistics and to carry out assessments and/or studies regarding Erasmus+ and other VET mobility programmes.

Maragall (2015, p. 10) does clearly confirm that the “relative weakness of vocational training as a whole is all the more evident in this area when compared with the undisputed strength of the network of European universities”.

2. Lack of data about IVET and TVET mobility in Europe

After only 2 years of IVET and TVET mobility in Europe under the Erasmus+ framework, it is still difficult to find precise data about the mobilities. The interview material collected for this study indicates that it is a concern for stakeholders on a national level as well as on a level. Considering this shortage of fully exploitable data two approaches are presented, in the following section that endeavour to overcome such deficit by using innovative techniques which may serve in the long run as good practice.

INTERNATIONALIZATION AND MOBILITY IN VET: THE IMOVE EXAMPLE

Quite interesting is the strong German approach of exploring VET-competency worldwide, which is a direct trigger for mobility in the VET sector. I.e. the iMOVE task force, which deals with competence for International Cooperation in Vocational Training and Education Training developed in Germany and is an initiative of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), is a successful approach in producing insightful data. As part of the international division at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) in the previous Federal City of Bonn its objectives are to promote international collaboration and to initiate cooperation and business relationships in vocational training and continuing education. Such is covering (a) matchmaking between international and German partners and (b) support for a variety of cooperation and business relationships and (c) support German providers of vocational training and continuing education in developing and expanding their international activities. In order to do so iMOVE works together with many German continuing education providers.

Erasmus+ Scoreboards by EURIDYCE and CEDEFOP

A recent development is the introduction of Mobility Scoreboards by different sectors, realised by EURIDYCE and CEDEFOP. In order to follow the 2011 European Councils recommendations on “Youth on the Move”, the IVET mobility scoreboard will be designed as a tool for monitoring developments in initial vocational education and training (IVET) mobility policies and also its implementation. However, whereas the
Higher Education Mobility Scoreboard by EURIDYCE is already partially available, the scoreboard for IVET will start with a draft version in June 2016. Both scoreboards provide analytical tools to monitor mobility activity by using in-depth qualitative analyses coming as well from representatives of the targets audiences. However, it is worth to mention that those are separate activities which apparently are fully functional at the moment, the most important bench for mobility in VET and HE is not yet released. Nevertheless, it would be interesting for any educational specialist to use available data (when available) for profiling their own activity. Also these scoreboards could be used to improve the strategies of national or European level programmes.

Still, there are remaining critical issues:

- The information about the scoreboards is rather limited with only a few more details offered on the Websites;
- While the starting point was already set in 2011 with the demand that the scoreboards for Higher Education and IVET should support the shaping and monitoring of mobility policies by (1) overviewing the state-of-play and progress of structures and policies, (2) highlighting good practices, and (3) outlining areas for reform for the main target groups. The target groups are (1) associations of IVET students, (2) organisers of mobility projects, (3) national and EU level policy-makers (Youth on the Move, Erasmus+). There is no such an independent usage possible yet, i.e. the data sets are not open for independent manipulation.

Overall, such more customized practice could be a highly valuable tool that would fit the needs of the respective targets groups to some extent, as shown in the interviews presented earlier.

RECOMMENDATION

- The European Parliament may consider improving information, documentation, open and independent use and usability of the Higher Education and IVET scoreboards.
- The European Parliament may consider closer cooperation with the research community on developing further the Higher Education and IVET scoreboards.

Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee is a “new approach to tackling youth unemployment which ensures that all young people under 25”, independently of whether applicants are registered with employment services or not. The idea is to provide good-quality, concrete offers within only 4 months before these young people leave formal education or become unemployed. Such good-quality offer should be for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or continued education and be adapted to each individual need and situation.


Chapter 8: Mobility of Adult Education Staff

The organisation of Key Action 1 activities in the sector of Adult Education is very similar to the approach chosen for the School sector, in terms of the transition from LLP, and relative to the goals of the Programme. The strategy adopted in the Adult Education sector is to move towards a more institutional approach. Adult Learning organisations are expected to function as applicants.

1. Policy priorities in adult education

A starting point for understanding is the “Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning” from 2011\(^{174}\) which explains “the major role which adult learning can play in achieving the Europe 2020 goals, by enabling adults – in particular the low-skilled and older workers – to improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society” (p. 1). Moreover, Adult Learning provide a means of up-skilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as contributing significantly to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.

Typically, 25% of adults in Europe would be “caught in a low-skills trap” as they have only limited access to the labour market without enrolling in further education or training. Indeed, only 4.4%, i.e. 2.9 of the 66 million European adults with, at best, lower secondary education participated recently in Adult Learning (cf. 2015 Joint Report cited below). In order to deal effectively with such a huge challenge, specific priorities of the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2016-2020 are defined and published in the 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, the so-called “ET 2020”\(^{175}\), (Annex, p. 35):

- Governance: ensuring the coherence of Adult Learning with other policy areas, improving coordination, effectiveness and relevance to the needs of society, the economy and the environment; increasing, where appropriate, both private and public investment;
- Supply and take up: significantly increasing the supply of high-quality Adult Learning provision, especially in literacy, numeracy and digital skills, and increasing take-up through effective outreach, guidance and motivation strategies which target the groups most in need;
- Flexibility and access: widening access by increasing the availability of workplace-based learning and making effective use of ICT; putting in place procedures to identify and assess the skills of low qualified adults, and providing sufficient second-chance opportunities leading to a recognised EQF qualification for those without EQF level 4 qualifications;

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• Quality: improving quality assurance, including monitoring and impact assessment, improving initial and continuing education of adult educators, and collecting the necessary data on needs to effectively target and design provision.

Those four priorities outlined above situate Adult Learning within a very clear thematic framework. One may explore further how such priorities may match the idea of a European mobility and may relate to the specific measures provided by Erasmus+.

In order to support the promotion of adult learning, the European Commission is working with 32 countries toward implementing a European Agenda for Adult Learning. This Agenda points at the need to increase participation in Adult Learning in all its variants, (formal, non-formal and informal learning). It also emphasises expectations that Adult Learning should be used for acquiring four core competencies:

1. new work skills,
2. skills for active citizenship,
3. skills for personal development,
4. skills for personal fulfilment.

Thus, Adult Learning cannot be linked to a specific educational sector solely. E.g. although it is expected to be separated from school-level general education, it may nevertheless be linked with higher education or TVET. Subsequently, there is a need for conducting empirical research, in order to map and understand better such considerations. To do, the authors analyse the structure of the members’ institutional provenance in the European Commissions’ network of national coordinators of adult learning. Indeed, a pattern emerged, and the variety mentioned above can be displayed in a rather simple way in Table 20 below:

Obviously, to judge from the table above, there is evidence of a strong link to stakeholders dealing with school education. Overall, the respective coordinators are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Educational sector of the organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(BIBB)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport, Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>Secretary General for Youth</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>Ministry for National Economy</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>ISFOL, Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>LI</td>
<td>Stiftung Erwachsenenbildung Lichtenstein</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Science</td>
<td>X, X</td>
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<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>VOX, Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Ministry of National Education</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>ANQEP - National Qualifications Agency</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>President, National Qualifications Authority Ministry of National Education</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>National Lifelong Learning Institute</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Slovenian Institute for Adult Learning</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Ministerio de Educación, Subdirección General de Aprendizaje a lo Largo de la Vida</td>
<td>X, X</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Swedish National Agency for Education</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Ministry of National Education</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)</td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>
responsible, in each country listed above, to “provide policy advice and support, and gather and disseminate best practices”\textsuperscript{177}. As well, the European Commission collaborates with a range of European associations, networks\textsuperscript{178}, and labour organisations to promote adult learning\textsuperscript{179}. Due to the considerable diversity, an integrated approach cannot be expected. Indeed, the linkage with other sectors may be seen as trigger for building different pathways into supporting adult learning.

In its in-depth analysis of Adult Learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe the European Commission (2015)\textsuperscript{180} outlines which specific policies are most effective in order to strengthen and expand Adult Learning:

- Increasing learners’ disposition towards learning;
- Increasing employers’ investment in learning;
- Improving equity of access to learning for all;
- Deliver high quality adult learning;
- Delivering learning that is relevant to employers and learners;
- Co-ordinate an effective lifelong learning policy.

Surprisingly the overall almost 300-pages report does not contain a single remark about mobility for adult learners. Thus, it is questionable to what extent this target group, adult learners who may benefit from physical mobility, has indeed be addressed properly. The only aspect with relevance to mobility seems to be the request for providing progression pathways for learners across the national qualifications frameworks. Overall, however, the report does not seem to valorise the comprehensive trans-European labour mobility for gaining educational progress on individual level.

2. Data on the implementation of mobility in adult education

When searching for up-to-date statistics on adult learner mobility, the learning mobility statistics from Eurostat may be a valuable source, as it presents a recent report about tertiary education students with data extracted in December 2015 and February 2016. However, the respective article presents statistics that covers the mobility of tertiary education students in the European Union, but starts only from 2013. The link\textsuperscript{181} pointing to the original database gives only access to annual data from 2004-2012 which is not usable for this report. It is only announced that further Eurostat information will be published in a planned article update in December 2016. All in all, this confirms the urgent need for a closer and better monitoring of publically available data.

\textsuperscript{178} http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/partners_networks_en.htm
\textsuperscript{179} http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/adult-learning/adult_en.htm
\textsuperscript{181} http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00064&plugin=1
Findings from the interviews on the implementation of adult education in Erasmus+

Several findings concerning the implementation of Adult Education in Erasmus+ and beyond were collected from the interviews. The authors found that Erasmus+ is not considered being extremely important for that sector.

One may observe a special interest for continuous education master programmes in the field of Adult Education. There is some evidence that labour market needs could be assessed and integrated better - not by adding regulatory requirements, but only by addressing needs for adaptation. Overall, user needs are core issues that are always strongly linked with the work place and the individuals’ professional development. Consequently, interaction with adult learners may take place in a highly individualised way.

Another aspect are the cross-sector issues, which are of interest as well. Especially, respondents would like to collaborate more intensely with the national governments, with a corporate-sector training institute, or with the NGO training sector. In addition, sharing (training) competencies to achieve delivery of services with other sectors is considered an interesting option. Another area of interest is the opportunity to engage in quality insurance by participating in cross-sector cooperation.

Obviously even enterprises show some concern about the (new) effort on regulations concerning to the European labour market and explain that they would mainly avoid short-term mobilities of staff in Europe and rather prefer using a partnering enterprise in the neighbouring country instead. This observation shows how fragile cross-border mobility might be. There is obviously a strong need for policies that stimulate and support the free transfer of adults in the context of the labour market.

Regarding how sustainability issues are addressed (often by EU projects) and implemented, there is evidence that the training institution usually designs first the material to be used in Adult Education. Only afterwards, the training institution would establish links with universities in order to search for approval and sustainability. This applies to aspects of accreditation, which are supposed to work only in cooperation with universities, i.e. outside the scope of the industry.

Virtual mobility in adult education

There is as well some awareness of virtual mobility, but even in industry, the potential of such needs to be explored further. As a matter of fact, virtual mobility is not often found in industry as well as in any other place of adult education.

The new dimension of digital learning environments in relation of adult learners is explored carefully in a recent report of the European Commission (2015)\textsuperscript{182}. This Final Report discusses in detail the policy dimensions as well as the didactic aspects of ICT-enhanced learning and Open Educational Resources (OER), its potential and conditions for success in a systematic approach.

\textsuperscript{182} \url{http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14407&langId=en}
Figure 12 above has been developed first by Goertz (2013, p.11) and is presented in the 2015 report. The blue areas indicate types of ICT that were already available in 2008; the green ones were new in 2013. This confirms the dynamic development of educational technologies and by that growing potential for virtual mobility. Indeed, adult learners are one of the main target audiences of such educational patterns and would be more directly addressed than those in VET would.
Chapter 9: Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)

1. General characteristics and transition from LLP

One of the main objectives of EMJMD is “increase the attractiveness of the European Higher Educational area (EHEA) and support the EU’s external action in the higher education field.” Erasmus+ plans to enrol and fund 25,000 students to study for a joint master’s degree. According to the latest Erasmus+ Guide for 2016, “the EMJMD grant for the preparatory year and the three student intakes will indicatively amount to around 3 million EUR.”

EUA Joint Masters Networks developed during the period 2002-2004 by the European University Association (EUA) were forerunners of Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses (EMMCs) under the LLP Programme, and of EMMCs’ successor, the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) programme. Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates (EMJDs) have been transferred from 2014 to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions - Research Fellowship Programme.

Brief evolution of EMJMD since 2014

In 2014, “The 2014 budget allowed the continued financing of some 138 Erasmus Mundus Masters Degrees and 42 Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates, which had initially been funded under the LLP programme. In addition, there was sufficient budget in 2014 to fund 11 new Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees, representing an additional 46 organisations which received funds to finance around 440 additional Masters scholarships over the next 5 years.” The selection rate for new EMJMD projects the first year of Erasmus+ was 18% (66 applications submitted, 11 granted). The 11 projects involved 46 higher education institutions from 18 different Programme Countries and a

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187 This move has been severely criticised by Haug and Wächter in Erasmus For All (2014-2020), p. 31: "Request that joint doctoral programmes not be separated and moved to Marie Curie. This move would not only mean a real loss of substance and a blow for Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus, but it would also be self-damaging for European higher education and would deprive the new integrated programme of a recent and internationally highly visible and successful activity. This would happen precisely at a moment when Europe is endeavouring to build up the strength and attractiveness of its universities at the doctoral level. The well-founded intention to avoid duplications with Marie Curie could be solved by keeping joint doctoral studies together with Erasmus, rather than passing them over to Marie Curie which has a quite different focus. Separating out the third level of education would also be in full contradiction with a basic principle of the Bologna Process and would send a negative signal to universities.”
“total amount of EUR 48.8 million was allocated to cover the ongoing EMMCs and EUR 32.5 million to cover the ongoing EMJDs.” (ibid, p. 25).

The transition from EMMCs to EMJMD did not go as smoothly as one might have expected as

“43 courses chose to submit a Quality Review Report in 2014 and were evaluated with respect to their performance, excellence, sustainability and development prospects beyond the period of the EU funding. At the end of the Quality Review process, 19 courses were deemed of sufficiently high quality to be included in the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs) Catalogue and were eligible to apply for a grant in 2015 based on a specific call for proposals.”

In a comment forwarded to the authors about the transition from LLP to Erasmus+ with regards to Joint Masters DG EAC states:

“We propose a fuller explanation of the transition from the 2009-13 period to Erasmus+: Joint Masters degrees have continued under Erasmus+. A large number of contracts, funded under the previous planning period, the so called "legacy" projects, were still running and being financed at the start of Erasmus. These legacy projects will start receive funding until the end of 2017, and will have completed all student matriculation by 2020. “

Plans for 2015 included an increase the volume of selected EMJMD application from 11 (2014) to 18 with an average of 13 grants per intake. The Work Programme for 2016 announces that “Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees (EMJMD) will in 2016 select more proposals than in the two previous calls. In the 2016 call, for the first time funding is foreseen for additional scholarships for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.” (p.15). Spring 2016 two calls were issued one for EMJMD and one for EMMCs to allow transition from LLP to Erasmus+.

2. Key Findings

Low interest for JMD in Programme countries

Feedback from HEIs and NAs contacted confirm a lack of interest in HEIs for Joint Master Degree. Knowledge about EU funded joint degrees is very low among teaching staff in European universities. The relative lack of HEIs for EMJMD is confirmed by recent statistics. There has been a decrease in EMJMD from 180 to 92 in 2016 and just a minor increase compared with 2015. EMJMD has received lower budget appropriation than expected. There are also feedbacks from stakeholders, acknowledged by the

189 Erasmus Mundus Quality Review - Selection 2014.


192 Neither the Web site for the 2016 Calls under Actions 1A and 1B, nor the Erasmus+ Guide for 2016 (version 2) offer explanations to potential applicants of differences applying to each Action (1A and 1B).
Commission that EMJMD needs a stronger institutional embedding. As of today, awareness of EMJMD has reached only a few HEIs in Programme countries.

In a comment forwarded to the authors\textsuperscript{193} about the above mentioned decrease DG EAC states:

“Towards the end of previous planning period (2006-2013) a large number of institutions were applying for Joint Masters support. In 2012, 815 universities applied within 177 consortia. This number decreased significantly under Erasmus+ and in 2016 for instance, only 460 universities applied in 92 consortia. We can speculate on a number of reasons for this decrease in interest. The first is that to encourage less dependence on EU funding, joint masters funding under Erasmus+ offers funding for 3 cohorts of students, rather than 5 cohorts in the previous programme. Even with this reduced funding, it was only possible to fund 11 new Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters consortia in first year of the programme (2014).

In addition, and potentially more off-putting to casual applicants, consortia in Erasmus+ must already have accreditation for their joint degree at the time of application. In the previous programme consortia could use the first year of the contract, if they were funded, to apply for this accreditation. This was undesirable for two reasons. Firstly, it encouraged casual applicants who, if they could get EU funding, thought that this would ease their national accreditation processes. Secondly, even with good intentions, if consortia were not very advanced with accreditation at the time of their applications, the first year of contract implementation was not long enough to complete the process – leading to problems with recruiting students for unaccredited courses.”

The low volume of applications for JMD funding requires action.

The Commission will select 30 JMD in 2016 compared with 11 JMD in the first year. The low rate of success, especially in Scandinavia, but not everywhere, and a decreasing number EMJMD proposals should be a strong warning that there is a mismatch between the offer and the demand. The causes of the problems may not reside exclusively in the design of EMJMD, but may reside also in unfavourable institutional environments e.g. universities. A general comment from teachers and administrators in HEIs is that Joint Masters (and Joint PhDs) are nice, but involve too much bureaucracy to be worth the toil. On a more positive note, France, Germany, and Spain continue to support EMJMD. There are also newcomers to JMDs. However, the attractiveness of EMJMD remains to demonstrate.”

Minority impact

The modest evolution of EMJMD and the not so smooth transition from EMMCs justifies the criticism expressed in the Coimbra Group position paper:

“While we recognize the value of an “excellence initiative” of the kind it promoted, the Coimbra Group believes that joint programmes leading to joint or dual/multiple awards should also be promoted in a more widespread fashion, without the need for the high levels of funding for individual students which have characterized the prior version of this programme, which limit the number of programmes funded to the point of becoming a disincentive for academics and

\textsuperscript{193} following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016 at DG EAC.
institutions to participate. The impact is, unfortunately, to be especially noticeable in the first calls for Joint Master’s Degree proposals under Erasmus+, which are restricted in their funding and hence in the number of programmes which will be approved, due to commitments undertaken under [LLP]194.

3. SWOT analysis of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)

The following SWOT analysis (Table 21) systematises findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The “jointness” of the Master Degree Programmes is well-defined.</td>
<td>1. Lack of clarity about tuition fees in private HEIs. Lack of clear rule about tuition fees (no limiting principle).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Relative flexibility as one can opt between joint (preferred) or multiple degrees.</td>
<td>2. National quality control procedures may not work legally and practically on widely distributed Joint Master Study Programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Student mobility grants to Masters students.</td>
<td>3. Admission and grant selection of students is performed by the EMJMD consortium. This may contravene the national legal rights of applicants to contest rejection of applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher mobility grants.</td>
<td>4. Poor interfacing and partial overlapping with Master Level Curriculum Development projects in Capacity Building in Higher Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Complies with national and institutional accreditation regulations.</td>
<td>5. Unclear definition of what constitutes a “highly talented student”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Students from Partner countries may apply for admission and grants.</td>
<td>6. Minority impact (minor programme).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. High level of funding for 3 initial intakes of student to raise visibility worldwide.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Includes non-academic partners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Realistic grant packages and length of stay (15 regular + 4 additional scholarships and 4 guest lecturers and 8 weeks).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Feasible multi-location requirements for study sessions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Additional scholarships available for some Partner regions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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OPPORTUNITIES
1. Offers incentives to engage in cooperation between Master Study Programme.
2. Legal integration in national Master Study policies.
3. Top financing from institutions and states.
4. Financial contributions from employers who may need specialised work-force.
5. Some countries and institutions offer incentives for having Joint Master Study Programmes.
6. Virtual learning between mobility periods.
7. Clear rules for including students from Least Developed Countries and Low or Lower Middle Income Countries.

THREATS
1. Lack of interest in many countries and institutions (too much paperwork, too complicated, too few local incentives).
2. Legal and regulatory obstacles to Joint Degrees.
3. Pattern of organisational resistance.
4. Some countries, following a boom in Master programmes in HEIs, i.e. France are reducing the number of accredited master study programmes.
5. Common examination and assessment procedures may be difficult to enforce in consortia with widely different regulations and traditions.
6. HEIs making a business of Master Degrees, i.e. MBAs, might not find EMJMD attractive.
7. Admission rules in elitist, highly selective HEIs, e.g. grandes écoles in France may pose problems.
8. Student grant levels may not be sufficient to cover basic expenses in some countries.
9. Variability of mandatory costs for students.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• The European Parliament may consider merging all programmes and projects targeting Master Degrees under Key Action 1 and Key Action 2.
• The European Parliament may consider assessing the usefulness of the overall design of EMJMD, in light of the evaluation of EMCCs.
• The European Parliament may consider assessing the value for the money of EMJMD measured against more widespread solutions in Key Action 1.
• The European Parliament may consider assessing EMJMD in light of the low interest for EU Joint Masters in many European universities.
• The European Parliament may consider engaging in a dialogue with higher education associations, student unions, and national authorities to make the EMJMD programme more attractive to stakeholders.
Chapter 10: Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility

In this chapter the authors analyse the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility (hereafter called 'Master Loans'). After a short introductory descriptive section highlighting budgetary aspects, historical aspects situating the debate about portable loans and grants for mobile students in Europe in a broader socioeconomic context will be discussed. The views of the Commission as well as the arguments from critiques of portable EU-loan-schemes will be discussed. This chapter will close with key findings, a SWOT classification and final recommendations.

1. Main characteristics

Master Loans are targeting students who want to complete a full study programme at Master level in another Programme Country. The envisaged Master Loans are thought more as a contribution to their costs than a full coverage of living expenses and possible fees. The master loan will be provided by banks in the EU that have passed an agreement with the EU. Banks granting such loans to students will have a guarantee from the European Investment Fund. An Erasmus grant and an Erasmus+ Master Loan cannot be cumulated when mobility participants go to the same host Higher Education institution (HEI). For 2016 the amount of loan will be 12 000 EUR for 1-year Master programmes and 18 000 EUR for 2-year Master programmes. Such loans are currently available in France (through BPCE S.A. representing Banque Populaire and Caisse d’Épargne) and Spain (through MicroBank La Caixa/ Nuevo Bank S.A.U), but will be made available in more Programme countries in 2016-2020. 20 to 25 banks are expected to join the Erasmus+ Student Loan Guarantee Facility.

Master Loans under Key Action 1 are programmed to release a massive 3.3 billion EUR of loan amount (≈6.44 x the guarantee) for up to 200 000 students in Programme countries. The claim that Master Loans represent usually presented as a relatively modest enterprise or ‘pilot action’ in Key Action 1 may be true with regard to the percentage of budget means allocated for Master Loans (512 million EUR) relative to the total Erasmus+ budget for the period 2012-2014 (3.5%). However, further analysis of the Commission’s 2016 Work Programme for the implementation of Erasmus+ suggest that Master Loans budget allocations are indeed far from being modest when compared with Erasmus+ mobility grants in higher education. As a matter of fact, while planned budget allocations for the mobility of students and staff in higher education for 2016 amount to 600 423 252 EUR,

198 The Web sites for Erasmus+ master loans in these two French banks are still under construction.
the budget for Master Loans amount to 54,319,000 EUR, representing ≈9% of the aforementioned allocation\(^\text{200}\). Master Loans budget allocations for 2016 represent also ≈28% of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) budget (57,160,000 EUR for 2016).

These budgetary observations are important insofar as they relate to other implementation aspects of Key Action 1. E.g. the following issues may be raised:

- How appropriate is it to establish a EU-financed bank loan guarantee facility rather than offering mobility grants adapted to joint or international masters?
- What are the possible side-effects of allocating 9% of the budget otherwise allocated for student and staff mobility in higher education to Master Loans in case the demand for regular mobility grants increases and, as a consequence, is followed by a decrease in the funding of mobility grants in higher education and to a corresponding dissatisfaction of HEIs and students?
- How appropriate are budget allocations to Master Loans with regards to the relative success and failure of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)?
- How realistic are the expectations of the Commission to release 3.2 billion EUR Master loans to 200,000 students?

The next section presents in a concise way some historical aspects that may help readers to understand Master Loans in the wider context of the evolution from a higher education area or ‘space’ to a higher education market in Europe.

2. Earlier initiative in the European Higher Education Area

While inter-war and pre-1914 states attempted to consolidate the territorial, linguistic, ethnic dimensions of 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century nation-states, they have evolved into welfare-states addressing increasingly their citizens’ need for social security, health care, and education. After World War II, welfare-oriented European states have moved resolutely into new nation-building projects endeavouring to reconcile the logics of state and with the needs of their citizens. Kuhnle (2000) has stressed the historical resilience of the welfare-state in Europe (we include education, training, and inclusion policies in the notion of welfare), observing that “West European welfare states have been built over a 100 years’ period. Institutions have survived world wars” (p. 233). For this author, the “format of the welfare state may look different in coming decades, however, than what it was during the period of the most intense ‘happy marriage’ (Hagen 1998) between the nation-state and the welfare state in Europe ca. 1950-1980” (Kuhnle 2000, p. 237)\(^\text{201}\). A redistributive tax system has enabled national and local authorities to equip new geographical and social territories with unprecedented health and education infrastructure.

Before the vision of a European Higher Educational Area was realised, the legal prerogatives and territoriality of European nation-states on public (and even private) higher education systems was an integral part of the welfare-state model. This dominion implied among other things that,


support schemes financed by the taxpayers, e.g. (grants and loans, free or low-fee tuition, access to health services and insurance) should be granted only to nationals or permanent residents (although several states have granted partial social rights to foreign students while studying);

private institutions should comply with national standards to receive accreditation and be eligible for state support;

higher education systems should allow admission of international students as guests, (e.g. conditions of admission of foreign students has been facilitated or obstructed by varying legal and social regulations in EU states early after WWII);

special grants schemes, e.g. for students from developing countries, could be implemented through bilateral agreements between states or on the basis of unilateral decisions, but in no case could be apprehended as universal rights applicable to all foreign students;

professors should preferably be nationals, unless special provisions were made to allow or even encourage foreign recruitment.

The Bologna process and later processes which have been integrated in the European Higher Educational Area policies, as well as in the policies European Union in the area of Education and Training, have challenged fundamentally the idea of a territoriality of higher education. The process to evolve an internal EU-EEA market in higher education has undergone two formative phases since the turn of the millennium:

- The first phase has been to evolve, in a classical state-centric legal manner, a legal “higher education area” building primarily on intergovernmental agreements between EHEA states (initiated by the Sorbonne declaration of 1998 and the Bologna declaration of 1999), and on a common currency (‘credits’) for the recognition of learning and training outcomes in higher education, ECTS. Within the Sorbonne and Bologna early system students are mainly defined as citizens and legal subjects, and only indirectly as customers and production value.

- The second consolidation phase involves exploiting the legal recognition platform provided by the Bologna processes and the mobility toolbox offered by the European Union to establish an “internal market” where students additionally to being “legal subjects” become (still legally bound) “customers” and higher education institutions evolve from being “dispensers” to “providers”.

The main challenge for European policy makers since the Sorbonne declaration of 1998 has been to match the determination of nation-states to maintain their legal dominion over higher education with a more diffuse, supranational market demand to remould higher education into a knowledge market regulated by the law of supply and demand. In such a knowledge market the student must assume the triple roles of being a legal subject (whose learning outcome need formal validation), being a customer (choosing sources of supply) and being a product (of the supplier).

An early initiative was taken in 2004 by the Expert Network on Portability of Grants and Loans in Europe concluded that

“The portability of student loans and grants is an important instrument in the promotion of mobility. In the Berlin communiqué202, the Ministers responsible for

202 “They reaffirm their intention to make every effort to remove all obstacles to mobility within the European Higher Education Area. With a view to promoting student mobility, Ministers will take the necessary steps
Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013)

higher education declared that with a view to promoting student mobility, Ministers would take the necessary steps to enable the portability of national loans and grants. At the Informal Meeting of the EU-Ministers of Education in Rotterdam on July 12 2004, the presidency concluded that portability of grants and loans should be possible.  

referring clearly to the 2005 Bergen Ministerial Communiqué in which “governments have been repeating their commitment to full portability of grants and loans”.

As suggested by Hervey (2010), turning the intergovernmental version of the EHEA into an “internal market in higher education, based simply on free movement and efficient competitions, would indicate that students should be allowed to take support available in their home Member State (whatever that might be), and choose where to receive their education”, a vision that “totally ignores the social solidarity elements of education systems, which are organised on a national bases” (2010, p. 133f). In Harvey’s words the question “Who will pay for the students’ welfare (or study expenses) within the EU?” is the “type of ‘wicked’ problems that results from new social practices” (ibid) that can only be addressed by, partially illusory, partially operative “new governance’ processes”, as witnessed by the current extended composition of the Bologna Follow-up Group including not only governments, but also various international organisation and BUSINESSEUROPE. Which brings back to the foreground of the discussion not only the theme of multilevel governance and ‘soft policies’ in in light of Education and Training policies discussed earlier in this study but also the legal issues that emerge when soft policies actually challenge basics principles and values defining European welfare states.

to enable the portability of national loans and grants”. AEGEE EUROPE, European Student Forum (2003). ‘Realising the European Higher Education Area, Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003’.


“We recognise that mobility of students and staff among all participating countries remains one of the key objectives of the Bologna Process. Aware of the many remaining challenges to be overcome, we reconfirm our commitment to facilitate the portability of grants and loans where appropriate through joint action, with a view to making mobility within the EHEA a reality.”, p. 4, in EHEA (2005). ‘The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education’, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005”.

Hervey (2010).

BUSINESSEUROPE’s mission statement: “BUSINESSEUROPE is the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at European level, standing up for companies across the continent and campaigning on the issues that most influence their performance. A recognised social partner, we speak for all-sized enterprises in 34 European countries whose national business federations are our direct members.” Retrieved from https://www.businesseurope.eu/mission-and-priorities.


204 “We recognise that mobility of students and staff among all participating countries remains one of the key objectives of the Bologna Process. Aware of the many remaining challenges to be overcome, we reconfirm our commitment to facilitate the portability of grants and loans where appropriate through joint action, with a view to making mobility within the EHEA a reality.”, p. 4, in EHEA (2005). ‘The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education’, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005”.

205 Hervey (2010).

206 From BUSINESSEUROPE’s mission statement: “BUSINESSEUROPE is the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at European level, standing up for companies across the continent and campaigning on the issues that most influence their performance. A recognised social partner, we speak for all-sized enterprises in 34 European countries whose national business federations are our direct members.” Retrieved from https://www.businesseurope.eu/mission-and-priorities.
3. Position and views of the Commission

Panel interviews with the Commission were conducted in May 2016\textsuperscript{207} and subsequent comments forwarded to the authors addressed among other aspects of Key Action 1, Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility. A summarised presentation\textsuperscript{208} of the implementation narrative follows:

- Master Loans represent a real change in Erasmus+. The implementation of Master loans is very much linked with the efforts deployed to reach agreement with banks. It requires changes from the banks. This process takes time.
- The loans would address gaps in the financing of graduate studies.
- The Commission receives every day requests from students to obtain such loans.
- Unlike other action, the Commission controls Master Loans only indirectly, as the programme’s management is entrusted (via a Delegation Agreement) to the European Investment Fund (EIF) and is supervised by the EIF Board, where the Commission is represented. The Legal Basis states that “the management of the Student Loan Guarantee Facility at Union level shall be entrusted to the European Investment Fund (EIF) on the basis of a delegation agreement with the Commission, setting out the detailed rules and requirements governing the implementation of the Student Loan Guarantee Facility and the respective obligations of the parties.”
- The Commission is represented on the EIF Board, \textit{but does not have a majority vote}\textsuperscript{209}. However, as the board member in charge of the Erasmus+ programme, the voice of the Commission in the Board obviously carries special weight.
- Not all countries see the same need for Master Loans. E.g. Spain was the first country to join the effort and make a proposal. Different countries are in the process of applying for Master Loans.
- So far, Master Loans are available from banks in Spain and France. Applications from three more countries are being assessed by the EIF; for commercial and confidentiality reasons, no further information can be provided on their countries of origin.
- At the end of 2014 the Delegation Agreement between the Commission and the EIF was signed. After a call for Expression of Interest to banks (February 2015), student loans became available through MicroBank in Spain in June 2015, as the operational start of the initiative. Thus, the Loan Scheme has been operational for about a year. Within this period 7 banks have applied already with the EIF.
- MicroBank in Spain signed up to the scheme in June 2015 and began disbursing loans in the 2015-16 academic year. MicroBank already provided nearly 1,5 million EUR in loans to date. The average loan amount is about 13 000 EUR (10 500 EUR for a Master up to one year and 16 130 EUR for a Master > 1 year).

\textsuperscript{207} Conducted by one of the authors 4/5/2016 with participation of several representatives of DG EAC.
\textsuperscript{208} Statements listed are not \textit{verbatim} statements but summative narratives reformulated by the authors.
\textsuperscript{209} \url{http://www.eif.org/who_we_are/governance/board_of_directors/index.htm}
The 10% margin (below the maximum ceiling) would appear to indicate that the ceiling amounts present a fairly good fit to the student needs.

- The 2 pillars of the BPCE Group from France, Banques Populaires and Caisse d’Épargne joined the scheme on 1st December 2015 and 12 April 2016 respectively. Loans will be available from 1 June 2016; a communication campaign will be launched by BPCE on June 1st, multiplied by EAC. Several other applications are being handled by the EIF (commercial & confidential info).

- Even with small numbers so far, the scheme demonstrates its European nature, with outgoing (79%) and incoming (21%) participants coming from nearly 20 E+ countries. A survey of participants is ongoing. For the new academic year 2016-17, at least 90 million EUR will be available in student loans from these 3 banks. This substantially broadens study options for students from all over Europe.

The views exposed above are consistent with the narrative about of Master Loans presented by Mr Tibor Navracsics 4 September 2015 on behalf of the Commission:

“...The Erasmus+ Master Loan Scheme is currently a pilot-activity (representing 3.5% of the Erasmus+ programme) and does not replace the Erasmus+ credit mobility grants, which continue to receive the majority of the Erasmus+ budget for student mobility.

Acquiring relevant knowledge and skills through a good education is the best way for young people to prepare themselves for today’s rapidly evolving labour market. It is precisely to allow young people to invest in their education and future that the Commission has taken the initiative of setting up the Scheme.

Most Member States have student aid schemes in place to support students during their studies, with the balance between grants and loans and the level of support varying considerably. However, few Member States have fully implemented the commitment made under the Bologna Process to make student support portable for study in another country.

The Commission’s initiative is targeted at transnational degree mobility at Master’s level, where investment not only creates the highest returns (at both individual and societal level), but where funding is also most needed, as it is less readily available from existing sources than at Bachelor’s level.

When preparing its initiative, the Commission has considered the feasibility of offering grants. Budgets available at the EU level would be inadequate to make a substantial impact if grants were offered. Through offering loan guarantees, six times more budget can be made available to fund up to 200,000 loans for Master students.”

The arguments developed by Mr Navracsics above are quite representative of current ‘soft governance’ practices in the EU and will be commented below:

- The Commission leans on the Bologna Process, described above in this Chapter. The Bologna Process advocates full portability across Europe for all kind of financial supports allocated to students on the move, e.g. grants and loans.

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210 Answer given by Mr Navracsics on behalf of the Commission, 4 September 2015 to Question for written answer to the Commission Rule 130, E-011020/2015 submitted by Pablo Iglesias (GUE/NGL) and Tania González Peñas (GUE/NGL).

• The failure of European governments to agree full legal portability of support in the European Higher Education Area, e.g. a European Mobility Fund, is presented as the reason why the Commission needed to act, otherwise, it is implied in the speech of Mr Navracsics, nothing would have happened in this domain. The argument of necessity is particularly illustrative of the justifications used to enforce ‘soft policies’ to circumvent national jurisdictions. “As we have seen, one way of getting purchase on this kind of intractable problem … is through ‘new governance’ processes, involving reflexive participatory discussion and deliberation, within transparent, impartial processes that are sufficiently open to the relevant stakeholders.” (Hervey, 2010, p. 133).

• Ideally, the Commission would have opted for grants, but due to insufficient budget resources, the Commission has opted for loans instead of grants. The argument presented by Mr. Navracsics is, again, seemingly, about dodging financial obstacles, not about ideology. However, as pointed by Hervey (2010) there is a fundamental difference, socially, politically and legally, between being a grant receiver and being a private borrower. Grant holders are legal subjects as "Member States make provision for students not simply on the basis of their likely future economic contribution, but also because they have a socio-cultural duty to their citizens to provide them with education" (Hervey, 2010, p. 132). By contrast, students who take Master Loans are de facto customers in a higher education market. Hervey objects speaking of portable grants and loans that “this approach, essentially of an internal market in education services, totally ignores the embedded social solidarity elements of education systems, which are organised on a national basis. In practice, it would also indicate massive influxes of students to English-speaking higher institutions, which tend to be concentrated in a few Member States” (op. cit., p. 133).

• The choice of language metaphors used by Mr. Navracsics (e.g. “where investment not only creates the highest returns (at both individual and societal level), but where funding is also most needed”) illustrates that the practical arguments put forward serve a broader purpose to transform higher education into a profitable market. Transnational degree mobility is not only described as de facto market but as a market under construction in need of investment. It is not clear, however, who the investors are, The Commission, the borrowers, or the universities offering Master Programmes.

4. Various criticisms about portable student support

There were early concerns expressed regarding the legal status and side-effect of European portable student loans, e.g. the Workshop on portability of loans and grants at the Noordwijk conference expressed such concerns in October 2004 stating that 212

“a tension arises between portability of student support and the decisions of the European Court of Justice that stretch the equal treatment principle to broader groups of students in the host country. This approach may prevent EU member states to make their own systems of student support portable. Under current conditions, the home country principle is preferred by the member states. The problem is not just a problem of some countries, but a threat to mobility as such.

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212 See full reference in an earlier footnote in this chapter.
The idea was raised that a European fund for student support could reduce some obstacles for mobility. A network of student support experts from the member states should be founded. They should address the issue of portability of student support in a broader economic, social and cultural perspective.”

Since in May 2003 the former ESIB, the predecessor of European Student Union ESU, stressing that “In some European countries and regions, there are no relevant grant/loan-schemes at all.”, supported the idea establishing a Europe-wide portable grant system while rejecting plans about loan-schemes (“ESIB calls upon governments, non-governmental and supranational organisations offering financial support also for mobility to move from loan-schemes to grants and reject introducing new loan schemes.”)214.

In October 2012, the European Students’ Union’s (ESU) delegates at the BM64- BUDAPEST meeting confirmed its vehement opposition against the European Commission’s plans to introduce Master Loans, stressing that these plans “barely reflect[ed] on the future prospects for young graduates in the EU” 215.

ESU reiterated strongly this rejection of the plans to establish a European Master loan-scheme in a resolution published 3rd May 2013216, stressing that they “do not consider the idea of establishing a European loan guarantee scheme as a feasible one, neither reflecting the needs of students”, and made it clear that they were “appalled, that the proposal ignores the potential impact, that such a scheme can bring, such as raising the level of debt among young people or instigating brain drain from less developed regions”, arguing that the “scheme acts as a guarantee to the banks, so they would not lose their profits, but not as a guarantee for students, so that they will get a well-paid job to repay their debt after getting a degree.”

Referring to the 2005 Bergen Ministerial Communiqué in which “governments have been repeating their commitment to full portability of grants and loans” delegates at BM-64 demanded instead to strengthen the Erasmus grants scheme so that “that the money originally planned to establish the loan scheme, [would] be directed towards supporting student mobility through grants.” The European Commission, according to BM-64, should rather

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213 ESU (http://www.esu-online.org) is also known as “ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe”.

214 “Grants and loans must be fully transferable for studies abroad, for both vertical and horizontal mobility. Transferability of grants and loans must be guaranteed from the very start of studies in order not to hinder mobility. Additional grants for mobile students are necessary in order to even out longer study times and starting problems due to getting familiar with language, culture and academic system of the host country.”, ESIB (2003). ‘ESIB Policy paper on mobility’, May 2003.


217 “We recognise that mobility of students and staff among all participating countries remains one of the key objectives of the Bologna Process. Aware of the many remaining challenges to be overcome, we reconfirm our commitment to facilitate the portability of grants and loans where appropriate through joint action, with a view to making mobility within the EHEA a reality.”, p. 4; EHEA (2005). ‘The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005’. 

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encourage the member states to introduce necessary changes in the legislation to allow full portability of national support services”.

Adopt the proposed European student loan guarantee facility for full-degree, Master’s-level studies abroad, provided that the Union is not associated with it in any other way than as a guarantor on behalf of students. In view of the planned integration of the intra-European and external dimensions of higher education and the importance of Master’s degrees in cooperation with other countries, it seems difficult to understand why the proposed loan scheme would not be available for studies in neighbouring countries and other regions of the world. It would also be important to emphasise the grant possibilities for a study/internship period abroad as part of a Master’s programme, in order to avoid sending the signal that Master’s studies will henceforward be supported only, or mainly, through loans. The new loan scheme should never be referred to as “Erasmus Master”, as if it were the only option open to Master’s-level students. “Erasmus For All”, p. 31.

The same kind of criticism is expressed implicitly in the Question for written answer to the Commission (Mr Navracsics’ answer is cited and commented in the previous section): “The problem with these loans is that they will leave students indebted in a world where the labour market is highly fragmented, unstable and precarious. Does the Commission not think that it would be best to set up a scheme of offering grants instead of loans? On this issue, would the Commission be able to study the possibility of setting up a specific European wide grant scheme?”

5. Key findings

Questionable integration in Key Action 1 and with Key Action 2

- How Master Loans relate to Student Scholarships in Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters (EMJMD) and Master Level Curriculum Development projects in Capacity Building in Higher Education projects (Key Action 2) is at best unclear, and at worse introduces significant readability issues for stakeholders.

Still few banks in few countries, actually one bank fully operational

- The fact that only one bank is fully operational with regards to Master Loans (MicroBank La Caixa in Spain) at the beginning of June 2016 may suggest that the Master Loans-scheme is far from being an incontestable success in Europe. The Commission’s plans to involve 20-25 banks needs further documentation.

Hard to access decision-making processes

- The decision-making processes leading to the adoption of Master Loan in the EU regulations remain unsatisfactorily documented by the Commission. It is not clear how the arguments and suggestions of all stakeholders, banks, lobby groups, students, consumer authorities have been collected, weighed, and taken into consideration.
- The position and arguments of the ESIB / ESU have been consequently ignored or rejected.

218 See full reference to Question E-011020-15 in an earlier note in this chapter.
Neglected scenarios about negative side-effects

- The middle- and long term consequences of introducing the Master Loans are poorly investigated.
- The allocation of a Master Loans budget representing 9% of 2016’s budget means for mobility in higher education is not measured against the side-effect of decreased funding of regular grants in Key Action 1.
- The possible direct or indirect support of the Master Loans to the privatisation or semi-privatisation of Master Programmes in the EU is not researched satisfactorily.
- The slogan “No need for collateral from students or parents, ensuring equality of access” while well-intentioned, may be misleading, as it ignores already known EU patterns of social selectivity in student recruitment in general, and in student mobility in particular.
- The possible negative impact of Master Loans on the readiness of governments in some if not many Programme countries to develop viable financing schemes for students, needs to be researched.

Poorly documented mapping of the alleged demand

- It is unclear whether the EU Master Loans respond to a real demand from students. Documentation about such demand should be made public, particularly in light of the resolute opposition of ESU against this loan-schemes.

Poorly documentation of the comparative advantages of Master Loans

- The realism and social effect of the interest rate publicised as “favourable, better than market interest rates” or the statement that “the rate of interest charged on the loan will vary depending on which country the bank lending the money is based. Nevertheless, the rate of interest will be lower than standard commercial rates” need to be assessed critically with supporting documentation. E.g. the rates apply that the 5.15% annual interest offered by MicroBank La Caixa, fixed throughout the term of the loan appear to be high by other e.g. North-European standards. Interests run and are being capitalised during the legal deferment period adding to the total cost of the Master Loans. The annual APR is 5.53% including the 1% fee for establishing the loan and a deferment period.


221 By comparison, the Norwegian Statens Lånekasse’s regular interest rates for study loans is currently 1.825% and 2.550% depending on repayment scheme, student loans are exempt of interest during studies, and the first payments start 7 months after final graduation. See https://www.lanekassen.no/nb-NO/Languages/About-the-Norwegian-State-Educational-Loan-Fund-
• Also the repayment period (5 years for 1-year Master course and 6 years for a 2-year Master course), is unrealistic and socially discriminating in Spain and France where employability of graduates remains a serious problem, and where average salaries are rather low compared with Northern Europe, UK and Canada.

• Complete terms of loan contracts with students are not made public as standard templates published by the banks currently offering such loans (or easily accessible).

• Compliance with national and consumer regulations for financial services are not investigated, or if investigated are not made readily accessible the general public.

• What happens in case of the student after completion of the Master degree abroad remains unemployed, or loses his or her income for whatever reason, is not made clear.

• It is not clear how the 1% setup fee billed by e.g. MicroBank La Caixa fits within the definition of a competitive loan, and is ethically defendable, as such fee actually adds to the effective APR interest of the Master Loans.

• Additional provision for credit-check of foreign students by MicroBank Caixa are not described in the Erasmus+ Guide for 2016 version 2 not on the Commission’s official Web sites. The legal and pragmatics reasons for operating with differential treatment of non-resident and residents, e.g. MicroBank La Caixa’s requirement that “In the event that the applicant is not resident in Spain, they must submit a certificate of their credit status in their country of residence.” are poorly documented by the bank and by the Commission.

• The case of the HEIs with high admission fees, e.g. in the United Kingdom, needs to be clarified further.

6. **SWOT analysis of Master Loans**

*Table 22: SWOT matrix of Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. New offer to talented mobile students in Programme Countries.</td>
<td>1. Plans to involve 20-25 banks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Involvement of the European Investment Fund (EIF).</td>
<td>2. 200 000 students are targeted in Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Possible positive social effect in some countries or regions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Few banks have enrolled yet.</td>
<td>1. Evolution of the labour market and financial market in Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Few countries have enrolled yet, only Spain and France.</td>
<td>2. An unclear, poorly documented decision-making process threatens the social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No published priority list of countries to enrol in Master Loans until</td>
<td>and political legitimacy of Master Loans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020.</td>
<td>3. Possible side-effects. E.g. privatisation of Higher Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Poor integrated with Key Action 1 and with Key Action 2, e.g. Capacity</td>
<td>4. Negative incentive for national authorities to design viable national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–Building in Higher Education Master Curriculum Development.</td>
<td>student financial support in some countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Questionable competitively of the Master Loans: annual APR interest of</td>
<td>5. Few banks (currently one fully operative) are offering Master loans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.53% / Repayment conditions are not indexed on income after studies /</td>
<td>6. Strong oppositions of ESIB / ESU since 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance or lack of such against unemployment or invalidity is poorly</td>
<td>7. Not interesting enough for banks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>documented.</td>
<td>8. Increased financial inability of Key Action 1 to meet a growing demand for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Student organisations have been ignored.</td>
<td>regular grants in Higher Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects on social selectivity in mobility enrolment are unsatisfactorily</td>
<td>9. Poorly documented role of private stakeholders, lobby groups in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>documented.</td>
<td>decision-making process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Loans not grants, nor loans convertible into grants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Different credit checking conditions for foreign and national residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Spain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Not clear on which grounds a bank can refuse a loan to eligible Master</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans applicant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Exemption of tuition fee, e.g. in the UK, is not clearly documented.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may consider assessing the social legitimacy and financial viability of the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament, with regards to the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme, may consider adopting a firm position against transforming Higher Education into a <em>market</em> and students into <em>customers</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may, with regards to the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme, consider assessing if it is within the prerogatives of Erasmus+ to create Master Loans.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may, with regards to the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme, consider assessing whether Master Loans circumvent efforts in Programme countries to create decent financial support schemes for students or improve on existing schemes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may consider assessing if the budget means allocated to Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme would be better utilised for funding regular or adapted 1-year or 2-year Master mobility grants for mobile students in Programme Countries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may consider assessing the realism of the targets for the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme (200 000 students and 3.2 billion EUR loan volume, 20-25 banks, many countries).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may consider integrating better and with more visibility sub-actions and components in Key Action 1 and 2 that target Master studies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART IV
Implementation Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Mobility of Youth and Workers

Chapter 11: Mobility of individuals in the Field of Youth

1. Situational Snapshot
Key findings collected from the 2015 EU Youth Report (YR2015) and from the European Commission’s 2015 Education and Training Monitor (ETM2015) provide useful contextual knowledge to appraise the implementation of Key Action 1 activities targeted at Youth structures. The 2015 Youth Report offers a comprehensive description of the situation of young people in Europe, and is complemented by Youth National Reports. The SWOT matrix displayed in Table 23 below links selected findings from these two reports to objectives and known characteristics of the Youth sector activities:

Table 23: SWOT matrix summarising external and internal aspects affecting the Youth sector.
Sources: 2015 EU Youth Report and 2015 Education and Training Monitor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 1/3 European aged 30-34 have a tertiary degree. Higher education attainment continues to improve and now stands at 37.9 %.</td>
<td>1. Organisational infrastructure is fragile in the Youth sector and cannot be compared to other KA1 sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 82% people aged 20-24% have upper secondary education.</td>
<td>2. “European countries differ widely in the level of participation of young people in non-formal education and training.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “In the EU-28 in general, the age group with the highest share of people who have studied abroad is the 25-39 age group (12%).”</td>
<td>3. “Today’s young people tend to participate in learning mobility more than older generations. However, differences across countries are substantial”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Linkage between Youth policy and Youth research in several EU countries, i.e., Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, Austria.</td>
<td>4. “Only one in four young Europeans report having used a career guidance service at some point”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Most Programme countries have National youth strategies.</td>
<td>5. The majority of trainees were not offered an employment contract when they finished their most recent traineeship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Some EU countries have allocated important national budgets for the youth field, e.g. Germany, France</td>
<td>6. “Only a quarter of young people who have participated in voluntary activities have received a certificate or diploma formally recognising their experience and the skills they have demonstrated.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. “Almost one in three young volunteers does not receive any</td>
<td>7. “Between 2011 and 2014, a general decline in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

contribution towards the living and travelling costs incurred.”

youth participation in cultural and artistic activities has taken place”.

8. “A small fraction is actively engaged in organisations that pursue globally relevant issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 1 in 4 has volunteered; 50% are active in a club, organisation or association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (2014) offers methods and techniques empowering the conventional applicant to involve excluded groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Some Programme countries have a specific Youth law or national legislation on youth, e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, United Kingdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Most EU Member States have established an institutionalised mechanism to ensure a cross-sectorial approach to youth policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A majority of Member States report a positive impact of the EU Youth Strategy at national, regional and local level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Most member states are involved in implementation of the EU Work Plan for Youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 18 member states support active involvement of youth with a migrant background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A Joint Action on mental health and well-being was launched in 2013 under the EU Health programme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “Many young Europeans are facing serious threats such as marginalisation in the labour market, deterioration of living conditions, and obstacles to social integration and political participation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “The EU-28 unemployment rates among young people aged 20-24 and 25-29 registered a further increase during the period 2011-2014”. 90 million young people 15-29 years in Europe; 8.7 million unemployed; 13.7 young people are neither employed or under education or training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “In 2014, the youth long-term unemployment rate continued to be higher for young men (aged 15-24) than for young women in the same age group”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The proportion of young people between 15 and 29 years decreases in Europe. The most affected is the 15-19 age group. And more decline is expected in the next decades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate continues to rise for young people. 27 million are at the risk of exclusion or poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 48% foreign born at risk vs. 28% native born; 4 member states do not support active involvement of youth with a migrant background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In the EU, 22% of 15-year-olds underachieve in mathematics. Among pupils with low socioeconomic status, this is a worrying 36.6%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. There are more than 4.4 million early school leavers across Europe, and about 60% of these are either inactive or unemployed. Early school leaving still affects 11.1% young people between 18 and 24 years with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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11. “Young people in northern and western Europe generally leave the parental home earlier than their peers from southern and eastern European countries.”
12. “Many young people resort to the Internet and its social media to interact with public authorities and exchange opinions on political issues.”

2. Integration of Youth In Action into the Erasmus+ Programme

Simplification efforts from the perspective of the Commission

The Youth in Action Programme was not part of the educational programmes under LLP, but functioned as a separate programme, which is not the case anymore under Erasmus+. In the own statements of the Commission, “It has not been an easy exercise to merge all earlier programmes into one completely new and simplified structure under the three Key Actions of Erasmus+.” Separate structures from LLP have been significantly simplified into one compound structure.

In a written answer given to a question submitted by European MP Ilhan Kyuchiuk (ALDE) on 27 January 2015, Mr Navracsics 19 March 201 agrees on behalf of the Commission that further efforts are needed to assess the effects if the structural simplification applied to The Youth in Action Programme:

“As this is still only the second year of implementation, the Commission does not yet have enough elements to assess whether our simplification efforts have been sufficient. A mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme is foreseen in 2017 when options to further reduce the administrative burden will be looked into. In the meantime, all feedback received from National Agencies and stakeholders will be taken into account in the regular programme implementation.”

In a panel held 25 April 2016 during which DG EAC exchanged views with the CULT Committee in the European Parliament on the implementation of Erasmus+,91 further simplification of procedures where announced:

“The templates for the 2016 agreements between beneficiaries and National Agencies have been substantially improved, both in terms of length and clarity, in response to feedback expressed by programme stakeholders over the past months. As an illustration, while fully respecting our obligations towards the financial regulation, a Youth Exchange agreement to be signed by organisations has been cut by half.”

225 Source: Panel Interview with representatives from DG EAC 4th May 2016.
Possible side-effects of the implementation of the Youth activities

In the light the discussion in Chapter # about ideals and realities of multilevel governance and less virtuous organisational side-effects, it is appropriate, at this point, to underscore that structural simplification, or, simplified implementation, may be considered to be crucial, efficient, goal-rational, and user-friendly by the institutions, but may not necessarily be perceived accordingly by beneficiaries, who may experience getting entrapped by specific institutional modes of action. E.g. ‘simplification’ implies usually standardised treatment of Beneficiaries (individuals). While this may not be problematic in sectors and activities that target high-resource individuals, e.g. master students, individuals with special needs may need, by contrast, to be offered a differential treatment based on individual needs, resources, and achievements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The European Parliament may consider assessing the virtuous and less virtuous side-effects of the integration of the Youth in Action programme in Erasmus+ Education and Training activities on beneficiaries.
- The European Parliament may consider assessing whether integrating the Youth in Action programme in Erasmus+ Education and Training activities contributes to achieve the general objectives for the EU Youth Strategy’s activities in the areas of Education & Training, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Health & well-being, Participation, Voluntary Activities, Social inclusion, Youth & the world, and Creativity and Culture.
- The European Parliament may consider reviewing necessary activities, resources and methods that may consolidate the Youth in Action programme in Erasmus+ Education and Training activities during the next Erasmus+ phase.

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National Agencies in Charge of Youth Activities

Among the 60 National Agencies only 1/3 are dealing exclusively with Youth. The rest are dealing with all sectors. Future evaluations of the implementation of Youth activities under Key Action 1 should focus on comparing the advantages and disadvantages of operating with separate National Agencies these agencies with the corresponding advantages and disadvantages of operating with National Agencies addressing all sectors in Erasmus+.

Table 24: National Agency system in Belgium and Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country and ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>HO</th>
<th>YO</th>
<th>VET</th>
<th>AET</th>
<th>HE</th>
<th>National Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE01</td>
<td>AEF-EUROPE</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gouvernement de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE05</td>
<td>YIA-BEFL - JINT</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flemish Ministry for Culture, Youth, Sports and Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE04</td>
<td>YIA-BEFR - BIJ - Bureau International Jeunesse (BIJ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ministère de la Communauté française en charge de la politique de la jeunesse,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE02</td>
<td>EPOS vzw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vlaamse Overheid : Ministrie Onderwijs en Vorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE03</td>
<td>YIA-BEDE - Jugendbüro der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft V.o.G.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft Belgiens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE01</td>
<td>Nationale Agentur für EU-Hochschulzusammenarbeit im Deutschen Akademischen Austauschdienst (NA-DAAD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE02</td>
<td>Nationale Agentur Bildung für Europa beim Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BiBB)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE03</td>
<td>Pädagogischer Austauschdienst der Kultusministerkonferenz, Nationale Agentur für EU-Programme im Schulbereich (PA)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE04</td>
<td>JUGEND für Europa (YIA-DE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further comment communicated to the author by the a representative from DG EAC: “The NAs are designated by the National Authorities within each Programme Country (PC), and it is up to the PC to decide whether there should be separate NAs per field/groups of fields or a single NA for Erasmus+. The Commission has been promoting the single NA approach for the matters of efficiency and harmonised programme implementation, but the decision is taken at national level. (A list of NAs with field responsibilities can be provided).”
There are countries that are traditionally more directed towards Youth Voluntary Service, which could offer cases for the evaluation of task sharing among agencies. E.g. in Belgium, both agencies in Brussels (Bureau International Jeunesse, BIJ for the Francophone Community and JINT for Flemish Community have developed functions, e.g. SALTO229. Cross-national specialisation is also practised, e.g. the agency in the Belgian Flemish Community is specialising in Inclusion and Diversity, while the German agency in Bonn is specialising in other Youth activities. Table 24 below illustrates the National Agency system in Germany and Belgium.

Prioritised Activities in the Key Action 1 Youth Activities
Action: (1) Youth Exchanges, (2) Youth Voluntary Services (EVS), and (3) mobility of Youth workers. The current emphasis is on (1) Youth Exchange and (2) European Voluntary Services.

Status Spring 2016
The Youth Programme amounts to 10% of the Erasmus+ budget. In 2014, Youth had produced 25% of the Erasmus+ participants. One third of all Erasmus+ Key Action 1 applications are coming from the Youth field. In 2015, 20 000 applications were submitted to the Youth Programme, which is an increase by 5 000. In comparison, in 2014, 14 000- 15 000 applications were submitted.230 The average funding for projects in Youth is 20 000 EUR, which allows Erasmus+ to fund approximately 7 000 projects out of 20 000 submitted applications.231

Users with special needs
"Within the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020), the support to the access of learners with special needs and their success in education and training is mainstreamed in all the funding opportunities and activities available in the programme, as stated in the Erasmus+ legal base"232. Youth has a high proportion of beneficiaries with special needs. The ratio of disadvantaged participants is estimated to 34%. There are currently 50 000 young people with ‘fewer opportunities’ participating in Key Action 1 Youth Mobility activities.233

229 SALTO Resource Centres are support structures. Information about them can be found at https://www.salto-youth.net/about. There are 8 NAs ensuring the functioning.


231 Source: Panel Interview with representatives from DG EAC 4th May 2016


233 Source: Panel Interview with representatives from DG EAC 4th May 2016.
Categorisation of users as ‘disadvantaged’ is done by the applicant, e.g. a NGO or user association and is quality-checked by the National Agencies. Further evidence is obtained by DG EAC from participant reports and questionnaires. The Commission monitors regularly the proportion of users with special needs.

The impression that Youth produces more mobility than other sectors is related to the calculation of the average cost for Youth mobility. Youth mobility, especially duration of stays abroad, is not the same as in other sectors addressed by Key Action 1. In comparison, the average mobility, e.g. in the field of higher education is longer than the average mobility in Youth, so this difference partially explains the impression that Youth produces more mobility. This is not the case since the duration of Youth mobility is on average shorter (e.g. 2 weeks’ stays are current) and relatively portable which makes it possible with a similar budget to fund more mobility experiences than in other sectors.

**Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (IDS)**

The 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) and this dimension is further strengthened by the addition to the Youth Programme of an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (IDS). IDS offers methods and techniques empowering the conventional applicant to involve excluded groups. The definition of exclusion is rather broad and is based on e.g. economy, religion, gender, or other characteristics (e.g. the needs of deaf persons are addressed.)

The 2015 Youth report summarises the situation of young people in general in Europe and describes the Youth Strategy under Erasmus+.

The views of the Commission are summarised below:
- The Youth activities under Key Action 1 are highly inclusive and exhibit increased flexibility by responding to severe challenges that threaten social cohesion in Europe.

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234 The governing principle of the 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020— [OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, pp. 25-35] is emphasised in the reply given by the Commission 21 March 2016 to a Question for written answer to the Council Rule 130 by MP's Dominique Bilde (ENF), Steeve Briois (ENF), Marie-Christine Boutonnet (ENF), stating that the Report "identifies inclusive education, equality, equity, non-discrimination and the promotion of civic competences as a priority area for future cooperation – an area which includes concrete issues such as addressing the diversity of learners, enhancing access to quality education for all learners, including newly arrived migrants, and promoting intercultural competences. Other areas of common interest identified include skills development, promoting work-based learning, improving the quality and supply of adult learning, encouraging open and innovative education and training including digital learning, and ensuring strong support for teachers and other educational staff.""


236 See confirmation of the legal base for inclusion of deaf persons in all Erasmus+ activities given in the Answer given by Mr Navracsics on behalf of the Commission given 19 February 2016 in response to a Question for written answer to the Commission Rule 130 by Tania González Peñas (GUE/NGL) 10 December 2015.

An increased emphasis has been put on projects addressing violent radicalisation and activities targeting migrants.

It is also a goal for the Commission to include youth from small NGOs. This approach applies to the Erasmus+ Programme, in general, and not only to Key Action 1, but also to Key Action 2 with its focus on social inclusion, and to Key Action 3 with some calls which aim to respond quickly to current political challenges.

Some members of the Parliament were very worried that the Commission would not be able to accommodate the reality of the small youth NGOs.

Available statistic indicates no drop, on the contrary, in the number of requests, and no drop in the inclusion aspects.

Challenges from 2017

The Commission during a recent exchange with the CULT Committee in the European Parliament has reaffirmed the centrality of social inclusion in plans for 2017:

“Also in 2017, similar to 2016, particular emphasis is put on social inclusion as a priority in education, training, youth and sport, across all actions of the programme, also in line with the 'Paris Declaration'. Social inclusion will be considered "the priority among priorities". Indeed, it represents a challenge for education and training systems, but also for society as a whole. The refugee crisis illustrates well the need to uphold values of tolerance and intercultural understanding.”

In this respect, the programme will support projects that aim to enhance the access and the learning performance of disadvantaged learners and also to foster the development of social, civic and intercultural competences.

3. European Voluntary Service (Youth)

Erasmus+ aims to involve 500 000 participants in transnational volunteering or youth exchanges from 2014 until 2020. Under Erasmus+, close to 100 000 young people can participate in EVS until 2020.237

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A further challenge to be met is the need for complementing the European Youth Voluntary Service (EVS) by achieving not only lasting impact on individuals by means of Youth mobility, but also by achieving a lasting impact on the local society.

This new orientation of the Youth mobility activities is in line with the reorientation from the former LLP and Youth in Activity Programmes to Erasmus+, from supporting directly individual mobility to institutionalising the management of mobility in all sectors addressed by Key Actions 1.

DG EAC considers the European Voluntary Service (EVS) to be a major instrument with the capacity to strengthen the social cohesion of young people in Europe and achieve both types of impact, individual and collective. There are approximately 10 000 Youth Volunteers grants available every year (see distribution of EVS mobilities in 2015 in Table 25 above) under the current budget appropriations. The average duration of mobility for Youth Volunteers is close to one year (236 days). Also shorter stays are possible, e.g. for disabled young persons.

However, what has been learnt from volunteering during e.g. one year in a foreign country should be better described and made more useable for the beneficiaries in the labour market and society at large.

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240 Source: Panel Interview with representatives from DG EAC 4th May 2016.

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It has been claimed in October 2015 by MPs that there is in the EVS programme “evidence of the non-compliance with contracts, the use by private firms of volunteers as unpaid workers, a practice prohibited under the rules, and breaches of the right to lawful, dignified work” and measure have been requested aiming at “monitoring the programme and the conditions under which volunteers work and the activities they are required to carry out”.

4. Recognition of non-normal learning outcomes

The recognition of outcomes of non-formal learning needs improvements. Earlier approaches developed under LLP and earlier programmes, e.g. the Youth Pass, which is aiming at describing the learning processes in non-formal learning activities and the subsequent learning outcomes need to be made more useable by achieving to describe real competencies even better. There are still diverging views among educationalists how to deal with recognition of non-formal learning, especially when targeting acceptance of volunteers on the regular labour market. As there is still a long way to go towards generalised recognition of non-formal learning outcomes, further efforts are needed to promote Youth activities for public services, employers, etc.

International cooperation in the field of recognition of non-formal learning represents an opportunity, as several countries experience similar threats against social cohesion and employability. Already there is an on-going cooperation about Youth Pass, in Baltic member states, which could serve as a case for further exploration.

Potential for improvement

The Commission has been asked during the Panel Session held on 4 May 2016 to describe possible improvement to the Youth activities. The narrative is reproduced below in a simplified form, including later comments communicated by panel attendants:

- The rate of increase of the Erasmus+ budget allocations to the Programme will be critical for the programme’s capacity to meet the demand from young people.
Ideally, it should be easier for applicants to apply, and the activities should be more accessible for end-users.

- However, because the Programme, as of today, is able to fund only a small proportion out of 20,000 Youth applications (in 2016), an increase of the demand for grants may lead to, e.g., to 30,000 proposals being submitted. The result would be then that a smaller proportion of the submitted applications would be funded, as the Programme would be able to fund only the same amount of mobilities given the available budget.

- Such a situation would increase proportionally the incapacity of Erasmus+ to respond to an increased demand.

- "We have the demand and we will be able to absorb (based on the demand) the expected budget increase from 2017 onwards. What is predictable as there is a continuous increase in demand that despite the increase in budget there will not be a significant increase in "success rate" (comparison between submitted/granted application)." 242

- There are continuous attempts to simplify and adapt the application process to the needs of young people and youth organisations, but this is not linked to the number of submitted applications, but rather to the quality of submitted applications.

- Given current budget limitations more and better results can be obtained by choosing the right approach to the right groups.

- Future evaluations of the implementation of Youth activities in Key Action 1 will need to take into consideration specific structural aspects of the Youth programme.

- E.g., reception centres for youth in need are fragile structures that need specific support. Applicants can, however, obtain assistance from Erasmus+ to run such structures. In comparison the Programme does not need to finance universities, but may need to finance Youth organisations at a European dimension in order to stimulate the creation youth jobs.

242 Comment added by a DG EAC representative on the panel interview transcripts.
PART V
Interaction between Sectors in Erasmus+ Key Action 1
Chapter 12: Online Linguistic Support (OLS) Services

The framework for EU cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) stresses that, in order to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training, it will be necessary to strengthen the linguistic competences of learners, trainees, staff, and youth. Regulation No 1288/2013 of 11 December 2013 establishing Erasmus+, states plainly (Article 5) that the Programme, in order to enhance the internationalisation of education, shall have the specific objective to “to improve the teaching and learning of languages and to promote the Union’s broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness”. Furthermore, “the percentage of participants in long-term mobility declaring that they have increased their language skills” is listed among the indicators to be included in the evaluation of the Erasmus+ (Annex I).

The political and regulatory basis of Erasmus+ presupposes that linguistic support should be integrated in Key Action I (as well as in Key Actions 2 and 3), but does not specify how it should be realised. The European Commission could, ideally, have opted for:

- improving the decentralised Erasmus intensive language course (EILC) system practised under LLP. These courses lasted between 2 and 6 weeks and mobility candidates were offered an additional grant to cover their participation in the host country. Providers of these courses were selected by the National Agencies and the list of organising institution was distributed by the Commission. The participants received a certificate indicating the foreign language proficiency level attained after the course;
- offering additional grant support to host institutions, e.g. universities, to organise locally intensive courses for incoming mobility participants, provide support and assessing their foreign language proficiency using standardised proficiency tests;
- delivering a centralised linguistic support service under the authority of the European Commission to all mobility participants;
- combining various aspects of the scenarios outlined above.

The Commission decided in 2014 to go for a fully centralised alternative. Under LLP, Erasmus intensive language courses (EILC) were supported through additional grants to

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244 The Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2016 states:

“Linguistic support is available for the language used by participants for studying, carrying out a traineeship or volunteering abroad in the framework of long-term mobility activities supported under Key Action 1. Linguistic support will mainly be offered via the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support, as e-learning offers advantages for language learning in terms of access and flexibility. The Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support includes a mandatory
improve the foreign language proficiency among mobility participants. The experience reported by the Commission and some National Agencies was that the EILC course system was hard to run from an administrative and logistic perspective. In 2014, the Commission, learning from experiences in LLP, chose to introduce the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) service\textsuperscript{245}, a simplified system purportedly accessible to all, at any time, on any support, allowing users to measure the improvement of their linguistic skills. As the Open Call for Tenders was issued in December 2013, it is to assume that systematic preparations for such a radical move away from the EILC system have been going on during in 2012-2013. There are OLS is presented as a totally new product that was introduced in a few weeks or months.

1. Main characteristics of the OLS service

The service provider
OLS is an online service developed and maintained by a Consortium pooling together three partners, Altissia International S.A. (Belgium) a privately held company founded by linguists, the CLL Group, a language foundation in Belgium and Luxemburg, founded in 1984 by the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL), and UCL. This consortium has been selected by the European Commission\textsuperscript{246} to provide online linguistic support for a final total value of 95 800 000 EUR (excl. VAT) to individuals participating in Erasmus+ mobility, primarily under Key Action 1.

The Executive Agency EACEA is responsible for the implementation of the framework contracts n°2014-0319 (Lot 1: Online assessment of language competences) and 2014-0321 (Lot 2: Online language courses), which entered into force on 27 May 2014. EACEA is currently managing and monitoring this service\textsuperscript{247} in close synergy with the service provider. The planned budget allocation for OLS according to the Commission’s 2016 Work Programme for the Implementation of Erasmus+ is 16 000 000 EUR (a sum, which compared with the total value of the tender assumes 6 equal allocations from 2015 to 2020)\textsuperscript{248}.

The UCL-CLL-Altissia Consortium is responsible for the provision of the OLS services (language assessments, language courses, OLS licence management system) to the different stakeholders involved (National Agencies, Erasmus+ beneficiaries, mobility assessment of language competences and voluntary language courses. Language assessment is a crucial aspect of the initiative in order to provide the right preparation for each participant and collect evidence on language skills of EU mobility participants. Therefore, a language assessment will be undertaken by participants before mobility and another assessment will be carried out at the end of the mobility period to monitor progress in language competences. The results of the language assessment test carried out by participants before their departure will not preclude them from taking part in the mobility activity, whatever the result is.”

\textsuperscript{245} http://erasmusplusols.eu
\textsuperscript{246} European Commission (2013). ‘Online assessment and linguistic support for mobility of individuals under the Erasmus+ Programme - EAC/24/2013’, covering 5 languages (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish). Tender closed 24/02/2014.
participants, DG EAC and EACEA). DG EAC is responsible for the overall supervision of OLS.

**Target languages**
OLS covers from the beginning the six most frequently used mobility languages (languages in which the teaching abroad is dispensed), German, English, Spanish, French, Italian, and Dutch, which cover approximately 90% of the needs of the Erasmus+ mobility participants. Six additional languages are to be implemented during the first half of 2016, Czech, Swedish, Greek, Danish, Polish, and Portuguese. Within 2020 the OLS service plans to support all EU official languages. OLS builds upon a similar methodology for all languages.

**Use of OLS**
The OLS system builds upon an adaptive testing of the user’s language proficiency following the six Common Reference Levels of attainment defined by Common European Framework (CEFR). OLS offers structured pedagogical content, daily activities, as well as professional modules. OLS presupposes 30 hours of effective usage by mobility candidates. The mobility candidate can assess his/her language skills before and after mobility.

**Licencing**
The core engine of OLS is based on the Altissia system, a private software product. OLS being partly an external service contracted by the Commission, packages of licences need to be granted to institutions and individuals on the basis of funded mobilities. The contractor is paid on the basis of the number of licences for which access has been provided. Non-used licenses, if not reallocated by the Commission, will not be paid to the contractor. Unused licences may be repurposed by the Commission, as it has recently been the case, when 100 000 licences have been reallocated to refugees and migrants who may use the service on a voluntary basis.

A complicated licence attribution system, prone to logistic overhead, regulates the interaction between the Executive Agency (EACEA) and the service provider, various stakeholders, and end-users (see Figure 13 below). A number of licenses are released to beneficiary institutions, e.g. schools and universities, after the National Agencies have finalised the grant selection process. A contact list of beneficiary institutions is communicated by the Executive Agency to the service provider who is expected to release a required number of licences to mobility candidates through the National Agencies. The licence flow system is complicated furthermore, as the contract between the Commission and service provider operates with two distinct licensing system, one type of license for language proficiency assessment and another type of licence for language courses. The participant’s course and assessment data is to be stored by the

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service provider in the Commission’s data systems. The progress of the foreseen fully automated integration of OSIL data in the IT architecture of DG EAC / EACEA is insufficiently documented. Overall, the licence attribution system raises issues with regards to efficiency and long-term pertinence of the private-public contractual framework chosen by the Commission.

The allocation of OLS licences to mobility participants is done as follows:

“A first allocation of OLS licences to Erasmus+ National Agencies, for each call and for each field, is made by DG EAC based on the estimated needs. Erasmus+ National Agencies are responsible for the allocation of licences to their beneficiaries. Language assessment and language course licences are made available to Erasmus+ beneficiary institutions/organisations via the OLS system, based on contractual information regularly provided by DG EAC. Erasmus+ beneficiary institution/organisations are then in charge of allocating the licences to their mobility participants, once these have been selected to take part in Erasmus+ mobility. Mobility participants must take a compulsory first language assessment before leaving on mobility (except native speakers and duly justified cases). If they wish so, they have the opportunity to follow an online language course before and during their mobility abroad. Finally, they are invited to take a second language assessment at the end of their mobility to measure how much their linguistic skills have improved.”

The choice of a licencing system was guided by the following requirements:

“the OLS platform had to be customised to answer the needs of specific target groups (Erasmus+ students, VET learners, volunteers), and offer contents that are highly relevant to them. This resulted in a customised learning offer, with Live Coaching interactive activities, tutoring and HE/VET/EVS-specific contents. There were no "ready-to-use" contents available, and the cost of developing new linguistic contents would be included in the licence fees. With changing users’ needs and new needs appearing over time, the OLS needs to be highly adaptable. It is constantly evolving so as to offer more relevant and interactive contents. This means that pedagogical and technical developments are constantly ongoing, so as to ensure that the platform is catering to new and future needs of the target groups. The choice of a licencing system allows continuous maintenance, developments and improvements to be introduced by the service provider without additional costs (the related costs being covered by licence fees).”

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253 This clarification was communicated to the authors by a representative of DG EAC following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016 at DG EAC.
Evidence of improvement in foreign language proficiency

The Executive Agency is monitoring the progression of OLS user and reports results. The Commission was asked to comment if there was evidence of improvement in foreign language skills following the use of OLS by mobility candidates. According to the Commission:

“there are early indications that OLS is a useful tool to check the language skills of mobility candidates before and after a stay abroad. With an active use amounting to 30 hours it is reported that many users manage to improve their skills from a CEFR level A1 to A2, and even higher. “

This claim may raise criticism as a publicly available documentation of these claims accessible for independent research is still lacking. Asked if there was evidence, e.g. survey data, indicating such a significant progression rate, the Commission forwarded the following comment to the authors:

“The analysis about linguistic progress before and after mobility is progressively being refined, as more data becomes available with the new waves of Erasmus+ participants taking the first and the second language assessments. The following findings are therefore to be considered preliminary, and will be reviewed once a sufficiently substantial set of data has been collected.

This preliminary analysis, conducted on 110,000 Erasmus+ participants who completed their mobility abroad and took both language assessments, shows that more than 35% of all participants with an initial A1, A2 or B1 level reach a progression of 1 CEFR level at the second language assessment (regardless of their participation in an OLS course). More than 25% of all participants with an

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254 During Panel Interview held 4 May 2016 at DG EAC.
initial A1, A2 or B1 level show a progress of 2 CEFR levels at the second language assessment (again, regardless of their participation in an OLS course). The progress is notably higher for Erasmus+ mobility participants who spend more than 30 hours on the OLS course platform.

It is important to note that many variables and factors have to be taken into account, whose respective weighting in terms of linguistic progress still has to be fully analysed and determined. Participants’ progress is namely influenced by the initial language level and the selected language. The duration of the mobility abroad further increases the participants’ progress and should not be underestimated.

Other variables such as the linguistic distance between the participant’s mother tongue and the studied language, the motivation to improve one’s language skills, the OLS language course usage and the effort put into the second language assessment are also being considered.”

**Compliance with ALTE standards**

While the system based on the Altissia software is owned and maintained by a private consortium, the service provider claims to comply with the methodology of the European Association of Language Testers (ALTE)\(^{255}\), but actually offers only limited insights into the language testing and didactic methodologies used. E.g. the various languages proficiency tests offered by OLS are not listed in the annual ALTE Framework audit report for 2016\(^{256}\). It is not clear in 2016 if the OLS test methodology is or will be subject to regular external and independent audits based on the ALTE Q-MARK system, which operates with 17 quality standards. Furthermore, there is no publicly available documentation showing that the OLS system complies with ALTE’s four minimum standards for language testing and examinations: administration and logistics, marking and grading, test analysis, and communication with stakeholders\(^{257}\). Noticeably, CLL the central member in the OLS consortium has joined ALTE only very recently. Anonymised language test data collections are not currently made available for the general public or for the language testing research community.

**The integration of OLS into Key Action 1**

The Commission’s level of ambition for OLS has been very high from the start: “As an indication, the European Commission assumes that the targeted proportion of learners using the online assessment of language competences in the five main languages (among overall long-term mobilities) may comprise: 92% of mobile individuals in higher education; 80% in VET and 64% in the youth sector.”\(^{258}\)

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\(^{256}\) Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) (2016). *ALTE Framework 2016*.


The original tender targeted 593,488 mobility participants to complete the language assessment test and 272,618 participants to complete the OLS language courses totalling 866,106 participants within two years from start defined in the tender as April/May 2014 (see Table 26 below). According to the tender, the online system should be able to handle 200,000 concurrent users according to the tender specifications.

While the participation reported by the Executive Agency for 2014-2015 is by itself impressive, it remains far from reaching the original target numbers displayed in Table 27. The 2014 and 2015 reports summarised in Table 28, Table 29, and Table 30 below states (after summing up the two first years) that 361,230 participants completed the 1st assessment, significantly less than the targeted 593,488 participants for the first year. It is also reported that merely 114,803 participants used language courses in 2014-2015, much less than the targeted 272,618 participants for the same period. One may therefore question the realism of the target numbers specified in the tables below.

### Table 26: Estimated number of expected mobility participants to take

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated number of expected mobility participants to take</th>
<th>Year 1 (12 months)</th>
<th>Year 2 (12 months)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment tests</td>
<td>289,688</td>
<td>303,800</td>
<td>593,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language courses</td>
<td>131,850</td>
<td>140,768</td>
<td>272,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total estimated number of participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>421,538</strong></td>
<td><strong>444,568</strong></td>
<td><strong>866,106</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Tender EAC-24-2013

### Table 27: Targeted number of courses per year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning mobility of individuals</th>
<th>OLS Language courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sectors</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education (HE)</td>
<td>94,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Education and Training (VET)</td>
<td>33,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth (17 - 30 years)</td>
<td>3,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school pupils</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff (all sectors)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total pr. year</strong></td>
<td><strong>131,850</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 2014-2017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** European Commission. Tender EAC/24/2013

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260 Same source p. 26
Table 28: Online linguistic support (OLS).
Participation first year 2014
Source: Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report 2014261

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants who</th>
<th>completed 1st assessment</th>
<th>Completed 2nd assessment</th>
<th>Used courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector:</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>129 039</td>
<td>103 214</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>129 575</td>
<td>103 449</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29: Online linguistic support (OLS).
Participation 2nd year 2015
Source: EACEA Dashboard 82nd of OLS use 262

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants who</th>
<th>completed 1st assessment</th>
<th>Completed 2nd assessment</th>
<th>Used courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector:</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>218 056</td>
<td>84 981</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>11 806</td>
<td>4 385</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>1 793</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>231 655</td>
<td>86 947</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30: Online linguistic support (OLS).
Source: EACEA Dashboard 82nd of OLS use 263

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants who</th>
<th>completed 1st assessment</th>
<th>Used courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector:</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>347 876</td>
<td>142 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>11 806</td>
<td>5 469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>2 330</td>
<td>1 321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2014-4/5/2016</td>
<td>362 014</td>
<td>149 275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OLS testing is mandatory for some, but not all participants.

OLS is not only marketed by the Commission as a service offered to all individuals enrolled in Erasmus+ mobility under Key Action 1. It is also imposed as a compulsory activity for all individuals enrolling in Erasmus+ mobility under Key Action 1264. However, non-completion of the proficiency tests will not have practical or financial


262 Communicated to the authors by EACEA 4/05/2016.

263 Communicated to the authors by EACEA 4/05/2016.

264 “The OLS language assessment is compulsory for Erasmus+ mobility participants with German, English, Spanish, French, Italian or Dutch as their main language of instruction, work or volunteering.” Retrieved from http://erasmusplusols.eu/assessment-test/
consequences for the completion of the stay abroad\textsuperscript{265}. There are provisions for excepting individuals targeting host languages that are not yet implemented in OLS, or native speakers of the main language of instruction in host institution. The results should be possible to include in the European Skills Passport or referred to in the Youth Pass\textsuperscript{266}.

**Early user criticism**

There has been critical feedback from users relative to the timing of the release of user licences. E.g. “OLS tests do not function optimally. The test licence functions only after the student has left his/her home country”. Interviews with students, National Agencies, and DG EAC confirm that there have been initial timing issues after launching OLS.

It is not known how efficiently and meaningfully language learners interact with the OLS interface. Measures have been taken to alleviate what is considered as start problems. E.g. access to licences have been decoupled from budget allocations, so that the National Agencies have been able in most cases to give access to OLS tests even before having been able to sign the mobility contracts with the universities. Currently, 45 of 60 National Agencies are reportedly given access to OLS licences to higher education institutions since the beginning of May or end of April 2016.

The Commission was asked\textsuperscript{267} by the authors if there was any evidence that OLS licences have been released in time in 2016 or 2015. An answer was communicated to the authors stating:

“In 2016, the allocation of OLS licences from DG EAC to Erasmus+ National Agencies was officially notified to all National Agencies with the Note to Erasmus+ NA Directors E+/NA/DIR/2016/019, published on 30 March 2016. National Agencies were encouraged to start allocating licences to their beneficiaries already mid-March, and the first licences were transferred to the OLS system on 15 March 2016, well ahead the planned start of mobility activities on 1 June 2016. On 31 March, 9 National Agencies had already allocated licences to their beneficiaries; 43 had done so on 28 April; 52 had done so on 30 May. Some of the still missing National Agencies are experiencing delays for the signature of the Delegation Agreement with the Commission (the master contract for the participation in the programme, and without which they cannot proceed to allocate OLS licences).”

\textsuperscript{265}Ibid, “Only the participants and the institutions/organisations in charge of their selection receive the results of the assessments. For EVS volunteers, the results will not be communicated to the other organisation(s) in the project. For higher education students, the results will not be communicated to the receiving institution/organisation.”


\textsuperscript{267} following the Panel Interview session held 4 May 2016 at DG EAC.
SWOT analysis of OLS

Table 31: SWOT Matrix of Online Linguistic Support (OLS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. OLS offers potentially fewer organisational burdens than the Erasmus Intensive Language Course system under LLP (only 1 service provider).</td>
<td>1. The licencing system involves a potential logistic overhead and bean-counting rather than an open system available for all, mobile individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Standardised assessment system uses the CEFR system to measure language proficiency.</td>
<td>2. Completed number of 1st assessments are much lower than original targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Constant feedback to the user is made possible.</td>
<td>3. Completed number of language courses are much lower than targeted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-paced adaptive system.</td>
<td>4. Licences were granted after departures of individuals to host institutions in 2014.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Massive processing capacity (200 000 concurrent users).</td>
<td>5. In-site needs of learners before and after not addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 24/7 Help desk in all target languages.</td>
<td>7. Duties of HEIs to support are not well specified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Compliance with ALTE Q-MARK audit system not available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Completed number of assessment tests and course in VET and Youth sector are very low.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A massive number of mobility participants may use OLS.</td>
<td>1. OLS is a privately owned service with software closed to contributions and verification from the foreign language teaching community in Europe and elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Easy access once the licence is granted.</td>
<td>2. The assessment and course methodology is not publicly available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. All EU languages covered within 2020.</td>
<td>3. Anonymised course and assessment data are not publicly available for research and independent evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. May encourage mobility to countries with less frequently spoken languages.</td>
<td>4. OSL is a fully centralised system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reallocation of 100 000 unused licences to refugees and migrants.</td>
<td>5. Compulsory test, but without consequences if proficiency is low.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The European Parliament may consider making an enquiry into the decisions that have led to enforce a full centralisation of linguistic support in Erasmus+. More flexible solutions may be provided for the VET and Youth sector.

- The double licencing system needs to be evaluated and simpler alternatives reconsidered. The logistics of the licence release procedures needs to be revised and possibly replaced with a generalised access to all mobile learners and youth in Europe.

- The financial terms of the contract between the Commission and the service provider needs to be reappraised with regards to the needs of end-users and of home and host institutions. The pricing of licences needs also to be evaluated.

- The OLS service may be made available for public use and research, e.g. for contributions from the foreign language learning and testing research community.

- The European Parliament may consider making the continuation of the OLS service dependent on a full independent and external audit of OLS complying with the ALTE Q-MARK quality indicators.
Chapter 13: Concluding remarks

1. Recent developments that call for further attention

The 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) states unambiguously that

“Europe is facing a number of urgent tasks: restoring job creation and economic recovery; achieving sustainable growth; bridging the investment gap; enhancing social cohesion; coordinating a response to the migration flow; giving priority attention to preventing radicalisation and violence. At the same time, Europe must address long-term challenges such as ageing, adjusting to the digital era and competing in the global, knowledge-based economy.”

New challenges and possible threats have emerged or persisted since the launch of Erasmus+: the financial crisis, the refugee crisis, political tensions in some member states, a tenacious labour market crisis in several member states, evolving and challenging patterns of learning and professional global mobility, possible Brexit, new cultural tensions, terrorism, and armed conflict in close vicinity of the EU. All this threats and challenges place new demands on European societies in general, and more specifically on the various mobility programmes under Erasmus+ Key Action 1. These new threats to social cohesion that are calling for new priorities in education and training.

There are many recent developments that call for further attention. A few of these will be listed below but not be discussed in detail:

- Mobility as private versus societal experience: the evolution of the practices of individuals and groups, online and in physical mobility, e.g. tourism, social media has both short-term and long-term influence on learning, training, and ultimately, mobility for learning and training.
- Some industrial actors may be less enthusiastic about physical mobility for learning and training, but be more supportive of virtual mobility.
- Various evolving practices, representations, ideals and values affect the way learners and trainees are assessed.
- Some educational sectors tend to be rather locally focused and do not privilege national or even international dimensions.
- There is a trend towards renationalisation of international collaboration. There is a need to explore more systematically how the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1 could be optimally interfaced to non-EU international collaboration in Programme countries.
- More efforts are needed to understand the multiple factors linked with the low performance, or even exclusion, of stakeholders in Programme or Partner countries from mobility measures.

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With respect to overall socio-economic and political contingencies, the most challenging development throughout Europe, now, is of course the huge mobility steam caused by war and economic migration.

2. Refugees and migrants

Although Erasmus+ and LLP, at the onset of the before economic crisis, already had an inclusion dimension, persistent threats against social cohesion have impacted the recent implementation process of Erasmus+. A series of measures have been adopted, targeting inclusion of people from all backgrounds. This applies specially to field of Youth, where an additional focus has been set on less privileged people. Refugees and migrants were already a matter of attention before 2014 and in 2014-2016. However, more attention is given in Spring 2016. In order to reach the right target groups with the advantages of mobility, new measures have been added, completing existing ones.

Measures envisaged in Key Action 1

In a comment forwarded to one the authors270 the Commission states:

“In 2016, the Commission has reinforced the support that Erasmus+ provides to projects which either involve refugees, asylum seekers and migrants or address the theme of refugees.

• Under Mobility Actions in KA1, we have emphasised the opportunity for mobility projects to focus on better equipping teachers, trainers and youth workers with competences to deal with learners and young people with disadvantaged backgrounds and newly arrived migrants.

• In 2016, we have made social inclusion the first thematic priority (“the priority of the priorities”) when selecting the strategic and collaborative partnerships in the field of education, training, youth and sport, which amount to 400 million EUR in the 2016 Erasmus+ budget. In light of the critical context, particular attention will be given to support projects involving refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and/or focussing on the topic of the refugees' crisis in Europe”

Furthermore, a

“13 million EUR call for proposal on inclusion, to scale up and disseminate successful actions developed at grass root level to prevent violent radicalisation and foster the inclusion of disadvantaged learners, including people with migrant background. The call for proposals supports three project strands:

Strand 1: Transnational cooperation projects in the fields Education & Training and Youth.

Strand 2: Large-scale volunteering projects in the field of Youth

Strand 3: Networking of Erasmus+ National Agencies in the field of Youth”

To circumvent the possible criticism that Erasmus+ may be diverted from its core purpose, improving educational system, the Commission has put an emphasis on supporting inclusion and on migrants insofar as it does not affect the efficiency of the

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269 In a further comment forwarded to one of the authors following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016, a representative from DG EAC states that “already during 2014 and 2015, Erasmus+ and its predecessor Programmes (Lifelong-learning and Youth in Action) provided financial support to more than 260 projects which dealt with the integration of migrants in education.”

270 Comment from DG EAC forwarded to one of the authors following the Panel Interview held 4 May 2016.
education systems in Programme countries. Erasmus+ is not primarily a fund dedicated to caring for migrants. However, Erasmus+ can fund activities that deal with migrant issues when it affects the efficiency and relevance of education and training. Schools, e.g. need to absorb migrants. Inclusion of refugee and migrant relates more to Key Action 2, which addresses cooperation and exchange of practices. Key Action 2 is targeted as the priority action for such purposes.

However, in Key Action 1, Youth European Voluntary Service (EVS) may address needs of refugees and migrants. Furthermore, other Key Action 1 tools “in both School, VET and Adult Education may support professional development for staff on very relevant topics like teaching multilingual classrooms, inclusion, cultural diversity, etc. Through job shadowing and teaching assignments, the action may support transfer of experiences and good practice between institutions that have long experience with integrating migrants, and those for whom this is a new situation. From 2016, Key Action 1 gives particular attention to support projects in these areas, cf. the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.”

As a consequence, “A further €13 million has also been committed for 2016 to fund projects tackling issues like social inclusion of minorities and migrants and other disadvantaged social groups.”

**Allocation of OLS licences to refugees**

To support Member States’ efforts to integrate migrants in Europe’s education and training systems, the Commission has indeed decided to extend the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support provided to Erasmus+ participants to the benefit of 100 000 refugees over 3 years, free of charge for them.

The 100 000 OLS licences correspond to a budget of 4 180 000 EUR which was previously committed under Erasmus+ for the 2014 Call for Proposals, but was not consumed during this start-up period. There is therefore no consequent reduction in the funds that are available to support those participants who go to work, study or volunteer abroad with the Erasmus+ programme.
Also, the Commission has taken some actions, e.g. allocating some Online Language Service (OLS) licences for migrants. 100 000 licences for 3 years have been reallocated for the benefit of migrants, as highlighted in answer given by Mr Navracsics on behalf of the Commission:

“To support Member States' efforts to integrate migrants in Europe’s education and training systems, the Commission has indeed decided to extend the existing Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support (OLS)(1) for Erasmus+ participants to the benefit of 100 000 refugees. This offer is free of charge to them and covers 3 years. The 100 000 OLS licences correspond to a budget of EUR 4 180 000. This amount was originally committed in 2014, the first year of Erasmus+, but not consumed during that start-up year. There is therefore no reduction in funds available for ‘regular’ Erasmus+ participants who go abroad to work, study or volunteer.

The Erasmus+ OLS currently offers online language assessments and courses in English, French, Italian, Spanish, German and Dutch. Six new languages (Czech, Danish, Greek, Polish, Portuguese and Swedish) are being introduced in May 2016. The OLS can be used at any time from a PC, tablet or smartphone with an Internet connection.”

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# Chapter 14: Key findings and recommendations

## Key findings

**Regarding barrier to cross-sector mobility in Key Action 1:**
- In the VET sector, there is already a strong cross-sector networking involving a diversity of stakeholders.
- Improving opportunities for employability will require far more flexible and generalised strategies for cross-sector mobility.
- Key action 1 offers valuable but still insufficiently radical and flexible opportunities for cross-sector mobility.
- The current institutionalised implementation model for the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1 is an obstacle to introducing a generalised cross-sector mobility in Erasmus+.

**Key finding**

**Recommendation 1**

### Regarding the status of mobility participants:
- The pure institutional governance model of Erasmus+ represents a significant move towards a rigid variant of multilevel governance.
- The ‘simplifications’ performed by the Commission, as currently practised in KA1, may ease the work of the Commission and National Authorities, but at the price of keeping end-users in institutional moulds that may inhibit sociocultural and professional change.
- The “No Support Given To Individual Participants” ideology and “all support given through institutions” regime may increase the distance between citizens and European Institutions.
- The institutionalised implementation of KA1 may entail a shrinkage of the perimeter of action for mobility candidates in their interaction with European institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may consider amending Regulation No 1288/2013 and remove barriers to cross-sector mobility of individuals in Key Action 1, so that learners, teachers, educators, trainers, apprentices, workers, and youth may engage fully in cross-sector mobility. E.g. apprentices interested in assistive technologies should be able to have an internship in a kindergarten or in a specialised institution; students may be able to have a stay abroad in a NGO to carry out a project with young people and win recognition of learning outcomes; VET trainers should able to follow a course in a HEI abroad, etc. This is not realisable without removing institutional constraints in Erasmus+ and introducing a universal mobility concept in education and training, and youth work.</td>
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</table>

**Recommendation 1**

- With regards to Key Action 1 targeting the mobility of individuals in education, training and youth,
- Given the policies and principles laid down in EU regulations,
- Given the Implementation Model enforced in Erasmus+ involving tiers of administration within a hierarchy,
- Given that the new Implementation Model of Key Action 1 can accommodate private companies as partners or subcontracted service providers,
- Given that the new Implementation Model of Key Action 1 can accommodate legal entities, institutions or associations as applicants,
- Given that Key Action 1 targets the mobility of individuals but does not accommodate these individuals or informal groups of such individuals as applicants, partners, or more generally as ipso jure actors of the system,
- Given a resulting de facto reduction of mobility applicants, who are citizens, end-users and customers, to Beneficiaries submitted to Implementation Bodies,
- The European Parliament may consider (1) assessing the appropriateness of the roles, rights
### Key finding

**Recommendation 1**

- Individual mobility participants are not any more ipso jure interlocutors of European institution, but beneficiaries.
- Programme countries with autocratic tendencies may be tempted to implement mobility arrangements selectively, giving priority to students with certain ideological orientations or in ideological networks and status of mobility participants in the current implementation of Key Action 1, and (2) finding ways to reinstate individual mobility participants or their representatives as real interlocutors.
- The European Parliament might want to “facilitate a debate about the foreseeable consequences of implementing a strategy based on large contracts run through intermediary bodies.” (identical to Recommendation No 9, Erasmus For All, p. 32)
- The European Parliament may consider regularly monitoring in Programme countries the practices of autocratic governments relative to the selection of individuals for mobility stay in Key Action 1.

### Key finding

**Recommendation 2**

**Regarding the fully institutionalised implementation model in Key Action 1:**

- The impact of the fully institutionalised implementation model enforced in Key Action 1 on “Free Movers” in European HEIs may be detrimental.
- The European Parliament may consider assessing the consequences of enforcing a fully institutionalised organisation of the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1 on Free Movers.
- The European Parliament may consider initiating a policy dialogue with the European Commission and the National Authorities in Programme Countries to revitalise the Free Mover dimension in the mobility of individuals in higher education.

### Key finding

**Recommendation 3**

**Regarding the implementation of the central vs. decentral implementation of Erasmus+:**

- Should the Parliament and the Council amend the original regulations and instruct the Commission to recentralise activities and responsibilities in KA1 that are currently delegated to National Authorities and their National Agencies, or conversely decentralise centralised functions, still, logistic and organisational constraints would limit the Commission’s capacity to deliver the Programme with the required level of quality and responsivenes.
- System actors (DG EAC, NAU, ...) Given the Commission’s view that it is not possible nor realistic to modify thoroughly the Implementation Model of Erasmus+ in 2017.
- The European Parliament may consider exploring legal and practical needs and opportunities for changing the centralised and decentralised Erasmus+ Implementation Model.
### Key finding

NAs, etc.) may tend to remain locked-in in a particular institutionalised vision and influence, more than democratically appropriate, the interactions between various actors and stakeholders.

### Recommendation 3

**Regarding the implementation model of Key Action 1:**

- While the general implementation model for Key Actions is readable, the detailed implementation of KA1 adds a significant amount of interwoven processes for stakeholders and beneficiaries. Interaction mechanisms between Implementation Bodies (Key Actions), Levels and stakeholders can pose readability issues for stakeholders and beneficiaries.

- A maze of external mechanisms and bureaucratic particularisms proprietary to each call may discourage applicants from participating.

### Key finding

**Regarding the implementation model of Key Action 1:**

- The European Parliament may consider assessing the appropriateness of external and internal interactions between (1) Implementation Levels, (1) Implementation Bodies, and (2) Key Actions, as well as, possible side-effects on Applicants and Beneficiaries.

- The European Parliament may consider assessing to which degree the enforcement of multilevel governance in the Erasmus+ Programme in general, and in Key Action 1 in particular, contributes to increasing the distance between the targeted beneficiaries of the Programme, e.g. mobility participants, and the decision-makers.

- In view of alternative, more networked, less hierarchical types of multilevel governance, the European Parliament may consider alternative more flexible implementation mechanisms for Key Action 1.

- In view of the systematic choices made by the Commission to institutionalise the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1, and end supporting individual mobility participants, the European Parliament may consider reinstating individual access to mobility in Key Action 1.
**Key finding**

**Regarding expected budget evolution for Erasmus+:**
- The public communication of the Commission about increases in budget and mobility volume has fuelled unfulfilled expectations among stakeholders, including National Agencies and applicants. This affects particularly actions targeting the mobility of individuals in Key Action 1.
- The Commission has communicated frequently with the European Parliament to explain the implications of the Erasmus+ budgetary policy for implementing activities, as well as implications for short-term planning and long-term projections.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendation 5</th>
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<tr>
<td>The European Parliament may consider assessing not only the effects of the decision to spread the Erasmus+ 40% budget increase over the duration of Erasmus+ Programmes (7 years from 2014 to 2020), but also the effects of the public communication of the Commission about expected budget increase on stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Key finding**

**Regarding social selectivity in the enrolment of individuals to mobility in Key Action 1:**
- The Eurostudent V (2012-2015) surveys support earlier findings regarding the persistence of social selectivity in enrolment to mobility.
- Programme countries with low GDP (e.g. under 80% of EU average) have a high proportion of student mobility funded by EU grants.
- High upward educational mobility is only attested a few countries, e.g. Latvia, Sweden, and Germany.
- With the exception of Nordic countries, there is a high percentage (higher or equal to 50%) of countries in which students are dependent on support from their parents, family, or partner for their mobility.
- Earlier conclusions (Souto et al.) that “barriers to take-up of the programme are not only economic but truly socio-economic” still apply.
- Erasmus is not yet truly ‘for everyone’.

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<th>Recommendation 6</th>
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<tr>
<td>The European Parliament may consider restructuring the budget for Key Action 1 to enable the mobility of people who now cannot take part in it due to financial reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The European Parliament may consider measuring this against the administrative costs of setting up schemes that take into account the economic background of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The European Parliament may consider initiating a more nuanced allocation of funds by home and host country that would also encourage the participation of a wider socio-economic spectrum of students in the programme since these aspects still have an impact on the financial situation of students due to differences in the cost of living that is not fully offset by the current distribution of grants.</td>
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</table>
Key finding

Regarding grant amounts:
- The interview material gathered for this study confirms that while, some mobility participants declare to be satisfied with the grant levels, other students and local Erasmus+ staff members report criticism about perceived grant discrepancies between countries.
- There are indications that National Agencies enforce grant allocation decisions quite differently from country to country and from sector to sector in Key Action 1.
- Germany has cut all grants to apprentices by 80% leaving only 20% to mobility participants. In Norway, by contrast, such cuts do not happen, and these candidates receive the whole grant. Perceived or real, differences in grant amounts, is still a hot issue.
- The Commission agrees about the need to assess the level of these unit costs for grants.
- There are 6 countries, among them France and Germany, have granted universities the liberty to decide the grant level.

Recommendation 7

- The European Parliament may consider assessing in greater depth and width the implications of the policies of Commissions and the practices of National Agencies with regards to grant amounts with special regards to reproduction of socio-economic disparities in Europe.

Key finding

Regarding school staff mobility in Key Action 1:
- Erasmus+ has brought to an end significant efforts deployed earlier in Comenius to encourage school class exchanges, including pupils.
- The ideology and rationale underlying such an abrupt policy change from LLP to Erasmus+ has not been submitted systematically to the appreciation of stakeholders, neither it has debated in depth and width in the media nor in national professional arenas, prior to the adoption of Regulation No 1288/2013 of 11 December 2013 establishing Erasmus+ and Article restricting...

Recommendation 8

- The European Parliament may consider assessing to which degree the Commission’s policies allowing almost exclusively school staff mobility LLP in Key Action 1, and not any more school class exchanges, as it was the case in Comenius, faithfully addresses all aspects of the Comenius dimension expressed in Regulation No 1288/2013.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key finding</th>
<th>Recommendation 8</th>
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<tr>
<td>implicitly mobility in school sector to staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A close reading of the Comenius related portions of Regulation No 1288/2013 reveals some ambiguities about the systematic exclusion of Comenius-type mobility for learners from 13 years of age.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Key finding</th>
<th>Recommendation 9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regarding the right of school staff to apply for mobility grants:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The most important change from the previous programme is the introduction of an institutional model which accepts only application from the institutions, e.g. from the schools provided they are legal entities, or from the ‘school owners’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In some countries the institutionalisation of mobility proposals for school staff has been systematised to the point that not even schools can apply for teacher mobility grants, since schools are not legal entities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teachers may encounter institutional obstacles, that were not as present under Comenius, when trying to obtain grants for staff mobility from Erasmus+.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The institutional model that is enforced operates on the two implicit beliefs that the innovation potential of Erasmus+ staff mobility is appropriately recognised by the school leadership or owners. It is essentially a top-down model.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• There is interest among teachers for job-shadowing in the school sector.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• eTwinning is a success, as 9 out of 10 teachers declaring that it has a moderate or large impact on learner motivation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may consider granting in schools staff members (and staff in other sectors) the right to apply individually or collectively for mobility grants under Key Action 1.</td>
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</table>
Key finding

Regarding teaching assignments abroad in higher education in Key Action 1:

- User criticism of the new staff exchange regulation in Erasmus+ has been voiced since 2014.
- Regular grievances have been voiced by teaching staff in HEIs concerning, in their experience, wildly underestimated amounts (carefully termed “support” and not “reimbursement”) for plane travels in Europe and elsewhere between 500 and 3999 km. These flat support amounts, it is argued, are not reflecting real ticket prices.
- Many teachers in HEIs fear they may have to pay from their own pocket an important part of the expense incurred to carry out quite demanding teaching assignments abroad.
- Not all higher education institutions have additional financial resources to contribute with, or are willing to cover the remaining costs of travel, stay and subsistence for mobile staff.
- The new rules for teaching assignments may have only a partial positive effect on teachers in higher education, as some staff members experience that these new rules are introducing new practical obstacles.

Recommendation 10

- The European Parliament may consider assessing the practical and financial conditions that would allow staff members in higher education to carry out teaching assignments abroad without additional personal or local costs.
Key finding

Regarding virtual mobility in relation to physical mobility:
- The experiences reported by respondents confirm earlier indications that, in Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET), virtual mobility remains marginal because physical mobility is the norm.
- There are currently rather early stage sample cases available for research and evaluation, which may demonstrate innovative uses of Virtual Mobility in initial VET, so-called IVET, but do not reach a wide audience.
- Digital Learning in the form of web-based training and eLearning are increasingly important in the industrial sector.

Recommendation 11

- The European Parliament may consider stimulating internationalisation at home among higher education staff, adding internationalisation funds, in order to stimulate teachers in HEIs to combine virtual mobility with physical mobility, to prepare, carry out and follow-up physical mobility.
- The European Parliament may consider stimulating further the use of virtual mobility in Initial Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education, and Youth programmes.

Key finding

Regarding the Higher Education Mobility and IVET scoreboards:
- The information about the scoreboards is rather limited with only a few details offered on EU Websites.
- Scoreboards build upon a rather simplified set of “key factors”.
- Scoreboards function primarily as planning tools for the European Union and National Authorities, and more peripherally as source material for media and societal actors.
- As such scoreboards rely extensively on official statistical sources, they do not provide compound socioeconomic problem analysis (e.g. they do not explain how unemployment and housing crisis for young people in Spain may be related to outbound student mobility in this country).

Recommendation 12

- The European Parliament may consider improving information, documentation, open and independent use and usability of the Higher Education and IVET scoreboards.
- The European Parliament may consider closer cooperation with the research community, and “open up” the scoreboard efforts to a wider network of contributors.
- The European Parliament may consider intensifying the collaboration with the ongoing Eurostudent Survey VI and interface it more evidently with mobility scoreboards.
Key finding

Regarding Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) in Key Action 1:
• There is generally a low interest for Joint Masters in many Programme Countries and HEIs.
• There is a large amount of partly justified institutional resistance against Joint Master Degrees in many HEIs.
• For many HE teachers, Joint Master are too complicated to agree and add unnecessary administrative and human resource workload on understaffed teams.
• Legal and administrative differences between partner and programme countries constitute major obstacles to implementing EMJMDs, which appear more as part of a EU political wish list, than as a clear need and demand from HEIs.
• The lack of attractiveness of e.g. EMJMDs is perceived in HEI as a weakness of Erasmus+ KA1.
• There has been a decrease in EMJMDs from 180 to 92 in 2016 and just a minor increase compared with 2015.
• EMJMD has received lower budget appropriation than expected.
• The low volume of applications for JMD funding requires action.

Recommendation 13

• The European Parliament may consider merging all programmes and projects targeting Master Degrees under Key Action 1 and Key Action 2.
• The European Parliament may consider assessing the usefulness of the overall design of EMJMD, in light of the evaluation of EMCCs.
• The European Parliament may consider assessing the value for the money of EMJMD measured against more widespread solutions in Key Action 1.
• The European Parliament may consider assessing EMJMD. the low interest for EU Joint Masters in many European universities.
• The European Parliament may consider engaging in a dialogue with higher education associations, student unions, and national authorities to make the EMJMD programme more attractive to stakeholders.

Key finding

Regarding Master loans:
• Master Loans establish an “internal market” where students additionally to being “legal subjects” become (still legally bound) “customers” and higher education institutions evolve from being “dispensers” to “providers”.
• The 2005 Bergen Ministerial Communiqué in which “governments have been repeating their commitment to full portability of grants and loans” has not been

Recommendation 14

• The European Parliament may consider assessing the social legitimacy and financial viability of the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme.
• The European Parliament, with regards to the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme, may consider adopting a firm position against transforming Higher Education into a market and students into customers.
• The European Parliament may, with regards to the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme, consider assessing if it is within the prerogatives of Erasmus+ to create Master Loans.
### Key finding

**Recommendation 14**

- The European Parliament may, with regards to the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme, consider assessing whether Master Loans circumvent efforts in Programme countries to create decent financial support schemes for students or improve on existing schemes.

- The European Parliament may consider assessing if the budget means allocated to Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme would be better utilised for funding regular or adapted 1-year or 2-year Master mobility grants for mobile students in Programme Countries.

- The European Parliament may consider assessing the realism of the targets for the Erasmus+ Students Loan Guarantee Facility programme (200 000 students and 3.2 billion EUR loan volume, 20-25 banks, many countries).

- The European Parliament may consider reviewing necessary activities, resources and methods that may consolidate the Youth In Action programme in Erasmus+ Education and Training activities on beneficiaries.

### Key finding

**Recommendation 15**

- The European Parliament may consider assessing the virtuous and less virtuous side effects of the integration of the Youth In Action programme in Erasmus+ Education and Training activities on beneficiaries.

- The European Parliament may consider assessing whether integrating the Youth In Action programme in Erasmus+ Education and Training activities contributes to achieve the general objectives for the EU Youth Strategy’s activities in the areas of Education & Training, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Health & well-being, Participation, Voluntary Activities, Social inclusion, Youth & the world, and Creativity and Culture.

- The European Parliament may consider reviewing necessary activities, resources and methods that may consolidate the Youth In Action programme in Erasmus+ Education and Training activities.
Key finding

been significantly simplified into one compound structure. The positive or negative effect needs to be explored.
• It has been a demanding task to merge all earlier Youth programmes into one completely new and simplified structure under the three Key Actions of Erasmus+.
• The proliferation of many National Agencies, e.g. in Belgium and Germany may hamper cross-sector transfers.

Recommendation 15

Training activities during the next Erasmus+ phase.

Key finding

Regarding Online Linguistic Support (OLS):
• OLS poses potentially fewer logistic problems than the Erasmus Intensive Language Course system under LLP (only 1 service provider now).
• OLS offers a standardised assessment system which uses the CEFR system to measure language proficiency, and a massive processing capacity (200 000 concurrent users). Services in 12 languages are planned for 2016.
• The licencing system involves a potential logistic overhead and bean-counting rather than an open system available for all, mobile individuals.
• The number of completed 1st assessments and of completed language courses is much lower than the original target numbers.
• On-site needs of learners before and after mobility not addressed.
• Compliance with ALTE Q-MARK audit system for language testing is not documented.
• The number of completed assessment tests and courses in the VET and Youth sector are very low.
• The licence attribution system raises issues with regards to efficiency and long-term pertinence of the private-public contractual framework chosen by the

Recommendation 16

• The European Parliament may consider making an enquiry into the decisions that have led to enforce a full centralisation of linguistic support in Erasmus+. More flexible solutions should be provided for the VET and Youth sector.
• The double licencing system needs to be evaluated and simpler alternatives reconsidered. The logistics of the licence release procedures needs to be revised and possibly replaced with a generalised access for all mobile learners and youth in Europe.
• The financial terms of the contract between the Commission and the service provider needs to be reappraised with regards to the needs of end-users and of home and host institutions. The pricing of licences needs also to be evaluated.
• The OLS service may be made available for public use and research, e.g. for contributions from the foreign language learning and testing research community.
• The European Parliament may consider making the continuation of the OLS service dependent on a full independent and external audit of OLS complying with the ALTE Q-MARK quality indicators.
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<th>Key finding</th>
<th>Recommendation 16</th>
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<td>Commission.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Key finding</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Regarding lack of knowledge about mobility among applicants and participants:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interviewees emphasise that there is little knowledge among individual applicants and participants about mobility in education, training and youth work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• There is a need for integrating modules and events to foster knowledge about learning and training mobility and comparative competences about culture, systems, enterprises, laws etc. in existing educational and vocational curricula.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identifying and exploiting opportunities for mobility are reported to be positive skills for individual professionalisation and career development among target groups in Key Action 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The European Parliament may consider asking the Commission to introduce and support a structured learning component on educational mobility that should or could become part of any higher or vocational education programmes in order to ease and strengthen awareness of mobility competency in all targeted sectors. Not only physical mobility of individuals, but also virtual mobility components may be integrated in this new initiative.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexes

1. Bibliography


2. References


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Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013)


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4. The Interview Grid

Research paper about the implementation of Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 1

Interview GRID

This research project is contracted by The European Parliament, DG EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, Post Impact Assessment Unit. The purpose of the research is to acquire knowledge about the implementation of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 – Mobility of individuals in education and training, and Youth. A more detailed description of the research project is available in a separate document. The general methodology of project is also available in a separate document.

This document compiles the necessary activities, methods and expected outcomes as quick notes.

1. Framing conditions to be introduced in the implementation report on the Erasmus+ Programmes’ Key Action 1

The interview shall be completed in a rather private atmosphere in 1:1 (expert to informant) situation. In case respondents prefer a group meeting this shall be explained briefly.

The preferred approach is to take brief notes by using the GRID as presented below. However, whereas needed and desirable, the researchers may ask to record the conversations for further information processing. The signature of a release form by the respondent(s) will be necessary; otherwise no recording will take place. Only researchers will be privy to the recordings. The interview transcripts will be kept in an anonymised and encrypted file format with separate encrypted keys to identify the respondent. At project completion, latest 31.12.2016 the key file and recordings will be destroyed. No respondents will be cited by name in the final paper.

In addition, the informants must sign a form devised to meet our ethical requirements, stating that: (1) all information will be held confidential by the experts, (2) participation is voluntary and may stop at any time without explanation given, and (3) that the experts do not intend to inflict any harm.

It is expected that each interview session will last between 30 and 60 minutes. Respondents shall be briefly oriented about the purpose of the implementation report, and, following this introduction, will report about their experiences with ERASMUS + Key Action 1 in a rather open narrative way.

Respondents may use their native language whereas applicable. Otherwise, the interview shall be conducted in English or any common language.

The processing of the interview material will follow a qualitative approach, and may not necessarily use all aspects of the narrative produced by the respondents, i.e. researchers will select only those sequences they consider meaningful for the assessment to be done.
During this process selected interview sequences shall be translated into English language when necessary.

The interview situation itself may be used to pinpoint important aspects of the research in a Delphi-like manner, i.e. respondents may be invited to comment on the notes taken by the researcher.

All information originating from the interviews shall be presented in the final report in an anonymised way. In cases where full anonymity is not achievable due to the direct linkage of a statement to its respective institution or the respondents, the researchers will not use such material without obtaining a written permission from the respondents (email may be used in such cases).

2. **Socio demographic data and release form**

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<th>Recording of interview accepted</th>
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**Ethical statement read**  
I have been informed that (1) all information will be held confidential by the experts, (2) my/our participation is voluntary and may stop at any time without explanation given, and (3) that the experts do not intend to inflict any harm.

Date and signature:

**Special aspects of anonymity**

**Abbreviations used in this document**  
S: Strengths  
W: Weaknesses  
O: Opportunities  
T: Threats  
DG EAT: European Commission, Directorate General Education and Training  
ECTS: European Credit Transfer System  
KA1: Erasmus+ Key Action 1
### Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No 1288/2013)

#### NA: National Agency

#### 3. Main questions to be addressed:

Introduction: Erasmus+ Key Action 1 supports mobility in the education, training and youth sectors and aims to bring long lasting benefits to the participants and the organisations involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Which are your experiences with mobility in the education, training and youth sectors?</td>
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<td>Suitable sample case?</td>
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<td>Practical knowledge?</td>
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<td>How has the implementation of Erasmus+ KA1 been initiated during the start phase 2014-2016?</td>
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<td>Formal structure and actual practice of the interaction between NAs, DG EAT, Linkage to NA?</td>
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<td>Relevant aspects of interaction between sectors?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which aspects of the allocation of financial means may contribute to or inhibit the implementation of KA1?</td>
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<td>How has your institution in organisational and financial aspects contributed positively or negatively to the implementation of Erasmus+ KA1?</td>
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<td>eLearning and distance learning?</td>
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<td>Budget issues?</td>
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<td>Which new aspects, internal or external, will call for new initiatives, awareness, or political intervention?</td>
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<td>Demands and suggestions for improvement?</td>
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</table>
Which early knowledge about the **realism of the official target figures** (individual, institutional beneficiaries; regions; sectors) can be learned from that experience?

### 4. Sectoral specific questions in Higher Education (to discussed where applicable – and answered with 1-3 words only)

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<td>International Credit Mobility (ECTS)?</td>
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<td>Strategic potential?</td>
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<td>Role of the Erasmus+ handbook?</td>
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<td>Obstacles to mobilising professional and students?</td>
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<td>How realistic are grant sizes and grant allocation mechanisms?</td>
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<td>Immediate innovative effects?</td>
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<td>Which knowledge do students have of the ideas of the Erasmus+ program and which aspects are perceived as most and less attractive?</td>
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<td>Virtual mobility?</td>
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### European Implementation Assessment

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<th>How are Joint degrees programmes (Joint Masters, Joint PhDs) implemented?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge about EU loans to master students?</td>
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</table>

5. **Sector-specific questions in the field of Education and Training** *(to discussed where applicable – and answered with 1-3 words only)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the role of the programme in the field of Education and Training?</th>
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<tr>
<td>How are the new and “old” aspects of Erasmus and Erasmus+ combined in the various EAT layers of KA1?</td>
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<td>How are labour market needs assessed and integrated?</td>
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<td>Virtual mobility?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How are educational and cross-sector issues integrated?</td>
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<td>Which specific knowledge can be gathered about mobility of school staff?</td>
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</table>
How are Sustainability Issues identified and addressed by projects and implemented?
6. **Sector-specific questions in the field of Youth** (to discussed where applicable – and answered with 1-3 words only)

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<td>What is the role of the programme in the field of Youth?</td>
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<td>How are the new and “old” aspects of Erasmus and Erasmus+ combined in the various EAT layers of KA1?</td>
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<td>How are labour market needs assessed and integrated?</td>
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<td>How are educational and cross-sector issues integrated?</td>
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<td>Which specific knowledge can be gathered about mobility of Youth staff?</td>
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<td>How are Sustainability Issues identified and addressed by projects and implemented?</td>
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7. **Sector specific questions** in the field of Adult Education (to discussed where applicable – and answered with 1-3 words only)

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<td>What is the role of the programme in the field of Adult Education?</td>
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<td>How are the new and “old” aspects of Erasmus and Erasmus+ combined in the various EAT layers of KA1?</td>
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<td>How are labour market needs assessed and integrated?</td>
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<td>Virtual mobility?</td>
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<td>How are educational and cross-sector issues integrated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which specific knowledge can be gathered about mobility of staff in adult education?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How are Sustainability Issues identified and addressed by projects and implemented?</td>
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5. Panel interview WITH DG EAC: guiding questions

Research on The Implementation of The Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU n° 1288/2013)
Key Action 1 - Learning mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth

DG EAC and EACEA Interview panel
Wednesday 4 May 2016, 10h00-13h00

Independent experts:
Daniel Apollon, University of Bergen, email: daniel.apollon@uib.no
Thomas Köhler, Technical University Dresden, email: thomas.koehler@tu-dresden.de

Purpose of the research
The research will endeavour to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that may shed light on the implementation of learning mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth (Key Action 1).

Uses of the research
The independent experts appointed by the Directorate General for European Parliament Research Services (D.G. EPRS) will formulate recommendations to the Culture and Education parliamentary committee (CULT). These recommendations may be used by the European Parliament as an input to a future larger evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme.

Interview themes
A general interview grid is used in the project with other actors. This grid is provided together as a separate document to provide information about field interviews to panel participants. The present document presents a specific list of topics for this meeting. The participants should however feel free to contribute with additional topics and perspectives reflecting their current knowledge and understanding of the implementation of Erasmus+.

Supporting documents
Supporting publicly available documents can be sent to Daniel.Apollon@uib.no, before, under, and after the panel meeting. Confidential or restricted document should not be sent.

Recommendations and ideas are welcome!
Participants are strongly encouraged to formulate recommendations for improving the Erasmus+ Programme - Key Action 1

Key action 1 sub-actions to be covered during the panel
It is of paramount importance that, if possible, all sub-actions under Key Action 1 are covered during the panel:
A. In the field of education and training:
   1. Mobility of higher education students and staff (programme countries and partner countries);
   2. Mobility of VET learners and staff;
   3. Mobility of school staff;
   4. Mobility of adult education staff;
   5. Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree;
   6. Erasmus + Master Loans.

B. In the field of youth:
   1. Mobility of young people and youth workers

C. Interaction between different sectors will also be examined.

Suggested questions for the panel exchanges
The panel will seek to provide insights, visions, recommendations, and where possible supporting documents (to be provided later) covering the following non-exhaustive list of questions:

1. Which objectives and targets of the programme are met or not met by 2016?
2. Which foreseen and unforeseen events, developments in Europe and elsewhere call for changes in Key Action 1?
3. Does the delegation model of responsibilities to Implementing bodies (article 26 - the Commission, National Authorities, and National Agencies) respond optimally to the challenges met during implementation?
4. How does Key Action 1 enhance the mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth?
5. How do the various mobility initiatives and tools under Key Action 1 contribute to raise the knowledge and skills of beneficiaries of mobility grants?
6. How does the Key Action 1 help to promote multilingualism? How are various challenges posed by the foreign language proficiency of mobility candidates met?
7. How does Key Action 1 help to develop e-skills? How is virtual mobility integrated with physical mobility?
8. How satisfied with the Erasmus+ mobility programme and its implementation are users? What would they change?
9. How do budget allocations and grant sizes influence the quality of projects and the volume of enrolment abroad?
10. How do different sectors of education and training and youth function interact under Erasmus+?
11. How are labour market needs coordinated with mobility of individuals?
12. What evidence can be displayed suggesting that the programme foster innovativeness?
13. How does the global dimension of the programme work?
14. How satisfied with the Erasmus+ programme structure, delegation of responsibilities, and its current functioning are national agencies, EACEA, and DG EAC? What would they change?

15. Which groups are better or worse represented in the Erasmus+ rather than in previous edition(s) of the programme, e.g. LLP?

16. Which advantages and disadvantages of novel aspects of the Erasmus+ Programme can be highlighted?
Annex II

The Implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices in the field of education, training and youth (Key Action 2)

Research paper by Juha Kettunen

Abstract
This study assesses the implementation of the Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ Programme. A novel assessment tool is developed that extends the strategy map of the balanced scorecard to the assessment of networked strategies and programmes. The assessment map is used to assess Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Sector Skills Alliances and Capacity Building. The results of this study emphasise the importance of clearly describing the desired impact, using the right tools of financial control, defining efficient processes and structures and applying high-quality skills and qualifications in the projects. The results of this study are useful for those who want to improve the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme.
AUTHOR
This study was written by Chancellor, Adjunct Professor Juha Kettunen of the Turku University of Applied Sciences, at the request of the Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit of the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value, within the Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services (DG EPRS) of the General Secretariat of the European Parliament.

LINGUISTIC VERSIONS
Original: EN

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Manuscript completed in June 2016
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Executive summary

This study develops a novel assessment tool, the assessment map, to analyse the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme. The assessment map is applied in this study for networked strategies and programmes, because no single organisation is responsible for implementing the Erasmus+ Programme. Another novel feature of the tool is that it can be used not only for the communication and implementation of strategies but also for the assessment of strategies and programmes to improve them in the framework of quality assurance.

The assessment map is applied to the Erasmus+ Programme which aims to achieve the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of the Europe 2020 strategy. The assessment map is also used to describe the objectives of the framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), the European dimension in sport, in particular grassroots sport, in line with the EU Work Plan for Sport, European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), including the corresponding benchmarks.

At the level of the Erasmus+ Programme, the assessment map is applied to the Key Action 2 “Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices” of the Erasmus+ Programme. A detailed assessment is done for the actions a) Strategic Partnerships in the field of education, training and youth, b) Knowledge Alliances, c) Sector Skills Alliances and d) Capacity Building. The assessment supports the conclusion that the Erasmus+ Programme has a balanced mix of objectives but many details can be improved.

Strategic Partnerships of the Erasmus+ Programme focus on intermediate organisations and do not necessarily define the external organisations where the impact could be targeted. Knowledge Alliances action is the only one which has direct external impact because at least two enterprises must participate in the projects. Sector Skills Alliances can be specified so that the action emphasises the systematic and sophisticated procedure to ensure the congruence of educational provision and the needs of a given economic sector. Capacity Building in the field of higher education has external impact, because projects should have multiplier effect not only in higher education institutions, but also outside them. Capacity Building in the field of youth involves mobility activities which have positive impact on employability and personal development.

The external impact of the activities can be increased by requiring educational institutions and other intermediate organisations to collaborate with enterprises or other customer organisations. Innovativeness can be improved by defining in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide that the innovations are improved or new processes, services and products that are the desired outcomes from the impact perspective.
Financial control can be used to promote specific political activities such as multilingualism. Funding can be allocated to encourage innovations and good practices to promote language teaching and learning. Unnecessary paperwork should be eliminated to allocate more funding for the most important objectives of the projects. The regulations about the equal amount of grant per day for each person should be abandoned because they decrease the incentives of the participating organisations to use high-quality and better paid workers.

The activities perspective could include processes and structures that help projects achieve their desired impact. The activities should have evidence-based or otherwise obvious impacts on the processes, services and products of enterprises or other customer organisations. The activities should be based on a novel idea and its implementation applied in a customer organisation. The dissemination and sustainability of the projects can be ensured by existing and new permanent structures after the project lifetime.

The skills and qualifications needed in the activities should include a clear reference to the European transparency and recognition tools and especially to the European Qualifications Framework. The award criteria could also include relevant work experience. In addition, a record of publications, pedagogical capacity and international experience can be required in the award criteria.

An important advantage of the Erasmus+ Programme is that project proposals are assessed by independent experts using the common eligibility and award criteria and valid procedure. That is a valuable contribution compared to the many other funding sources which allocate funding to specified target sectors or organisations using traditional funding relationships. The award criteria of the Erasmus+ Programme can improve applied research and development to promote innovations and export the novel European knowledge and skills to Partner Countries.

The principle of continuous improvement that is already well-known in quality assurance can be applied in the Erasmus+ Programme. The desired outcome of projects can better be achieved by allocating more resources to the core substance of the projects in order to achieve the strategic and programme objectives. Unnecessary paperwork should be eliminated by the improved processes and distribution of work between the National Agencies and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). National funding control, greater autonomy and simpler rules such as the flat rate and lump sum principles could help participating organisations focus on the desired outputs of their projects.

The quality of projects can be strengthened by improving and re-engineering the application process. More time can be allocated for the project preparation, adjusting the usability of application forms, making necessary changes in the Erasmus+ Programme.
Guide and improving the quality assurance of the projects. A web-based platform is suggested in order to simplify the application, management, accounting and audit of projects.
1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) has developed networked cooperation between member countries and independent participating organisations. The cooperation has led to the planning of networked strategic plans and programmes to guide the future cooperation of the network. The networked plan is different from the plan of a single organisation, because there is no single body which owns the plan or is responsible for implementing, assessing and improving it. The networked strategies and programmes aim to achieve objectives that cannot be achieved by any single participating organisation.

A high degree of autonomy and professional discretion are characteristics of the participating organisations implementing the Erasmus+ Programme. The autonomy of universities is especially prominent and self-management has become more important than ever. These characteristics, at the same time, emphasise the assessment and accountability of the participating organisations. These organisations are accountable for results and face expectations, which underline the need for a rational framework to assess institutional strategic plans and performance.

This study on the implementation of the Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ Programme is based on Article 6.1 (b) and Article 12 (b) of the Regulation EU No 1288/2013. The study is based on existing variety of documents and data, case studies, surveys and interviews. Background information can be found in the annual work programmes for the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme. Important Information can also be found in the Erasmus+ Annual Report 2014 with the Annexes and the Erasmus+ Programme Guide which is necessary for the project personnel.

Each project of the Erasmus+ Programme has particular merits that are related to its impact, financial resources, activities and human capabilities. The assessment of the Erasmus+ Programme is used to judge these merits and the implementation of the programme. The assessment of the programme requires a framework and sensible

276 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/awp/docs/c_2013_8193.pdf
277 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/awp/docs/c_2014_6856_en.pdf
judgements on different objectives weighed against each other. The various objectives should be aligned and balanced with each other so that the policy and programmes are able to build bridges between the perceived present situation and the desired future position described by the strategy and programme documents.

This purpose of this study is to assess the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in order to improve the networked collaboration funded by the Programme. It is necessary to create a general tool for the assessment of the Programme from different perspectives. The assessment map is developed in this study to illustrate the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Erasmus+ Programme and other related programmes. This study contributes especially to the assessment of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme, but the findings of the study are also useful for other similar purposes.

The novel framework is applied to the assessment of the Erasmus+ Programme at the policy level which connects the Programme to the Europe 2020 strategy and to other relevant programmes. At the more detailed level, Key Action 2, Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, is assessed. Finally, the assessment includes a) Strategic Partnerships, b) Knowledge Alliances, c) Sector Skills Alliances and d) Capacity Building. The interaction between different sectors will also be examined.

A rational framework to assess the Erasmus+ Programme was found among the tools of strategic planning because the Erasmus+ Programme aims to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Kaplan and Norton (2001, 2004) designed the balanced scorecard to communicate and implement the strategic plan. The strategy map of the balanced scorecard is used to illustrate and make the strategic plan understandable. It is evident that a similar approach can be used to assess the implementation of the strategic plans and programmes. It is important to find a rational framework to assess the performance of the Erasmus+ Programme. Otherwise the evaluation is based on the subjective judgements of different people.

The assessment map can be used to examine the implementation of the strategic plan and programmes across four perspectives, labelled in this case as impact, funding, activities and skills and qualifications. The measures are balanced between the impact on organisations and individuals, the financial steering and control, the processes and structures and the capabilities that drive future performance. The assessment map extends the financial control and action plans to the impact and skills and qualifications necessary in knowledge economy. Therefore the approach is ideal for the assessment of EU programmes.

The general approach for the planning and evaluation of networked strategies was developed by Kettunen (2004, 2007, 2008). The efficient communication of policy objectives is particularly important in a networked implementation of the plans. The diverse backgrounds of participating organisations underline the need for enhanced
communication. The assessment map developed in this study helps the personnel of the projects and the funding bodies create a shared understanding about the policy objectives and the implementation of the project.

The remainder of this study is set up as follows. The next chapter describes the development of the assessment framework for the Erasmus+ Programme. The third chapter includes the assessment of the Erasmus+ Programme at the policy level and the detailed assessments of Key Action 2, Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Sector Skills Alliances and Capacity Building. The fourth chapter describes the implementation of the Erasmus+ projects. The following chapter offers results and discussion. The concluding comments are presented in the final chapter.

2. Assessment framework

The balanced scorecard was developed to provide a framework for the communication and implementation of the strategy. The scorecard translates the strategic plan into objectives and balances them typically among four perspectives. The system of objectives and measures should indicate the strategic plan through a sequence of relationships between the performance drivers and desired outcomes. The assessment map follows those guidelines in order to improve the implementation of the plan.

The perspectives of the assessment map can be written for the Erasmus+ Programme as follows:

1. Impact. The impact perspective includes objectives that are the outcomes of past efforts described in the activities perspective and reports on the outcomes achieved for a better Europe and its regions.

2. Funding. The objectives of the funding perspective are prerequisites for the activities. The perspective describes the funding of the Erasmus+ Programme.

3. Activities. The objectives of the activities perspective describe the processes and structures needed to implement in the Erasmus+ Programme and achieve the impact.

4. Skills and qualifications. This perspective emphasises investments in human capital. The objectives of this perspective are the drivers for future performance and describe the capabilities by which the activities create value for the Erasmus+ Programme.

The variations of these perspectives are necessary and sufficient in a wide variety of organisations and networks. Typically, for-profit enterprises place the financial perspective on the top of the hierarchy.

It is reasonable to apply the perspectives of the balanced scorecard to the assessment of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme, because the assessment map is a
safeguard that the Programme includes all the necessary elements that can be described and implemented in a balanced manner. The common framework is a prerequisite for the successful assessment of the Programme. Without a proper framework, the assessment is based on the personal experiences and beliefs about the implementation of the programme.

The Erasmus+ Programme is analysed in this assessment using the causal chains of value creation between the perspectives in the assessment map. The assessment map illustrates the written strategy and policy documents in a graphical form similar to a road map. The assessment map describes the main routes to the desired destinations but leaves out the less important elements to focus the attention on the most important challenges and achievements. The assessment map is essential in the knowledge society, because it describes the activities for transforming intangible assets and financial resources into tangible impacts among customers and regions.

The assessment map is a simple tool for illustrating and evaluating the Erasmus+ Programme. The description of the assessment map can be started in a top-down fashion defining the desired objectives in the impact perspective. The description can begin by asking, “What kind of impact does the Erasmus+ Programme provide for the customers and regions? Are there any clearly defined objectives?” The general strategic objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme – smart, sustainable and inclusive growth - can be found in the Europe 2020 strategy, but more detailed objectives can be found in the Erasmus+ Programme.

The questions in the funding perspective are, “What is the funding for the implementation of the strategic plan and the programmes? Are there any clearly articulated tools of financial control? The objectives of the funding perspective include the funding of the Erasmus+ Programme that is used to finance the processes and structures in the activities perspective. Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the activities are carried out. The participating organisations of the projects provide additional funding, because the funding of the Programme cannot cover all the costs of planning and carrying out the projects. Cost-efficiency is linked to external funding and is a main objective of higher education institutions and other participating organisations.

The core of the strategy is in the activities. Regarding the core of the strategy and programmes, one must ask, “What has to be done and described in the activities perspective, and what are the objectives?” At the core of the Erasmus+ Programme are the activities of the Programme, the objectives of the European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), the European Union work plan for sport and the European values of how the activities are performed. The achievement of these objectives also supports the European Union’s attempts to meet the objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
The last question is, “What kinds of skills and qualifications are required to achieve the objectives in the activities perspective?” This perspective encompasses the skills and qualifications of the Erasmus+ Programmes and the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), including the corresponding benchmarks\(^{283}\). These objectives describe the driving forces to achieve the objectives in the activities perspective and finally in the impact perspective.

The Erasmus+ Programme adapts its financial resources and detailed annual work programmes to the changing environment. As the environment changes, learning takes place and the participating organisations achieve their targets, the Erasmus+ Programme is periodically updated in the work programmes. There are no exact and direct measures indicating the achievement of strategic objectives, but the gaps can be assessed in the planning of the work programme.

The networked strategy and the programmes are shared to achieve synergy across otherwise autonomous organisations. The Europe 2020 strategy includes a statement that “the Commission proposes that EU goals are translated into the national targets and trajectories.” This principle can be extended to the strategies of the participating organisations of projects to achieve commitment to a common European strategy. Each participating organisation can define its own strategic themes, objectives, measures and performance targets and include a European dimension in its strategy for seeing how it contributes to the high-level European strategy. It is also important to commit the participating individuals of the Erasmus+ projects to the European strategy.

### 3. Assessment of Key Action 2

**I – The assessment of the Erasmus+ Programme at the policy level**

The clearly articulated objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and Erasmus+ Programme describe the direction and future of Europe and help its countries, organisations and individuals understand their roles in supporting the European policy. The Erasmus+ Programme describes the dynamic actions needed for the participating organisations to make the transition from the present situation to the desired future position described by the policy objectives. The implementation of the programme adapts to the changing environment, evolves over time and follows the policy objectives.

According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, the Programme aims to contribute to the achievement of

• the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, including the headline education target
• the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), including the corresponding benchmarks
• the sustainable development of Partner Countries in the field of higher education
• the overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)
• the objective of developing the European dimension in sport, in particular grassroots sport, in line with the EU work plan for sport
• the promotion of European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union.

The sustainable development of Partner Countries in the field of higher education is defined in the annual work programme for the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme.

Many of the objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme have been defined in other documents. Therefore the funding of the Erasmus+ Programme can be directly linked to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, frameworks and other documents. Enterprises and other organisations measure the achievement of their strategic objectives by indicators and the progress of development projects. In the Erasmus+ Programme, the achievement of the objectives can be measured by the self-assessments reports of projects.

Figure 1 depicts the assessment map of the Erasmus+ Programme at the policy level. The Erasmus+ Programme is committed to the objectives and targets of the Europe 2020 strategy, which comprise three mutually reinforcing priorities: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The European Commission has put forward seven flagship initiatives to catalyse progress under each priority theme. The flagship initiatives are “Innovation Union”, “Youth on the move”, “A digital agenda for Europe”, “Resource-efficient Europe”, “An industrial policy for the globalisation era”, “An agenda for new skills and jobs” and “European platform against poverty” (Europe 2020, A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth).

The funding perspective includes financial levers which are mobilised to break bottlenecks and deliver the Europe 2020 goals. The grants, procurements, budgets and other arrangements are described in the annual work programmes of the Erasmus+ Programme. Detailed information on financial control can be found in the funding rules of the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

The activities perspective covers the processes and structures funded by the Erasmus+ Programme: “Key Action 1, Learning mobility of individuals”, “Key Action 2, Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices”, “Key Action 3, Support for policy reform”, “Jean Monnet Activities” and “Sport”. The activities perspective includes also the sustainable development of Partner Countries in the field of higher
education, the overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) and the objective of developing the European dimension in sport, in particular grassroots sport, in line with the EU Work Plan for Sport. The European values describe the ethical principles that govern how the actions are performed to achieve the strategic objectives.

The skills and qualifications perspective includes the capabilities necessary in the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme and the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), including the corresponding benchmarks. These skills and qualifications are prerequisites and contribute to the achievement of the objectives in the activities perspective.

The assessment supports the conclusion that the written plans provide a balanced mix of objectives. There are reasonable objectives in all the perspectives. Another remark is that reasonable causal linkages can be drawn between the perspectives. Following the principle of continuous improvement in quality assurance, there is, however, always room for improvement, especially in the activities perspective.

Figure 1. The assessment map of the Erasmus+ Programme at the policy level

- Impact
  - The impact of the Erasmus+ Programme
  - Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of the Europe 2020 strategy

- Funding
  - The funding of the Erasmus+ Programme

- Activities
  - Activities of the Erasmus+ Programme
    - The sustainable development of Partner Countries in the field of higher education
    - The overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)
    - The objective of developing the European dimension in sport, in particular grassroots sport, in line with the EU Work Plan for Sport
      - The promotion of European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union

- Skills and qualifications
  - The skills and qualifications of the Erasmus+ Programme
  - The objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), including the corresponding benchmarks
II – The assessment of the Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ Programme

Figure 2 depicts the assessment map of the Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ Programme. The impact perspective describes the indirect and direct impact of Key Action 2 on the desired target. Alternatively one could define the external impact on the organisations and individuals outside the intermediate organisations in the assessment map. In this study, the term ‘impact’ is used instead of ‘external impact’ because most of the impacts of Key Action 2 target the intermediate organisations.

There must be a strong linkage between the funding objectives and the objectives of the activities perspective. Funding is a prerequisite for the activities, but by the same token, cost-efficiency is required in the processes. The Erasmus+ Programme is implemented through 1) grants, 2) procurements, 3) financial instruments and 4) other actions.

To achieve the strategic objectives, Key Action 2 supports Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Sector Skills Alliances, Capacity Building and IT support platforms. To achieve the objectives and policy priorities, general and specific calls for proposals are published by the European Commission or by the Executive Agency. Each year a general call for proposals of grants is published. The general call for proposals for the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme makes reference to a Programme Guide for practical information. The work programme also includes the actions that will be implemented, mostly by public procurement procedures via calls for tenders or the use of existing framework contracts. The management of the student loan guarantee facility is entrusted to the European Investment Fund. Other instruments are used to support the accreditation processes in the field of higher education, vocational education and training (VET) and youth in order to ensure the general quality framework for European and international cooperation activities.
The skills and qualifications perspective includes the skills and qualifications of the Erasmus+ Programme defined in each action. The Erasmus+ Programme clearly emphasises the importance of skills and qualifications which have indirect but nonetheless important effects on the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of the Europe 2020 strategy.

The following sections assess the Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Sector Skills Alliances and Capacity Building. The assessments are conducted using the information on the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, which is a document for the implementation of the Erasmus+ projects. The information on the activities supported and the eligibility and award criteria are used to assess the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme.
III – The assessment of Strategic Partnerships

Strategic Partnerships aim to develop initiatives addressing one or more fields of education, training and youth and promote innovation, exchange of experience and know-how between different types of organisations in education, training and youth or other relevant fields. Certain mobility activities are supported insofar as they contribute to the objectives of the project. Figure 3 depicts the assessment map of Strategic Partnerships.

The impact perspective includes “the potential impact of the project outside the organisations and individuals directly participating in the project, at local, regional, national and/or European levels.” The statement does not clearly state the prerequisites or require the external impact of projects on the organisations and individuals outside the participating organisations. The impact could be expressed in a more straightforward manner and targeted at enterprises, other organisations and individuals outside education institutions and other intermediate organisations to maximise their external impact.

The funding perspective is limited, because Strategic Partnerships have only one funding statement: “The extent to which the project is cost-effective and allocates appropriate resources to each activity.” The funding perspective has potential as a steering instrument and relevance to achieve the core objectives in the activities perspective but it has primarily been left for the discretion of participating organisations following the funding rules.

The activities perspective has plenty of opportunities for the intermediate organisations, but only one of these opportunities is linked with the regional authorities. The long list of activities is reasonable, because the essence to achieve the desired outcomes of projects is in the activities. Each participating organisation should focus on its strengths, which are the bases for the clear division of labour and the avoidance of overlapping activities.

The skills and qualifications perspective emphasises that “the project involves an appropriate mix of complementary participating organisations with the necessary profile, experience and expertise to successfully deliver all aspects of the project”. The experiences from the Consortium on Applied Research and Professional Education (CARPE) (www.carpenetwork.org), however, emphasise the importance of the similar fields of education in the member institutions of the strategic partnership, because they favour student and staff exchange, joint educational programmes and collaboration in research and development projects (Kettunen, 2015 a-c, 2016 a-c). This cross-fertilisation can be done within the participating organisations. The skills and qualifications perspective could include an explicit reference to the European transparency and recognition tools and especially the European Qualifications Framework. In addition, the
relevant work experience of the project personnel could be an advantage in the award criteria.

Figure 3. The assessment map of Strategic Partnerships

- The potential impact of the project outside the organisations and individuals directly participating in the project, at local, regional, national and/or European levels

- The extent to which the project is cost-effective and allocates appropriate resources to each activity

- Activities that strengthen the cooperation and networking between organisations
  - Testing and/or implementation of innovative practices
  - Recognition and validation of knowledge, skills and competences
  - Cooperation between regional authorities
  - Disabilities/special needs
  - Segregation and discrimination
  - Equity, diversity and inclusion
  - Promote the integration of refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants
  - Active citizenship and entrepreneurship (including social entrepreneurship)

- The project involves an appropriate mix of complementary participating organisations with the necessary profile, experience and expertise to successfully deliver all aspects of the project

IV – The assessment of Knowledge Alliances

Knowledge Alliances between higher education institutions and enterprises foster innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, employability, knowledge exchange and/or multidisciplinary teaching and learning. Ten projects were funded (a 4% success rate) due to the limited budget of 8.4 million euro and high demand across the programme countries in 2014. The low success rate has a potential impact on the long-term motivation of future applicants. At least in part, the success rate can be increased by having smaller project sizes. Figure 4 depicts the assessment map of Knowledge Alliances.

The impact perspective shows “societal and economic relevance and outreach”. The Knowledge Alliances action clearly promotes external impact, because “at least two enterprises” must be involved in the projects. An important award criterion is that the
The proposal provides “pertinent measures to monitor progress and assess the expected impact”. The impacts of the action have to be measurable. The external impact is clearly the strength of Knowledge Alliances action compared with Strategic Partnerships, Sector Skill Alliances and Capacity Building actions that could have the requirement of enterprises or other customer organisations in their award criteria in the future.

The funding perspective includes a statement of “the appropriate allocation of resources to each activity”. The proposal should allocate sufficient amount of funding to the core substance to achieve the main objectives as well as possible. The funding perspective also includes a statement: “Quality and financial control: specific measures for evaluation of processes and deliverables ensure that the project implementation is of high-quality and cost-efficient.” Quality is unnecessarily combined with financial control because quality is primarily associated with activities. Cost-efficiency is necessary and it should be achieved especially in the secondary activities which are less important in relation to the primary objectives of the external impact according to the lean management principles (Trent, 2007).

The activities of the Programme Guide include “boosting innovation in higher education, business and in the broader socio-economic environment” that includes new learning and teaching methods, curricula, continuing education and development in higher education. The activities of the Programme Guide include the phrase “developing entrepreneurship mind-set and skills” that includes various forms of entrepreneurship education. The statement “stimulating the flow and exchange of knowledge between higher education and enterprises” covers various forms of outreaching and engagement with regional development. The activities clearly strengthen the external impact.
Figure 4. The assessment map of Knowledge Alliances

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<tr>
<td>• The societal and economic relevance and outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td>• At least two higher education institutions and at least two enterprises</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pertinent measures to monitor progress and assess the expected impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The appropriate allocation of resources to each activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Quality and financial control: specific measures for evaluation of processes and deliverables ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient</td>
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<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Boosting innovation in higher education, business and in the broader socio-economic environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing entrepreneurship mind-set and skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stimulating the flow and exchange of knowledge between higher education and enterprises</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skills and qualifications</th>
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<tr>
<td>• An appropriate mix of higher education and business partners with the necessary profiles, skills, experience, expertise and management support required for its successful realisation</td>
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The performance drivers in the skills and qualifications perspective should communicate the capabilities necessary to achieve the objectives in the activities perspective and finally in the impact perspective. The skills and qualifications perspective includes “the necessary profiles, skills, experience, expertise and management support” of higher education institutions and their business partners. Applicants must have the professional skills and qualifications required to complete the proposed activities. These skills and qualifications are not, however, specified in detail. The necessary skills and qualifications can be described by relevant education using the European Qualifications Framework and experience with enterprises.

V – The assessment of Sector Skills Alliances

Sector Skills Alliances support the design and delivery of joint vocational training curricula, programmes and teaching and training methodologies, drawing on evidence of trends in a specific economic sector and skills needed in order to perform in one or more professional fields. Figure 5 depicts the assessment map of Sector Skills Alliances.
The impact of the proposal should show “societal and economic relevance and outreach”. The impact perspective clearly indicates the exploitation of Sector Skills Alliances, because the award criteria stipulate that “the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the Alliance will be used by the participating organisations and other stakeholders”. The results and solutions should be transferable and accessible to a broader audience.

The funding perspective indicates that “the budget provides appropriate resources necessary for success and it is neither overestimated nor underestimated”, which is a rather general criterion for activities but do not provide accurate financial steering or guidelines for achieving the most important objectives of the project. The funding perspective indicates also that “financial and quality control measures and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is high-quality and cost-efficient”, which contains a redundant connection of financial control and quality assurance.

The activities perspective includes “Sector Skills Alliances for skills needs identification” and the “design and delivery of VET”. The activities are tailored to meet the needs of specific economic sectors. Lots 1 and 2 focus on the skills and qualifications, but prominently not to the systematic procedure to make sure that the educational provision meets the needs of a given specific economic sector. Such a procedure could include processes and structures used to monitor and develop the curricula. The close cooperation of participating organisations is essential to plan and carry out projects. With the help of the network, each participating organisation can supplement its capabilities needed in the project. The Annual Report 2014 reveals that many applicants did not understand the action which should have well-defined processes and structures to achieve the objectives. Even though the 2015 Programme Guide provided clarification, there is still room for improvement because they do not clearly describe the needed activities nor do they describe the essential skills and qualifications for the projects.

The objective of the skills and qualifications perspective is to develop capabilities among the personnel of Sector Skills Alliances. The perspective makes special mention of “digital and green skills”. The perspective also emphasises the importance of “the expertise and competences required in the skills identification and anticipations, skills supply, and skills policy issues more generally”. In addition, the perspective states that “the coordination shows high-quality management and coordination of transnational networks and leadership in complex environment”. Applicants’ misunderstanding or confusion can be prevented by a clearer definition of skills and qualifications with a reference to the European transparency and recognition tools and to the relevant work experience needed in this action.
Figure 5. The assessment map of Sector Skills Alliances

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<th>Impact</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The proposal shows societal and economic relevance and outreach</td>
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<td>• The proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the Alliance will be used by the partners and other stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The budget provides for appropriate resources necessary for success, it is neither overestimated nor underestimated</td>
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<td>• Financial and quality control measures and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient</td>
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<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Lot 1: Sector Skills Alliances for skills needs identification</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Defining skills and training provision need in a given specific economic sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lot 2: Sector Skills Alliances for design and delivery of VET</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Designing European vocational core curricula</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Delivering European vocational core curricula</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skills and qualifications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Digital and green skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The expertise and competences required in the skills identification and anticipations, skills supply, and skills policy issues more generally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The coordination shows high quality management and coordination of transnational networks and leadership in complex environment</td>
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V – The assessment of Capacity Building in the field of higher education

Capacity Building supports cooperation with the Partner Countries of the European Union in the fields of higher education and youth. Capacity-building projects aim to support organisations and systems in their modernisation and internationalisation. Certain types of Capacity-building projects support mobility activities insofar as they contribute to the objectives of the project. Figure 6 depicts the assessment map of Capacity Building in the field of higher education.

The impact perspective includes the statement that the project will have “a substantial impact on the capacities of participating organisations, in particular on the development and modernisation of higher education” to open them to society, labour market and international cooperation. In addition, “the project will produce multiplier effects outside the participating organisations at local/regional/national or international level”. The impact of the projects is measured by indicators. The action clearly has external impact, because the projects should have multiplier effects not only in higher education institutions, but also outside of them.
The funding perspective includes the statement that “the project is cost-effective and allocates appropriate resources to each activity”. Meagre resources should be earmarked to achieve the core objectives of the project. The funding perspective also states that “the overall project design ensures consistency between project objectives, methodology, activities and budget proposed”. The financial criteria are scarce but detailed information can be found in the separate tables of personnel costs which indicate the daily funding amounts for each person. These funding tables seem to distort the use of high-skilled labour force in the projects, because it is not profitable for participating organisations to use high-skilled and high-salary staff in the projects.

The activities perspective includes a wide variety of “joint and structural projects”, which offers a great deal of flexibility in terms of the activities that a Capacity-building project can implement. Capacity Building supports “student and staff mobility” which is also supported by Key Action 1. The Capacity-building network identifies how the activities of separate higher education institutions and other participating organisations can be combined to create synergies and value added on the capabilities of the participating organisations in Partner Countries.

Figure 6. The assessment map of Capacity Building in the field of higher education

- Substantial impact on the capacities of participating organisations, in particular on the development and modernisation of higher education
- The project will produce multiplier effects outside the participating organisations at local/regional/national or international level

- The project is cost-effective and allocates appropriate resource to each activity
- The overall project design ensures consistency between project objectives, methodology, activities and budget proposed

- Joint projects
- Structural projects
- Student mobility
- Staff mobility

- The project team has the necessary skills, experience, expertise and management support to successfully deliver all aspects of the project
- Where relevant, the project also includes the most appropriate and diverse range of non-academic partners, in order to benefit from their different experiences, profiles and specific expertise
The skills and qualifications perspective emphasises that “the project team has the necessary skills, experience, expertise and management support to successfully deliver all aspects of the project”. The skills and qualifications could be described in terms of advanced degrees, publications, pedagogical capacity and international experience using the European transparency and recognition tools. It also emphasises that “where relevant, the project includes the most appropriate and diverse range of non-academic partners, in order to benefit from their different experiences, profiles and specific expertise.” The latter statement may remain ambiguous. The use of the European Qualifications Framework, international experience and other relevant work experience is recommended.

VI – The assessment of Capacity Building in the field of youth

Capacity-building projects in the field of youth aim to foster cooperation and exchanges between Programme and Partner Countries. They also aim to improve the quality and recognition of youth work, non-formal learning and volunteering in Partner Countries. The projects foster the development, testing and launching schemes and programmes of non-formal learning mobility and promote transnational non-formal learning mobility, especially for young people with fewer opportunities. The projects can also involve organisations from the fields of education and training, as well as from other socio-economic sectors. Figure 7 depicts the assessment map of Capacity Building in the field of youth.

According to the impact statement: “The potential impact of the project on participants and participating organisations, during and after the project lifetime and outside the organisations and individuals directly participating in the project, at local, regional, national and/or international levels.” The statement is rather general and it can be made more precise using the innovation concept. The impact perspective could define how the activities of the projects improve or create innovations defined by new processes, services or products (Christensen, 1997; Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt, 2001).

The funding perspective also asserts that “the existence and relevance of quality control measures to ensure that the project implementation is of high quality, completed in time and on budget.” Quality control is insufficiently connected with the budget. The funding perspective also includes the statement: “the extent to which the project is cost-effective and allocates appropriate resources to each activity.” The financial steering could incorporate some guidelines on where to allocate most of the funding to reach the objectives in the projects and achieve cost-efficiency.

The activities perspective has a long list described in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. “Capacity-building activities” are planned to have an impact on project participants and participating organisations. “Mobility activities” include youth exchanges, European
Voluntary Service between eligible Partner Countries and the mobility of youth workers. Mobility activities have positive impact, because transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new skills is one of the fundamental ways in which young people can strengthen both their future employability and their personal development (European Commission Green Paper: Promoting the learning mobility of young people)\(^{284}\).

Figure 7. The assessment map of Capacity Building in the field of youth

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<td>• The potential impact of the project on participants and participating organisations, during and after the project lifetime and outside the organisations and individuals directly participating in the project, at local, regional, national and/or international levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The existence and relevance of quality control measures to ensure that the project implementation is of high quality, completed in time and on budget.</td>
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<td>• The extent to which the project is cost-effective and allocates appropriate resources to each activity.</td>
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<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Capacity building activities</td>
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<td>• Mobility activities</td>
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<th>Skills and qualifications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The quality of arrangements for the recognition and validation of participants' learning outcomes as well as the consistent use of European transparency and recognition tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The project involves an appropriate mix of complementary participating organisations with the necessary profile, experience and expertise to successfully deliver all aspects of the project.</td>
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The skills and qualifications perspective contains an excellent and clearly defined statement that is also applicable to other actions: “The quality of arrangements for the recognition and validation of participants' learning outcomes as well as the consistent use of European transparency and recognition tools.” The other statement is: “The project involves an appropriate mix of complementary participating organisations with the necessary profile, experience and expertise to successfully deliver all aspects of the project.” It does not, however, define the experience required of participants.

Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Sector Skills Alliances and Capacity Building actions are relatively balanced, including reasonable strategic objectives in the perspectives of the assessment map. Most of them have aligned their funding and human

\(^{284}\) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Aef0017
resources with the activities to achieve the desired objectives in the impact perspective. It can be concluded that the remarkable share of their contents is in the activities perspective, which is the essence of the projects. A notable share of the contents is also in the skills and qualifications perspective which describes the drivers of the activities. Many objectives and the linkages between the perspectives can be, however, be more explicitly stated to better achieve their desired impacts.

<table>
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<th>Key findings</th>
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<td>- Strategic Partnerships, Sector Skills Alliances and Capacity Building in the field of higher education may focus only on the intermediate organisations and are not explicitly targeted to achieve external impact on organisations and individuals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Knowledge Alliances outreach and engage directly with the region and society outside the intermediate institutions because the participating organisations include at least two enterprises.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Assessment of Erasmus+ projects

I – Erasmus+ projects

This chapter presents four Erasmus+ projects: the CARPE-ESSENCE project of Strategic Partnerships, the FINCODA project of Knowledge Alliances and the INDOPED project of Capacity Building in the field of higher education and the SIVIM project of Capacity Building in the field of youth\(^{285}\).

II – The CARPE-ESSENCE project of Strategic Partnerships

The HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (Hogeschool Utrecht) and the Turku University of Applied Sciences (Turun ammattikorkeakoulu) started to plan the Consortium on Applied Research and Professional Education (CARPE) in 2008 and the strategic partnership agreement was signed in November 2011. The Polytechnic University of Valencia (Universitat Politècnica de València), the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg) and the Manchester Metropolitan University joined as members of the consortium (Kettunen, 285 The author acknowledges the helpful information provided by the project personnel, especially Ms. Piia Nurmi, Ms. Jenni Suominen and Mr. Harri Lappalainen from the Turku University of Applied Sciences.
The CARPE-ESSENCE project implements the idea of creating Strategic Partnership extremely well because the institutions had established a permanent strategic partnership before the project. The experiences with the CARPE partnership and its permanent structure ensure the real sustainability of the project after the project lifetime.

The members of the strategic partnership articulated the rationale of their close cooperation with each other rather than having each institution operating as an isolated entity with its own self-governing activities. The objectives of the network are 1) exchange and collaboration in European research programmes, 2) the development of joint study programmes, 3) the exchange of students and staff and 4) establishment of a strong European reputation.

The similar fields of education favour student and staff exchange, joint educational programmes and research and development projects in the strategic partnerships of higher education institutions. The institutions are intermediate organisations that support the success of enterprises in international trade and the other organisations in their international activities. International trade was an important motivation for the geographical coverage of the network, because Europe is an important market for the export enterprises of the countries where the institutions of CARPE are located.

It was also fairly straightforward for the institutions to commit to their strategic partnership, because the partnership supports the European economic and social cohesion in the common market. An additional motivation was the funding from the European Union for student and staff exchange and research and development projects. The responsible people of CARPE think that the collaboration creates shared value that cannot be otherwise achieved in a cost-efficient manner. Another advantage of the CARPE network is that each member institution is committed to the EU-funded projects and exchange.

The Erasmus+ Programme aims to promote cross-fertilisation among fields. Also the requirements of the regional development do not follow the subjects or degree programmes of higher education institutions. This cross-fertilisation has been seen at the Turku University of Applied Sciences and many other institutions with multi-disciplinary faculties and activities. Excellent examples can be found also in Aalto University and Stanford University, which combine engineering and business education with design following the innovation process of enterprises.

The strategic CARPE network was used to apply the Strategic Partnership funding of the Erasmus+ Programme for the project titled CARPE European Sustainable Solutions for Existing and New City Environments (CARPE-ESSENCE). HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht is the coordinator of the project (2014-2017). The list of the participating institutions is available on the project website at [http://husite.nl/essence/](http://husite.nl/essence/).
organisations of the CARPE-ESSENCE project includes all member institutions of the CARPE network. The cities of Alcoi, Turku and Utrecht also participate in the project.

CARPE-ESSENCE uses Open Educational Resources (OERs) that are any type of educational materials placed in a public domain or introduced with an open license (Bozkurt et al., 2015). Anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share the material placed on the platform. OERs can be lecture notes, assignments, textbooks or any other educational material used for teaching, learning, assessing or research. Each higher education institution prepares courses for OER based on its own expertise and interest in the course topics.

The project proposal includes an international Sustainable City Competition for Students held in Alcoi, Turku and Utrecht in combination with an intensive learning programme. The competition challenges students to develop viable action plans for making cities more sustainable. Groups of international students adopt a city for which they develop smart sustainable solutions under the supervision of teachers. The competitors endeavour to find real solutions for the challenges commissioned by the cities. The assignments of the cities will remain a permanent practice after the project.

The project proposals include also an intensive programme for teachers. The programmes consist of personnel training on blended learning (Littlejohn and Pegler, 2007; Nordberg, Dziuban and Moskal, 2011; Moskal, Dziuban and Hartmen, 2013; Taylor and Newton, 2013) in Valencia and creative solution searching in Turku. Several events are organised to share the intellectual outputs with a wider audience. These multiplier events include an International Conference on Blended Learning and Open Educational Resources in Valencia, the International Smart Sustainable Cities Event in the Skanssi Area in Turku and the Conference on Creating Smart Sustainable Cities in Utrecht.

Special attention of the project is paid to entrepreneurship and encouragement to develop start-up enterprises. Higher education institutions formulate business models and develop entrepreneurship via an international Start-Up Competition for Students using a pressure cooker model (Schoenmaker, Verlaan and Hertogh, 2015) during the Smart City Bootcamp in Manchester. Local authorities explore the causes of the lack of entrepreneurship in their regions and come up with new solutions for sustainable challenges.

Key findings

- The CARPE-ESSENCE project of Strategic Partnerships effectively promotes sustainability in the higher education institutions, student enterprises and municipalities in different parts of Europe with e-learning and e-skills.
- The similar fields of education favour the strategic partnerships of higher education institutions, but institutions can generate cross-fertilisation by their structures and processes.
- The project exchanges, investigates and tests the best practices of innovative teaching approaches, develops a joint international course programme on creating sustainable cities and delivers the outcomes using Open Educational Resources.
- The project promotes entrepreneurship and encourages students to establish start-up enterprises.
III – The FINCODA project of Knowledge Alliances

This section applies the strategic partnerships of higher education institutions to Knowledge Alliances where enterprises have an important role. The project presented in this section contributes to the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020). The project implements the strategic objective 2 (“Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training”) and strategic objective 4 (“Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training”).

This section presents the project titled “Framework for Innovation Competencies Development and Assessment” (FINCODA), which utilises and develops innovation pedagogy (Kettunen, 2009, 2011) based on the socio-cultural theory and the constructivist view of learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 2001). The project is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme and it belongs to the Knowledge Alliances of Key Action 2, Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of the good practices. The project is being carried out in 2014-2017.

The Turku University of Applied Sciences is the coordinator of the FINCODA project. Other participating institutions are the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, the Manchester Metropolitan University and the Polytechnic University of Valencia. Participating organisations include Elomatic Ltd, Hamburger Hafen und Logistik AG, Lactoprot Deutschland GmbH, European Computer Driving Licence Foundation Limited, ECDL Foundation, John Caunt Scientific Ltd, Carter & Corson Partnership Ltd, Celestica Valencia SA and Schneider Electric España SA. The FINCODA project meets the requirement of involving at least six independent organisations from at least three Programme Countries, of which at least two are higher education institutions and at least two are enterprises.

Innovation pedagogy extends the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) initiative of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). AHELO addresses the generic and discipline-specific skills based on the US Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) test (Kettunen, Kairisto-Mertanen and Penttilä, 2013). While AHELO is based on written performance, the real-life innovations typically take place in interaction among several people. Therefore the FINCODA project aims to develop a tool for assessing people’s performance in authentic innovation processes.

287 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52009XG0528(01)
288 http://www.fincoda.eu/
The theory of constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011) is used to define objectives that are aligned with the methods of learning and finally with the assessment of learning outcomes. Higher education institutions are expected to increase their external impact on their environment with innovation competence. They have organised higher education and developed adequate educational methods of achieving the desired objectives. The development gap exists in the assessment of innovation competence.

The project develops a novel INCODE barometer by utilising the Innovation Competencies Barometer (ICB) that was developed in 2011-2013 (Watts, García-Carbonell, Andreu-Andrés, Stange and Helker, 2013; Räsänen, 2014). This FINCODA project will expand the use of INCODE barometer into companies and increase the knowledge in behaviour-based assessment in universities and enterprises. The project also produces Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for INCODE barometer and behaviour assessment.

### Key findings

- The FINCODA project implements strategic objective 2 (“Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training”) and strategic objective 4 (“Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training”) of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020).
- The project helps higher education institutions develop e-skills by developing the INCODE barometer and organizing MOOCs.

### IV – The INDOPED project of Capacity Building in the field of higher education

This section presents the project “Modernizing Indonesian Higher Education with Tested European Pedagogical Practices” (INDOPED). The project is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme and belongs to Capacity Building in the field of higher education of Key Action 2, Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. The project is being carried out in 2015-2018. The INDOPED project is an excellent example of how the modernisation and internationalisation of higher education can be implemented in Partner Countries to have a substantial impact on the capabilities of participating organisations, society, labour market and international cooperation.

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289 http://www.indoped.eu/
The Turku University of Applied Sciences is the coordinator of the INDOPED project. Other participating organisations include the Inholland University of Applied Sciences, the Business Academy Aarhus, the University of Gdansk and the University of Seville. The Indonesian participating organisations include the BINUS International, the Syiah Kuala University, the Syarif Hidayathullah State Islamic University Jakarta, the Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya, the Yogyakarta State University and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Open Learning Centre (SEAMOLEC).

The project utilises e-learning and e-skills by establishing a website and uses social media to maintain contact with the participants and disseminate results to a wider audience, though the project personnel have an impression that they have underestimated the importance of face-to-face meetings and trusted too much on digital communication. A periodic online journal will be issued and a call for papers will be issued worldwide to acquire the best knowledge on active learning methods. Enthusiastic collaboration with the Indonesian ministries is used to open vistas for the fruitful dissemination of results. SEAMOLEC, the participating organisation of the project and a department of the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs are invited to all events sponsored by the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The INDOPED project has been prepared to meet the European Union’s Innovation Union initiative, which underlines the role of education in boosting future professionals’ innovation capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The cooperation of the INDOPED project boosts innovation in the Indonesian higher education, business and in the broader socio-economic environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The cooperation of higher education institutions with enterprises helps participants raise the business orientation and acquire the skills relevant to employability.</td>
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V – The SIVIM project of Capacity Building in the field of youth

Learning mobility as a type of transnational mobility is a fundamental way in which young people can strengthen both their future employability and their personal development as noted in the Green Paper of the European Commission, “Promoting the learning mobility of young people”. Despite the efforts of the European Commission and the Member States of the EU, there are still too many young people who do not have access to learning mobility for personal, economic, social and health reasons. The project hopes to use a novel approach to resolve these challenges.
Social Inclusion through Virtual International Mobility (SIVIM) project aims at reducing the inequalities and risk of exclusion faced by young people who cannot access learning mobility opportunities, in particular, young people from disadvantaged social groups. Public administration and youth organisations from Spain, Italy and Poland have created a Toolkit for Virtual Mobility in non-formal education in this project. The toolkit will give opportunities to young people who cannot travel to develop similar competence as gained by those taking part in transnational learning mobility activities.

Once the toolkit is finished, it will be made freely available online in Open Educational Resources for anyone who wishes to use it. The participating organisations will arrange multiplier events to share the intellectual outputs with a wider audience. Each organisation will organise an event in order to present the results of the project and train at least 60 potential users to use the toolkit. The participating organisations will also launch a European-wide dissemination campaign to distribute the toolkit to at least 180 organisations working with young people from disadvantaged social groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The SIVIM project is based on the evidence-based impact on the learning mobility on employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The SIVIM project develops a Toolkit for Virtual Mobility in non-formal education to promote employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The toolkit will be freely available in Open Educational Resources.</td>
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</tbody>
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5. Discussion and results

This chapter presents the assessment of the Erasmus+ Programme with the project personnel, the Finnish National Agency, the participants of conferences and other people. The chapter includes the assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) and specific questions of the Erasmus+ Programme.

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290 http://www.sivim-project.eu
291 The author acknowledges the helpful information provided by the project personnel of the Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland, the personnel of the Center for International Mobility (CIMO), Finland, the participants of BraBa Metodologiaseminaari (Methodology conference), Finland, the participants of the ERASMUS Congress and Exhibition in Thessaloniki, Greece, Dr Margaret-Mary L. Nelson, University of Bolton, UK, Professor Javier Orozco Messana, Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain, Dr René Butter and Ms Erlijn Eweg, HU University of
Table 1 depicts the SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis, credited to Albert S. Humphrey, came from his research at the Stanford Research Institute from 1960 to 1970. The study assesses the internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats of the implementation of the cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices in the fields of education, training and youth.

The strengths in the SWOT assessment emphasise the importance of independent experts, who use explicit eligibility and award criteria in project assessments. The project assessment should be done by highly qualified experts. The assessment can be improved by clearer assessment criteria that help experts select the best project proposals. The procedure is an opportunity for qualified participating organisations, because many other funding sources allocate funding according to the traditional funding relationships and do not necessarily esteem the new ideas and value added outside them.

The strengths also include the applied research and development projects which provide opportunities to create external impact. Applied research and development projects are in many ways better than basic research to create instant impact. Applied projects can be used to implement the strategic plans and programmes and achieve desired results and create innovations. The projects should promote practice-oriented research that aims to find a good balance between practical relevance and scientific rigor.

The low success rate is a strength of accepted projects but also a threat, because it potentially deters otherwise competent applicants. The low success rate is attributable to the limited budget and high demand for project funding. The lowest success rate was 4% in the call of Knowledge Alliances in 2014. The low success rate can be increased with more funding and smaller project sizes.

The threat of low impact can be overcome with well-defined activities carried out at the beginning of the projects which shifts the learning curve (Speelman and Kirsner, 2005) to achieve better results. Especially, a meeting between European participants was suggested in the Capacity Building project in the field of higher education before the kick-off meeting arranged in the Partner Country. The impact can be improved by achieving the desired outcomes by better kick-off meetings. In addition, communication and dissemination can be improved during the project. The improved learning curve could help the project achieve evaluated and improved results and ensure that existing or new structures are used to ensure the sustainability of the projects after the project lifetime.

Financial control using the daily euro amount for a teacher, trainee, researcher and youth worker is a threat to the quality of the project. Externally funded projects are typically not profitable for participating organisations which may soften the negative economic result by hiring low-paid personnel. They are not likely to have the quality of higher-paid workers. For example, research and development activities of the Turku University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, The Netherlands and Mr Tom Kentson, INHolland University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands.
Applied Sciences showed a deficit of about 30-40% during the last few years, because not all the project proposals and costs were accepted.

Table 1. The SWOT assessment of the implementation of the cooperation for innovation and the exchange of practices in the field of education, training and youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Exploit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The assessment of independent experts provides opportunities for qualified participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The external impacts of applied research and development projects should be prioritised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td><strong>Win</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The low success rates lower the motivation of applicants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The learning curve of projects should be improved.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The projects should not hire incompetent and low paid personnel to the projects.</td>
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</table>

The weaknesses in the SWOT assessment include elements that can be strengthened according to the principles of continuous improvement and fitness for purpose in quality assurance (Harvey and Green, 1993). The innovativeness of the project proposals can be improved. The Erasmus+ Programme Guide could provide information for those who are writing project proposals on how to describe the improved or new processes, services or products to achieve innovations.

Encouragement and courage are required to plan outstanding projects that increase the value added of services and products produced for customers. Effective development work typically includes risks. Conscious risk-taking should be not only allowed but encouraged, because one cannot know in advance what kind of innovations will be popular among users and customers.

The weakness and threat that should be avoided is low ambition. This can be prevented by the inclusion of enterprises and other customer organisations and the increasing of external impact beyond the intermediate organisations. Knowledge Alliances action is the only one that requires enterprises. Innovations are based on ideas that are applied in customer organisations.

The personnel of the Erasmus+ projects also think that red tape should be avoided. The need for so much paperwork should be examined, because processing it consumes resources that could be used to achieve the projects’ objectives. On the one hand, Erasmus+ projects require administrative personnel to take care of the financial and
secretarial issues but on the other hand, teachers and other substance personnel are responsible for the core contents and objectives of the projects. The contracts could include lump sum or flat rate contribution to cover the costs. The new roles of National Agencies and the EACEA should also be considered, because both the national and the EU requirements add to the burden of project personnel.

Appendix 1 lists the questions on the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme. These questions can be used to improve the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme.

The external impacts of projects can be notably improved. Knowledge Alliances action is one of a kind in Key Action 2 where enterprises are necessary. The external impact can be improved by adding the requirement of enterprises or other external organisations to the award criteria of projects. The external impact is left secondary and much of the impact is targeted to intermediate organisations. Innovations are applied and utilised in enterprises and other organisations to improve or create new processes, services and products. The inclusion of enterprises and other external organisations could improve the innovativeness of the Erasmus+ projects. The definition of innovations in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide could help project personnel better describe the external impact of the projects.

The financial control can be improved and unnecessary paperwork can be avoided. The national regulations and the differences in the regulations of the EACEA require a notable amount of resources allocated to the project management to fulfil both the national and EU requirements. For example, the Turku University of Applied Sciences has a dual system of project management which has an administrative project manager and assisting personnel along with an operational project manager who works mainly with teachers. Removing the responsibility of detailed financial control would free up more financial resources to improve the core substance and operational management of the projects. If necessary, financial control can be used to allocate funding to achieve specific objectives such as multilingualism.

The project activities are generally good. The project personnel is pleased with the collaboration with the municipalities, enterprises and other organisations. The participants in the projects benefit from the international ideas and generation of know-how. The benefits include also pooling complementary skills and accessing external knowledge, but the processes could be improved.

A joint conference for Key Action 2 participants was suggested in order to create a database where the participants could propose the topics of future projects. The application process has many shortcomings. More time should be left for the preparation of the applications and application forms should be tested, simplified and revised to be more user-friendly. There are also some unnecessary financial rules that should be abandoned to make room for efficient processes. Especially, there is no reason to limit the maximum share of the staff cost to 40% in the projects of Capacity Building in the field of higher education. More time should also be left between the acceptance and starting dates.
According to the project personnel, completing the application was a challenge, with a lot of questions being asked of the National Agency regarding certain aspects of the forms. For example, finding the relevant documentation and information such as spreadsheets and grant rates to support budgeting for the bid writing were not very clearly signposted, nor easy to understand. Some of the questions in relation to Knowledge Alliance bid were: 1) Where would we find the EU definitions of roles such as a manager, teacher, researcher, trainer, technician and administrator? 2) Would the total costs include everyone’s contributions including associate partners? 3) Is there a form for associates to fill? Where would we find this? and 4) Is there a template for the mandate letter? Guidance was also not very clear on whether associate partners needed a Participant Identification Code (PIC), which had to be clarified. The project personnel found the EACEA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document very useful. A web-based platform was suggested in order to simplify the application, management, accounting and audit of the projects.

Knowledge and skills are also important requirements for efficient activities. The project personnel suggested that the high-quality personnel should be used to improve the quality of projects. Some of the Erasmus+ projects are very demanding and require PhD holders and other high-quality personnel. The skills and qualifications should be specified in the calls for proposals using a common database where the participants should have a profile using the European transparency and recognition tools including the European Qualifications Framework.
6. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to assess the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme. The study is based on policy documents, the annual work programmes and the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. A novel tool, the “assessment map” was developed for the evaluation of networked strategies and policy documents. The assessment map is based on the balanced scorecard which was designed for the communication and implementation of strategic plans. The assessment map was used to assess the Erasmus+ Programme at the policy level, Key Action 2 and its specific actions. The assessment map is useful for those who want to accelerate the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme.

The study identified improvements that can be made to reinforce the impact of the projects. The relationships of intermediate organisations with external customer organisations can be strengthened to affect a wider economic and social environment. The external impact of educational institutions can be increased by requiring collaboration with enterprises and other customer organisations. The innovativeness of projects can be increased by defining that innovations are improved or new processes, services or products of enterprises and other customer organisations.

The opportunities of financial control are not being fully used to promote specific activities such as multilingualism and the most important objectives of the projects. The detailed financial control and unnecessary regulations have added red tape that has consumed resources of the operational core substance of the projects. The financial control does not support the high quality of personnel in the projects because an equal amount of funding is allocated for each person in the project. The equal amount of grant per day for each person increases the incentives of participating organisations to use low-paid and less qualified personnel in the projects. The use of less qualified personnel has typically led to to inefficient activities and eventually to the failure to produce the desired outcomes.

The activities perspective could clearly describe processes and structures on how the desired impacts can be achieved. The activities should be rooted in an evidence-based or otherwise obvious relationship that demonstrates the impact can be achieved by activities such as transnational learning mobility which promotes employment. The activities could be based on the implementation of a novel idea to stimulate innovations applied in customer organisations. Existing or new permanent structures are advantages that ensure the dissemination and sustainability of the outputs of the projects after the project lifetime.

The skills and qualifications could better describe the capabilities of the project personnel to achieve the high-quality objectives of the activities. The award criteria could include a clear reference to the European transparency and recognition tools and especially the European Qualifications Framework. Both formal education and relevant work experience could be among the award criteria. The skills and qualifications can be described by publications, pedagogical capacity and international experience.
The assessment of Strategic Partnerships indicates that award criterion “an appropriate mix of complementary participating organisations with the necessary profile, experience and expertise to successfully deliver all aspects of the project” is too general and should be clarified. The results of this study support the argument that similar higher education institutions favour student and staff exchange, joint educational programmes and research and development projects, but the cross-fertilisation should be sought for the projects from the processes and structures of higher education institutions and other participating organisations.

The assessment of Knowledge Alliances indicates that the external impact is well defined because at least two enterprises must be involved in the projects. A larger number of enterprises is an advantage especially to promote the dissemination and sustainability beyond the project lifetime. Knowledge Alliances action is a good example of how the external impact can be improved also in Strategic Partnerships, Sector Skills Alliances and Capacity Building which could have the requirement of involving enterprises or other customer organisations outside the intermediate participating organisations. The finding in the funding perspective is that the financial control is rather general and it can be stated more clearly to allocate funding for designated politically important purposes. Quality and financial control have been put together even though quality should be sought and improved in the activities. The activities of Knowledge Alliances do not include clear processes and structures that are used to create the desired outcomes in the impact perspective.

The assessment of Sector Skills Alliances indicates the desired outcome in the impact perspective. The outcome has wide societal and economic relevance and requires the project proposal to demonstrate how the outcomes of the Alliance will be used by the participating organisations and other stakeholders. Lots 1 and 2 describe the skills and qualifications in a given sector and design European vocational core curricula. The processes and structures could be better described to produce the desired outcomes in the impact perspective. In addition, the clear definition of skills and qualifications with a reference to the European transparency and recognition tools and relevant work experience is needed in this action.

The assessment of Capacity Building in the field of higher education indicates that the projects can have a substantial impact because the projects should produce multiplier effects outside the participating organisations at the local, regional, national or international levels. The impact is not necessarily direct, because no enterprises and other organisations are required outside the intermediate organisations. The projects should have necessary skills, experience, expertise and management support and include non-academic partners where relevant.
The assessment of Capacity Building in the field of youth could clearly define the desired impact, especially the innovations that are improved or new processes, services and products. The activities perspective includes evidence-based information that mobility activities improve employment among youth. Evidence-based information should also be used in other actions. Capacity Building in the field of youth includes also another recommended criterion for using the European transparency and recognition tools.

The experiences of this study testify to the applicability of the assessment map in the evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programmes even though the map was not used in the planning of the Programme. The assessment map can be successfully used to create strategic awareness about the Programme and align the defined objectives with the participating organisations. The perspectives of the assessment map can be used to better understand the objectives and their causal relationships.

Most of the Erasmus+ projects launched in the programme period (2014-2020) were not yet finalised at the time of this writing (spring 2016). The launch of some international actions such as Capacity Building in the field of higher education and international credit mobility was delayed, because Heading 4 funds were not available until the end of 2014. Therefore this assessment concentrates on the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme. The implementation has been done according to the programme guidelines, but it is too early to make an assessment on the results of the projects.

Key findings
- The assessment supports the conclusion that the Erasmus+ Programme has a balanced mix of objectives but many details can be improved.
- Strategic Partnerships of the Erasmus+ Programme focus on intermediate organisations and do not necessarily define the external organisations where the impact could be targeted.
- Knowledge Alliances action is the only one which has direct external impact because at least two enterprises must participate in the projects.
- Sector Skills Alliances can be specified so that the action emphasises the systematic and sophisticated procedure to ensure the congruence of educational provision and the needs of a given economic sector.
- Capacity Building in the field of higher education has external impact, because projects should have multiplier effect not only in higher education institutions, but also outside them.
- Capacity Building in the field of youth involves mobility activities which have positive impact on employability and personal development.
- The implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme can be improved from the perspectives of impact, funding, actions and knowledge and skills.

Recommendations
- The external impact of the activities can be increased by requiring educational institutions and other intermediate organisations to collaborate with enterprises or other customer organisations.
− Innovativeness can be improved by defining in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide that the innovations are improved or new processes, services and products that are the desired outcomes from the impact perspective.
− Financial control can be used to promote specific political activities such as multilingualism. Funding can be allocated to encourage innovations and good practices to promote language teaching and learning.
− Unnecessary paperwork should be eliminated to allocate more funding for the most important objectives of the projects.
− The regulations about the equal amount of grant per day for each person should be abandoned because they decrease the incentives of the participating organisations to use high-quality and better paid workers.
− The activities perspective could include processes and structures that help projects achieve their desired impact.
− The activities should have evidence-based or otherwise obvious impacts on the processes, services and products of enterprises or other customer organisations.
− The activities should be based on a novel idea and its implementation applied in a customer organisation.
− The dissemination and sustainability of the projects can be ensured by existing and new permanent structures after the project lifetime.
− The skills and qualifications needed in the activities should include a clear reference to the European transparency and recognition tools and especially to the European Qualifications Framework. The award criteria could also include relevant work experience. In addition, a record of publications, pedagogical capacity and international experience can be required in the award criteria.
− The desired outcome of projects can better be achieved by allocating more resources to the core substance of the projects in order to achieve the strategic and programme objectives.
− Unnecessary paperwork should be eliminated by the improved processes and distribution of work between the National Agencies and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).
− National funding control, greater autonomy and simpler rules such as the flat rate and lump sum principles could help participating organisations focus on the desired outputs of their projects.
− The quality of projects can be strengthened by improving and re-engineering the application process.
− More time can be allocated for the project preparation, adjusting the usability of application forms, making necessary changes in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and improving the quality assurance of the projects.
− A web-based platform is suggested in order to simplify the application, management, accounting and audit of projects.
References


### Appendix 1. The questions about the Erasmus+ Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the objectives and targets of the programme met?</td>
<td>• The Erasmus+ Programme Guide, annual work programmes and projects include evidence that the objectives and targets of the programme are met. However, improvements can be made in the application and project processes to better achieve the desired objectives and external impact. Improvements can also be made in reducing the financial control and allocating resources to the desired activities. In addition, the skills and qualifications of project personnel can be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the cooperation boost innovation in higher education, business and in the broader socio-economic environment?</td>
<td>• The cooperation boosts innovative teaching methods and collaboration with external organisations outside higher education institutions, but the external impact can be improved by defining the desired innovations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Does the cooperation stimulate the flow and the exchange of knowledge between higher education institutions and enterprises and between VET institutions and enterprises? | • The Erasmus+ projects help education institutions’ outreach and engagement with enterprises and other organisations.  
• Knowledge Alliances action is a good tool for cooperation because the projects include at least two enterprises.  
• Strategic Partnerships, Sectoral Skills Alliances and Capacity Building do not necessarily have enterprises as participating organisations. There is a threat that the projects do not include grassroots experiments.  
• The collaboration among the participating organisations benefit the generation of knowhow and innovation. |
| How does cooperation with business help to raise the business orientation of participants and the skills relevant to employability? | • The assignments of municipalities and enterprises for students enable the development of business orientation and necessary skills and create connections to enterprises during their studies.  
• University-business forums should be encouraged to boost innovation. |
<p>| How does mobility help to raise the knowledge of participants?             | • The mobility offers several benefits including the pooling of complementary skills, accessing external knowledge, accelerating |</p>
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| How does the programme help to promote multilingualism?                                                                                  | - The evidence of the projects indicates that the participating organisations come from countries with different languages.  
- Multilingualism can be promoted by allocating funding to it.                                                                          |
| How does the programme help to develop e-skills?                                                                                          | - The project helps institutions generate joint electronic courses which utilise blended learning in electronic environments such as the Open Educational Resources. |
| How well does the interaction between different sectors of education, training and youth work?                                             | - No specific funding is allocated for the transition between the different sectors of education, training and youth.                                                                               |
| Which groups are better/worse represented in the Erasmus+ in comparison to the previous version(s) of the programme?                     | - Intermediate organisations are better represented than enterprises and other external organisations.  
- The award criteria favour large projects which meet many award criteria, but the proportionality principle has been used to select projects of various sizes and with different objectives. |
| How satisfied are (selected) participants with the programme and its implementation? What would they change?                             | - The project personnel is pleased with the collaboration with enterprises and other customer organisations.  
- Application forms should be provided earlier to give more time for the preparation of projects.  
- The deadlines of the project proposals of different actions should be arranged in different months.  
- The MS Word templates are not user-friendly and should be improved.  
- The projects have a lot of administrative work. They must have all administrative documents (e.g. invoices, travel documents) collected for the audit. In addition, the projects must have detailed data on salaries and other costs although they will not be reported.  
- The limit of personnel costs to 40% in the Capacity Building projects is problematic and should be abandoned.  
- The project personnel hope higher acceptance rates and more funding for the core |
| How satisfied are (selected) National Agencies and the EACEA (while involved) with the programme and its implementation? What would they change? | substance of the projects.  
• Fixed daily unit costs of personnel increase incentives to use low salary personnel to increase the profitability of projects.  
• The Finnish National Agency, Center for International Mobility (CIMO), has given positive feedback for the projects and accepted the interim reports.  
• The participating organisations are satisfied with the programme and its implementation, but more funding is required especially for the small projects. |
| What are the advantages and disadvantages of the new structure of the programme? | The new structure of the Erasmus+ Programme provides comprehensive and all-inclusive contents compared to disconnected programmes of the previous programme period.  
• Efforts are needed to simplify the application processes to improve the user-friendliness of application forms and IT tools.  
• Private companies were mainly target groups in the Socrates, Socrates II and Lifelong Learning Programme, but they are equal developers in the Erasmus+ Programme. It takes time to adapt to the new situation. |
Erasmus+ programme was launched on 1 January 2014 for Union action in the field of education, training, youth and sport, and will be implemented till 31 December 2020. The programme gathers seven successful programmes operating separately between 2007 and 2013 (the Lifelong Learning Programme, five international cooperation programmes, the Youth in Action programme), and also adds Sport activities.

The opening analysis of this Assessment, prepared in-house by the Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit within EPRS, situates the programme within the context of education policy, explains its legal framework and provides key information on its implementation. The presentation is followed by opinions and recommendations of selected stakeholders. A separate chapter is dedicated to the area of sport, which is the new element of the Erasmus+ programme.

Input to the EIA was also received from two independent groups of experts representing the Technical University of Dresden and the University of Bergen, and Turku University of Applied Sciences.

- The first research paper presents implementation of Key Action 1 (KA1) – Learning mobility of individuals in the field of education, training and youth.
- The second research paper presents implementation of Key Action 2 (KA2) – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices in the field of education, training and youth.

The two research papers, containing key findings and recommendations, are included in full as annexes to the in-house opening analysis.