INSTITUTE FOR
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Impact of Erasmus+ on the Adult Education Sector in Germany
National report RIA-AE Network

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RIA AE
Research Network for the Adult Education sector in Erasmus+

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms

AES   Adult Education Survey

BMBF   Federal Ministry of Education and Research

DVV   German Adult Education Association e.V.

E+   Erasmus+

EACEA   European Education and Culture Executive Agency

EU   European Union

KA1   Key Action 1

KA2   Key Action 2

NA   National Agency

OER   Open educational resource

RIA-AE   Network for research-based impact analysis of the Erasmus+ programme in adult education

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PART A – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to the monitoring study

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

The monitoring focuses on the impact of two of the three Key Actions (KA) of the Erasmus+ programme: KA 1 (learning mobility of individuals) and KA 2 (cooperation of organisations and institutions). The impact is examined on funded organisations and their staff, the learners and the adult education sector in the respective country. Particular attention is paid to the impact on internationalisation in adult education, but also on the horizontal priorities set by the European Union: inclusion and diversity, the environment and fight against climate change, digital transformation and participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement.

The monitoring design agreed within the network is based on a mixed methods approach. It consists of a document analysis including project documents and data from EU databases, an online survey and case studiesamong funded organisations, as well as interviews with adult learners and non-participating organisations. The data collection for the German study took place in summer and autumn 2023 and was carried out by the Institute for Innovation and Technology (iit) Berlin with the technical support of Ockham IPS.

Main results

In terms of the **accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+**, the programme data for the 2018-2022 period shows an **uneven geographical distribution** of organisations across the federal states within Germany. In KA1, organisations from North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, and Berlin are over-represented. In KA2, Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria have the largest number of funded organisations. Overall, participation is greater in the Western part of the country compared to the states of the former German Democratic Republic. However, smaller states in the West, such as Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland, are hardly or not at all represented in the period analysed either. Overall, the heterogeneity of the organisations participating in Erasmus+ mirrors the highly diverse provider structures in Germany. Participating organisations are predominantly small with up to 50 employees (71%). The majority of the funded organisations already have experience in Erasmus+ and/or are active in more than one project. The survey data indicate that the two Key Actions attract different types of organisations or cover different needs – only around a quarter of the organisations surveyed are active in both Key Actions.

Erasmus+ projects have a high variety of **target groups**. Most respondents to the survey among funded organisations mention people with a migration background (49%), young adults (45%) and employees (41%) as their main target group. In addition, projects often also address more specific target groups, such as parents or adults with disabilities. The age distribution of participants in KA1 mobility activities shows a peak among 51-60 year olds and overall, significantly more women take part than men. The main barriers to participation in the Erasmus+ programme for adult education organisationsare time and human resources constraints, the application process, project administration and the implementation of mobility activities being perceived as very time-consuming.

The **added value of funding** from the Erasmus+ programme is emphasised by 58% of the surveyed organisations. Without the funding, they would not have been able to implement their projects. The

particular value of Erasmus+ projects lies in the fact that they promote the development of new methods, encourage explorative work and foster local and international networking. The vast majority of the organisations surveyed (89%) stated that they would apply to the Erasmus+ programme again.

The funding of international mobility for adult learners in KA1 is a new element of the current programme generation. The small number of completed mobility activities at the time of data collection didnot allow for a large quantitative survey, thus limiting the impact analysis of these activities. The interest of educational institutions in this new opportunity, however, is high: 41% of the respondents to the survey are planning such activities for the future. But here as well, limited staff and time constraints negatively affect participation. Organisations that are not interested in KA1 point out that learner mobility is not a priority for them, compared to other topics, or that they lack direct access to the group of disadvantaged learners, who are targeted by Erasmus+ .

The results and impacts of Erasmus+ in adult education are examined at the meso, micro and macro levels and visualised in an impact model. At the meso level (organisations), it was of particular interest how the funded organisations integrate the international dimension and the horizontal priorities of the programme into their work and what effects can be seen in these areas. The majority of funded organisations (68%) report that the **conditions for internationalisation processes in their organisation have improved** since 2018. Around nine out of ten respondents also report that employees have developed a greater awareness of the added value of international projects. Awareness of inclusion and diversity issues in organisations is also promoted through participation in Erasmus+. **Digital transformation** is well underway, with 86% of the respondents stating that digital resources for teaching and learning activities are used in their organisations. Compared to the other horizontal priorities, progress on improving the conditions for a **green transformation** are less among the surveyed organisations. However, participation in Erasmus+ has a positive impact on the staff's awareness of green transformation. Many organisations have integrate elements to promote **participation in democratic life** into their activities while they implemented Erasmus+ projects. A majority also reports that the programme has a positive influence on the perception of the topic among employees. Moreover, participation in Erasmus+ has an impact on the integration of the horizontal priorities into the learning programmes offered by the organisations surveyed. The **products and results** developed as part of Erasmus+ projects – in KA2 primarily curricula, training modules, language courses, pedagogical concepts, handbooks and websites – are mainstreamed into the work of the funded organisations and continue to be used after the end of the project. Overall, products are adapted by most organisations (60%) for subsequent use and integrated into follow-up projects. The main obstacles for the continued use of products results after the end of the project are a lack of technical support for digital tools and poor or non-existent translations from English.

At the micro level (individuals), Erasmus+ has a **wide range of effects on the skills and personality** of both adult learners and the staff of the funded organisations. Participation strengthens the staff's professional skills, particularly in the area of international and intercultural competences. Respondents also notice that employees are better able to participate in innovation processes as a consequence of participating in Erasmus+ projects. The improved pedagogical and didactic skills resulting from participation contribute to the professionalisation of staff, which ultimately also benefits learners.

According to the project coordinators responding to the survey, KA1 and KA2 have a particularly strong effect on the **enrichment of adult learners' living environment and lifeworld as** well as on their social contacts outside their own environment. The impact on labour market positions and on participation in lifelong learning seems less clear. The interviews with adult learners having participated in KA1 mobility activites indicate that this contributes to the **acquisition of new skills and knowledge**

and, in addition to an understanding of foreign countries and cultures, significantly strengthen the **motivation to learn new things.**

KA1 and KA2 do not intend to have a direct impact at the macro level, contrary to KA3 (policy development and cooperation), which is not part of this study. However, some direct and indirect effects of KA1 and KA2 projects on the organisational environment and on education policies exist. For example, more than half of the organisations surveyed stated that **non-funded organisations also benefit from their project results**. This is facilitated by dissemination strategies, but also happens through direct involvement of other organisations and local stakeholders in Erasmus+ activities, for example in events for multipliers. In addition to the language barrier, which hampers the use of project results when they are not well-translated into German, the development and implementation of effective dissemination strategies is, however, often perceived as challenging by respondents. At the policy level, direct effects are an exception. A few examples were identified in the case studies, when **positions developed** in Erasmus+ projects were **incorporated into the political discourse** or project results were taken over and integrated into standard train the training offers for adult educators by regional authorities. Such successes are heavily dependent on the networks of the organisations and individuals and can therefore hardly be planned.

Key findings and recommendations for action

Once Erasmus, always Erasmus: Organisations often participate in the programme several times and use it to implement activities that would not have been possible – or not to the same extent – without funding. The programme is also open to organisations of different types and sizes. Once organisations have experienced the benefits of the programme, data suggest that they are highly likely to participate again.

Engaging organisations that have not yet been reached: In view of the approximately 60,000 institutions that are active in adult education and training in Germany, , only a relatively small number of organisations are participating in the programme. As part of the study, various barriers to participation were identified. These relate to the costs of participating, which are perceived as high or difficult to assess for organisations lacking any experience in Erasmus+. Respondents often stated that they lack the financial and human resources for submitting applications and implementing projects, having already to deal with high workloads to run their everyday tasks and cope with current challenges such as the rising demand for German language courses. On the other hand, there is the experience of organisations that have already received funding and in which Erasmus+ projects contribute to solving precisely these challenges. The proactive and professional information work of the National Agency was positively emphasised in the case studies and interviews. In order to increase the attractiveness of the programme for new organisations, the following ideas can be identified from the study:

- Strengthening the role of umbrella organisations and provider associations to initiate and support Erasmus+ activities among their members.
- Emphasizing the potential of Erasmus+ for advocating adult education issues and collaboratively developing new positions in the framework of KA2 projects.
- Supporting peer learning and collaboration between experienced and inexperienced organisations in order to facilitate the application of newcomers to the programme.

Internationalisation as an opportunity: The study shows that the conditions for internationalisation processes have improved in many funded organisations as a result of their participation in Erasmus+. At the same time, it is clear that in non-participating adult education institutions, internationalisation is not seen as a strategic priority or is considered to be of secondary importance compared to other topics such as digitalisation. The following arguments can be used to convince non-participating organisations of the opportunities offered by the programme:

- Erasmus+ could be presented even more strongly than before as an opportunity to overcome up-coming challenges in adult education through the international exchange of good practice and the development of innovative solutions.
- Initiating cooperation with partners or exchange organisations is challenging if there is no existing network to fall back on. Contact seminars, such as those offered as part of *Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA)*, offer this opportunity and should therefore be promoted even more actively by the National Agency.

Increase the transfer and dissemination of project results: Transfer of project results into daily practice and continuous dissemination of project results beyond the boundaries of the funded organisations and their immediate environment, even after the end of the project, is conducive to their sustainable exploitation. The continuing implementation of effective dissemination strategies after the project is limited by resource constraints on the side of the organisations. In addition, respondents strongly emphasized limiting influence of language barriers, when project results are not available in a professional quality in German. The following ideas could contribute to a broader impact of the projects:

- Project results should be made available in German in sufficient quality. This implies in particular sufficient resources for professional translations and layout.
- Applicant organisations could be better supported to develop suffenciently concrete, realistic and comprehensive transfer and dissemination strategies, for instance through peer learning activities or advice by the National Agency. Awareness for the importance of transfer and dissemination could be further reinforced among reviewers in the application process, including attention to the approaches for updating and operating technical tools (e.g. websites, apps).
- The use of national platforms for the dissemination of open educational resources should be promoted more actively.
- Projects should have the possibility to order promotional material for the presentation of the Erasmus+ programme at the local and community level.

Strategic funding for the promotion of the horizontal priorities: The study shows that the Erasmus+ programme has an impact, but that there are differences between the horizontal priorities. While digitalisation, certainly also driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, and inclusion are strongly anchored in many of the organisations surveyed, the green transformation and participation in democratic life are less well established. This raises the question as to whether more strategically orientated funding could lead to a more balanced thematic focus within the project prtofolio:

- The National Agency could examine whether there are opportunities to incorporate certain criteria such as serving previously less addressed horizontal priorities more strongly into funding decisions.

Raising awareness about the added value of mobility for disadvantaged learners: Mobility for adult learners is seen as highly valuable and attractive both by participants themselves and by project coordinators. Based on the first experiences with new funding opportunities in KA1 for adult learners, some improvements are suggested to reduce the barriers to participation:

- Learners with fewer opportunities are often unable to participate independently in job shadowing, internships or similar programmes. There are often no suitable free programmes for them abroad. Therefore, there is an urgent need to cover the costs of courses via the programme.
- Subsistance and accomodation rates for participants and accompanying persons are not equal, which is perceived as unfair.

- The close supervision of adult learners with special needs requires a high level of time and personal commitment from staff. Finding ways to compensate for this can increase the attractiveness of the programme.
- Education providers could be supported in finding adequate destinations and programmes for specific target groups through networking and information offers. Developing mobility offers for specific target groups could facilitate access to the programme.
- Despite the very small number of learners surveyed, a high added value of mobility activities can be seen at the individual level. For organisations working with these target groups, it could have a motivating effect if this added value is clearly and realistically highlighted.

PART B - MAIN REPORT

1 Introduction

1.1 The Erasmus+ programme

Since the 1920s at the latest, international cooperation in adult education have been seen, sometimes more, sometimes less, on the one hand as a contribution to peace and international understanding, and, on the other hand, as a means of further developing national systems and practices.[1] With the Grundtvig programme, which was merged into the Erasmus+ programme in 2014, the European Union (EU) has been promoting international exchange in adult education since 2000. The importance of adult education in European educational cooperation, which was consistently low in terms of the proportion of funding compared to other areas of education in Erasmus+, has grown since 2021.[2]

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

In the 2021-2027 period, as in the previous funding period (2014-2020), Erasmus+ comprises three **Key Actions (KA).** These concern the learning mobility of individuals (KA1), cooperation between organisations and institutions (KA2) and support for policy development and political cooperation (KA3).

In Key Actions 1 and 2, funding measures are implemented in a decentralised manner by Erasmus+ National Agencies (NA).[3] Their tasks include publicising and providing information about the programme, supporting applicants and beneficiaries, implementing the funding processes and cooperating with the European Commission and other NAs. The following objectives are pursued:

- **KA1 (learning mobility of individuals):** This key action aims to promote the personal, professional and social development of learners and educational staff through international mobility. Additional aims lie in the internationalisation and professionalisation of the participating organisations. Ultimately and in the long term, projects should contribute to political reforms and the increase of resources for mobility throughout Europe.

- **KA2 (cooperation among organisations and institutions):** This key action aims to support the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national and European level. In the long term, it should contribute to positive effects on the participating organisations as well as on the education systems.

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

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

[3] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/national-agencies

In the new Erasmus+ funding period 2021-2027, some **innovations** were introduced for the adult education sector **compared to the previous programme period (2014-2020).** In KA2, there is now a new project format called "Small-Scale Partnerships", which is particularly suitable for small and/or less internationally experienced organisations as a first step in Erasmus+. Projects consists of a co-operation between at least two organisations from two partner countries. The duration is shorter and the administrative burden is lower than for the "Cooperation Partnerships", which still exist as well. In KA1, funding is now available also for the mobility of adult learners. Until 2021, mobility measures in KA1 were only intended for the staff of educational institutions. In addition, organisations can now apply for an accreditation in KA1 for the whole programme period. Accreditation gives them access to funding for the implementation of mobility measures for learners or staff with comparatively little effort. In addition to accreditation, however, it is still possible to carry out a limited number of mobility activities via short-term projects.

In the field of adult education, the Erasmus+ programme aims in particular to strengthen the socio-economic resilience of adults and increase their participation in lifelong learning. Participating organi-sations should actively promote inclusion and diversity, environmental sustainability, digital education and civic engagement and participation. [4]

1.2   Purpose and key questions of the study

The impact of Erasmus+ on adult education learners, teachers, volunteers and organisations in the field of adult education has not been so far for the object of many research activities in Germany or Europe. A transnational research network (RIA-AE Network: *Research-based Impact Assessment in Erasmus+ Adult Education Programmes*), funded by Erasmus+, has therefore been set up to initiate and coordinate research and monitoring activities. Its aim is to foster transnational comparative re-search and thus provide evidence to strengthen the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education while also contributing to the further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ programme (see Annex IV). Founded in 2022, the network is open to new members and counts NAs from 15 member states and Türkiye at the beginning of 2024.[5]

In 2023/2024, the RIA-AE network will for the first time implement a coordinated transnational moni-toring study on the impact of Erasmus+ in the field of adult education, the results of which are reported here for Germany. The monitoring study focuses on the **impact of Erasmus+ Key Actions (KA) 1 and 2 on the funded organisations, the learners and the adult education sector** in the respective country. Particular attention is paid to the question of the extent to which **impacts** are evident **in con-nection with the horizontal priorities of the programme set by the EU:** Inclusion and diversity; digital transformation; environment and fight against climate change; participation in democratic life, shared values and civic engagement[6] . The study identifies factors that contribute to the observed impacts. On the basis of this information, perspectives for the further development of the programme at national and European level are derived.

In order to analyse the effects of Erasmus+, the monitoring study is based on a multi-level model of adult education.[7] Impacts can therefore be observed at different levels, which are interrelated. At the

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[4] European Commission (2023). Erasmus+ programme guide. p. 114.

[5] Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Türkiye, France.

[6] European Commission (2023). Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

[7] See, for example, Schrader, Josef (2011): Structure and change in continuing education. Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann Verlag, p. 107; Schrader, Josef (2019): Institutional framework conditions, providers, programmes and teaching-learning processes

micro level, the effects of Erasmus+ on individuals – learners and educational staff – are analysed, for example, in relation to their learning outcomes, their personal development or their teaching and learning practice. At the meso level, the focus is on the funded organisations, their structures and their learning offer. Finally, at the macro level, the focus is on political and institutional framework conditions and adult education as part of the education system.

This first national monitoring study on the impact of Erasmus+ in adult education in Germany addresses the following key questions:[8]

- How **accessible and inclusive** is the programme for the respective target groups? (Chapter 3)

- How does participation in KA1 and KA2 projects affect the funded **adult education organisations**? (Chapter 4)

- What impact does participation in KA1 and KA2 projects have on the **staff** of the funded adult education organisations? (Chapter 5.2)

- What impact do KA1 and KA2 projects have on **learners in adult education**? (Chapter 5.3)

- What impact do the projects in KA1 and KA2 have on **other adult education organisations** and on **political developments**? (Chapter 6)

- What conclusions can be drawn regarding **the effectiveness** and the further development of the Erasmus+ programme? (Chapter 7)

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

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in adult and continuing education. In: Olaf Köller et al. (eds.): The education system in Germany. Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt (4785), p. 704.

[8] A specification of the key questions of the monitoring study can be found in Appendix I.

Goals E+ AE

- Making AE more inclusive
- Promoting European/internation al dimension in AE
- Increasing quality and innovation in AE
- Making AE contribute to green and digital transformation
- Stengthening the learners' skills for democratic participation, inclusion and employability
- Fostering lifelong learning
- Fostering European cooperation in AE
- National priorities (KA2)

Interventions

- KA1, Individual and group mobility of learners
- KA1, Mobility of staff (incl. Voluntary staff)
- KA2, strategic partnerships and small-scale partenrships

Target group

- Adult learners
- Staff (employed)
- Staff (voluntary)
- Organisations

Outputs

- Mobility programmes
- Job shadowing, trainings, etc. etc.
- Curricula Concepts Strategies Etc. etc.

Expected outcomes

Adult learners
- Improved skills
- Self-empowerment and –esteem
- Awareness of European values

Professional staff/Volunteers
- Professional and personal skills
- Awareness for and capacity to foster internationalization and inclusion in AE

Organisations
- Professionalization of staff
- Improved structures and processes for internationalization, innovation, quality and inclusion
- Increased allocation of funds to international cooperation
- Improved programmes

Expected impact

- Socioeconomic resilience; living environment; social inclusion; European and democratic participation
- Better skilled AE staff contributing to the design and implementation of innovative, inclusive, and high quality AE programmes
- Inclusive and innovative AE programmes promoting the meaningful participation in democratic society, intercultural understanding and successful transition in the labour market

Erasmus+ general objective:
to equip participants of all ages with the **qualifications and skills needed for their meaningful participation in democratic society, intercultural understanding and successful transition in the labour market,** thereby focusing on its qualitative impact and contributing to **more inclusive and cohesive, greener and digitally fit societies.**
Erasmus Priorities: Inclusion & diversity / digital transformation / sustainability / participation in democratic life

Figure 1: Impact model of Erasmus+ (KA1 and KA2) in adult education (source: own illustration)

This study **focusses on Key Actions 1 and 2**. Despite their different orientations, the intended impacts of the two Key Actions are partially overlapping and are mainly to be expected at the micro and meso levels. For example, project activities that involve learner or staff mobility and have a direct impact at the individual level are also possible in KA2, while in KA1 staff mobility can have an impact on the learning opportunities and internationalisation processes of the institutions. In addition, there are cases in which organisations carry out projects in both Key Actions, so that effects accumulate or interactions arise. The macro level, on the other hand, is not the focus of these two Key Actions. For this purpose, Erasmus+ includes Key Action 3 (Policy Development and Cooperation), which is not part of the monitoring study. This central action, which is coordinated by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and not by the NAs, contributes to the development of new political strategies that can initiate modernisation and reforms at the level of the European Union and at the level of national adult education systems. Under Key Action 3, the EU funds Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA) which include various European event formats and enable National Agencies to cooperate and exchange good practice in order to improve the quality and impact of the programme. The RIA-AE network is one such TCA activity.

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

1.3   Survey design

The monitoring is based on a transnational survey concept agreed within the RIA-AE network. The data for this study was collected and analysed in accordance with this concept based on five stand-ardised modules. All or selected modules are implemented in all countries participating in the RIA-AE network and the results are analysed in a transnational study (see Figure 2).
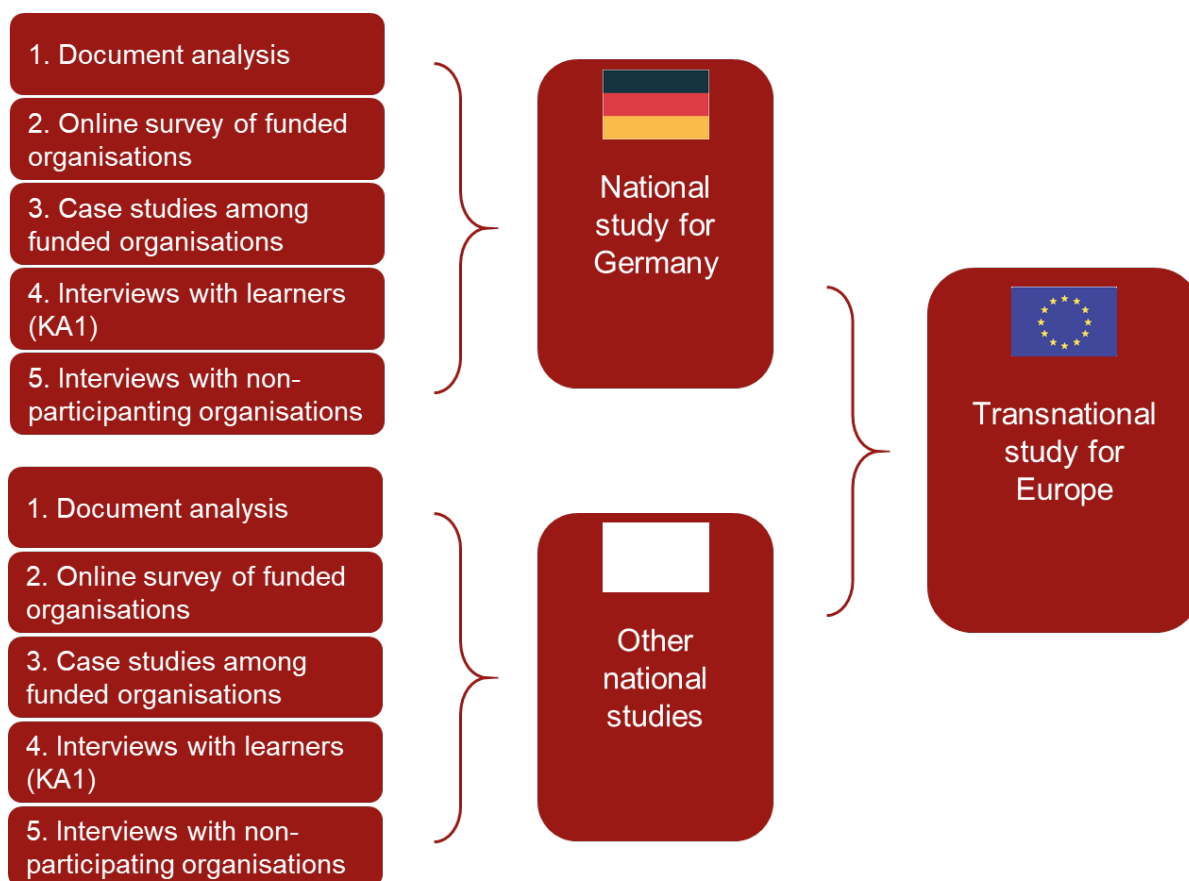
Figure 2: Modules for collecting and analysing monitoring data in the RIA-AE network (source: own illustration)

1.3.1 Module 1: Analysis of existing programme data and project documents

Module 1 (document analysis) comprises the analysis of existing studies, programme and project doc-uments as well as the data collected by the European Commission and the National Agency as part of the funding processes and for monitoring purposes. The latter are in particular data on the applicant and funded organisations and their projects, as well as the reports of the participating staff in KA1.[9] They mainly consist of answers to standardised questions. Project applications and project reports were not systematically analysed as part of this first national monitoring study. Instead, those were only used for the case studies, in spite of their rich potential for qualitative content analysis. This is due to the fact that these reports, although available electronically, could not be retrieved from the Euro-pean database in a format allowing for systematic qualitative analysis..

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

The period examined in this first monitoring round, from 2018 to 2022, comprises two different programme generations (2014-2020 and 2021-2027). This poses a number of challenges, as the EU Commission's databases and the data collection tools have changed during this period. In addition to the European tools QlikView, QlikSense and the Mobility Tool+, which are available to the NAs for monitoring and programme management purposes, the publicly accessible Erasmus+ Results Platform was also used to generate data. Selected findings based on these data are included in the reporting. In order to meet the requirements of an impact study, the analysis focuses on organisations that completed at least one project between 2018 and the end of 2022.

1.3.2 Module 2: Online survey of funded adult education organisations

An online survey of all organisations that implemented and completed at least one project in KA1 or KA2 between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2022 serves as the central survey instrument for recording the impact of Erasmus+.[10] For organisations that participated in more than one project, only one person – usually the project coordinator of the most recent project - received an invitation to take part in the survey. In Germany, the invitation to participate in the survey was sent to a total of 231 organisations. 42% of them took part in the survey, with 40% completing the questionnaire. Of the responding organisations (n=99), 27% carried out at least one project in KA1 and 48% carried out at least one project in KA2. A further 24% of the organisations were active in both key actions. 27% of the organisations are accredited in KA1 (see Annex II, Table II.1).

1.3.3 Module 3: Case studies

For the first monitoring study in Germany, a total of five case studies were conducted as part of Module 3 (see Annex III). The purpose of the case studies was to gain additional insights into the impact mechanisms of the programme and to collect examples to illustrate the results of the online survey. The case studies were conducted in organisations that differed as much as possible in terms of type of organisation (umbrella organisations versus single education providers), size, geographical location, thematic focus and experience in Erasmus+ (KA1 versus KA2, many versus few projects). With one exception, interviews were conducted on site. Depending on the constellation, the interviews were conducted individually or in small groups, for example if teachers or learners had taken part in a mobility together. The interviews were recorded and subjected to a thematic content analysis in line with the research questions.

1.3.4 Module 4: Interviews with non-participating organisations

In order to analyse the obstacles to participation in Erasmus+ at the organisational level, four telephone interviews were conducted with organisations that had not participated in Erasmus+ in recent years or with which the NA had been in contact for the purpose of acquiring project applications and which had ultimately decided against submitting an application. In consultation with the NA, umbrella organisations from areas or regions in which few projects have been applied for to date were prioritised.

1.3.5 Module 5: Interviews with learners in adult education

Only since 2021 has the mobility of adult learners (individual or group mobility) been eligible for funding as part of KA1 projects and KA1-accredited institutions. The NA is particularly interested in findings on

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[10] Contact persons from beneficiary organisations were selected for projects with a start date of 1 January 2018 at the earliest and an end date of 31 December 2022 at the latest in accordance with the grant agreement. For technical reasons, only the contact details of the project coordinators could be accessed in Key Action 2, so that German partner organisations participating in projects coordinated by an organisation in another member state are not included in the sample.

the effects of mobility at an individual level and on obstacles that can make participation in mobility programmes more difficult. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, international learner mobility was still severely restricted until 2022, meaning that very few learners in Germany had taken part in mobility programmes at the time of data collection. For the first national study in Germany, the interviews with learners were integrated into the case studies. In two institutions, it was possible to speak with a total of three learners and their accompanying persons.

2 Short portrait of the adult education sector in Germany

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

2.1 Institutional framework conditions and provider structures

The German Education Council defines adult education as "the continuation or resumption of organised learning after the completion of an initial phase of education and training of varying length", thereby making a distinction from school, higher education and initial vocational education and training.[11] With this broad definition, which also includes continuing vocational training, the **number of providers of adult and continuing education in Germany is around 60,000 institutions**, including public, non-profit and commercial organisations.[12] The provider structures in adult and continuing education are characterised by a huge diversity of players and offers, as well as by a large number and variety of regulations, which lead to a highly fragmented field. Due to the federal system, the legal framework and funding modalities for adult education differ from state to state. Compared to other areas of education such as schools or vocational education and training, the continuing education sector is less strongly regulated, e.g. with regard to certificates or the qualifications of teachers. In addition, historical traditions and differences in economic strength also have an impact on the structures of provision and providers in the individual federal states. Finally, the target groups and learning subjects are so diverse that **numerous sub-areas can be differentiated within adult and continuing education.** In terms of the programmes on offer, at least four main areas can be distinguished:[13]

- The teaching of basic skills (e.g. literacy, German as a foreign language), including programmes to catch up on school-leaving qualifications;

- The teaching of key competences (e.g. foreign languages, digital and social skills) and competences for various areas of life (e.g. cultural education, family, consumer and environmental education);

- Offers of political education;

- Offers for vocational and job-related training.

Various providers are active in these sub-areas, an overview of which is provided by the regular wbmonitor survey.[14] Across all subject areas, the commercial providers represent the largest group (22%), followed by non-profit organisations and by universities and academies (18% each) and the *Volkshochschulen* (adult education centres, 14%). As a rule, institutions offer courses in various sub-areas. At 93%, the overwhelming majority of providers offer vocational continuing education programmes. In contrast, only two thirds of providers are also or exclusively active in the field of general

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[11] Deutscher Bildungsrat (Hrsg.) (1970). Empfehlungen der Bildungskommission. Strukturplan für das Bildungswesen. p. 197

[12] Autorinnengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2022). Bildung in Deutschland 2022. wbv. p. 226.This figure also includes one-person companies and in-company training.

[13] Based on Schrader, J. (2019).Institutionelle Rahmenbedingungen, Anbieter, Angebote und Lehr-Lernprozesse der Erwachsenen- und Weiterbildung. In: Köller, O. u.a. (eds.) (2019). Das Bildungswesen in Deutschland. Bestand und Potenziale. utb. p. 701.

[14] Echarti, N. u.a. (eds.) (2023). Weiterbildungsmarkt im Wandel. Ergebnisse der wbmonitor-Umfrage 2022. Barbara Budrich. p. 51.

adult education (including political education). These are the primary target group for KA 1 in the Erasmus+ programme for adult education, as vocational education and training courses are funded as part of Erasmus+ for vocational education and training.[15]

Smaller organisations dominate among adult and continuing education providers**: 50% have a maximum of seven employees** and 15 freelance staff respectively, with half of these employing a maximum of three employees or freelance staff. Typically, adult education providers employ a small number of full-time staff, who are responsible for planning and administration in particular, and a larger number of part-time or freelance lecturers. Volunteers are found in only half of all providers, primarily in organisations run by churches, political parties, trade unions, foundations, associations or clubs.[16]

In Germany, **adult and continuing education is financed** in various ways. The primary source of income comes from the participants, mainly through course and enrollment fees. The state provides a variety of funding instruments that vary in importance depending on the sub-sector. Institutional sponsorship of recognised continuing education institutions in accordance with state laws, education vouchers for the unemployed and employed, education premiums for employees in small and medium-sized enterprises, co-financing of measures by the Federal Employment Agency, funding of integration courses by the Federal Government and grants from regional authorities including the European Union. Institutional and project funding from the Federal Government, federal states and local authorities, play a particularly important role for vocational schools and *Volkshochschulen*. For the vast majority of private-sector providers, on the other hand, public funding is not a significant source of financing.[17]

A special feature of adult education is **the importance of provider associations and umbrella organisations**. They fulfil an important function as a point of contact for policymakers by actively participating in the development of strategies, for example via advisory boards and working groups or through the publication of studies and position papers. They also play an important role in networking and professionalisation for the member organisations by promoting exchange, disseminating good practice examples, providing information on funding opportunities and, in some cases, offering training courses for staff.[18]

In the absence of a more differentiated database on organisations active in adult education, it is not possible to precisely identify and describe the groups of organisations addressed by Erasmus+. In addition to the types of providers described in the wbmonitor, for example, Erasmus+ also addresses organisations that do not offer adult education courses themselves but are involved in the subject (e.g. coordination centres for adult education at local authorities, research institutions, producers of educational media). Overall, this is a very heterogeneous group of organisations that operate in different institutional contexts.

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[15] Key Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme in adult education focuses on institutions that "offer adult education as a main or secondary activity on a regular or recurring basis in an openly accessible manner. This does not include continuing vocational training" (https://www.na-bibb.de/erasmus-erwachsenenbildung/mobilitaet/akkreditierung/antragsverfahren). In addition to education providers, KA1 also addresses local and regional authorities, coordinating bodies and other organisations with a role in adult education. Key action 2, on the other hand, addresses "all public or private organisations that are active in adult education in the broadest sense" (https://www.na-bibb.de/erasmus-erwachsenenbildung/partnerschaften-fuer-eine-zusammenarbeit/kooperationspartnerschaften). This includes, for example, universities that conduct research on adult education issues.

[16] All preceding figures are from Echarti, N. et al. (2023) (see above)

[17] All preceding figures are from Echarti, N. et al. (2023) (see above)

[18] See, for example, the tasks and structures of Volkshochschulen and their associations in Rossmann, E.D. (2018). Die Volkshochschulen und ihre Verbände – eine starke Struktur für die Erwachsenenbildung. In Bildung und Erziehung (72,2).

2.2 Adult education policies in Germany

Current policy in the area of adult and continuing education is guided by the *Nationale Weiter-bilungsstrategie* (National Continuing Education Strategy) adopted in 2019.[19] This strategy was developed jointly by the Federal Government, federal states, business organisations and social partners as well as the Federal Employment Agency. It aligns with the vision of Germany as a *Weiterbildungsre-publik* (continuing education republic), a country that will be characterised by a culture of lifelong learning and a high level of participation in continuing education across all population groups. As part of the EU 2030 strategy, Germany has set itself the goal of increasing participation in continuing education to 65%.[20] According to the Adult Education Survey (AES), this figure was 60% for 18-64 year olds in Germany in 2020.[21] The following areas of action are emphasised in the *Nationale Weiterbildungsstrat-egie*:

- Facilitate access to guidance, support and further training opportunities

- Deepen cooperation in regions and sectors

- Develop concepts further

- Strengthen digital training.

The *Nationale Weiterbilungsstrategie* is explicitly embedded in European and international strategies. However, the internationalisation or Europeanisation of adult education structures and services are not explicitly pursued as objectives.

As part of the European Skills Agenda 2020, Germany regularly sets new priorities for the implementation of European goals. For the years 2022-2023, these were the implementation of the Council Recommendation "Upskilling Pathways: new opportunities for adults" and the promotion of "skills for life", i.e. basic knowledge relating to life skills. For the years 2024-2025, the focus is on digital and green change, future skills and innovative learning environments.[22] These priorities are very much in line with the objectives of Erasmus+ and are to be addressed in particular through Erasmus+ projects.[23]

There is no independent strategy for the Europeanisation or internationalisation of adult education at national level in Germany. In this respect, the adult education sector differs from higher education and vocational education and training, for which strategic objectives and monitoring instruments in relation to European and international cooperation, as well as various bilateral and international funding programmes, are in place.[24] Within the Erasmus+ programme itself, Germany supports the European objectives and refrains from highlighting national priorities in the field of adult education. Regarding the financing of international activities, no other funding programmes comparable to Erasmus+ are available to adult education institutions in Germany. Existing funding opportunities only address individual topics or countries, such as the Franco-German Citizens' Fund, or are anchored locally when it

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[19] https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/weiterbildung/nationale-weiterbildungsstrategie/nationale-weiterbildungsstrate-gie_node.html

[20] Action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights by 2030: https://ec.europa.eu/so-cial/main.jsp?catId=1607&langId=de

[21] Bundesregierung (2022). Nationale Weiterbildungsstrategie. Gemeinsam für ein Jahrzehnt der Weiterbildung – Aufbruch in die Weiterbildungsrepublik.. https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/shareddocs/downloads/files/nws_updatepapier_fortfuehrung_09-22.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

[22] https://www.agenda-erwachsenenbildung.de/die-agenda/nationale-schwerpunkte

[23] NA beim BIBB (2022). Europäische Erwachsenenbildung in Deutschland https://www.agenda-erwachsenenbildung.de/filead-min/user_upload/na-bibb.de/Dokumente/06_Metanavigation/02_Service/Publikationen_Warenkorb/Broschueren/2022_Bro-schuere_Europaeische_Erwachsenenbildung_Deutschland_Web.pdf

[24] See the Federal Government's report on international cooperation in education, science and research 2021-2022 (https://www.bmbf.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/de/2023/bericht-internationale-kooperation.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5).

comes to federal state programmes or cooperation within the context of city partnerships. The degree of internationalisation of adult education can therefore be estimated to be low. One exception is the international co-operation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV). Through this organisation, the *Volkshochschulen* connect beyond national borders and also promote activities with an international focus in the member institutions within Germany, for example with the funding programme on Global Learning in *Volkshochschulen*.[25]

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

In Germany, findings on the impact of Erasmus+ in the field of adult education are limited. Existing scientific and empirical studies only shed light on specific aspects of the programme.

The most comprehensive and detailed study was conducted in 2020 on behalf of the NA at BIBB and focussed on the **impact of Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (Strategic Partnerships) in the period 2014-2019**.[26] The study focused on the embedding of European project cooperation in the structures of the adult education sector and its effects, as well as the derivation of success factors to support the NA.[27] This study examined which organisations took part, which topics were dealt with in the partnerships and which results were achieved. In addition, the effects on the participating organisations, the target groups, the cooperation with other organisations, the environment of the organisations and the success factors for the impact were examined.[28] As in the present study, a multi-level approach was chosen in which a distinction was made between impacts at the micro level (individuals), the meso level (organisations) and the macro level (sector and policy). The methodological approach is also similar to the present study. It combines document analyses with an online survey of funded and non-funded institutions and supplements these with qualitative case studies involving interviews with various groups (project coordinators, employees, learners).

The 2020 impact study on the strategic partnerships shows that participation has led to a **professionalisation of employees**, particularly with regard to didactic skills, expertise, foreign language skills, personal skills and management skills. At the same time, the researchers found that the structural impact at the organisational level is smaller than at the employee level. However, the participating organisations do see an impact on their organisation, for instance on the introduction of digital education and communication strategies. In addition, the vast majority of respondents (88%) state that participation has **improved the quality of their programmes.** However, the case studies demonstrate that the use of the developed products and insights after the end of projects is not always easy and strongly depends on the technical possibilities, available resources, but also on the organisational culture. The study identifies a number of factors that promote successful implementation and a positive response to the projects:

- Project conditions: continuity of contact persons, staff retention to retain knowledge and foster implementation, team structure, balance of partners with and without EU project experience and commitment to the topic.

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[25] See the DVV website: https://www.dvv-international.de/vhs-kooperationen/globales-lernen

[26] NA-BIBB (2020): Erasmus+ Erwachsenenbildung. Auswirkungen der Strategischen Partnerschaften in Deutschland. Bonn.

[27] Quiring u.a. (2020). Abschlussbericht. Wirkungen der Strategischen Partnerschaften in Deutschland. p. 7.

[28] Both funded and non-funded organisations were examined for this purpose. In addition, in-depth case studies were conducted in selected organisations (see NA-BIBB (2020): Erasmus+ Erwachsenenbildung. Auswirkungen der Strategischen Partnerschaften in Deutschland. Bonn).

- Cooperation: heterogeneous composition of consortia, willingness to change perspectives, professional project management, creation of spaces for physical and virtual encounters, good cooperation climate through a partnership approach and harmonisation of different starting positions.

- Quality and impact: integration of existing networks, multiple perspectives in product development, focus on needs and target groups, quality-tested results, well thought-out dissemination concept and early transfer of results to specialist circles.

A slightly older study on the evaluation of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and published in 2017.[29] In the field of adult education, the results are based on a survey of 239 beneficiaries (individual mobility of employees) and 53 representatives of funded organisations. The respondents were asked to assess the achievement of the Erasmus+ programme's objectives and came to positive overall conclusions in all target areas. The impact on the skills of the beneficiaries was rated as particularly high, especially in the area of **intercultural awareness and language promotion**. In adult education, the impact on **strengthening the quality and professionalisation of the institutions** was also rated as particularly high in comparison to the results in the higher education and vocational training sector. The evaluation does not contain any indicators for analysing the impact beyond the group of funded individuals and institutions.

Overall, the empirical basis for assessing the impact of Erasmus+ in adult education is limited, but the study commissioned by the NA on the Strategic Partnerships (Key Action 2) offers some starting points for comparisons. There is **a research gap, particularly with regard to the effects of Key Action 1,** which is, however, also due to the fact that the possibility of mobility for adult learners was only opened up in the current funding period. Furthermore, the existing studies do not directly ask about the **need for adjustment and potential for improvement for the programme** or for the work of the National Agency.

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[29] icunet & uz bonn (2017). Erasmus+ Evaluation. Bildungsbereiche: Hochschulbildung, Erwachsenenbildung, Berufsbildung. .

3 The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

3.1 Introduction

Inclusion and diversity are one of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme. Equal opportunities and equal access, inclusion, diversity and fairness should be promoted in all programme actions.[30] The focus of funding is therefore on organisations as well as disadvantaged learners who would otherwise not be likely to participate in internationalisation activities. This chapter discusses the characteristics of the organisations that participated in Erasmus+ in the previous (2014-2020) and current (2021-2022) programme generations, but also the characteristics of the adult learners who benefit from the outcomes developed in KA2 and/or mobility activities in KA1.. On this basis, statements can be made about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ in adult education in Germany.

3.2 Participating organisations in Erasmus+

Evaluations of the Erasmus+ databases QlikView (period 2018-2020) and QlikSense (period 2021-2022) were used to show the type of organisations participating in Erasmus+. As part of the reporting, organisations indicate the type of institution to which they belong.

3.2.1 Geographical distribution of the participating organisations

The geographical distribution of funded organisations in Erasmus+ shows **strong disparities between the old (Western) and new (Eastern) states in Germany**. North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria have the highest number of funded organisations in both KA1 and KA2 in the evaluated projects that have already been completed in the 2021-2022 period. Saxony-Anhalt, on the contrary, is in last or penultimate place in both Key Actions. These figures not only reflect the different population sizes of the individual federal states. They also correspond to the different provider densities and supply structures: the old states have the highest number of continuing education institutions per working-age inhabitant, which in some cases is twice as high as in the old states. Public subsidies and the number of *Volkshochschulen* per inhabitant also vary greatly and are particularly high in North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony, but low in Brandenburg, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt.[31] However, smaller territorial states in the west, such as Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland, are hardly or not at all represented in Erasmus+ in the period under review.

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[30] EU Commission (2023). Erasmus+ programme guide. p.7
[31] Author's Group Education Report (2022), see above, pp. 227-230.
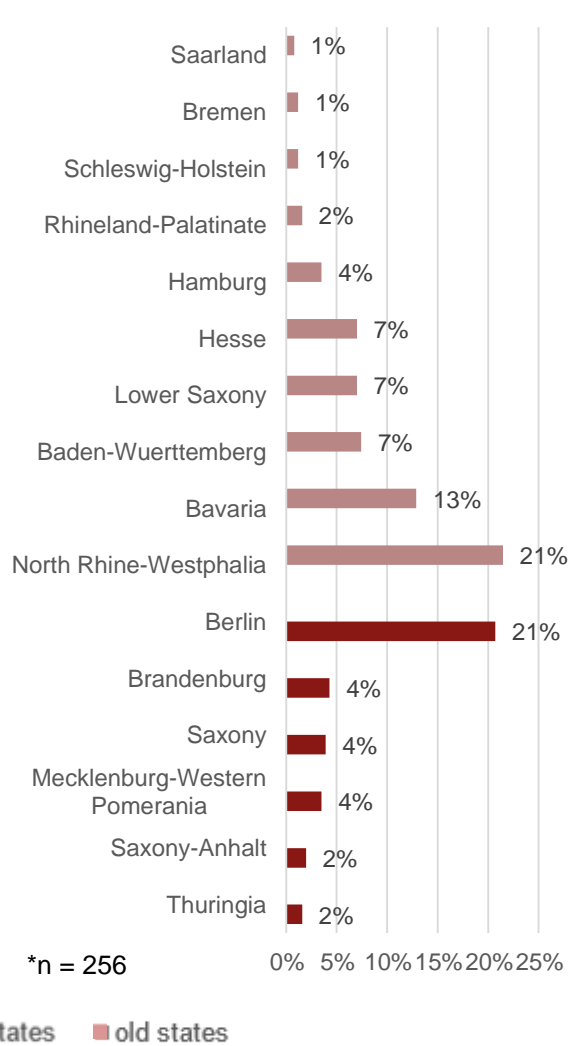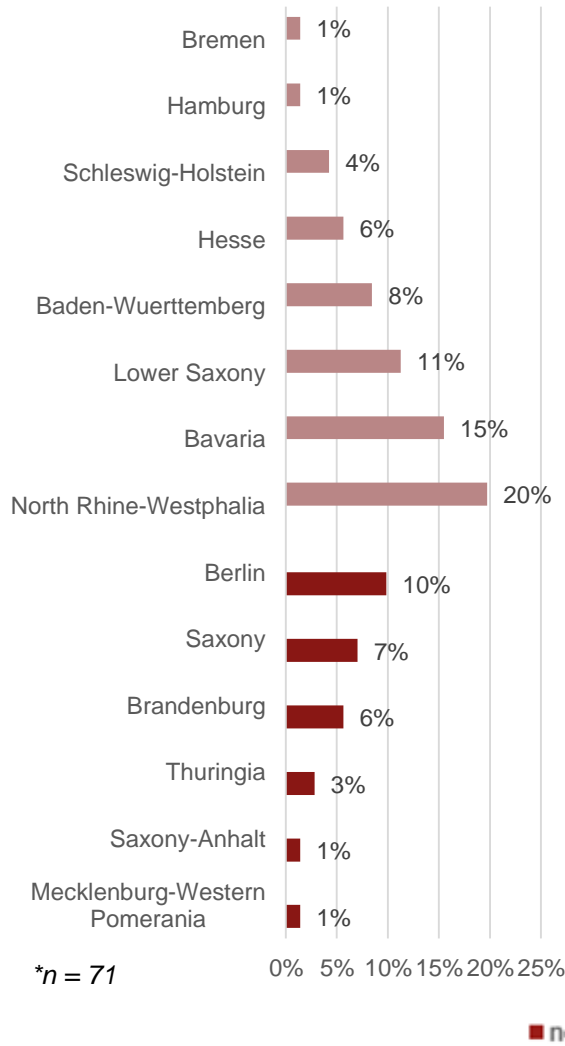
Figure 3: Regional distribution of organisations in KA1, 2021-2022 (source: QlikSense)

Figure 4: Regional distribution of organisations in KA2, 2021-2022 (source: QlikSense)

3.2.2 Types of organisation in Key Action 1

Key Action 1 is aimed at adult education providers and other organisations active in the field of adult education. The heterogeneity of provider structures in Germany is reflected in the types of organisations participating in Key Action 1 (see Figure 5).[32] In addition to organisations that identify themselves as educational institutions for adult education, non-governmental organisations and associations in particular take advantage of the opportunities offered by the programme to a somewhat lesser extent.

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[32] The response options are highly differentiated, particularly in Key Action 2, and have been clustered to create a better overview.
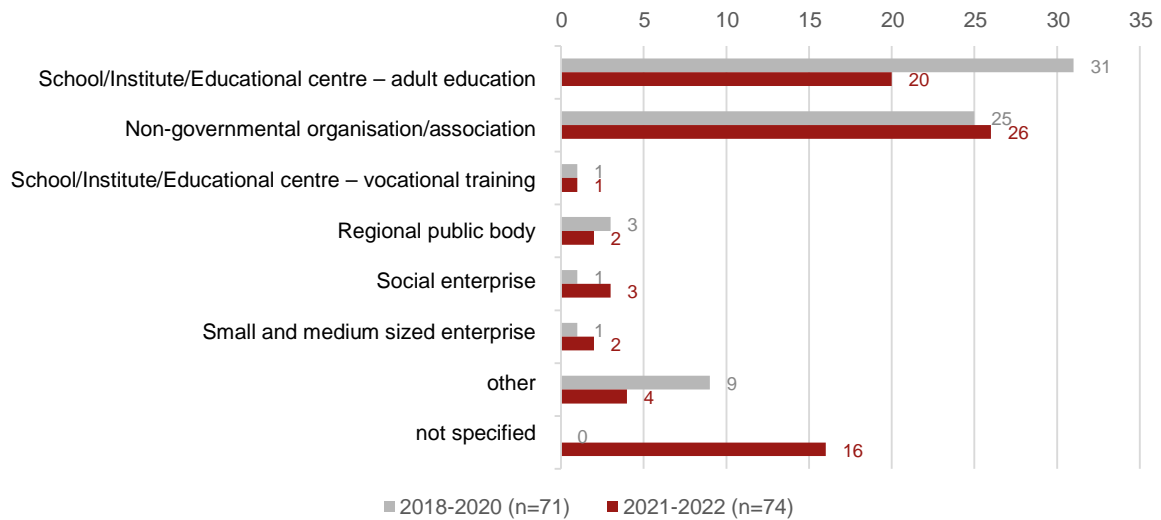
Figure 5: Type of the funded organisations in KA1 (source: QlikView, QlikSense)

For the observed periods, information on participation in Key Action 1 is available for 71 organisations in the first observation period and 75 organisations in the second observation period. The organisations predominantly position themselves as schools, institutes or educational institutions for adult education (resp. 31 and 20), for example *Volkshochschulen* or language learning centres, or non-governmental organisations/associations (resp. 25 and 26, for example church organisations or umbrella organisations for certain types of institutions). A direct comparison of the two observation periods shows slight shifts, for example a lower number of institutions that classify themselves as adult education providers in the period 2021-2022 than in 2018-2020. In the second observation period, however, a striking number of organisations (n=16) used the response category "not specified", which makes direct comparisons more difficult. It should be noted that the sample only includes organisations that completed projects within the specified periods. Organisations that started a project in 2021, for example, but did not complete it until 2023 are not included in the analysis.

3.2.3 Types of organisation in Key Action 2

Key Action 2 supports transnational cooperation projects between organisations and institutions and addresses all types of institutions involved in adult education. Organisations can participate in a project either as a project coordinator or as a partner.

Organisation type	2018-2020		2021-2022	
	Coordinator	Partner	Coordinator	Partner
NGO	80	31	112	22
Company	16	10	33	12
University	14	4	10	4
Adult education: school, institute, centre	12	11	21	3
Regional authority	7	9	8	6
Vocational training provider	7	2	5	0
Cultural organisation	7	2	0	0
Civil society organisation	4	4	3	1
Research organisation/ institute	4	3	9	1
Social partner	2	0	1	2
Consultancy firm	1	2	0	0
Other	4	6	4	0
n=	**159**	**84**	**206**	**51**

Table 1: Organisation types in Key Action 2 (data source: QlikView, QlikSense)

The evaluation of the Erasmus+ databases shows a slight increase in participating organisations in the second funding period (by approx. 6%) for both Key Action 2 and Key Action 1. The most frequently mentioned types of organisation in both funding periods are non-governmental organisations, companies (often private sector education providers or service providers for the education sector, e.g. for evaluations, consulting), adult education institutions and universities.[33]

Compared to the first funding period, the proportion of organisations taking on a coordinator role has increased by approx. 30%. The proportion of German partner organisations, on the other hand, has fallen by around 40% from 84 to 51 organisations in the 2021-2022 period. There has been a decrease in the number of participating partner organisations among non-governmental organisations and adult education institutions.

Overall, it should be noted that Key Action 2 addresses an extensive range of organisation types. In particular, it also involves organisations that do not have direct contact with learners, but rather work in the field of research and development or perform a support function for education providers, e.g. in the areas of consulting, digitalisation and media.

3.2.4 Size of the participating organisations

The number of employees or learners can be used to estimate the size of an organisation. In the survey of organisations that have completed projects in the Erasmus+ programme since 2018, 72% of the responding organisations stated that they had up to 50 employees. A large proportion of them even have only 1-5 employees (29%) or 6-10 employees (16%). 14% of the organisations state that they have more than 250 employees. A comparison of the figures from the current survey with the data

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[33] Table II.2 in Annex II provides more detailed information on the clustering of organisation types in KA2.

from the study evaluating the Strategic Partnerships 2020 confirms that there were no major shifts in the size of the participating organisations.[34]
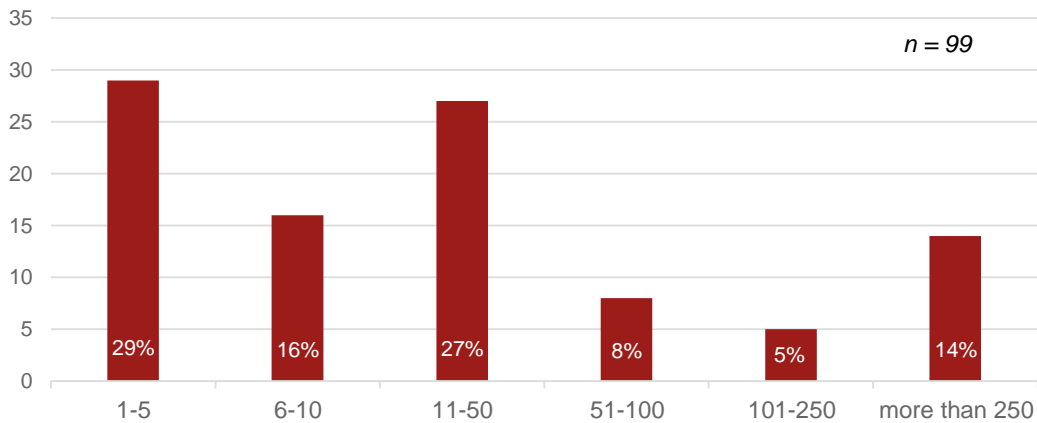
Figure 6: : Number of employees in the organisation at the end of 2022 in % (source: online survey)

Another way of approaching the size of the organisations is the number of learners (see Figure 7). The results of the survey show that a third of the organisations reach more than 250 learners. A further 28% of organisations reach 51-250 learners and 35% state that they reach up to 50 learners. Two organisations stated that they do not reach any learners. This is probably due to the type of organisation and participation in Key Action 2, where learners are not necessarily directly involved in the activities.
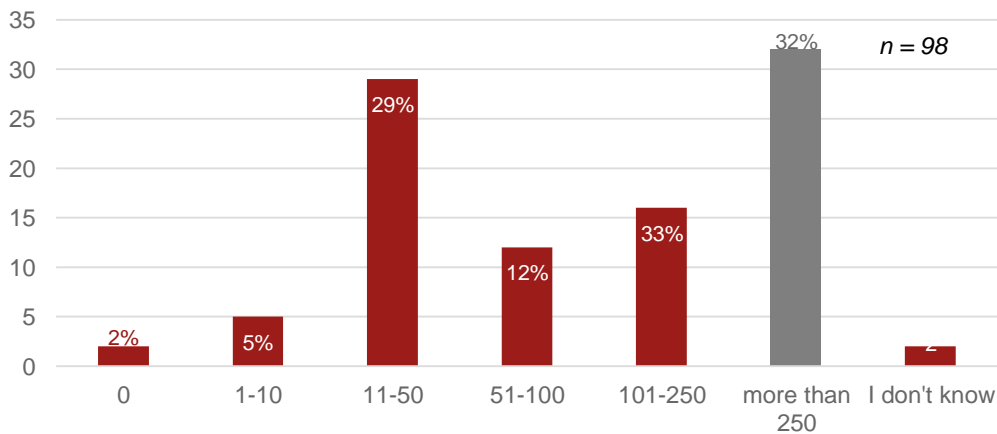
Figure 7: Number of learners who participated in learning opportunities offered by the organisations in 2022 (source: online survey)

3.2.5 Multiple participation and newcomers to the programme

A sign of the inclusiveness of the programme is the participation not only of "old hands" in Erasmus+, but also of newcomers. The survey of participating organisations shows that, **at 79%, the vast majority of the organisations surveyed participate in the programme more than once**. 44% of the organisations even stated that they had been involved in five or more projects in KA1 and KA2 (see

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[34] cf. NA BIBB (2020), p. 10

Fig. II.1 in Annex II). The programme is therefore attractive and organisations that are familiar with it participate several times over time. Around a quarter of the organisations surveyed also state that they are active in both Key Actions. In the in-depth case studies, it was pointed out that some organisations also carry out projects in several areas of education as part of Erasmus+, as does this organisation: "*Education is viewed holistically in our organisation. There are fluid transitions between the educational areas, so we work in a content-orientated way, and the projects live up to this... In the European context, the boundaries between adult education and continuing vocational education and training are becoming more blurred; thinking in these categories does not fit in many countries.*" (Case study 3). Conversely, the intensive use of Erasmus+ funding opportunities by the organisations surveyed means that the **proportion of new entrants to the programme is limited.** This raises the question of obstacles that may make it difficult for interested but inexperienced organisations to participate.

In Key Action 2, multi-funded organisations often take on the role of both coordinator and partner (see Fig. II.2. in Annex II). The case studies show that experienced organisations sometimes support newcomers to Erasmus+ by advising these organisations as partners in the application process and project management. This allows an organisation to gain initial project experience as a partner before possibly applying for a new project itself as a coordinator. However, the extent of this approach to Erasmus+ cannot be estimated on the basis of the available data.

3.3   Target groups of the projects

Organisations often address more than one target group with their Erasmus+ activities. More than 40% of organisations name people with a migration background (49%), young adults (45%) and employees (41%) as target groups. Other groups that are expected to benefit from the projects are adults from structurally weak or disadvantaged areas (34%), older people (32%) and adults with a low level of education (31%) or other disadvantages (e.g. with experiences of discrimination, learning difficulties, physical or mental disabilities). A small proportion of organisations state that their services do not address a specific target group (16%).

Target group	Percentage
Migrants	49%
Young adults (15-29 years old)	45%
Employed	41%
Refugees/ asylum seekers	35%
Adults who live in a peripheral area	34%
Elderly people (older then 65 years)	32%
No specific target group adults	32%
Other	32%
Adults with a low level of education	31%
Women	30%
Adults with lacking basic skills	29%
Adults who are discriminated	28%
Adults with learning difficulties	27%
Unemployed	26%
Adults with limited income	24%
Adults with physical or mental disabilities	16%
Adults with health problems	14%
Parents	10%
Early school leavers, NEETs	8%
(Ex)prisoners	7%
Addicts	3%
Homeless people	0%

n= 99

Figure 8: Target groups addressed by the Erasmus+ projects (source: online survey)

Differences in terms of the final target group of the projects can be explained, at least in part and in KA1, by specific barriers to mobility, such as health problems, family obligations or administrative barriers, as in the case of asylum seekers or (ex-)prisoners. For some target groups, stays abroad are more difficult to realise, but in KA2 projects they can benefit from the results of European cooperation in the form of improved and innovative learning opportunities.

For Key Action 1, an age and gender distribution for mobilities carried out under the new programme generation in 2021 or 2022 can be drawn up using participant data from the EU databases. Participation of women is significantly higher than that of men. Surveys like the Adult Education Survey for Germany do not reveal such a strong gender difference in participation in continuing education.[35] The staff structure in adult education institutions differs according to the type of institution and form of employment, but overall the ratio of men and women is balanced.[36] Another explanatory approach is

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[35] BMBF (2022). Continuing education behaviour in Germany 2020. Results of the Adult Education Survey - AES Trend Report.
[36] Autorengruppe wb-personalmonitor (2016). Personnel in continuing education.

offered by mobility research, which shows a higher participation of women in student mobility, for example.[37] As the data does not contain any further information, e.g. on the employment status of the participants, the different participation of men and women cannot be fully explained.

The age distribution shows a particularly high level of participation in mobility in the 51-60 age group. This is plausible, as family obligations decrease at this age and it is easier to organise time abroad.
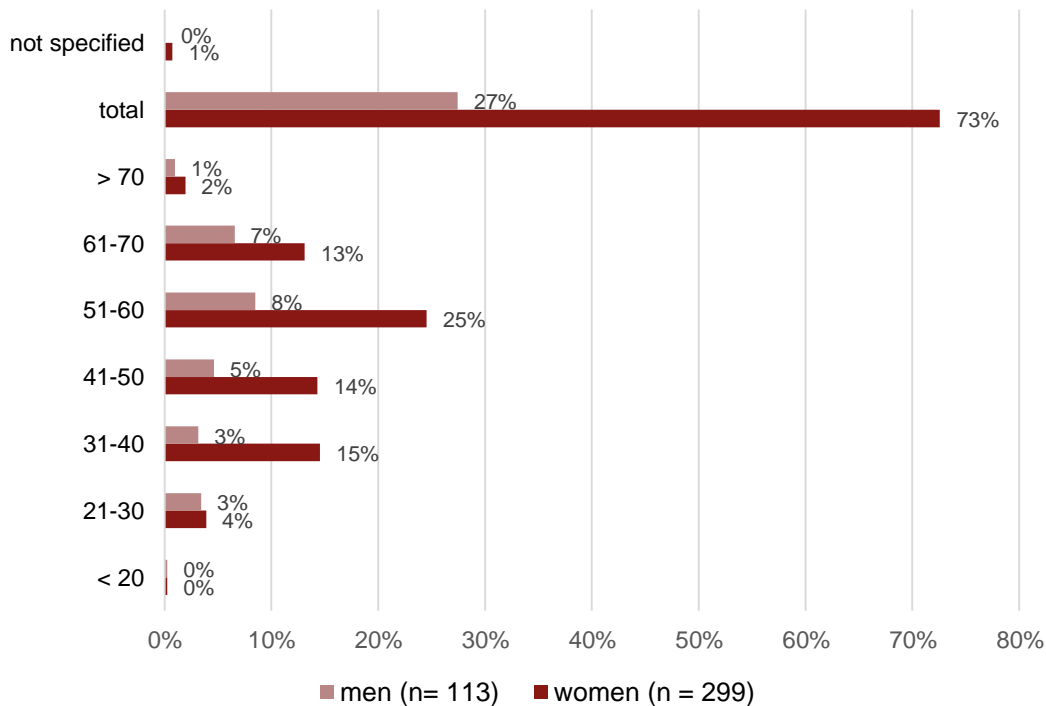
Figure 9: KA1 participants by age and gender 2021-2022 (source: QlikSense)

3.4 Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+

3.4.1 General obstacles in KA1 and KA2

The vast majority of organisations (89%) that took part in the online survey stated that they intend to apply to the Erasmus+ programme again in the future. Only 10% of the organisations do not yet know whether they want to participate again. Despite this very positive attitude towards future participation, many organisations cite obstacles that make participation more difficult or, in some cases, prevent them from submitting new applications. In the open responses to the survey, one of the most frequently cited obstacles to participation is the **effort involved in submitting an application**. Applying to the programme is time-consuming and resource-intensive, making it difficult to manage for many organisations, especially smaller ones. Difficulties with the EU software systems when submitting funding applications, short-term acceptances and rejections and the different evaluation approaches and focal points of the experts are also mentioned. The application process is perceived all the more as a burden because the chances of success (especially in KA2) are considered low by the respondents due to the strong competition.

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[37] Böttcher et al (2016). Gender Gap in the ERASMUS Mobility Programme. PLOS ONE (11,2).

Experienced organisations also state that **grants do not cover all costs** in both KA1 and KA2 due to reduced or limited lump sums, e.g. for traveling or overhead. External factors such as inflation and rising costs further exacerbate this situation. This can be a reason for small organisations in particular not to continue participating in Erasmus+. The large amount of administrative work involved in Erasmus+ projects is cited as a further obstacle. Working with the EU software is difficult, reporting and monitoring are time-consuming and a lack of capacity in financial administration often prevents participation.

Some organisations report bad experiences in previous projects, for example with poorly coordinated project work or conflicts due to different management and communication styles. The requirement to **find suitable and trustworthy partner organisations is** often cited as a stumbling block: It is said to be costly and time-consuming to find partners with whose working methods and objectives there is a high degree of agreement.

In addition to obstacles at the organisational level, **employees' limited time resources** also stand in the way of engagement. Organisations describe it as time-consuming to introduce new colleagues to the programme (case study 5). The organisation and implementation of mobilities is often done on top of regular tasks and often goes beyond regular working hours, making it difficult for volunteers or staff with family commitments to engage in the process. One challenge also discussed in the case studies and interviews with non-participating organisations is the need to release or replace employees who go on mobility to accompany or participate in Erasmus+ projects (case study 1). In addition to these organisational issues, a lack of foreign language skills on the part of staff can also stand in the way of participation in the Erasmus+ programme.

One organisation cited the challenge and expense of travelling in an environmentally sustainable way (e.g. by train) as an obstacle to participating in the Erasmus+ programme.

Organisations that have not yet participated in the programme unanimously cite the lack of time and human resources for familiarisation with the programme, application, implementation and release of employees as main obstacles. While internationalisation is often not a central element of the organisational strategy, in most cases respondents are aware of the added value of mobility. Respondents consider themselves to be very well informed and supported by the NA. Nevertheless, some organisations nay have **biased perceptions of how time-consuming the implementation of Erasmus+ projects ultimately is**. For example, one umbrella organisation reported that member organisations that had not yet participated in Erasmus+ had "no experience with the programme, that is a mental barrier" (interview 3). In Key Action 2, a cost-benefit analysis plays a major role. Organisations are concerned or have experienced that applications are rejected due to the highly competitive situation and that the resource-intensive application process does not pay off.

3.4.2 Specific obstacles for KA1 mobility for adult education learners

In the new programme generation, KA1 is now open to adult learner mobility. The programme's target group is primarily learners with disadvantages, e.g. for socio-economic, health or cultural reasons. Priority is given to people with low basic skills. Due to the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisations' activities in this new field have got off to a rather slow start. **However, 41% of the organisations surveyed plan to carry out mobility activities for learners in Key Action 1 in the future**. This also includes 5% of organisations that have only been active in Key Action 2 to date. In the interviews and open questions of the online survey, the added value of mobility for the target group was not questioned, with one exception ("We don't need it – it's more of an excursion than learning"). Nevertheless, a number of obstacles were mentioned at the level of the organisations, staff and learners.

Organisations mainly cite a **lack of resources of a financial or personnel nature**, for example in terms of familiarisation with the application and accreditation process, but also in the organisation and implementation of mobility activities. Strategic considerations regarding the orientation of the organisation or a lack of access to the target group sometimes also hinder the offer of learner mobility activities. Not all organisations involved in Erasmus+ reach and address them directly or the contact is too short to initiate more extensive stays abroad (e.g. for one or two-day educational formats). Similar to the general information on obstacles, the expected bureaucratic effort involved in accounting and reporting also poses a challenge. Overall, the **effort required for the preparation, coordination and follow-up of mobility activities for adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds is** considered to be high. This includes the need to select and motivate learners who, while belonging to the target group, display a minimum level of autonomy, reliability and social competence in order to fit in a group of mobile learners (case study 1). With regard to the implementation of mobility, it was pointed out several times that programme documents such as participant reports are not available in plain language and have to be translated and personally explained by the supervisors themselves. The fact that the lump sums for the accommodation costs of learners are lower than those for employees is viewed critically in comparison to other programmes.

At learner level, the obstacles to mobility are varied and differ depending on the target group. For people with a refugee or migrant background, for example, residence status and related visa issues represent an obstacle to mobility. There are also course formats (e.g. integration courses) that do not provide for an interruption for a stay abroad. For people with family commitments, childcare or caring for relatives can also present a hurdle and require special arrangements on the part of the educational institution (case study 2). Finally, it is not always easy for adult learners who are employed to assert their right to educational leave or to take time off to participate in a mobility programme (case studies 1 and 5).

3.5 Added value of Erasmus+ support

Repeated participation in Erasmus+ gives an indication of the attractiveness of the programme and the benefits that funded organisations experience or expect. In addition, the survey data also confirms the added value of the programme. Only 5% of the organisations surveyed stated that the projects would have been implemented without funding – perhaps at a later date. 58% of the respondents state that this would not have been possible. A further 20% say that projects could have been realised on a smaller scale only (see Table II.3 in Annex II). One organisation describes the added value of Erasmus+ as the "*opportunity to develop a programme that was urgently needed internally, but also met with great interest externally*" (open response format in the online survey). The added value of Erasmus+ funding is also explicitly emphasised in the case studies: *"The Erasmus+ programme provides opportunities **to work creatively and develop new methods**. In these projects, unlike with other third-party funding, it is possible to network locally, live flexible project structures and develop things exploratively. This way of working creates **ownership, which contributes to the sustainability of the project ideas**"* (case study 3).

3.6 Conclusions

There is a wide variety of organisations participating in Erasmus+ in adult education, reflecting the heterogeneous provider structures in this area of education. Regions in which adult education is institutionally underdeveloped also participate little in the Erasmus+ programme. For Germany, it can be

seen that Key Actions 1 and 2 address very different organisations and that providers are only active in both Key Actions in around a quarter of cases. The organisations align their activities with the objectives and strategy of the organisation. An extension of activities to previously unused Key Actions is often not considered due to a lack of resources, a lack of prospects for a successful application or a lack of access to the target group. These points are also cited by organisations that have not previously participated in the programme as obstacles to submitting an application. Overall, it is noticeable that once funded, organisations remain loyal to Erasmus+ and often carry out more than one project. From the perspective of the funded organisations, the added value of Erasmus+ is high, even compared to other funding programmes.

The opportunities offered by the new programme generation to implement mobilities for learners in adult education in KA1 are not yet being used intensively – given our perspective on projects that have already been completed. However, some of the organisations surveyed are interested in making use of this opportunity in the future, suggesting that participation will increase.

4 Results and impact of Erasmus+ at the meso level

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the outcomes and expected impacts of Erasmus+ on the organisations. This includes the impact of Erasmus+ on the way in which internationalisation and other Erasmus+ priorities are embedded in the participating organisations, but also on the development and improvement of the quality of learning opportunities offered by the participating organisations. It begins by presenting the concrete project results and products as well as the topics prioritised in Erasmus+ using data from EU databases. Subsequently, findings on the effects of Erasmus+ participation, including the effects on the organisation and the learning offer, are reported.

4.2 Topics and products of Erasmus+ projects

4.2.1 Topics of the projects

The projects being implemented in Key Actions 1 and 2 address different subject areas. The range of topics covered is broad. Short-term projects in Key Action 1 in the period 2021-2022, for example, focus on educational topics, in particular skills development (33%) and the development of educational formats (26%). Other project topics include diversity and inclusion (21%), environment and climate change (4%) and European values and politics (10%).

2021-2022	KA1	%
Competence development	37	33
Educational formats	29	26
Diversity and inclusion	24	21
European values and politics	11	10
Environment and climate change	5	4
Other	7	6
Total	113	100

Table 2: Topics of the projects in Key Action 1 2021-2022 (data source: QlikSense, own clustering, multiple answers possible)

4.2.2 Type and use of the results and products developed

Key Action 2 projects often serve the joint development of products, such as learning materials, curricula or tools that can be used in adult education. A large proportion of the organisations that were active in KA2 report the development of websites (78%), curricula, training modules, language courses or pedagogical concepts (71%) or manuals (65%), whereby multiple answers are possible. However, products of a KA2 activity can also be, for example, studies, teaching materials for teachers or games. Projects in Key Action 2 are described as a good opportunity to cooperatively develop methods and prototypes for specific target groups and needs (case study 3), which then find their way into practice in their own formats or via partner organisations.

Results or products that were realised within Key Action 2	absolute	relative
Curricula, training modules, language courses or pedagogical concepts	51	71%
Manuals/handbooks	47	65%
Website	56	78%
Teaching materials for teachers/staff	42	58%
Learning materials	43	60%
Online tools	38	53%
Publication/ book/ position paper	29	40%
Development of webinars or "blended learning" courses	21	29%
Development of films or instructional videos	30	42%
Other	7	10%
Multiple answers	*364*	
n=	72	

Table 3: Results or products developed as part of KA2 (source: online survey)

When asked to what extent the results and products developed in Key Action 2 since 2018 are still being used, 60% of the organisations stated that they use them rather much or very much. The practical relevance and thematic connectivity of materials is conducive to their continued use. Innovative products are more likely to find their way into organisational practice, but their application must not be too complex. It is also beneficial if there are training opportunities for the staff using the materials or if they are already involved in the development process. Good networking and an up-to-date website are useful for the dissemination of results and products. Active dissemination strategies and presentations at events, for example with partners, extend the reach of the projects.

To what extent are the outputs and products developed in Key Action 2 since 2018 still used by your organisation?	absolute	relative
Very much	21	29%
Rather much	22	31%
To some extent	24	33%
Only a little	3	4%
Not at all	0	0%
I don't know	2	3%
n=	72	

Table 4: Further use of the developed outputs and products (source: online survey)

Overall, the **project results are well integrated into the work of the organisations** and appear to meet a need. Only a very small proportion of organisations state that they make little or no use of project results and products. A frequently cited obstacle to the subsequent use of products created in projects since 2018 is the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is also cited as a catalyst for digitalisation processes and the use of relevant products. However, a lack of support and outdated technologies have an unfavourable effect on the subsequent use of digital products. This problem arises when a lack of human and financial resources prevents updates and the further development after project funding has expired. In the survey and in the case studies, language barriers are also cited as a

stumbling block for the reach and subsequent use of results. Erasmus+ project results are generally compiled and published in English. However, in order to be widely recognised and used in the German-language discourse, German-language translations of professional quality are required. Even if the translation work in Key Action 2 is eligible for funding via the lump sums per se , the coordination work involved and the distribution of the results cannot be easily matched in the budget and can present organisations with unaffordable challenges (case study 4). In key action KA1, it would be possible to finance translations for developed products via organisational lump sums, but these are limited.

4.3 Impact at organisational level

Beyond the products developed within the framework of projects, participation in Erasmus+ can also have an impact on the skills of employees, on structures and processes and thus on the functioning of funded organisations. In the online survey and the case studies, the effects in relation to internationalisation and other horizontal priorities of the programme were examined more closely.

4.3.1 Impact on internationalisation

The further development of a European and international dimension in adult education is one of the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme. When the participating organisations are asked about the structural conditions in their organisation that facilitate internationalisation processes, 71% state that they **systematically participate in international networks and internationalisation activities**. The organisations are somewhat less well positioned at the strategic level: only 38% and 35% of the organisations state that they have guidelines or defined processes for the management of international projects or a strategy for internationalisation. Significantly fewer (17%) also have a dedicated budget for these internationalisation activities (see Figure 11). The institutions accredited in KA1 are slightly better positioned than the average in terms of all these characteristics; in particular, 62% of the accredited institutions state that they have a policy or strategy for internationalisation (Fig. II.3 in Annex II). The case studies show that the accreditation application can also be understood as a strategy.
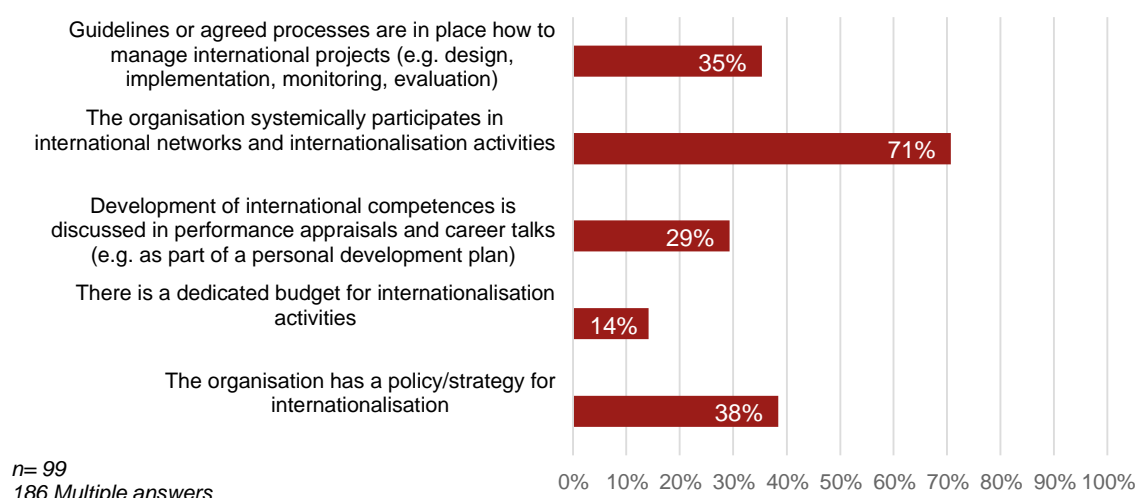
Figure 10: Structural support for internationalisation processes in the participating organisations (source: online survey)

In the majority of the organisations surveyed (68%), the **conditions for internationalisation processes have** improved somewhat or very much since 2018. In 21% of cases, the conditions have

remained the same, while they have become much or very much worse for 8% of the organisations (see Table II.4 in Annex II). Looking at the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the organisations, 87% fully or somewhat agree that there is an **increased awareness of the added value of international projects** and a **strengthening of the organisation's international network** (92%). The management of international projects has improved (77% agree) and there is more support for the internationalisation activities of professionals (68% agree) and volunteers (61% agree).
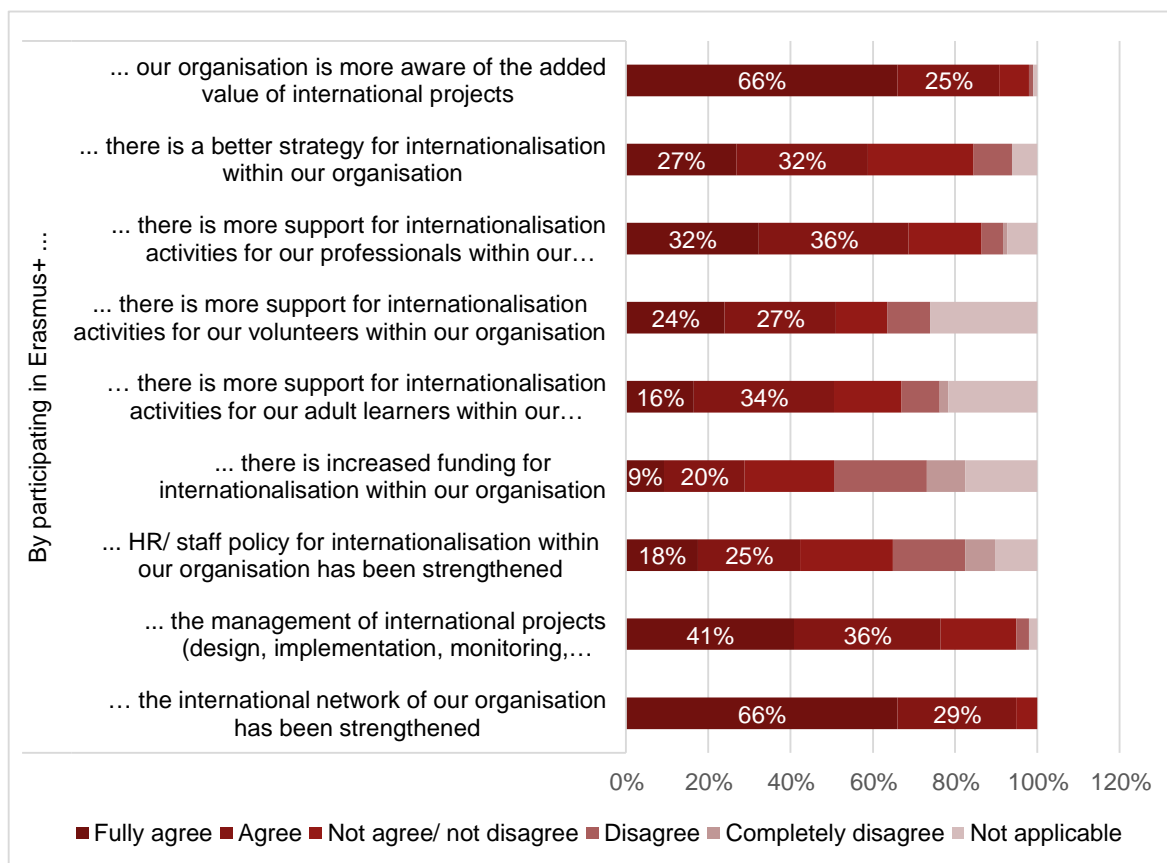
Figure 11: Impact of participating in E+ on the anchoring of internationalisation in the organisation (source: online survey)

The open answers also show the great added value that organisations derive from the projects, for example for the development of a European network. International cooperation and exchange create **access to innovative practices and solutions** in other countries. Organisations can tap into new potential and topics and use the exchange to find a "frame of reference" for their actions (online survey, open response format). The organisations also often see participation in the programme as an **opportunity to raise their profile and as a unique selling point that increases the attractiveness of the organisation for employees, customers and partners.**

4.3.2 Impact on horizontal priorities

In addition to the overarching goal of supporting the educational, professional and personal development of learners through lifelong learning, the Erasmus+ programme pursues additional so-called horizontal priorities for all educational areas and Key Actions: inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, environment and combating climate change as well as participation in democratic life, shared values and civic engagement. The following section describes the situation regarding these priorities in the organisations surveyed.

Inclusion and diversity

The majority of organisations (65%) that took part in the online survey have **embedded** the topic of **inclusion and diversity at employee level** and defined responsibilities for the coordination, communication and implementation of inclusion and diversity activities (see Table II.5 in Annex II). Many organisations involve learners in the development and evaluation of offers (49%). 41% of the organisations train their employees on inclusion and diversity and have established processes to ensure the inclusiveness of their programmes. Participation in the Erasmus+ programme has increased **awareness of inclusion and diversity in the organisations.** 57% of organisations say that awareness of these issues has improved quite a bit or a lot, 32% say that it has improved to some extent and only 8% say that it has improved only a little or not at all (see Fig. II.4 in Annex II). However, only a quarter of the organisations surveyed have a written inclusion and diversity strategy and action plan. The case studies show that it is advantageous for the consideration of target groups with special needs if organisations can draw on initial experience and specific competencies. This can be the case, for example, if employees have the relevant skills or can bridge language barriers due to their own migration background (case studies 3 and 5). In the case studies, employees also report that they explicitly use the Erasmus+ projects to address the challenges in the migration society and to create understanding for different cultural backgrounds (case study 5).

Box 1"We need to become more diverse!"

"We need to become more diverse!"

Activities

As part of a staff mobility programme, the manager of a small adult education institution in a rural area worked on the topic of diversity. The mobility took part with an international group of adult educators. Language apps were used to bridge language barriers between the participants.

Learning effects and inspiration

In addition to dealing with diversity as a course topic, it was above all the discussions with the other course participants that led the manager to reflect and gain new insights on women's rights and different role models. In addition, the use of language apps led to a more relaxed approach to language barriers.

Effects after the end of the project

Participating in the mobility programme on the topic of diversity and learning about pragmatic strategies for breaking down language barriers led to the realisation that "We need to become more diverse!". Back at the educational institution, the manager contacted refugee organisations with the aim of finding refugees who could teach, in order to make it easier to recruit other refugees as course participants. As a result, new courses taught by refugees were introduced, e.g. a sewing course, guitar lessons and Arabic. The strategy of reaching refugees in this way worked to some extent and both the group of learners and teachers at the educational institution have become a little more diverse.

Enabling and inhibiting factors

In this example, participation in the staff mobility programme provided the final impetus to actively address the topic of diversity and inclusion. The experience gained abroad was valuable and important in finding pragmatic solutions for dealing with language barriers.

Digital transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly highlighted the relevance, opportunities and risks inherent in the digital transformation and has also brought about a surge in digitalisation in adult education.[38] A very large proportion (86%) of the organisations participating in the online survey use **digital resources for teaching and learning activities**. They have digital devices for teaching (69%) and in

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[38] Echarti, Nicolas et al (2023): Weiterbildungsmarkt im Wandel. Ergebnisse der wbmonitor-Umfrage 2022. p. 35

some cases can also equip learners with digital devices (49%). Many organisations offer their employees the opportunity to receive **further training in the use of digital technologies** (73%, see Table II.6 in Annex II). Participation in Erasmus+ offers the opportunity to respond to "constant digital innovations with continuous training" (online survey, open response format). Familiarising oneself with innovative learning and teaching materials and pragmatic digital practices in other European countries opens the door to further developing one's own practices and reduces inhibitions. As one course instructor put it in the case studies: "*The staff mobility on the topic of "Making films with a smartphone" was great preparation for the COVID-19 pandemic. It helped me to do online courses later on. I wouldn't have dared to do it without this course. It was a kick-start into the digital world for me"* (case study 1). Awareness of digitalisation has improved a great deal or quite a lot (65%) in the organisations surveyed since 2018 and participation in Erasmus+, with 27% of organisations stating that it has improved to some extent (see Fig. II.4 in Annex II). However, due to the pandemic and the resulting surge in digitalisation, it may be difficult to assess the contribution of Erasmus+ more precisely.

Environment and combating climate change

The conditions for enabling the green transformation are still the least developed in the organisations surveyed compared to the other horizontal priorities. About one third of the organisations have an environmental/sustainability strategy and action plan (34%) and monitor sustainability measures in the organisation (38%). Environmental certifications (13%) and the calculation of the ecological footprint (12%) still play a subordinate role. In contrast, green skills and good environmental practices have already been incorporated more strongly into the programmes (46%) and employee qualifications (42%).[39] When asked about the degree to which awareness of the topic has improved in the organisation since 2018 and participation in the Erasmus+ programme, 33% said to some extent and 36% said quite a lot. Awareness of the topic has only changed very much in 18% of organisations – the topic of green transformation is therefore slightly less present on average than digital transformation and participation in democratic life. However, the case study (Box 2) and statements on the added value of the programme in terms of awareness-raising and sustainability show that individual organisations benefit greatly from participating in the Erasmus+ programme in this area. At the organisational level, the horizontal priority primarily affects the planning and implementation of mobilities. It is made more complex by the avoidance of air travel and also restricts the choice of mobility destinations by taking into account accessibility, e.g. by train (case study 1; online survey).

Box 2: Education for sustainable development

Education for sustainable development – impulses from Scandinavia

Activities

As part of a three-day visit to Denmark, the head of an association of adult education institutions, the employee responsible for sustainability and another full-time employee of the association attended a course on "Education for Sustainable Development" (ESD). During the course, didactic methods were presented and three adult education centres were visited. Another group of employees from member organisations of the association took part in a course on sustainability in Sweden.

Learning effects and inspiration

In Denmark, various courses and didactic tools were presented, such as a board game that supports organisational development towards greater sustainability. One participant was also able to develop new arguments and ideas to promote the anchoring of ESD in the curriculum of the member organisations in the association. In addition, suggestions for the design of Maker Spaces and experimental laboratories were also provided.

Ideas for designing learning spaces were also brought back from Sweden and participants learnt about new teaching methods for ESD.

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[39] "Knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live, work and act in economies and societies seeking to reduce the impact of human activity on the environment." https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-glossary/glossary?letter=S#glossary-150327

Effects after the end of the project

The discussion of other approaches to adult education and new ESD methods is seen by the participants as a great enrichment for the professional discourse within the association. For example, new impulses have enriched the discussion about third places of learning or addressing target groups and have led to reorganisations in individual institutions.

Networking with institutions in Denmark has led (as a side-effect) to further mobility activities being offered for employees there as part of KA1 accreditation.

Enabling and inhibiting factors

According to the participants, the transfer of what they had learned to their own organisation and thus the long-term impact of the mobility was promoted by the fact that it was a group trip and an exchange took place between the German participants. They discussed together what could be transferred to the German context and networking took place so that the exchange could continue after the mobility.

As an association, the funded organisation itself used various communication channels to communicate the results of the visit to Denmark to its member institutions, such as reports in newsletters, presentations in working groups and reports to the board. At employee level, networking groups and the intranet were used to share and discuss experiences.

Strong support from management is another success factor for long-term effects. The initiative to participate comes from the employees, who ultimately have to design and implement the project. However, the management supports the initiative and provides resources if the funding cannot cover the actual costs.

Recruiting full-time and voluntary staff for mobility programmes is a challenge. Freelancers have to organise replacements and have a loss of earnings due to the trip. Full-time employees find it difficult to be absent for several days due to the high workload. Older employees are also less likely to take part in mobility activities, either due to the language barrier or the travelling involved. Overall, however, once-mobile employees would always be happy to take part in mobility programmes again, although new ones are difficult to activate.

Participation in democratic life, shared values and civic engagement

Enabling participation in democratic life addresses as a horizontal priority the limited participation of citizens in democratic processes and the lack of knowledge about European integration.[40] Many **organisations integrate facilitative elements in their activities** that support learners in developing relevant skills, such as developing and expressing their own opinion (76%), taking responsibility (63%) and activating democratic participation (62%). In contrast, only 29% of the organisations surveyed have a strategy to promote active citizenship and democracy. Structures in which learners can influence the learning offer (for example in a learner council) are in place in 27% of organisations. Training on this topic is offered in 38% of the organisations. Awareness of this topic has increased in the organisations since 2018 and with participation in Erasmus+ (see Fig. II.6 in Annex II). In the case studies, employees of various organisations report that they try to network with disadvantaged groups and individuals on site and involve them in Erasmus+ projects. One aim here is **to strengthen civil society involvement** (case studies 2 and 3). The role as host in EU projects also leads to an examination of one's own environment and history: *"There are not only new things to discover abroad, but also here! Our history! And there are so many nationalities living here. You learn more about your own place" (case study 2).* One added value of the Erasmus+ programme is the "***increased curiosity for European issues and identification with European values***" (online survey, open response format). This can have a direct impact on the organisational culture, as reported in one case study:

> *"The project meetings have given us [the employees] a broader perspective. There are always tensions in an international context and then you work on them constructively, there is more mutual goodwill. We laugh a lot, which is transferred to the organisational culture. It's easier to deal with each other. Committed, but also with a form of serenity. There is a lighter atmosphere." (Case study 2)*

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[40] European Commission (2023). Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

4.3.3 Impact on the learning programme

Chapter 4.2.2 has already shown that the results and products created as part of Key Action 2 are largely incorporated into the organisations' practice. Even across both Key Actions, 85% of the organisations in the online survey stated that the knowledge gained had been incorporated into new or existing services (see Fig. II.5 in Annex II).

In addition, the following section shows the extent to which participation in Erasmus+ has had an impact on the development of the learning offer since 2018. For example, 50-60% of the organisations surveyed believe that the horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme are being incorporated more strongly into the development of the learning offer. Topics such as digital skills, inclusion and diversity and European values have received more attention in more than half of the organisations surveyed since participating in Erasmus+. This is also reflected in the examples given by organisations to illustrate the sustainable strengthening of their work through participation in Erasmus+. Organisations report on the further development of their offer, for example to **reach new target groups such as older people or people with disabilities**. **New craft, artistic or digital techniques** are integrated into the educational work from the experience gained abroad and lead to an expansion of the existing learning programme and an improvement in quality. The European exchange supports **learning from best practice examples**, for example in the digitalisation of offers, and leads to the further development and expansion of existing learning offers. Organisations also report that concepts developed as part of Erasmus+, for example in language and vocational education or inclusion, **have been adapted by other organisations and have thus been able to develop a wide reach**.

Box 3: "Although it was difficult at first, financial education is now firmly included in the programme"

"Although it was difficult at first, financial education is now firmly included in the programme"

Activities

In three thematically related projects in KA2, the organisation has developed teaching and learning materials as well as new learning arrangements for basic political and financial education aimed at different target groups. These include a multilingual learning platform with self-study courses, micro-learning units that are distributed via various channels including social media, and instructions for planning and implementing various workshop formats.

Learning effects and inspiration

Several employees who were involved in the projects reported on how they were able to acquire expertise in the subject area. Financial and economic education is often offered by commercial organisations, especially on the internet. From the organisation's point of view, there is a need for non-commercial offers that deal with the topic particularly from the point of view of political education. As a result of this change in perspective, the topic was increasingly seen as important within the organisation and relevant for its own learners: "The topic of financial education was included in the programme, although it was initially difficult, but now it is seen as part of political education".

Effects after the end of the project

The topic of financial and economic education continues to be the subject of events organised by the organisation and contributions to the public, for example on the radio or in the social media, as part of various projects. Collaboration with local cooperation partners established as part of the Erasmus+ projects will continue.

Further effects can be observed at the micro level. For example, one project employee, who was employed as a freelancer, reports that she is involved in follow-up activities with cooperation partners. As a result of the project, basic financial education has become a subject area in which she would like to continue working. Some of the learners who have taken part in project events have acquired knowledge and established networks that have helped them to set up their own business. There were also reports of learners who had reorganised their finances after a workshop and changed their savings behaviour in the long term.

> **Enabling and inhibiting factors**
>
> One factor that favours the impact of the projects on the learning offer is the possibility of carrying out several thematically linked projects. A networking strategy that is not only internationally oriented but also involves local partners also contributed in this case to the utilisation of the project results beyond the funding period.
>
> In the case of this organisation, inhibiting factors are a precarious, project-based form of funding and a mode of operation that relies heavily on freelancers and volunteers as well as project-financed and therefore temporary employment relationships. The latter means that knowledge and experience providers can withdraw at short notice. Project-based funding means that educational programmes are aligned with existing funding and may not be able to continue if the priorities of donors and partner organisations change, regardless of the needs of local target groups.

4.4 Factors hampering or stimulating impact

One experience repeatedly expressed by the organisations concerns the long time horizon required to assess the impact of projects. Case study participants report that **interest in or uptake of project results can occur years after project completion.** The dissemination of results is time-consuming and the scope of a project can only be assessed after a considerable period of time.

The time dimension is also emphasised in the statements of organisations that were able to carry out several consecutive projects. In four of the five case studies, it was possible to show how approaches and topics were further developed over several projects. However, if a follow-up project fails, this can mean that there is an abrupt lack of resources to develop innovative approaches to the point where they can be transferred. By carrying out **several projects that build on one another**, it is sometimes only possible to strengthen relationships with cooperation partners to such an extent that long-term collaboration becomes possible, as in the following example:

> *"Working with people in prison is a very complex and difficult field. It starts with identifying suitable prisoners with whom it makes sense to work at all. The next phase involves building trust, as there are also major prejudices on the part of the inmates against non-inmates ("they don't want to have anything to do with us anyway"), and the respective network must also be identified and involved (prison management, workers in the prison, labour market counselling facilities, companies, stakeholders, etc.). The greatest challenge is to overcome prejudices against prisoners. Although we are still in the middle of this process, we have been able to win over a large number of companies that are open to this target group. Thanks to Erasmus+, we have the opportunity to work specifically on the special issues that will lead to long-term, successful and sustainable support for former prisoners in several projects that build on each other and take into account the experiences of the respective predecessor project!" (Online survey)*

Another important factor for sustainability at the organisational level is the "**anchoring of the project objectives in the objectives of the organisation and the project partners**" (online survey). In this regard, the projects can be seen as an opportunity for organisational development. In larger organisations, however, it can be difficult to promote the internationalisation of the entire organisation with a project, for example, and to anchor the topic as a cross-cutting issue in all areas. The **participation of employees in different but thematically related mobilities** can be supportive. The subsequent exchange and presentation of findings within the organisation and the network lead to greater visibility and a focus on the topic (case study 1). Elsewhere, the possibility of joint staff mobilities was pointed out: Travelling together with colleagues supports exchange and makes it easier to "carry on" within the organisation afterwards.

In view of the many challenges that adult education institutions have faced in recent years, such as the organisation of language and integration courses for refugees or the COVID-19 pandemic, it is

helpful for the sustainability and impact of the projects to **find synergies on topics that are highly relevant to the organisation**. Erasmus+ projects can be used to address challenges that the organisation has to face and at the same time promote Europeanisation. The **support of umbrella organisations** and **good networking between the organisations and their members** is also beneficial. This can increase the reach of the results.

4.5 Conclusions

The survey of the funded organisations reveals a positive impact of Erasmus+ in all target areas of the programme. According to the respondents, the impact on the internationalisation of the institution, on inclusion and diversity and on digitalisation is particularly pronounced, with Erasmus+ projects sometimes being seen as important drivers of digital transformation, which has been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Positive effects are also seen in relation to democratic values and active citizenship. In contrast, the topic of sustainability and green transformation plays a somewhat lesser role in the project topics and is also less firmly anchored in the organisations. Some of the case studies were able to trace the far-reaching effects of projects, although there are a variety of factors that have an impact on effectiveness. In all the cases analysed, it was pointed out that impacts can only unfold over time and that active involvement beyond the duration of the project is still required to ensure broad and sustainable effectiveness.

5 Impact of Erasmus+ at the micro level

5.1 Introduction

Participation in individual or group mobility activities or involvement in project activities and the use of project results such as learning materials or methods are intended to strengthen the socio-economic resilience of individuals and the professionalisation of adult education staff in the long term. To this end, the Erasmus+ programme aims to bring about changes at an individual level in terms of skills and attitudes, with different priorities being set for the individual stakeholder groups.

5.2 Impact on staff

In addition to the case studies, two data sources are available for the survey of the effects of Erasmus+ on employees of adult education organisations (including volunteers): on the one hand, the questionnaires of the European Commission completed by the participants in mobility activities (KA1) and, on the other hand, the assessment of the project leaders responding to the online-survey. In the case of the latter, the statements on the impact of Key Action 1 or 2 projects relate to all staff in the organisation. In summary, both data sources demonstrate the **positive impact of Erasmus+ on the professionalisation of staff in adult education institutions**.

Unsurprisingly, the **influence on employees' international competences** is emphasised first – in the online survey, 58% fully agree with the statement that employees have strengthened their intercultural skills and international orientation through the project, while a further 32% at least partially agree with this statement. This aspect was also consistently emphasised in the case studies, with international cooperation being perceived as a booster for understanding other working cultures and increasing the ability to deal with cultural differences (case studies 1 and 2)**.** Participation in a mobility programme also helps to **empower and motivate teachers to carry out Erasmus+ mobility programmes for adult education learners themselves** (see Box 4)**.** Almost two thirds of participants in mobility in Key Action 1 also note positive effects in terms of their knowledge of foreign education systems and familiarity with European funding programmes in the field of adult education. This effect was confirmed in the case studies, according to which Erasmus+ projects contribute to- developing management skills and knowledge of the procedures and regulations of the Erasmus+ programme among the staff.

By participating in Erasmus+ (KA1, KA2 or both)...

	Fully agree	Agree	Not agree/ not disagree	Disagree	Completely disagree	Not applicable
... our staff has better international competences (intercultural competences; international orientation; and personal development)	58%	32%	7%	2%	1%	
... our staff has better pedagogical and didactical skills	29%	50%	16%	2%	2%	
... our staff pays more attention to inclusion and diversity	26%	48%	16%	5%	4%	
... our staff can better identify the learning needs of adult learners	20%	54%	16%	6%	2%	
... our staff is better able to engage into innovation processes	31%	39%	19%	7%	4%	
… our staff has better language skills of at least one other EU language	43%	26%	12%	8%	2%	8%
... our staff is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities	33%	35%	18%	5%		10%
…our staff is better able to make use of digital learning technologies	32%	32%	24%	6%		6%
... our staff can develop better learning pathways for our learners	19%	43%	22%	6%	1%	9%
… our staff has more attention for the environment and fight against climate change.	13%	44%	20%	10%	4%	10%
... our staff has more attention for active citizenship, democratic participation, civic and social engagement in their teaching	18%	36%	28%	9%	1%	7%
… our staff can better supervise the learning pathways for our learners/ participants	16%	33%	24%	11%	1%	15%
... our staff has more attention for the social-emotional development and guidance of our learners	17%	32%	23%	11%		16%
... our staff can better map the results of the learning trajectories for our learners	7%	33%	28%	11%	1%	20%

Figure 12: Impact on the professionalisation of staff in the funded institutions (source: online survey)

In the area of **foreign language skills,** a total of 69% of respondents see positive effects of Erasmus+, but with a clear difference between the two Key Actions. In relation to KA1 projects, 63% fully agree that their employees' foreign language skills have improved, whereas in relation to KA2 projects the figure is only 41% (25% and 16% respectively tend to agree). In the participant reports from KA1 projects, 60% of employees who took part in mobility activities stated that they had improved their foreign language skills – a further 33% stated that they already had very good language skills before the project. In the overwhelming majority of cases, English was spoken in the project (55%), followed by German (26%), Italian, Spanish and French (3 to 7% each). Only 25% of participants stated that they had attended a language course as part of their mobility. Even if foreign language learning was not the main focus of the project and cooperation sometimes involved interpreting and translation, the case studies show that interaction with people from other language regions increases the motivation to learn a foreign language, lowers the inhibition threshold for expressing oneself in a foreign language and generally increases interest in languages.

Box 4: From teacher mobility to learner mobility

From teacher mobility to learner mobility – mobile lecturers as trailblazers

Activities

As part of an individual mobility programme for employees in KA1, an English teacher travelled to Ireland for a fortnight and took part in a language course there. As a teacher, he teaches full-time at a secondary school and part-time, on a freelance basis, at a *Volkshochschule*. There he looks after a group of seven to nine adult learners, many of whom are of retirement age, who are learning the language primarily out of personal interest. During his stay abroad, he took part in an intensive English course at a language school. This course was not specifically aimed at teachers, but he met English teachers from other European countries there and informally exchanged ideas on pedagogical and didactic issues. The mobility took place as part of a KA1 accreditation programme involving various educational institutions in one city.

Learning effects and inspiration

In addition to improving his language skills, the participant was also able to familiarise himself with new teaching methods and learn a lot about Ireland. He reports on the inspiring effect of the small everyday encounters and interactions with locals. Overall, the mobility boosted his self-confidence and encouraged him to travel more again after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially to countries he was not yet familiar with.

Effects after the end of the project

After his return, the participant used many of the new impulses for his teaching practice at the *Volkshochschule*. For example, he introduced new exercise formats and readjusted his own speaking time in class. He also incorporated information about the country into the lessons, so that the learners themselves wanted to attend a language course in Ireland. He took up this wish and at the time of the interview was preparing a group mobility with three adult learners as part of the KA1 accreditation. He drew on his own experience for this and is convinced that he would not have been able or motivated to organise such a measure without his own mobility experience.

Enabling and inhibiting factors

The support provided by the *Volkshochschule* and the Erasmus+ coordination office in the city administration is emphasised by the participant as being particularly important. He himself had always been interested in spending time abroad, but it was only through the information event at the *Volkshochschule* that he found out about the specific possibility of doing such a stay abroad through Erasmus+.

With regard to his course participants, he sees the fact that they are motivated people with an affinity for education. For older people in particular, however, it is important that it is a joint mobility activity, as many do not have sufficient self-confidence for independent activities. Their motivation is very high and all course participants would have liked to come along, but for most of them, family commitments such as caring for relatives and looking after grandchildren ultimately prevented participation, so that in the end only a group of three learners will be travelling.

Another notable effect of Erasmus+ is to **better enable employees to participate in innovation processes** – 70% of respondents observe this effect. There are no significant differences between the two Key Actions. In the case studies, reference was made to the improved **digital skills in** this context. 64% of the project leaders surveyed believe that Erasmus+ has had a positive impact here. By familiarising themselves with new e-learning tools and the cross-border exchange of experience, some respondents felt encouraged to try out new approaches, for example. Some reported how comparatively well prepared they felt for the challenges of the pandemic-related lockdown, as they had already gained experience with e-learning and collaborative digital tools as part of Erasmus+. This had enabled them to actively contribute new solutions to the reorganisation of teaching operations. In addition, the knowledge and experience gained in other areas can also motivate employees to further develop their own practice as well as the processes and structures of their organisation.

An important area for such developments is the **topic of diversity and inclusion**. 48% of respondents tend to agree with the statement that awareness of these issues has increased as a result of participation in Erasmus+, with 26% even agreeing completely. These are far higher approval rates than in relation to other priority topics of the programme such as environmental issues and climate change (57% approval overall) or democratic principles (54%). According to the survey results, these changed attitudes also go hand in hand with **better pedagogical and didactic skills**, in particular, for example, the ability to work with other organisations to support participants with fewer opportunities, identify individual learning needs and develop suitable learning paths. These assessments by

the project managers surveyed largely correspond to the information provided by the mobile staff in the participant reports to the European Commission for KA1 projects. There, the respondents state that they have strengthened various facets of their professional competences through mobility measures (see Figure 13).

Impact of mobility on professional skills

Skill	Fully agree	Agree	Not agree/ not disagree	Disagree	Fully disagree
Cultural awareness and cultural expression	66%	27%	6%	1%	
Learned from examples of good practice abroad	62%	28%	8%	1%	
Social and civic skills	59%	31%	7%	2%	
More motivation to further develop my professional skills	51%	38%	8%	1%	
Teamwork skills	56%	33%	9%	1%	
Gained practical knowledge for my current job and for my professional development	52%	35%	10%	1%	
Learning to learn	49%	30%	13%	4%	5%
Improved my knowledge in my subject and/or subject area	41%	34%	18%	4%	3%
Practical skills (e.g. planning and organizing, project management, etc.)	32%	40%	20%	5%	4%
Skills developed to experiment with new learning and teaching methods	39%	33%	19%	6%	3%
Organisational/leadership and leadership skills	25%	38%	25%	7%	4%
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	29%	33%	22%	8%	8%
Improved my career and development opportunities	21%	36%	31%	7%	4%
Analytical competence	21%	36%	30%	8%	5%

■ Fully agree ■ Agree ■ Not agree/ not disagree ■ Disagree ■ Fully disagree

Figure 13: Impact of mobility on the professional competences of staff (source: MobilityTool+, n=3084)

Overall, the surveys confirm the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the skills and attitudes of employees in the funded organisations. Longer-tem effects on professional behaviour, career paths and the personal lives of those involved are difficult to prove using quantitative methods. However, the case studies have documented numerous and varied examples in which the international en-counters within the framework of the projects have in some cases brought about far-reaching changes in these areas of life (see Box 5).

Box 5: Erasmus+ as a stepping stone or career turning point

Erasmus+ as a stepping stone or career turning point

Activities

The organisation has 13-14 employees (full-time staff, volunteers, freelancers) and a network of around 200 members. It carries out KA2 projects in various areas of education alongside projects financed by other means. The association itself only runs educational programmes for adults in exceptional cases – usually, its employees take on a conceptual role, run events for lecturers and coordinate the projects or support other partners with project management. Project staff from various projects reported on their participation and its impact on their careers as part of the case study.

Learning effects and inspiration

Learning effects first relate to the management of European projects, language skills and intercultural competences. Examples often relate to the question of how partners need to be integrated and consortia managed in order to ensure commitment and ownership.

Through the conceptual work in the projects, employees also develop expertise on topics that are sometimes new to them (e.g. language courses for the deaf, consumer education, conflict resolution, etc.). The project-based work organisation enables employees to get involved on their own initiative and to acquire or develop new projects. New projects often develop from the results of completed projects or from partnerships. This allows individual employees to focus on specific topics or target groups across several projects and deepen their specialist expertise.

Effects after the end of the project

All employees surveyed described their work in Erasmus+ projects as meaningful and intellectually stimulating. Overall, a high level of identification with their own work in adult education was reported. For individual employees, the Erasmus+ projects serve as a stepping stone for new career developments within or outside the organisation. One employee was motivated to do a doctorate based on the topic of his Erasmus+ project. He moved to the university for a research position. One employee, who had first taken part in a project as a learner, then volunteered at the organisation, is now employed there as a project member. Another, who was involved in a project for migrants as a student assistant at a partner organisation, changed jobs after the end of the project and took on a project coordination role at the association.

Enabling and inhibiting factors

The open and project-based work organisation of the association promotes the development of employees. The Managing Director states: "E+ is not an institutional funding, we are aware that employees will develop and leave the organisation. New young talent will follow". The association sees itself as a multiplier for the European cause and actively supports the transfer of skills for managing European projects between employees. Through close cooperation with partners, knowledge is also transferred across organisations.

5.3 Impact on adult learners

Learners in adult education are reached in Erasmus+ projects in different ways. On the one hand, they can participate directly in project activities, for example in mobility measures in KA1 projects or in events that are designed and implemented in their own country by KA2 projects. On the other hand, they can benefit indirectly from the results of the projects, especially in Key Action 2, where courses and teaching/learning materials are often developed. In order to analyse the impact of Erasmus+ at the learner level, project managers were asked for their assessments in an online survey and learners were interviewed as part of case studies. Information from the EU databases was not available due to technical problems.

In both Key Actions, the project coordinators surveyed generally rate the impact of Erasmus+ on learners at their organisation as positive (see Figure 14). The enrichment of the participants' living environment and lifeworld is seen as particularly strong, with only 2% of the project coordinators surveyed disagreeing with this statement. **Effects on social contacts outside the participants' own environment** are also perceived as very positive, with only 6% disagreeing with the statement. Around half of the respondents fully or somewhat agree with statements that the programme gives learners **better opportunities on the labour market**, new opportunities to **participate in learning**

activities or to participate more than before in activities in their own environment. In the KA2 projects, respondents mention the benefits for learners in terms of new and better courses and methods, as well as the enhanced competences of lecturers.

> *"Our project was aimed at labour migrants. When implementing the curriculum we developed, we were able to address the topics that were on the participants' minds in addition to language skills: Tenancy law or issues relating to employment in the event of illness. Our course contributed to the empowerment of the participants, who now know what employers and landlords can and cannot demand and what the right strategies are in the event of a conflict." (Online survey)*

Learners, who were interviewed as part of the case studies, report on the **new skills and knowledge** they have gained from participating in an Erasmus+ project. They report changes in their professional lives and personal development that they attribute to their experience (**Box 6**). Adult educators emphasise learning effects in terms of foreign language skills and understanding of foreign countries and cultures, but above all in terms of **self-confidence and motivation to learn**. Thus, there are many parallels with the results from mobility research for the higher education and vocational training sectors, where the effects of stays abroad are particularly emphasised in the area of personal development. [41]

By participating in Erasmus+ (KA1 and/or KA2)...

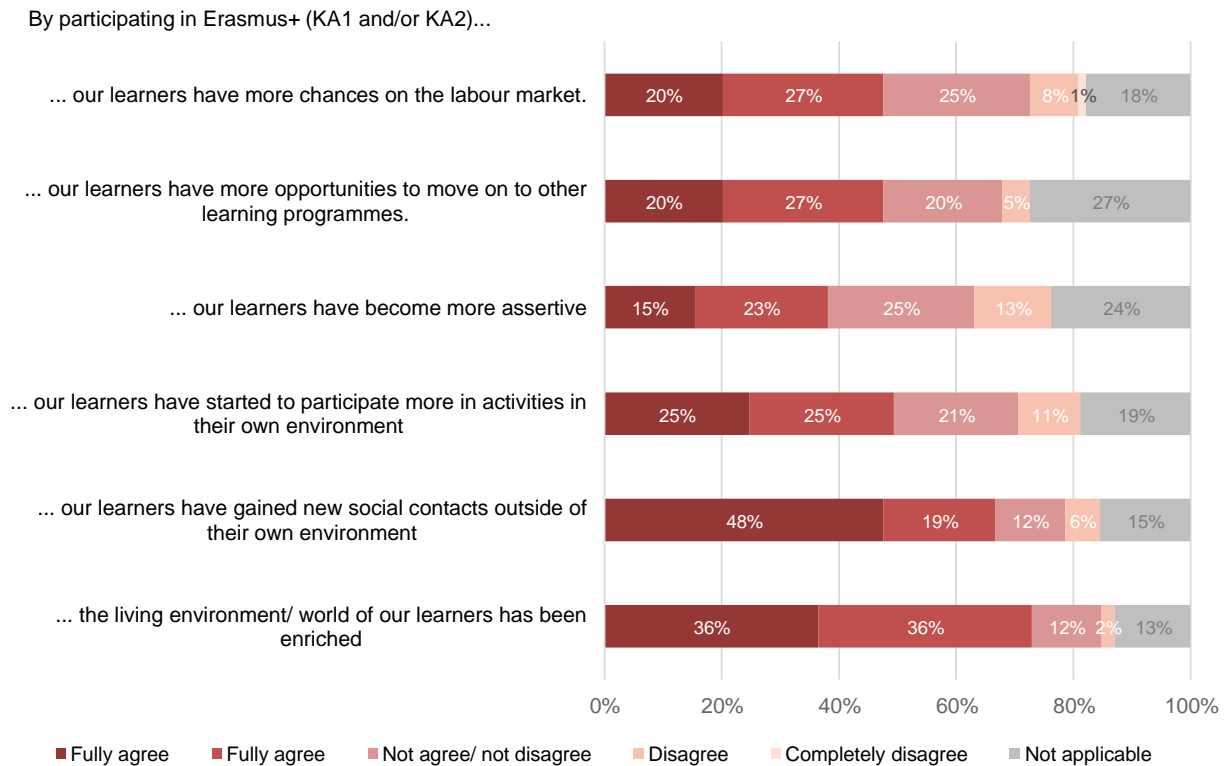|	Fully agree	Fully agree	Not agree/ not disagree	Disagree	Completely disagree	Not applicable
... our learners have more chances on the labour market.	20%	27%	25%	8%	1%	18%
... our learners have more opportunities to move on to other learning programmes.	20%	27%	20%	5%		27%
... our learners have become more assertive	15%	23%	25%	13%		24%
... our learners have started to participate more in activities in their own environment	25%	25%	21%	11%		19%
... our learners have gained new social contacts outside of their own environment	48%	19%	12%	6%		15%
... the living environment/ world of our learners has been enriched	36%	36%	12%	2%		13%

Figure 14: Impact on learners from the perspective of the organisations (source: online survey).

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[41] See e.g. Roy, A. et al (2019). Outcomes of international student mobility programmes: a systematic review and agenda for future research. *Studies in Higher Education* (44)9, 1630-1644. and Krichewsky-Wegener, L. (2020). Lernen durch Auslandsaufenthalte in der Berufsbildung. Springer.

Box 6: "You cannot *not* learn!"

"You cannot *not* learn!":
A group mobility for participants of a literacy course

Activities

Four learners from a basic literacy course travelled to Sweden for four days as part of a KA1 group mobility with three lecturers. The programme included a short introductory course in the Swedish language, a visit to an adult education institution, a visit to the city administration and a trip to the beach. The group travelled together and was accommodated in a hotel. The preparation and follow-up of the stay abroad took place in Germany in individual and group meetings.

Learning effects and inspiration

One accompanying lecturer concluded: "You can't take a step without learning!". She observed how learning also took place in small everyday situations, such as at the breakfast buffet. The participants had little or no travelling experience and were staying in a hotel for the first time in their lives. They learnt how to behave there. This strengthened their self-confidence and independence in travelling situations. During the interview, the learners stated that they would not yet dare to travel abroad alone. But they dreamed of new trips and felt motivated to learn English in order to travel to neighbouring countries in the future. In Sweden, they learnt a few words of Swedish and a lot about the country and its customs. This stimulated conversations in which participants reflected among themselves on differences and similarities – a first step that can lead to a revision of one's own ideas and thought patterns and thus to greater intercultural competence.

Effects after the end of the project

The learners interviewed reported on their motivation to take part in an English course. One of them was already learning his first words independently with a language learning app at the time of the interview. The lecturers generally noted an increased motivation to learn among the participants.

After the trip, the participants maintained contact with each other and continued to engage with the country, e.g. by cooking typical dishes. In their course, they had also planned a presentation for the other course participants at the time of the interview.

In future, the lecturer is planning further stays abroad for the target group of adults on literacy and basic education courses. The approaches to adult basic education developed in Sweden appeal to her and after her first experience she is convinced that the learners can benefit greatly from participating. The experiences with this KA1 mobility were shared in working groups with other adult education organisations.

Enabling and inhibiting factors

From the lecturers' point of view, her personal relationship with the learners was crucial for the successful implementation of the mobility. When approaching participants, care was taken to find those who would fit in well with the group. Very close personal support was provided for the entire project and the cohesion of the group was strengthened by the fact that learners and lecturers travelled together and also spent their free time together.

The support of the organisational management was also important, including finding a solution for overtime compensation after the lecturers had worked a lot of overtime for the trip abroad. The educational institution also made advance payments to cover all travel costs without any contribution from the learners. On the part of the participants, the employers were prepared to grant educational leave and support the participants.

The lecturer mentioned some of the regulations of the Erasmus+ programme as complicating conditions for the implementation of the mobility. For example, the different lump sums for accommodation costs for learners and lecturers posed a challenge, as they were accommodated in the same hotel. Furthermore, very intensive support was also required when concluding a learning agreement and completing the participant reports because the documents are not available in plain language.

In some cases, participation in an Erasmus+ project also represents the first step towards a professional reorientation. In two of the five case studies conducted and in two of the organisations surveyed online, examples were cited in which learners were encouraged by their participation in the project to work as lecturers, volunteers or permanent employees in the funded institution:

> "Through intensive coaching, an immigrant from Tunisia who was a participant in one of our integration courses was encouraged to teach French for beginners." (Online survey)

5.4 Conclusions

At an individual level, Erasmus+ has a wide range of effects on the skills and personality of both learners and staff at the funded organisations. Pedagogical and didactic skills contribute to the professionalisation of staff, which ultimately also benefits the learners. For both groups, however, the effects are also particularly pronounced in the areas of foreign language/intercultural competence and personal development. "Stepping out of one's comfort zone", as one lecturer described it in connection with a mobility experience, and self-awareness in a space that is not limited by the usual norms and codes (a so-called "*free space*"[42]), enable participants to develop new aspects of their personality and strengthen their self-efficacy.

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[42] Kristensen, S. (2004). Learning by leaving: placements abroad as a didactic tool in the context of vocational education and training in Europe. Publications Office of the European Union.

6 Impact of Erasmus+ at the macro level

6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the impact of Erasmus+ beyond the participating organisations. Overall, Erasmus+ aims to contribute to the further development of adult education in line with European values such as inclusion, sustainability and democracy through the dissemination of project results. This can take place on the one hand by taking up project results and exchanging good practice with non-funded organisations, and on the other hand by having an impact on political and institutional framework conditions at local, regional, national or sectoral level.

6.2 Impact on the organisational environment

Over **60% of the organisations surveyed (tend to) agree with the statement that non-funded organisations benefit from their project results** by making adjustments to their learning programme (see Figure 15). The case studies show that this can take place in a wide variety of ways.

By participating in Erasmus+...

... similar organisations (that did not participate in the project) benefited from the project results by adapting their offers

32% | 31% | 8% | 20% | 9%

- Fully agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree
- Undecided
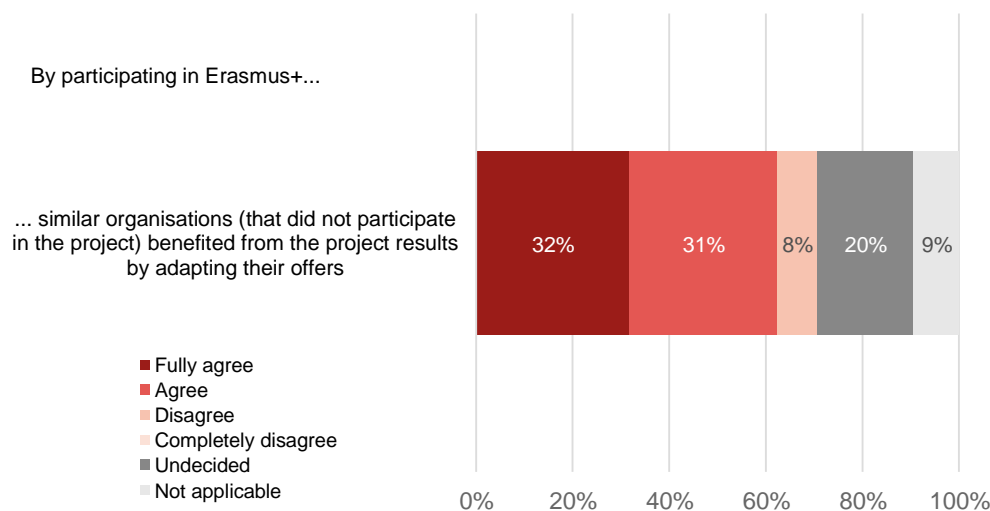- Not applicable

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Figure 15: Impact on other organisations (source: online survey)

Project results are disseminated first of all when **funded organisations** work closely with other organisations, for instance **as members or coordinating bodies of an education provider association,** and can use institutionalised communication channels. Typical products of KA2 projects such as manuals, curricula or teaching and learning materials can be presented in working groups, for example, and disseminated via (internal) newsletters. It is helpful if project results are available in German, as English-language products are far less successfully received in the context of adult education in Germany. Organising training courses for lecturers ("*train the trainer*") is another way of disseminating methods or products developed in projects. In KA1 projects, a case study also shows that experiences and proven procedures or instruments such as evaluation forms and checklists for the organisation of learner mobility are met with great interest by other organisations.

The **reach of European platforms for the dissemination of project results in Germany is considered limited by the interviewees in the case studies**, not least because of the language barrier. A shared view among respondents in the case study is that European results platforms are not consulted by organisations that have no contact with Erasmus+ themselves. Project results would therefore have a greater reach if they were taken up on national platforms. In one case study, for example, a project manager reported that a train-the-trainer concept with associated teaching/learning materials had been taken up by a regional office in its training programme after the end of the project and made available on its platform. As a result, it is now broadly used at the local/regional level. Based on the case studies, however, the impression arises that project results are often only disseminated to the public via the organisation's website or the project website due to a lack of suitable German platforms for the dissemination of open educational resources (OER) in adult education.

Some respondents in the case studies report on how they share their knowledge about Erasmus+ with organisations that are still inexperienced with the programme. In Key Action 2, for example, this is achieved by inviting organisations with which contacts already exist to participate in project activities. They may also be involved as partners in projects and, in the next step, they are given informal support in submitting applications and assuming a coordinator role (case study 3). In this way, knowledge and experience of accessing European funding in adult education is also disseminated via local networks.

Various factors were mentioned in the qualitative interviews that limit the impact of Erasmus+ beyond the circle of funded organisations. In addition to the **language barrier,** the lack of time or budget was mentioned above all – **after the end of the project, there is a lack of capacity to present the results to the public** and, in the case of websites, to maintain and update them. In one case, a **quality problem** was also mentioned. Project partners sometimes have different ideas about the quality standards to be adhered to and lack the resources to revise the results at the end of the project and ensure a professional layout of deliverables.

6.3 Impact on political framework conditions in adult education

The impact of Erasmus+ projects on educational policy measures is **rather low or difficult to assess from the perspective of the funded organisations surveyed**, especially beyond the local level (see Fig. 16). Where a connection was seen in the online survey between participation in Erasmus+ and educational policy measures, the local or regional level was more likely to be affected (25% agreement) than the national level (13% agreement).
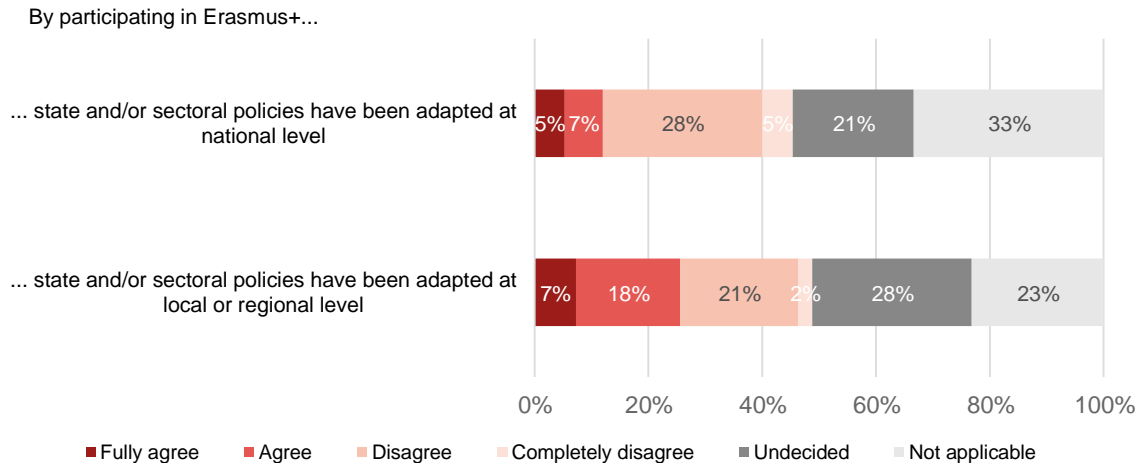
By participating in Erasmus+...

Figure 16: Impact on educational policy measures (source: online survey)

In two case studies, it was mentioned that Erasmus+ projects would contribute new ideas or perspectives to the discourse on adult education or to sub-areas of this discourse. There are institutionalised communication channels between education providers and policy-makers via umbrella organisations and working groups. Insights resulting from European projects can thus be passed on by individuals who take on a multiplier role. Individual initiatives and personal networks appear to play an important role here. In one case study, the organisation was able to use an Erasmus+ project to **develop joint positions of adult education institutions on current political debates and thus gain influence**. The project manager interviewed presented this as an isolated case that could, however, be specifically promoted (see Box 7).

Box 7: Using Erasmus+ to define positions, place topics on the political agenda and exert influence

Using Erasmus+ to define positions, place topics on the political agenda and exert influence

Activities

The topic of digitalisation in adult political education was addressed in a KA2 project. Based on an inventory of current practices, results such as a reader, a handbook for lecturers, a digital toolbox and a policy paper were developed.

Effects after the end of the project

The topic of the project was placed on the national political agenda, including a contribution to the relevant working group of the Conference of Education Ministers. At European level, a concrete contribution was made to the *DigComp Framework*, the European framework for digital competences.

Enabling and inhibiting factors

The right time window for placing the topic was certainly a conducive factor – there was great interest in digitalisation in adult education on the part of politicians in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, but few actors were in a position to make a substantial contribution to the debate. Personal contacts were also helpful in reaching decision-makers at national level. At the European level, the project reports that the European Commission and European executive agencies were very open and curious about the contribution and positions of adult education organisations: "They were very open, they are happy that the "users" get in touch [...]. They have no contact at grassroots level, it is very abstract because they are very far away from the perspective of adult educators. Education providers, on the other hand, don't have the policy level on their radar, only a few big players".

6.4 Conclusions

The Erasmus+ programme has an impact beyond the funded organisations, for example on other adult education institutions that take up project results or benefit from the project experience as part of a collaboration. The dissemination of project results often takes place through cooperation with associations, the use of institutionalised communication channels and the dissemination of products such as handbooks and (digital) teaching materials.

To a limited extent, Erasmus+ projects also contribute to the political discourse in adult education and thus indirectly influence political decisions at local, regional or national level. Personal networks of project participants play an important role in sending impulses via institutionalised communication channels and forums to political decision-makers. Overall, however, this bottom-up impact of Erasmus+ via Key Actions 1 and 2 can hardly be planned.

7 Conclusion and policy pointers

Once Erasmus, always Erasmus

The results of the first monitoring study for Germany indicate **the high attractiveness and added value** that the Erasmus+ programme offers participating organisations. The results of the survey show that **organisations often participate in the programme several times** and use it to implement activities that would not have been possible – or not to the same extent – without funding. The programme is also open to organisations of different types and sizes. Once organisations have been attracted to the programme, the data suggests that they are highly **likely to participate again.**

Raising the potential of previously unreached organisations

However, in view of the approximately 60,000 institutions[43] that are active in adult education in Germany, only a relatively small number of organisations are participating in the programme. There is still **untapped potential** here, particularly in Key Action 1, where the programme budget has not yet been exhausted. The study identified the following obstacles to participation in the programme, among others:

- Uncertainty regarding the expected costs of an application and project implementation,

- Lack of human and financial resources for the application, which is made in advance with uncertain prospects of success, and

- Insufficient financial resources for the projects and the associated need for additional funding.

In addition to these more programme-related obstacles, organisations also addressed current challenges that make international projects appear to be a mere necessity. Due to the high demand for integration and language courses for refugees, the burden of the COVID-19 pandemic, budget cuts and inflation, many adult education providers see no scope for additional activities that go beyond their day-to-day business. This contrasts with the experiences of organisations that have already received funding, in which Erasmus+ projects contributed to solving precisely these challenges, for example through the introduction of digital teaching and learning formats or the further training of learners to become (volunteer) teachers. The **proactive and professional information work of the National Agency** was positively highlighted in the case studies and interviews – in principle, the non-funded organisations surveyed also felt well informed about the funding opportunities. In order to increase the attractiveness of the programme for new organisations, the following policy pointers can be identified from the study:

- Strengthening the role of higher-level associations and umbrella organisations in the initiation and organisation of Erasmus+ activities can make it easier for member organisations to get involved in the programme. Smaller member organisations in particular benefit from professional support, e.g. in finding cooperation partners or on project management.

- The potential to collaboratively develop strategic positions for adult education through activities in Key Action 2 and to participate in the political discourse on adult education, whether at national

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[43] Autorinnengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2022). Bildung in Deutschland 2022. wbv. p.226. This figure also includes one-person companies and in-company educational institutions.

or European level, should be made more visible and given more targeted support by the National Agency.

- Although the organisations report on the professional advice and extensive information work of the National Agency, there is often uncertainty regarding the expected effort involved in submitting applications, accounting and reporting. Targeted networking of experienced and inexperienced organisations could help with this and support peer-to-peer learning or peer mentoring.

Internationalisation as an opportunity

The Erasmus+ programme **promotes international cooperation** in adult education in order to achieve effects at micro, meso and macro level. The study shows that the conditions for internationalisation processes in many funded organisations have improved as a result of participation in Erasmus+. The awareness of the added value of international cooperation and the motivation to continue working internationally are significantly strengthened by personal encounters within the framework of the projects. Involved employees **strengthen their international skills** and in some cases act as multipliers within their organisation, which can influence the strategic direction of the organisation, especially in smaller organisations or in the case of management staff. Erasmus+ projects also give funded organisations the opportunity to **expand their international network**. At the same time, it is clear that in non-participating adult education institutions, internationalisation is not seen as a strategic priority or is considered to be of secondary importance compared to other topics such as digitalisation – the added value of international cooperation for learners and staff is even doubted in some cases. However, if organisations have decided to see internationalisation as an opportunity to address the challenges they face, there are still barriers to participation in the programme that should be removed:

- Initiating cooperation with partners is challenging if there is no existing network to fall back on. Many of the organisations surveyed would like support in order to increase the chances of success for the application and subsequent project implementation. Contact seminars, such as those offered as part of Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA), offer this opportunity. The level of awareness about TCAs among interested organisations should be increased by the National Agency. The Grundtvig workshops held in the past were cited by as a good example of how organisations can get to know each other and generate new project ideas together.

- Erasmus+ could be presented even more strongly than before as an opportunity to overcome upcoming challenges in adult education through the international exchange of good practice and the development of innovative solutions.

Increase the transfer and dissemination of project results

Project funding always goes hand in hand with the desire for the greatest possible reach and broad utilisation of the knowledge gained and products developed. The vast majority of the organisations surveyed stated that the products developed as part of Erasmus+ projects would also be used at a later date. In some cases, it still takes time after the end of the project for project results or publications to be received by external parties. The continuous dissemination of project results beyond the boundaries of the organisation and the immediate environment, even after the end of the project, is conducive to their sustainable use. The development and implementation of such dissemination strategies at the end or even after the end of the actual project period is naturally difficult to reflect in the project budget and often cannot be achieved by the organisations themselves to the desired

extent. The reception of Erasmus+ project results in the German-speaking discourse is also made more difficult by language barriers. The following policy pointers arise in order to increase the reach of the projects:

- In order to reach the large German-speaking community and avoid language barriers, project results should be made available in German in sufficient quality. This is not yet reflected in the project budget in KA1. In particular, it implies sufficient funds for professional translations and layout.

- The implementation and dissemination strategies of the applicant organisations should be presented in a sufficiently concrete, plausible and comprehensive manner when the application is submitted. If necessary, peer learning or advice from the National Agency can support the projects in developing a strategy that is suitable for the national context. It should be examined whether the review process can also be further sensitised to this topic.

- In addition to the European platforms, which are less well-known outside the programme, the use of national platforms for the dissemination of project results should be actively supported.

- To date, there are no specific promotional materials for adult education for the neighbourhood and local presentation of the Erasmus+ programme. However, these could draw attention to the programme in the immediate vicinity of the organisations. The National Agency should consider providing organisations with giveaways, displays or banners to attract learners and interested parties, taking into account the sustainability aspect.

Aligning the funding with the impact to be achieved

The study shows that the Erasmus+ programme is having an impact, for example in the horizontal priorities. However, the study also shows that the horizontal priorities are addressed to varying degrees in terms of content and are anchored in the organisations. While digitalisation, certainly also driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, and inclusion are strongly anchored at employee and service level in many of the organisations surveyed, the **green transformation and participation in democratic life are less well established**. This finding provides a starting point for raising the question of whether more strategically orientated funding can lead to a more balanced thematic focus and ultimately impact. In addition, the question of the **utilisation of project results does** not yet appear to be sufficiently taken into account in the funding decision – especially when it comes to technical products such as learning platforms and websites.

- The National Agency could examine whether there are possibilities for integrating certain criteria, such as serving previously less addressed horizontal priorities or the usability of project results after the end of the project term (e.g. due to the risk of technical obsolescence), more strongly into funding decisions.

Making the added value of mobility for disadvantaged learners visible

The possibility of promoting learner mobility in adult education with the new programme generation could only be examined very selectively due to the small number of completed projects. However, learner mobility activities in the accredited organisations and in the other KA1 projects are underway and are perceived as attractive. The added value for learners is consistently seen as very high, for example in terms of motivation to learn, personal development and forging social relationships. Based on experience to date, there is already potential for improvement, which is mainly related to the special characteristics of the target group of learners in adult education compared to vocational or higher education: For example, the case studies showed that the organisation of mobility activities for people with fewer opportunities is associated with increased effort, for example in the acquisition of participants. Unlike in the case of vocational or higher education, potential participants are not always enrolled already in a programme and must therefore first be acquired and then motivated for a stay abroad. In addition, it is often not as easy for learners in adult education to take time off from their everyday commitments as it is for students, for example.

The conception and implementation of mobility activities also comes with specific challenges. Common formats, such as job shadowing, cannot be implemented one-to-one for this target group. Enrollment fees often have to be paid for participation in courses abroad, which are not yet eligible for funding. Programme documents are also not suitable for learners with a low level of basic education. Concrete starting points for removing these barriers are as follows:

- Learners with fewer opportunities are often unable to participate independently in work shadowing programmes or similar. They require closer support at the destination and learning formats that are often not free of charge abroad, as adult education and further education in many countries is mainly offered by commercial providers. The interviewees expressed an urgent desire to **finance course fees via the programme**.

- The **unequal amount of lump sums** for accommodation costs for participants and accompanying persons **is often perceived as unfair**, especially when learners and teachers are travelling together and sharing accommodation.

- The close support of learners with disadvantages requires a **high level of time and personal commitment from staff,** which is not always fully compensated for by the Erasmus+ programme and is difficult to achieve by teachers who often work on a freelance or voluntary basis. Finding ways to compensate for this can increase the attractiveness of the programme.

- Another support option for the National Agency could be the establishment of structures or networking with suitable **mobility destinations for specific target groups** with special needs. Developing formats for specific target groups could facilitate their access to the programme.

- Despite the very small number of learners surveyed, the added value of the mobility activities is evident at an individual level. For organisations working with disadvantaged target groups, it could have a motivating effect if this added value is clearly and realistically highlighted.

There is still a need for research and development to monitor the impact of Erasmus+ in adult education

This study presented the first results of national monitoring for Germany as part of the RIA-AE network. Limitations of the study and further methodological considerations are outlined below.

Limitations of the study arise from the insufficient access to adult learners who have completed mobility activities by the end of 2022. For the upcoming study in 2025, it can be assumed that a much higher number of adult learners will have had experience with Erasmus+ mobility activities and that more in-depth analyses of the impact of mobility activities on this target group, for example on social inclusion, will be possible. However, a further limitation results from the limited use of the Erasmus+ databases. As part of the document analysis, the **potential of the QlikView, QlikSense and project Management Module (PMM) databases was explored** with the results that **variables of interest cannot be retrieved in a data set** and information can only be retrieved via individual project PDFs. These hurdles in data availability significantly increase the effort involved in analysing the data. Improving the accessibility of the data generated by the programme is desirable. The following steps could be helpful to improve research into the impact of the programme on learners in adult education:

- Clarification of data protection issues with the European Commission to improve the usability of programme data for research purposes.

- A revision of the European Commission's participant reports in KA1 to make them available to learners in plain language. Focussing on a small number of questions would make it easier for learners to complete the reports independently. This offers the opportunity to carry out a full survey of the short-term effects after mobility.

- An expansion of the qualitative learner survey as soon as more mobility activities have been carried out. Support for the projects is essential here in order to ensure that they are approached and to organise the appointments. The projects could be sensitised to this at an early stage.

PART C - ANNEXES

Appendix I: Key questions of the study

Key questions of the 2023 monitoring study
How accessible/inclusive is the programme for the respective target groups?
– What are the special features and characteristics of the adult education institutions participating in the Erasmus+ programme?
– What are the special features and characteristics of adult learners and employees who are taking part or have taken part in an Erasmus+ project?
How does participation in KA1 and KA2 projects affect the funded organisations?
– How does participation affect the learning programme?
– How does participation affect the adaptation of educational formats to the needs of learners?
– How does participation affect the involvement of learners in the programme design?
– How does participation impact on improving accessibility for adult learners (inclusion)?
– How does participation affect the use of information and communication technologies and the digitalisation of programmes? (Erasmus+ priority Digital transformation)
– How does participation affect the integration of activities promoting democracy and participation in the organisations? (Erasmus+ priority participation in democratic life, shared values and civic engagement?
– How does participation affect professionalisation and quality assurance?
– How does participation affect cooperation with other organisations in the sector?
– How does participation affect the exchange of knowledge and experience within the organisation and with other organisations?
– How does participation affect the organisational anchoring of internationalisation in the organisations (strategy, finances, project management, networks)?
– How does participation affect the establishment and development of an international network?
What impact does participation in KA1 and KA2 projects have on the staff of the funded organisations?

– What impact does participation have on the skills and expertise of staff, in particular
    – Foreign language skills and intercultural awareness
    – Digital competences
    – Understanding of and ability to deal with climate and environmental issues
    – Understanding of and ability to engage with European society and the values associated with it
    – Understanding of and ability to deal with issues of inclusion and diversity
    – Organisation of mobility projects
    – Ability to cooperate with European partners

– What impact does participation have on the application and exchange of the international experience gained among employees?
– What impact does participation have on professional development and career?
What impact do KA1 and KA2 projects have on adult learners in the areas of... (Chapter 6.3)

international, personal and professional competences, in particular:
    – Foreign language skills and intercultural awareness
    – Awareness and understanding of the European Union and common European values
    – Key competences
    – Digital competences and media skills
    – Sustainability-related skills and awareness of the green transition
    – Self-empowerment and self-esteem
    – Commitment

Labour market results:
–   Improved employability, better career prospects and economic independence
Lifelong learning:
–   Improved learning performance and motivation to participate in education and training
–   Ability to participate in vocational training
Social integration:
–   More active participation in society and increased positive interactions with people from different backgrounds
What impact do the projects in KA1 and KA2 have on other adult education organisations and on political developments? (Chapter 7)
–   Will the experiences from the KA1 and KA2 projects be adopted by other organisations that did not participate in Erasmus+ (dissemination of results)?
–   Do the results of the KA1 and KA2 projects contribute to political developments at local, regional, national and European level?
What conclusions can be drawn regarding improved effectiveness and efficiency for the further development of the Erasmus+ programme? (Chapter 8)
–   How can the accessibility of the Erasmus+ programme be improved for target groups in adult education?
–   What are the opportunities and challenges for the participation of the target groups?
–   What are the first experiences with KA1 individual or group mobility of adult learners and what are the opportunities and risks?
–   What monitoring information is needed annually, in addition to the 'participation reports', to monitor the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ programme for the target group of adult learners? Can research provide a frame of reference that enables sustainable improvement of effectiveness?
–   How can the National Agencies provide even greater support to adult education organisations in achieving impact?

Appendix II: Figures and tables

Tab. II.1: Accreditations in Key Action 1 (source: online survey)

Does your organisation currently have Erasmus+ accreditation for mobility in adult education?	absolute	relative
Yes	26	27%
No	54	56%
I don't know	16	17%
n=	**96**	

Tab. II.2: Organisation type KA2 2018-2020 – Clustering of the institution types (source: QlikView)

Cluster	2018-2020 (KA2)	Coordi-nator	Part-ner	Coor-dinator To-tal/Clu-ster	Part-ner to-tal/clu-ster
NGO	Non-governmental organisation/association	79	28	80	31
	European NGO	1	3		
Higher education institution (ter-tiary level)		14	4	14	4
School/Institute/Educational centre - Adult education		12	11	12	11
Enterprise	Small and medium sized enterprise	11	9	16	10
	Social enterprise	5	1		
	Large enterprise	1	0		
Social partner or other repre-sentative of working life (cham-bers of commerce, trade union, trade association)		2	0	2	0
Research Institute/Centre		4	3	4	3
Multimedia/Music	Multimedia association	1	0	1	1
	Multimedia company	0	1		
School/Institute/Educational Centre – general education	School/Institute/Educational centre - General ed-ucation (primary level)	1	0	1	0
Public body	Public service provider	1	1	7	9
	Regional Public body	2	4		
	Local Public body	4	3		
	European or international public body	0	1		
Civil society organisation	Civil Society Organisation	4	2	4	4
	Foundation	0	2		
Vocational training	School/Institute/Educational centre - Vocational Training (secondary level)	7	1	7	2
	School/Institute/Educational centre - Vocational Training (tertiary level)	0	1		
Counselling body		1	2	1	2
Culture	Non-profit making cultural organisations	7	0	7	2
	Choir	0	1		
	Cinema Theatres	0	1		
Others	Sport club	0	1	2	4
	Group of young people active in youth work	0	1		
	Youth organisation	1	0		

Accreditation, certification or qualification body		0	0		
International agencies and organisations		1	2		
no data		0	1	0	1
		159	**84**		

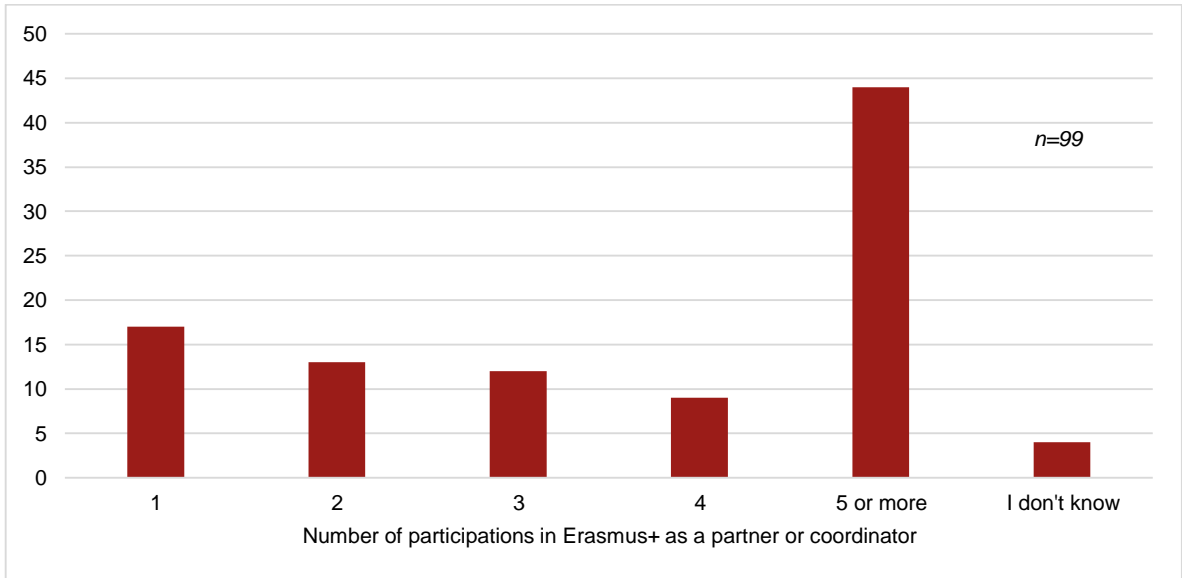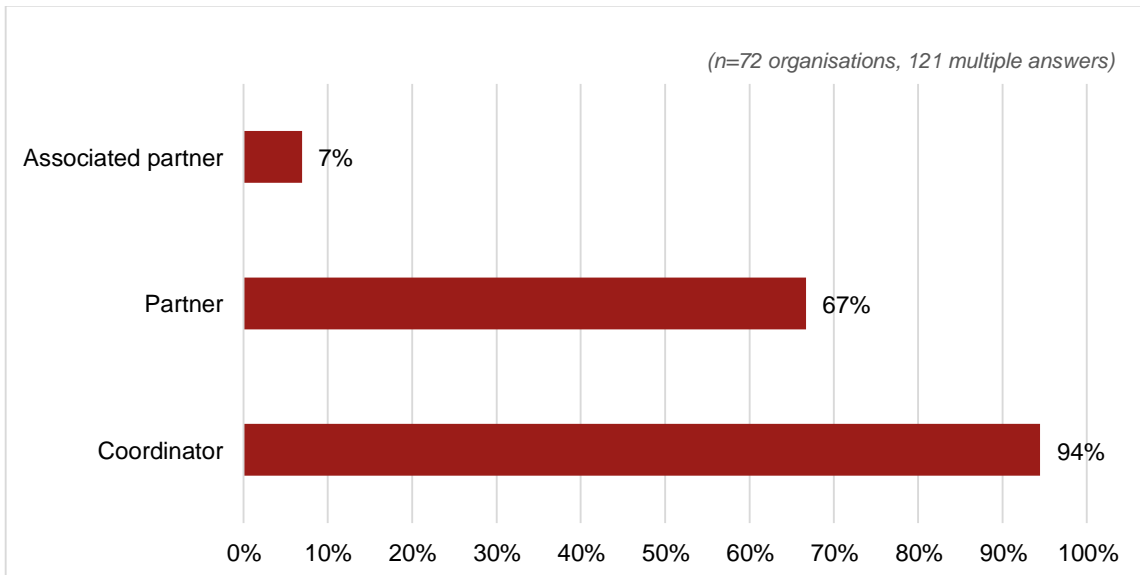Fig. II.1: Participation in Erasmus+ projects (source: online survey)

Fig. II.2: Roles of the organisations in Key Action 2 (source: online survey)

Tab. II.3: Added value of participating in Erasmus+ (source: online survey)

If your organisation had not participated in Erasmus+, would the supported actions by Erasmus+ after 2018 still have been implemented?	absolute	relative
Yes, there would be no difference	4	4%
Yes, but at a later date	1	1%
Partly, in a different form and with different content	9	9%
Partially, then in a slimmed-down form	19	20%
No	56	58%
I don't know	7	7%
n=	96	

Tab. II.4: Changes in the conditions for internationalisation processes (source: online survey)

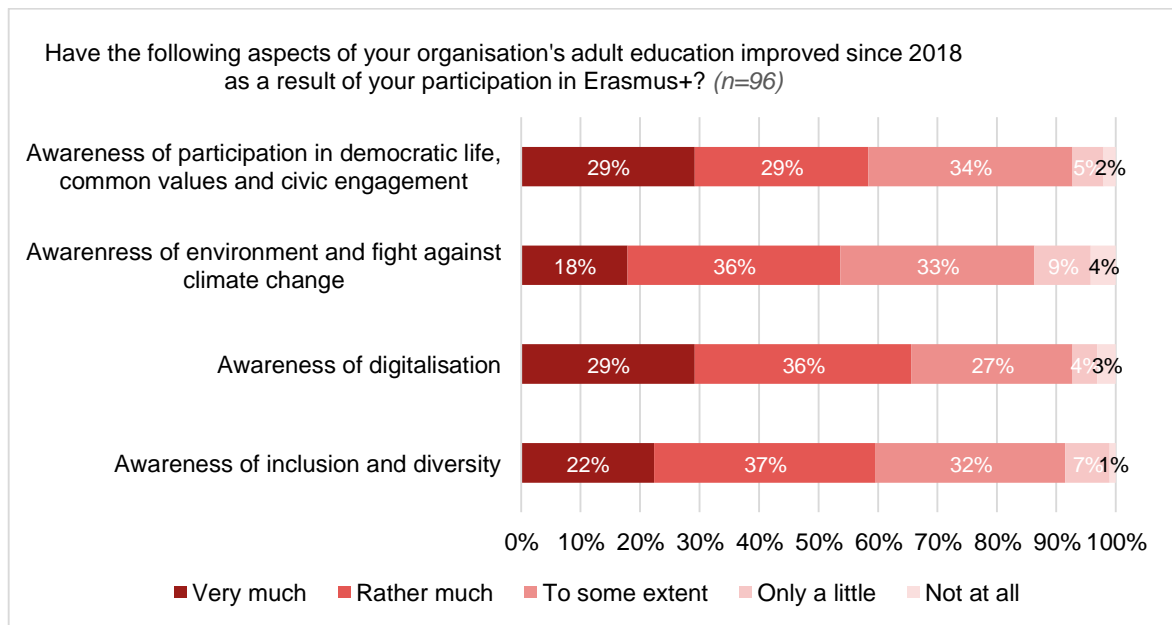| Did the conditions in your organisation to facilitate internationalisation processes improved, remained the same or worsend since 2018?	absolute	relative
They have improved significantly	23	24%
They have improved	43	44%
They have remained the same	20	21%
They have decreased	3	3%
They have significantly decreased	1	1%
I don`t know	7	7%
n=	97	

Fig. II.3: Structural support for internationalisation processes in the KA1-accredited organisations (source: online survey)

n= 26 (only accredited organisations)

Tab. II.5: Promotion of inclusion and diversity in the organisations (source: online survey)

Please indicate which of the following conditions are met in your organisation to promote inclusion and diversity?	absolute	Relative
We have an inclusion and diversity strategy and an action plan	25	25%
We have dedicated employees who are responsible for the coordination, communication and implementation of inclusion and diversity activities	64	65%
We train employees on inclusion and diversity	41	41%
We use the learner voice to develop, monitor and evaluate our offering	49	49%
We have established processes to ensure that our training programme is inclusive	41	41%
We cooperate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities	70	71%
Multiple answers	*290*	
	n=	99

Fig. II.4 Changes in awareness of horizontal priorities (source: online survey)

Have the following aspects of your organisation's adult education improved since 2018 as a result of your participation in Erasmus+? *(n=96)*

	Very much	Rather much	To some extent	Only a little	Not at all
Awareness of participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement	29%	29%	34%	5%	2%
Awareness of environment and fight against climate change	18%	36%	33%	9%	4%
Awareness of digitalisation	29%	36%	27%	4%	3%
Awareness of inclusion and diversity	22%	37%	32%	7%	1%

Tab. II.6: Conditions for promoting the digital transformation (source: online survey)

Please identify which of the following conditions are in place in your organisation to facilitate a digital transformation.	absolute	relative
We have an inclusion and diversity strategy and action plan	37	37%
Our staff have continuing professional development opportunities in the use of digital technologies.	72	73%
We have digital devices to use for teaching.	68	69%
We have digital devices for learners.	49	49%
We have physical spaces that support teaching and learning with digital technologies.	47	47%
Learners in need of special support have access to assistive technologies.	31	31%
We use digital resources for teaching and learning activities	85	86%
Multiple answers	389	
n=	**99**	

Tab. II.7: Conditions for promoting a green transition (source: online survey)

Please identify which of the following conditions are in place in your organisation to facilitate a green transformation.	absolute	relative
We have a green / sustainability strategy and action plan.	34	34%
We calculate our environmental footprint.	12	12%
We have dedicated staff that is responsible for the coordination, communication and implementation of the green / sustainability strategy.	52	53%
We train staff on good environmental practices.	42	42%
We use environmental certifications/ecolabels.	13	13%
We collaborate with organisations/individuals to strengthen sectoral capacity to operate more sustainably.	51	52%
We monitor the implementation of greening strategy and plan.	38	38%
We embed green skills in our learnings.	46	46%
We have a specific training offer for green skills.	23	23%
Multiple answers	*311*	
n=	**99**	

Tab. II.8: Conditions for the promotion of democratic values (source: online survey)

Please indicate which of the following conditions are in place in your organisation to enable participation in democratic life, shared values and civic engagement?	absolute	rela-tive
We have a strategy to promote active citizenship and democracy	29	29%
We train our employees in active civic engagement	38	38%
We offer activities that enable learners to develop and express their own opinions	75	76%
Our organisation offers learners spaces in which they can take on/experience responsibility	62	63%
We offer activities that activate the democratic participation of learners	61	62%
We have structures that enable learners to influence the learning programme (e.g. learner council)	27	27%
Multiple answers	*292*	
n=	**99**	

Fig. II.5: Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the development of the learning offer of beneficiary organisations

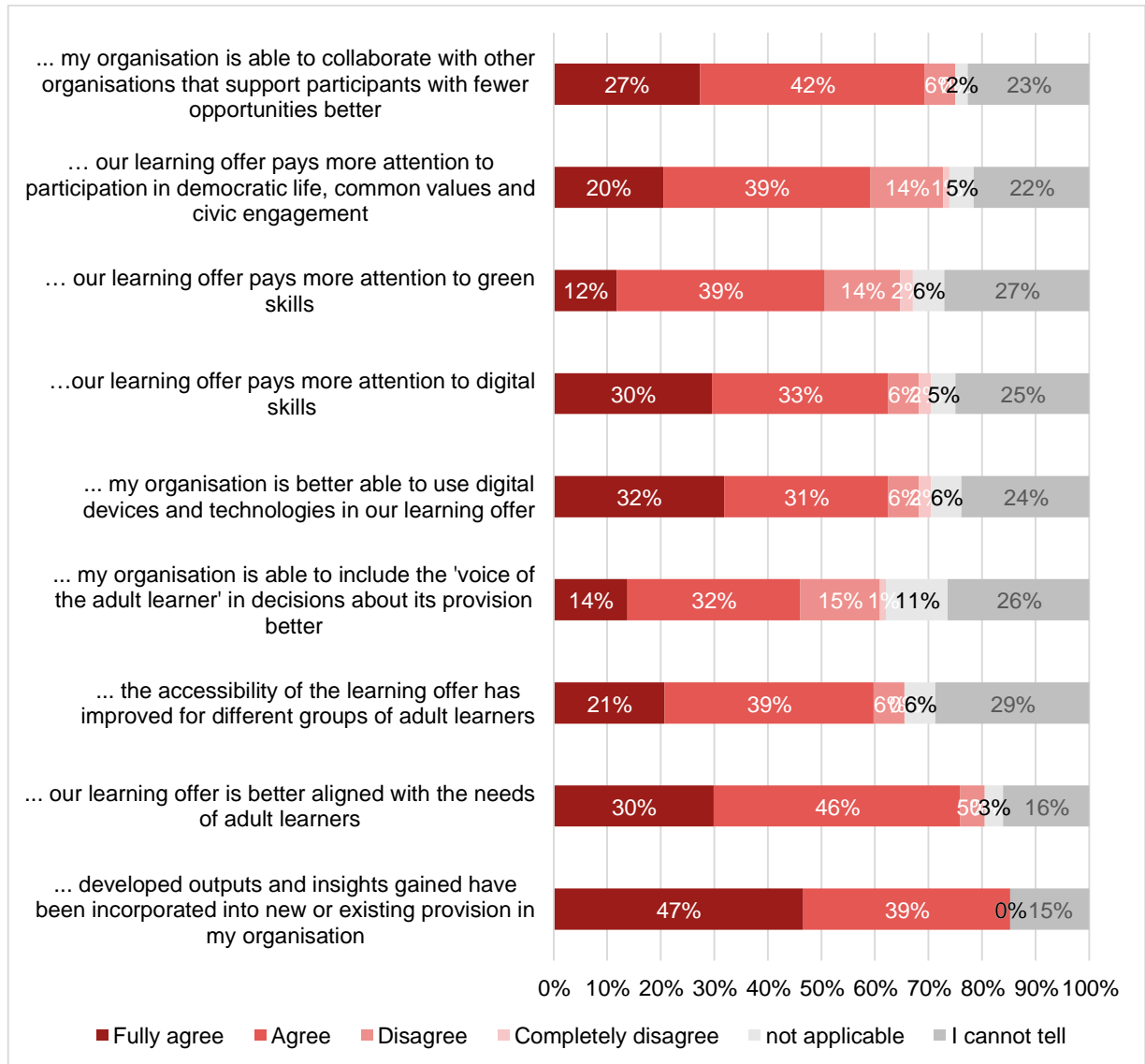| Statement	Fully agree	Agree	Disagree	Completely disagree	not applicable	I cannot tell
... my organisation is able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities better	27%	42%	6%	2%		23%
… our learning offer pays more attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement	20%	39%	14%	1%	5%	22%
… our learning offer pays more attention to green skills	12%	39%	14%	2%	6%	27%
…our learning offer pays more attention to digital skills	30%	33%	6%	2%	5%	25%
... my organisation is better able to use digital devices and technologies in our learning offer	32%	31%	6%	2%	6%	24%
... my organisation is able to include the 'voice of the adult learner' in decisions about its provision better	14%	32%	15%	1%	11%	26%
... the accessibility of the learning offer has improved for different groups of adult learners	21%	39%	6%		6%	29%
... our learning offer is better aligned with the needs of adult learners	30%	46%	5%		3%	16%
... developed outputs and insights gained have been incorporated into new or existing provision in my organisation	47%	39%			0%	15%

Legend: ■ Fully agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Completely disagree □ not applicable ■ I cannot tell

Fig. II.6: Attention to horizontal priorities and other topics (source: online survey)

Topics receiving more attention through participation in Erasmus+
(n=99, 580 multiple answers)
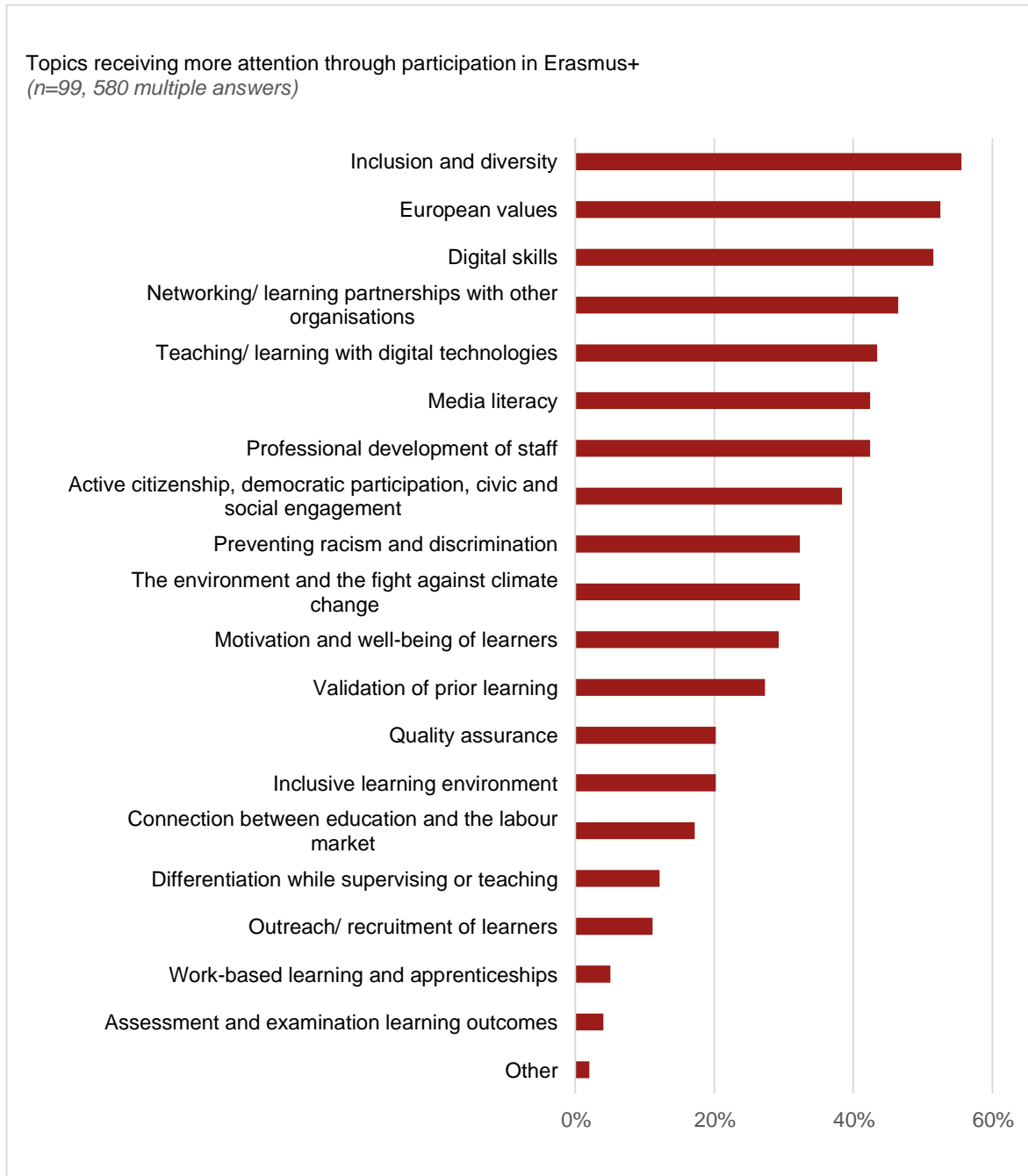
Appendix III: Reports on individual case studies

Case study 1

About the organisation

The organisation surveyed is a regional association of *Volkshochschulen*. The association employs around 50 people and has around 150 member organisations of various sizes that offer a wide range of adult education courses. The state association represents the interests of its member organisations at state and national level and supports them, for example, by providing advice, further training for staff and by acquiring and implementing variously funded projects.

Projects in Erasmus+

The organisation has been running its own Erasmus+ projects since 2015 and was previously involved in the Grundtvig programme. Since 2021, it has had KA1 accreditation, in which another national association participates as a consortium member. Since then, it has regularly organised individual and group mobilities for its own employees and employees of member organisations, as well as mobilities for learners. In the latter case, the focus is on supporting people with fewer opportunities. At the time of the survey, several mobilities for employees had taken place, but only one group mobility with four learners. The learners were participants from the "Reading and Writing" basic education courses. The employee mobilities had different focuses, including education for sustainability, inclusion and diversity, and digital transformation.

Importance and benefits of Erasmus+

The organisation does not have an independent internationalisation strategy, but the accreditation application fulfils a similar function. KA1 mobility measures generate impetus, open up new perspectives for the organisation's own work and strengthen the European identity and motivation of employees and learners. Erasmus+ projects are described as "add-ons" in that the budgets are limited in comparison to other funding programmes. At the same time, however, they are given a high idealistic value, which is also expressed by the fact that the organisation contributes its own funds for the implementation and releases employees to participate in mobility measures. Limited personnel resources are cited as a reason for only being active in KA1 so far.

With regard to the member organisations, there is still potential for greater participation in Erasmus+. However, there are some obstacles to overcome, in particular the "state of exhaustion" of many organisations following the pandemic and the waves of refugees, which place high demands in the area of language and integration courses. The personal motivation of the organisation managers and employees is often the decisive factor, with personal reasons such as working as a freelancer, lack of language skills or childcare sometimes also being an obstacle. In addition, the support of the staff councils in the municipalities is sometimes decisive in releasing employees for projects.

Methods

The following people were interviewed as part of the case study:

- Management (1 person, participation in mobility programme)

- Project management team (2 people)

- Employees of the national association (2 persons, participation in group mobilities)

- Employees of a member organisation (1 person, participation in two individual mobilities)

- Supervisor for a learner mobility (1 person)

- Adult learners from a member organisation (2 persons, participation in group mobility)

In addition, the accreditation application and three final reports from KA1 projects from the 2014-2020 programme generation were evaluated.

See also Info Box 1, 2 and 6

Case study 2

About the organisation

The organisation is a registered association that has been active in a district of a large city characterised by a variety of social problems since 2014. At the time of the survey, it employed five members of staff, some of whom were financed via freelance contracts, one student assistant and a fluctuating number of volunteers. The organisation is mainly financed by grants, particularly in the form of project funding. The association is locally based and offers various educational formats in the area of political education in the district, such as workshops, excursions and open dialogue spaces. In addition, has set itself the task of producing studies and educational materials as part of projects. In terms of content, the association focuses on intercultural encounters, both internationally as part of its European projects and locally in its cooperation with the various population groups in the neighbourhood.

Projects in Erasmus+

The association has been heavily involved in Erasmus+ since it was founded. In the current programme generation, has KA1 accreditation. At the same time, implements various KA2 projects, partly as a coordinator and partly as a partner. At the time of the survey, the association had completed five projects as coordinator since 2018 and two projects were still ongoing. As a partner, was involved in eight projects, three of which had not yet been completed. The focus is on political-economic education, remembrance culture and gender equality . As part of KA1, four *job shadowing projects have been* realised to date.

Importance and benefits of Erasmus+

The Erasmus+ projects form the centrepiece of the association's activities. On the one hand, many educational programmes take place as part of the projects. On the other hand, the Erasmus+ projects provide content and methods for programmes that are financed elsewhere or implemented with other partners. The structures, working methods and networks of the association have developed and professionalised strongly under the influence of the Erasmus+ projects.

Methods

The following people were interviewed as part of the case study:

- Management (1 person, participation in mobility programme)

- Project staff (2 persons)

- Volunteer employee (1 person, previously also involved as a learner in a workshop as part of a KA2 project)

In addition, the KA1 accreditation application and two final reports from KA2 projects from the current programme generation were evaluated.

See also Info Box 3

Case study 3

About the organisation

The organisation is a network organised as a registered association. It has been active in a heavily migrant neighbourhood since 2007. The core business of the organisation is research and development activities in the field of adult education, although occasional projects are also carried out in school or vocational education. Educational programmes for adult learners are carried out by cooperation partners and conceptually supported by the association. The association works primarily with organisations in its own district. In terms of content, the activities focus on intercultural encounters and international cooperation. They are financed through projects in various European and national funding programmes. The organisation currently employs around 13-14 people, including volunteers from other European countries. The association has around 200 members in various countries who act as a network and provide access to expertise in a wide range of specialist areas.

Projects in Erasmus+

The organisation has been active in European programmes since it was founded and has already implemented Grundtvig projects. At the time of the survey, the organisation had coordinated a total of ten KA2 projects in adult education since 2018, half of which had not yet been completed. The association was involved as a partner in a further 22 KA2 projects. It was also active as a coordinator in KA2 projects in vocational training and youth work and as a partner in the areas of school and higher education.

Importance and benefits of Erasmus+

Projects in Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ programme form a large part of the association's activities, although other European funding programmes are also used for comparatively larger projects, such as Horizon2020 and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme. In terms of funding, Erasmus+ projects account for around a third of the organisation's total budget and take up around half of staff time. Compared to other funding programmes, Erasmus+ is particularly valued for the scope it offers to work creatively and develop methods. From the perspective of the organisation management, it also offers the opportunity to "build local networks, live flexible project structures and develop things exploratively". The many years of experience in Erasmus+ are shared with network partners, and in some cases knowledge is also transferred when employees change jobs. Overall, the organisation sees itself as a multiplier and ambassador of the European idea.

Methods

The following people were interviewed as part of the case study:

- Management (1 person)
- Project staff (4 people, including 2 former apprentices)

In addition, three applications and final reports for KA2 projects from the old programme generation were evaluated.

See also Info Box 5

Case study 4

About the organisation

The organisation is a nationwide association comprising institutions of political youth and adult education with different profiles. These include youth education centres, *Volkshochschulen*, international meeting places and academies of party-affiliated foundations. They focus on political education, youth education, further education and international and intercultural education. The association receives institutional funding and is also financed by project funds from various funding programmes. Around 20 people work in the office.

Projects in Erasmus+

At the time of the survey, the organisation had completed a KA2 project in adult education as coordinator. The project dealt with digital transformation and developed various materials for teaching digitalisation skills in (political) adult education. An application for a follow-up project was rejected. In addition, three Erasmus+ projects in the youth sector have been carried out in the past.

Importance and benefits of Erasmus+

The organisation had already gained European experience in the Grundtvig programme, but was initially unable to successfully position its topics until democracy and political education were once again given a higher priority in Erasmus+. International cooperation is very important to the association and its member organisations, but primarily in youth education. In civic education for adults, European cooperation is only slowly becoming an issue again, but educational institutions in this field often lack the capacity to submit applications, especially for the role of coordinator. In its role, the association also sees itself as a supporter for the member organisations in order to strengthen their participation in Erasmus+. In particular, great potential is seen in KA1 for learner mobility.

Methods

The following people were interviewed as part of the case study:

- Project management (2 persons)

In addition, an application and the associated final report for a KA2 project from the old programme generation were evaluated.

See also Info Box 7

Case study 5

About the organisation

This is the department for education and integration within the administration of a medium-sized city in the new states. One member of staff is responsible for European co-operation in education and coordinates the activities involved in KA1 accreditation. As a central office, he supports the city's educational institutions, which are members of the KA1 accreditation consortium, in the planning and implementation of mobility programmes for learners and staff.

Projects in Erasmus+

As part of the KA1 accreditation, several mobility programmes for learners and employees have already been carried out. At the time of the survey, two groups of learners with refugee and migrant backgrounds had travelled to Spain and Italy respectively for a language course and further learner mobilities were being planned, including a trip to Poland for a group of senior citizens. The conceptualisation of a KA2 project has already been considered with partners, but an application has not yet been submitted for capacity reasons.

Importance and benefits of Erasmus+

There is no explicit internationalisation strategy for the education sector in the city administration. However, international activities are strongly supported by political decision-makers. Erasmus+ is perceived as a great opportunity to enable learners to participate in stays abroad who would otherwise not have the opportunity to do so. The programme pursues various objectives, but in particular the better integration of people with a refugee or migrant background and the fight against xenophobia. From the project coordinator's point of view, it will take some time and persuasion to convince employees in educational institutions to take part in mobility programmes.

Method

The following people were interviewed as part of the case study:

- Project management (1 person)

- Teacher of an educational institution (1 person, participation in an individual mobility)

- Supervisor for a learner mobility (1 person)

- Adult learners (1 person, participation in a group mobility)

In addition, the KA1 accreditation application was analysed.

See also Info Box 4

Appendix IV: Mission statement of the RIA-AE network

RIA-AE Network mission statement

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

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

The aims of the RIA-AE network

The RIA-AE network pursues the following objectives:

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

Procedure

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

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

Principles of cooperation

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

Values

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

Appendix V: Literature

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