

Impact of Erasmus+ on the Adult Education Sector

LATVIA

National report RIA-AE network

April / 2024



RIA

ADULT EDUCATION

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Abbreviations

AE	Adult education
E+	Erasmus+
EU	European Union
KA1	KEY ACTION 1: Learning mobility of individuals (staff and learners)
KA2	KEY ACTION 2: Cooperation among organisations and individuals
NA	National Agency
RIA-AE	Research-based Impact Analysis of Erasmus+ Adult Education Programme Network

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SHORT SUMMARY REPORT

Summary of result

Background of the monitoring study

Although adult education plays a significant role in promoting personal, social and economic well-being and it provides skills development opportunities to help people to find better jobs, it is not rare that adult education is underestimated in comparison with compulsory and higher education and receive limited budgets and policy attention.

To enlarge the visibility of the benefits of adult education in the EU and Member States and the role of Erasmus+ and to foster further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ Programme, this transnational monitoring study offers the analysis of the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education within the Erasmus+ programme.

Because the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners has been less researched so far both in Latvia and on the scale of the entire EU and to better coordinate research activities on the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education, a transnational research network **the Research-based Impact Analysis of Erasmus+ Adult Education Programme Network (RIA-AE Network)** has been developed, and the National Agency of Latvia (the State Education Development Agency) has joined to this network.

The main objectives of the first wave of the transnational monitoring study in 2023 are (1) to develop the methodological approach of the national monitoring study (to be repeated in 2025 and 2027), (2) to provide the National Agencies with information on the impact of the Erasmus+ on participating institutions, staff and adult learners, and (3) to propose suggestions on further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ Programme.

Methodological approach

The methodological approach of the transnational monitoring study envisages three waves in 2023, 2025 and 2027, and this is the report of the first wave study in 2023. The methodological approach of the national monitoring study 2023 in Latvia includes five modules: (1) analysis of existing impact studies and project documentation; (2) Survey among participating AE organisations; (3) case studies at AE institutions that participated in Erasmus+; (4) Interviews with adult learners (individual and group mobility); and (5) Interviews with non-participating organisations.

(1) The analysis of existing impact studies and project documentation was focused on programme monitoring data (based on PMM, MobilityTool+ and QlikSense) providing information on type of beneficiaries that participated in Erasmus+, topics addressed in Erasmus+ projects and impact data based on participant reports. Data were prepared and provided by the National Agency of Latvia (the State Education Development Agency).

(2) Survey among participating AE organisations took place between October and December 2023. All institutions, which participated as coordinator in KA1 and KA2 projects in adult education sector were invited to participate in an online survey. Their response rate was 63%. In total, 45 questionnaires were included in the analysis as valid.

(3) Case studies at AE institutions that participated in Erasmus+ included documents analysis, in-depths interviews, and group interviews both face-to-face and remotely. A total of five cases were studied in Latvia. The interviewees included representatives of the organisations' management, project coordinators, teaching staff who had participated in the mobility visits, and 11 adult learners. A total of 27 people were interviewed, and 23 interviews were conducted between October and December 2023.

(4) Interviews with adult learners took place between October 2023 and January 2024. In total 25 adult learners were interviewed that participated in a mobility action, as well as the AE institutions that successfully applied for mobility for adult learners within KA1.

(5) Interviews with non-participating organisations took place in January 2024. The criteria for selecting the organisations were: 1) the organisation has implemented an Erasmus project in the past but has not submitted a project application in recent years; 2) the organisation has received individual advice on the preparation of project applications but has not submitted a project application; 3) the organisation has participated in State Education Development Agency of Latvia seminars on the conditions for calls for proposals but has not prepared a project application. The interviews aimed to find out why these organisations have not (yet) applied, and the obstacles experienced for their organisations. Representatives of seven organisations were contacted and six interviews were conducted for the research. One potential interviewee declined to participate in the study because the organisation no longer exists.

Key findings

The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

Looking at the diversity of the applied projects and the organisations that receive funding, it can be concluded that the Erasmus+ program is available to the most diverse organisations: both by legal status and size of the organisation, as well as by thematic interest and target groups. The hindering factor for organisations to apply is the human resources capacity of the organisation. If the organisation does not have specialists with project planning, writing and English language skills to make contacts with international partners, or these specialists are busy with other work, organisations lack the capacity to prepare a project application.

The analysis of the characteristics of the KA1 mobilities' participants reveals that the proportion of women in KA1 mobilities is significantly higher than that of men (75% vs. 25%). This peculiarity of Latvia, that women participate much more actively in any kind of training, is a long-standing problem related to the involvement of men in educational processes in Latvia. To change this trend, the recruitment of men for educational activities should be given special attention and strongly encouraged.

Administrative data on participants with fewer opportunities in 2021-2022 KA1 mobilities shows a positive trend that the participation of this group increases a little every year. At the same

time, difficulties remain in providing mobility visits to persons in wheelchairs, as environmental accessibility problems are still observed in EU countries, which complicate the organisation of mobility visits for persons in wheelchairs. Ensuring inclusion is also complicated for other target groups, for example, for persons with low basic skills, because they often lack motivation to learn, and special approaches are needed to motivate them.

Impact at meso level

Quantitative survey data, as well as case studies and in-depth interviews confirms that participation in Erasmus+ projects has the strongest impact on internationalisation of organisations. 71% of the surveyed organisations agree that the conditions within their organisation to facilitate internationalisation processes have improved since 2018. More than 70% of surveyed organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ the international network of their organisation has been strengthened, that the management of international projects (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning) has been improved, and HR/ staff policy for internationalisation within their organisation has been strengthened, and that their organisation is more aware of the added value of international projects. Participation in Erasmus+ projects has a relatively smaller impact on the increase of funding for internationalisation.

The study reveals that participation in Erasmus+ projects has a significant impact on the learning offer of organisations. 86% of organisations point out that by participating in Erasmus+ their learning offer is better aligned with the needs of adult learners. More than 70% of organisations agree that their organisation is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities and that the accessibility of the learning offer has improved for different groups of adult learners. More than two-thirds of the organisations indicate that the developed outputs and insights gained have been incorporated into new or existing provision of their organisation.

In general, the Erasmus+ support has been decisive in the implementation of adult education activities in Latvia, because without Erasmus+ programme most or some of the learning activities in the adult education sector would not be carried out.

Within the impact of participation in Erasmus+ projects on horizontal priorities, the most significant impact of the projects has been on digital transformation. 66% of organisations report that attention to digitalisation has improved very much and rather much. The in-depth interviews and case studies suggest that this was significantly facilitated by the implementation of Erasmus+ projects during the Covid-19 pandemic, when all meetings had to be organized remotely and planned events had to be reorganized so that digital tools were used. The research reveals that the second horizontal priority on which participation in Erasmus+ projects has had the greatest impact is democratic life, common values and civic engagement. 60% of organisations state that the attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement has improved. 55% of organisations note that the attention to inclusion and diversity has improved, and only 40% mention that the attention to environment and fight against climate change has improved.

The main hindering factors to use outputs and products developed are the small staff capacity of the organisations and change of employees. The main stimulating factors are awareness of the organisation's mission and focus of organisations to solve certain problems

or to support certain target groups (seniors, persons with disabilities, Roma women etc.). Factors that encourage use of outputs and products developed with the support of Erasmus+ are the high relevance of the developed teaching materials and the availability of the learning materials in different languages and on different platforms.

Impact at micro level

The highest impact of Erasmus+ participation on the organisations' staff can be seen in significant improvements in terms of better international competences of staff. 87% of the surveyed organizations agree that participating in Erasmus+ improves intercultural competences, international orientation, and personal development of their employees. By participating in Erasmus+ organisations' staff has better language skills, is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities, is better able to make use of digital learning technologies, and staff has better pedagogical and didactical skills. Employees of participating organisations have improved a range of useful competences for their future work, including organising the work in teams and use new teaching methods. In addition to gaining competences that are directly applicable in their workplace, their self-esteem and motivation for further professional development have also been positively improved. All in all, participation in Erasmus+ has a significant impact on the professionalisation and development of staff.

Regarding the adult learners, the study shows that by participating in Erasmus+ the living environment/ world of adult learners has been enriched, adult learners have gained new social contacts outside of their own environment, they have become more assertive and have started to participate more in activities in their own environment. As a result of participation in projects, adult learners not only have acquired foreign language skills, certain professional skills, gained higher self-confidence and life experience, but in some cases even founded their own companies or non-governmental organisations in order to promote personal, social and economic well-being.

Impact at macro level

The impact of Erasmus+ beyond participating organisations in terms of how other organisations benefitted from the project outcomes is best revealed in case study interviews. The experience of the closely analysed organisations reveals that other organisations are involved in testing and use of the results of KA2 projects. Organisations are happy to cooperate with each other and to use the outputs prepared by other organisations. The only preconditions for this are that the outputs are prepared in high quality and available in both Latvian and English. 69% of the surveyed organisations believe that similar organisations have benefitted from the Erasmus+ project outcomes and have adjusted their learning provision/ offer.

Impact of Erasmus+ projects at the local, regional, and national level is less pronounced than other benefits. 31% of the surveyed organisations believe that by participating in Erasmus+ adjustments have been made to government and/ or sectoral policies at the local or regional level, and 16% of the surveyed organisations believe that by participating in Erasmus+ adjustments have been made to government and/ or sectoral policies at the national level. The case studies, positive examples of cooperation and distribution of results were more pronounced in relation to other organisations and cooperation with local municipalities. All in

all, the main impact and importance of Erasmus+ can be revealed at the meso and micro level, positively influencing the organisations that implement the projects and adult learners in Latvia, but it is less vivid at the macro level.

Policy pointers

How to increase the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

- In the study, the support provided by the NA (the State Education Development Agency) during both project preparation and implementation was evaluated very positively. Such support needs to be continued.
- To promote the more active involvement of men, as well as persons with low basic skills, in training activities, organisations should be inspired to think more about different approaches to encouragement and motivation, possibly also by preparing projects in which such motivation strategies are tested.
- To promote the involvement of new and inexperienced organisations in Erasmus+ projects, it is recommended to simplify the project application form, reducing the need to repeat similar information in different sections.
- For Erasmus+ projects to cover a larger number of organisations and have a greater impact, it is necessary to evaluate whether the funding available to Latvian applicants for adult education projects should not be increased. It should be noted that the available funding is determined not by the National Agency, but by the European Commission.

How to increase the impact at macro level

- To increase the impact of Erasmus+ projects beyond participating organisations, it is recommended that more emphasis be placed in the training of organisations on measures to promote the dissemination and wider application of project results (in the stage of preparation of project applications).
- To increase the impact of Erasmus+ projects on policies at the national, regional and local level it is recommended that, in training activities, organisations should be inspired to think more about macro level impact and involvement of relevant municipalities and state institutions as important stakeholders in the implementation of projects.

MAIN REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

1.1 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU flagship mobility programme for **education, training, youth, and sport in Europe**. The programme offers mobility and cooperation opportunities in the following **six main areas**: higher education (HE); vocational education and training (VET); school education (including early childhood education and care - ECEC); adult education; youth; and sport. It aims to reach out to a wider range of groups such as younger students, disadvantaged individuals, and smaller grassroots organisations.

The **general objective** of Erasmus+ emphasises **lifelong learning** as underpinning the educational, professional, and personal development of people in education, training, youth, and sport, both in Europe and beyond. The programme Actions aim to contribute to sustainable growth, ensuring that citizens have quality jobs, building social cohesion, facilitating innovation, and strengthening European identity and active citizenship.

In 2021-2027, as with the previous programme, Erasmus+ comprises three **Key Actions**. Some Actions are managed at the **centralised** Commission level, either directly or through the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (**EACEA**). Other Actions are managed at the **decentralised** level through the network of **Erasmus+ National Agencies (NAs)**¹ whose role is to promote the programme, disseminate information nationally, support applicants and beneficiaries, assist the Commission in the selection process for funding, monitoring and evaluating projects, and work with other NAs and the Commission, for example sharing high quality practice and project achievements. These include:

- **KEY ACTION 1: Learning mobility of individuals (staff and learners)**: aiming to influence education, training, and youth systems, result in positive long-term effects on individuals, ultimately inspiring policy reforms and drawing new resources for mobility opportunities throughout Europe and beyond.
- **KEY ACTION 2: Cooperation among organisations and individuals (Previous: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices)**: aiming to develop, transfer, and/or implementation of innovative practices at the organisational, local, regional, national, and European levels, with beneficial long-term consequences on the participating organisations and policy systems.

For the Adult Education Sector, the Erasmus+ programme aims to strengthen the socio-economic resilience of adults whose conditions for changing their personal situation through educational opportunities are difficult. Adult learning under Erasmus+ should lead to greater ownership and autonomy through improved language, numeracy, digital and other skills for

¹ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/national-agencies>

vulnerable adults. The figure below provides the reconstructed Theory of change (ToC) of Erasmus+ for the adult education sector.

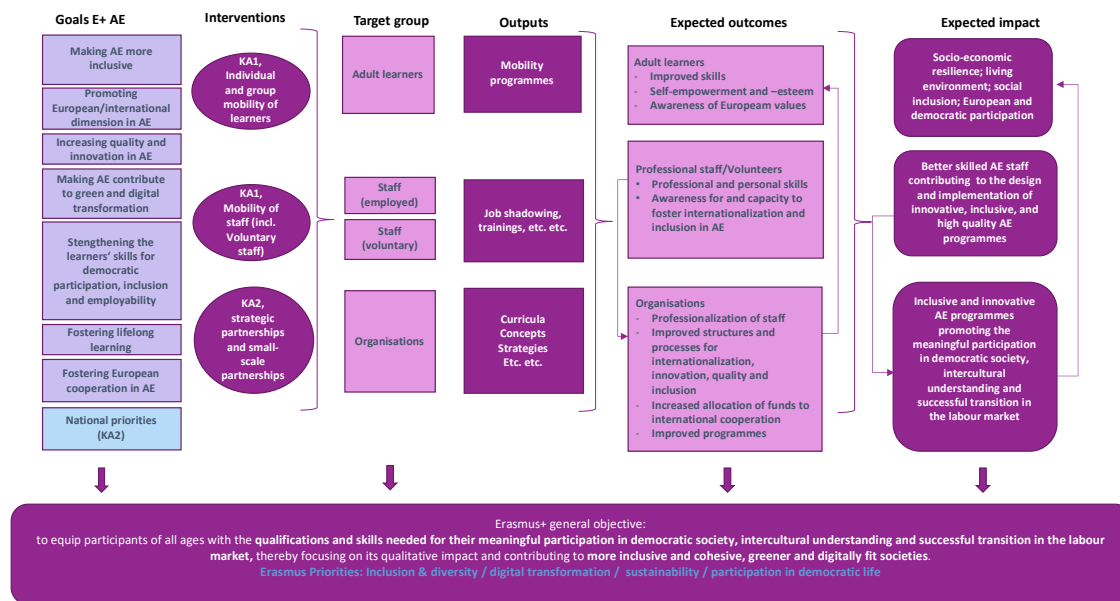


Figure 1: Intervention logic Erasmus+ impact on the adult education sector

1.2 The importance of impact monitoring

Till now, less is known about the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners, staff, volunteers and organisations in the field of adult learning. To better coordinate research activities on strengthening the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education and to enable the further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ programme, a transnational research network has been established, funded by Erasmus+ (see box below with the mission statement of the RIA-AE network).

Mission Statement RIA-AE Network

'Adult education matters' AND 'To explore the unexplored'

Adult education provides skills development opportunities to help EU citizens find better jobs and improve well-being. Yet it remains a "poor cousin" of compulsory and higher education, often disconnected from social policy and the education system at large, receiving limited budgets and policy attention compared to other sectors. Nevertheless, research shows that adult education matters and that adult education plays a significant role in promoting personal, social and economic well-being.

The impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners has been less researched so far and little is known about the impact of the Erasmus+ programme on the environment and socio-economic resilience of adult learners. 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 to be established named: The Research-based Impact Analysis of Erasmus+ Adult Education Programme Network (RIA-AE Network)

The objectives of the RIA-AE network

The RIA-AE Network has various objectives:

- 1) to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education within the Erasmus+ programme;
- 2) to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between research, policy and practice;
- 3) to contribute to further development and quality improvement of the Erasmus+ Programme by enabling high-quality and practice-oriented evaluation and impact research.
- 4) to enlarge the visibility of the benefits of adult education in the EU and Member States and the role of Erasmus+ (advocacy).

Means

In order to achieve these objectives, the RIA-AE network aims to establish cooperation between National Agencies of the Erasmus+ from different European countries interested in developing a new approach to programme evaluation and impact assessment in the field of adult education within the Erasmus+ framework.

This framework opens the possibility to take stock of existing research and knowledge on the benefits and impact of adult education (repository), curate this knowledge and update knowledge by implementing different research projects to evaluate the impact of mobility projects and partnerships. Research designs can focus on impact at individual, organisational or systemic level, and can explore core thematic areas such as the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme. One such research project is an impact study of Erasmus+ on adult education organisations, staff and adult learners in Europe.

Cooperation framework

Cooperation 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 institutions (e.g. universities, research institutes). Each NA involved in the network can decide whether to carry out the research projects itself (depending on resources and staff expertise) or to commission a partner.

Values

To achieve the goal of high-quality research, network partners adhere to common standards of social and educational research that meet internationally recognised ethical standards. The methods used for the research activities may include all methods commonly used in sociology, political science and education - quantitative, qualitative or a mixture of different methods.

BOX 1: Mission statement RIA-AE network

1.3 Multi-level framework

The RIA-AE network works on the development of a transnational monitoring study for programme evaluation and impact analysis in the field of adult learning. The monitoring

focuses on the question of the benefits of participating in Erasmus+ adult education projects, i.e. the identification of factors that have contributed to positive or negative, short-term or lasting changes, e.g. in the personal, organisational and professional spheres. In addition, it will be determined to what extent the objectives set by the EU in this framework (inclusion and diversity; digitisation; sustainability/climate; participation in democratic life) could be realized. Based on this information, recommendations can be made for improving the programme.

To be able to address the effects of Erasmus+ on the different programme levels (organisation, staff, learners), the RIA-AE network proposes to locate the monitoring study in a multi-level model of adult education. The model distinguishes between the micro, meso and macro levels, which can be decisive for access and take-up, but also for the effects of international projects in individual, organisational or systemic terms (Brüning and Kuwan, 2002)²³. Brüning and Kuwan, (2002) notably stress that the answer to the challenge of widening participation of learners lies in the alignment of activity structures at the macro, meso and micro level. To provide a basis for interdependence of these levels 'mobilisation strategies' and 'clusters of instruments, to increase the participation in learning or to mobilize specific target groups into learning' (Broek and Hake, 2012, p. 400), are necessary. The framework connects the following factors (cf. Brüning and Kuwan, 2002):

- the subjective and social barriers of the individual (micro level);
- the provision of educational services by educators, educational institutions and other organisations (meso level), taking into account the above-mentioned barriers at the micro level;
- the framework conditions and development opportunities of adult education organisations through participation in mobility programmes (meso level);
- and political decision-making (macro level) to create the necessary conditions for the meso level.

Figure 2 shows the interplay of these three levels influencing the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education within the Erasmus+ programme. For each of these levels key factors can be identified to describe and analyse the specific

² Schrader, J. (2011): Struktur und Wandel der Weiterbildung. Bielefeld: wbv.

³ Brüning, G. & Kuwan, H. (2002): Benachteiligte und Bildungsferne - Empfehlungen für die Weiterbildung. Bielfeld: wbv.

influences of the impact of international cooperation and mobility projects in adult education within the Erasmus+ programme.

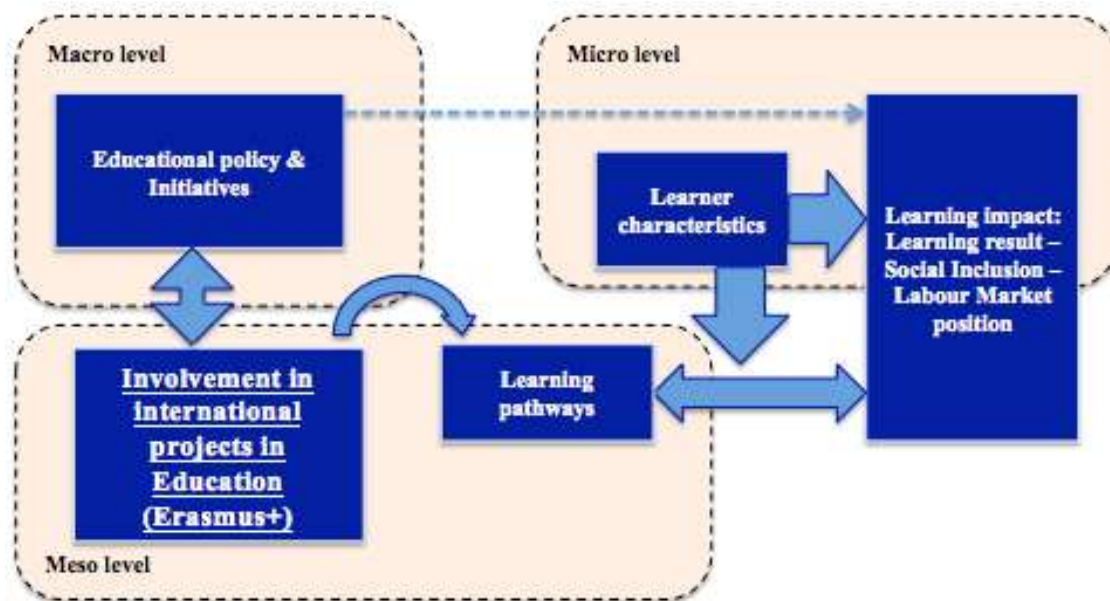


Figure 2: Interplay of key factors at macro, meso and micro levels

1.4 Purpose of the study and research questions

The main objective of the transnational monitoring study is to provide the National Agencies with information on the impact of the Programme on (1) participating institutions, (2) staff and (3) adult learners who have participated in a mobility activity individually or in groups, as well as on the benefits for their living environment and socio-economic resilience.

Although the monitoring study aims to determine the impact of individual actions at micro, meso and macro levels differentiated according to the guiding principles KA1 and KA2, in practice the beneficiary organisations often participate in several parts of the programme and projects (KA1 and KA2) and in different roles (e.g. as coordinators and partners). Such "double" participation has a cumulative effect on the organisation, staff and learners, making it difficult to attribute the impact to individual parts of the programme or projects. Rather, a link between effects can be assumed. In this way, KA2 projects can directly strengthen the educational offer of organisations. However, this provision also has an impact on adult education staff and individual learners. Staff and learner mobility could also have an indirect impact on organisations. Therefore, we jointly present the research questions to be addressed in Table 1.

Research
How accessible/inclusive is the programme for the target groups? (chapter 4)
– What are the specificities and characteristics of the adult education organisations participating in the Erasmus+ programme?
– What are the specificities and characteristics of participants, staff, volunteers and adult learners who, individually or in groups, participate or have participated in an Erasmus+ project?
– What does this information say about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ internationalisation projects in the network countries (Erasmus+ priority inclusion and diversity)? Are there any 'Mobstacles' for organisations, professionals and learners to participate?
What is the impact of participation in KA1 and KA2 projects at the AE institution on the following areas... (chapter 5)
– The quality of the organisation and in particular the organisational embedding of internationalisation in the organisations (strategy, finances, project management, networks, validation of international competences)?
– Policies for the professional development of their staff in relation to individual needs and organisational objectives?
– The introduction of new or adaptation of existing offers (programmes, activities, modules or new/adapted pedagogical, didactic and validation activities)?
– The adaptation of (educational) activities and programmes to the needs of learners?
– The involvement of learners in programme design?
– Improving accessibility for adult learners (inclusion)?
– Quality assurance policies?
– The use of information and communication technologies and the digitisation of programmes (Erasmus+ priority digital transformation)?
– The promotion of the teaching of international competences and common values (inclusion and diversity; tolerance; sustainability/ environment/ fight against climate change, digitisation, global citizenship, equal opportunities, anti-discrimination, etc.) in the offers (see Erasmus+ priorities: Inclusion & diversity / digital transformation / sustainability / participation in democratic life)?
– Sustainable cooperation and synergies between adult education institutions, charities, cultural institutions, labour market actors and civil society to promote the independence of adult learners?
– The dissemination, exchange of knowledge and experience within the organisation and with other (more or less experienced) organisations?
– The establishment and development of an international network?
– How do the impacts differ between the different types of adult education institutions (formal, non-formal, governmental, civil society, private)?
What impact does participation in KA1 and KA2 projects have on staff in the areas of ...(chapter 6.2)
– Skills, knowledge, attitudes, competences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Foreign language and intercultural awareness

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital competences, including to allow a shift towards digital education - Competences linked to occupational profiles - Understanding of practices, policies and systems across countries - Understanding for and ability to address issues of social inclusion and diversity - Capacity to trigger changes in terms of modernisation and international opening within their educational organisations - Organising mobility projects - Managing cooperation with European partners - Management skills (mentioned only in KA2) - Sustainability competences (mentioned only in KA2)
- Self-confidence, adaptability and perseverance?
- The application and exchange of the international experience gained among the employees?
- Identification with European society and the values associated with it (integration, diversity, tolerance, anti-discrimination, etc.)?
- Professional development and career?
- Motivation and satisfaction in daily work?
What impact do KA1 and KA2 projects have on adult learners in the areas of ... (chapter 6.3)
<p>Skills, knowledge, attitudes, competences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foreign language and intercultural awareness - Awareness and understanding of the European Union and common European values (e.g. respect for democratic principles, human dignity, unity and diversity, intercultural dialogue, as well as European social, cultural and historical heritage) - Key competences - Digital skills and media literacy - Sustainability-related skills and awareness for green transformation - Self-empowerment and self-esteem - Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
<p>Labour market outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced employability, improved career prospects and economic independence
<p>Lifelong learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved learning performance and motivation for taking part in education and training - Enable learners to participate in training
<p>Social Inclusion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More active participation in society and enhanced positive interactions with people from different backgrounds - Socio-economic resilience
- Is there a difference in impact between participation in group and individual mobility?
What impact do KA1 and KA2 projects have on other organisations and policy developments? (Chapter 7)

– Will the experiences from the KA1 and KA2 projects be taken over by other organisations that have not participated in Erasmus+ (dissemination of results)?
– Do the results of the KA1 and KA2 projects contribute to policy developments at local, regional, national and European level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Policy reforms – Attracting new resources for mobility opportunities – Raising participation of adult of all ages and socio-economic background in adult education
Lessons to support the effectiveness and efficiency of future Erasmus+ programmes (Chapter 8)
– How can the accessibility of the Erasmus+ programme to the target group adult learning be improved?
– Which AE organisations are pioneers and why (with which institutional peculiarities including special features of the offers)?
– What are the opportunities and challenges for the participation of target groups?
– What are the first experiences with the KA1 individual or group mobility of adult learners and what are the opportunities and risks?
– What monitoring information is needed annually in addition to the "participation reports" in order to monitor the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ programme on the target group of adult learners? Can research provide a frame of reference that enables a sustainable improvement in effectiveness?
– How can the NAs support the AE institutions even more strongly in reaching impact?

Table 1: Research questions

2 Research design

2.1 Introduction

The methodological approach of the national monitoring study includes five modules, which are repeated over the three waves 2023, 2025 and 2027 and thus enable an update of the impact monitoring:

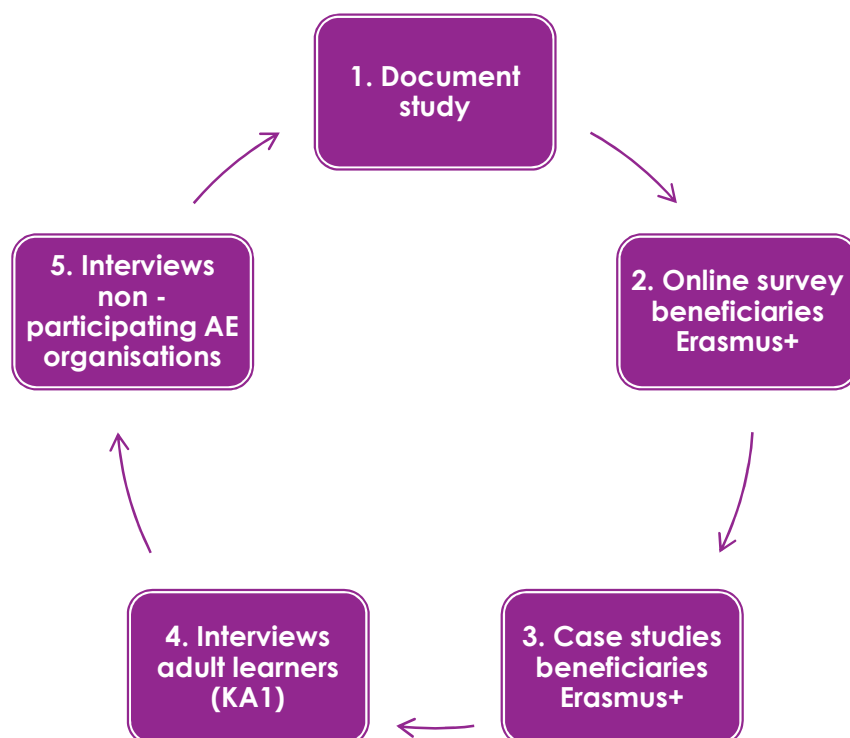


Figure 3: Research design

2.2 Module 1: Analysis of existing impact studies and project documentation

Available existing impact research was considered that has been carried out in the last decade on the impact of Erasmus on the adult education sector at national level. Moreover, programme data were analysed on type of beneficiaries that participated in Erasmus+, topics addressed in Erasmus+ projects and impact data based on participant reports (making use of programme monitoring data, based on PMM, MobilityTool+ and QlikSense).

2.3 Module 2: Survey among participating AE organisations

To get a good picture of the impact of Erasmus+ on AE institutions in Latvia, all AE institutions, which participated as coordinator in a KA1 and KA2 project in the previous (from 2018 onward) and current programming period, were invited to participate in an online survey. The response rate among coordinators of KA1 and KA2 projects is 63%. In total, 45 questionnaires are included in the analysis as valid. The survey took place between October and December 2023.

2.4 Module 3: Case studies

In addition to the analysis of existing information at the NA and the survey, five case studies were conducted at AE institutions that participated in Erasmus+. A total of 27 people were interviewed, and 23 interviews were conducted to identify project experiences. The interviews were conducted both face-to-face and remotely. The interviewees included representatives of the organisations' management, project coordinators, teaching staff who had participated in the mobility visits, and 11 adult learners. The interviews took place between October and December 2023.

2.5 Module 4: Interviews with adult learners (individual and group mobility)

To get a picture of participation, experiences and impact of mobility for adult learners (new activity in the current Erasmus+ programme), in total 25 adult learners were interviewed that participated in a mobility action, as well as the AE institutions that successfully applied for mobility for adult learners within KA1 (partly online and partly on-site). The interviews took place between October 2023 and January 2024.

2.6 Module 5: Interviews with non-participating organisations

Phone Interviews were implemented with AE institutions with no experience of Erasmus+ about why they have not (yet) applied, and the obstacles experienced for their organisations. Representatives of seven organisations were contacted and six interviews were conducted for the research. One potential interviewee declined to participate in the study because the organisation no longer exists. The criteria for selecting the organisations were: 1) the organisation has implemented an Erasmus project in the past but has not submitted a project application in recent years; 2) the organisation has received individual advice on the preparation of project applications but has not submitted a project application; 3) the organisation has participated in State Education Development Agency of Latvia seminars on the conditions for calls for proposals but has not prepared a project application. The interviews took place in January 2024.

KEY FINDINGS

3. Short portrait of the adult learning sector in Latvia

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the governance of the adult education sector in Latvia, the Adult Education infrastructure, type of stakeholders involved and main policy priorities. It is based on analysis of policy documents and existing studies on the adult education sector.

3.2 Adult Education Policies in Latvia

The tasks of the adult education policy formulated in the Latvian policy planning documents envisage the promotion of a culture of lifelong learning, the development of competences in accordance with the changing conditions of the labour market, the role of adult education in reducing and preventing unemployment, fostering personal growth and self-realization, and more active involvement of employers in the implementation of adult education.

The currently valid policy planning document in the field of education is Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 "Future Skills for Future Society", approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2021⁴. This planning document defines the following adult education policy priorities: (1) to increase participation in adult education; (2) to strengthen the quality and management of adult education; (3) to develop a sustainable financing system for adult education, which fosters cooperation of public and private sectors; (4) to promote the acquisition of digital skills.

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

One of the latest studies on the adult education sector in Latvia is the 2020 study "Evaluation of more effective involvement in education of employed adults with low qualifications" of the foundation "Baltic Institute of social sciences"⁵. It provides an insight into the characteristics of the adult education situation in Latvia and concludes that in order to achieve better results,

⁴ Ministru kabineta 2021. gada 22. jūnija noteikumi Nr. 436 "Par Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādņēm 2021.-2027. gadam". Publicēts oficiālajā izdevumā "Latvijas Vēstnesis", 1.07.2021., Nr. 124 <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2021/124.17>.

⁵ BISS (2020). Nodarbināto pieaugušo ar zemu kvalifikāciju efektīvākas iesaistes mācībās izvērtējums. Available: http://petijumi.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/title_file/BISS_zinojums_pieauguso_izglitiba_2020.pdf

more state funding and involvement in managing adult education should be ensured. It is especially necessary for improving the skills of employees with a low level of education.

It must be emphasized, that according to this study the main source of funding for adult education in the last 10 years is funding from the EU and other foreign financial instruments and private funds for various projects. These are the main sources of funding for implementing professional continuing education programs, non-formal education programs and other adult education programs. The problem in the field of adult education, especially for the future, is that there is no systemic state funding for adult education in Latvia.

As shown by the survey data of the municipalities, in the majority of municipalities, their planning documents provide for lifelong learning measures. At the same time targeted financial resources for adult education are not allocated from the municipal budget. The lack of state and local government funding, as explained by education policy makers, is also one of the main reasons why adult education centres have stopped operating in many municipalities, as they were basically developed and performed their functions thanks to the support of EU structural funds.

The quality of the adult education offer is uneven, not always sufficiently controlled and corresponding to the requirements of the labour market. Therefore, the question of the quality of education, especially in relation to non-formal education programs, is a topical issue on the agenda of the field of adult education. The study also shows that the participants of adult education events, although they are involved in the process of adult education, do not recognize it as involvement in educational events and, accordingly, it is not included in the overall statistics, which are based on the self-assessment of the population.

In general, the adult education sector in Latvia is not well enough developed, and Erasmus+ projects serve as a resource for new ideas and development, while their sustainability is threatened by a systematic lack of state and local government funding.

3.4 Conclusions

Considering the fact that adult education in Latvia is a relatively less developed education sector, the first priority defined by the Cabinet of Ministers for adult education in Latvia is the need to increase the number of citizens participating in adult education activities. This priority is also closely related to the second and third priorities: to strengthen the quality and management of adult education and to develop a sustainable financing system for adult education, which fosters cooperation of public and private sectors. In connection with the digitization of the entire public administration, as the fourth priority of adult education the fostering of the acquisition of digital skills has been put forward. These priorities correspond to the problems identified in previous evaluations and studies in the adult education sector. The first, second and fourth priorities in the adult sector are partially addressed by Erasmus+ projects, too. While the third priority of development of a sustainable financing system for adult education is more the responsibility of state institutions, primarily the Ministry of Education. Although a wide variety of stakeholders are involved in adult education in Latvia (municipalities, educational institutions, NGOs and the private sector), it is precisely the

insufficient leading role of the state that is one of the challenges of the adult education sector in Latvia.

Research on the impact of Erasmus+ in the adult education sector, which would include opportunities for international comparison, has not been conducted in Latvia. So far, the impact of Erasmus+ has been assessed based on administrative data collected by the National Agency (the State Education Development Agency) and surveys among the beneficiaries.

4. The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

4.1 Introduction

Inclusion is one of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme and it is therefore important that the programme is attractive to organisations that have not previously benefited from Erasmus+, as well as to vulnerable participants who would otherwise be less likely to participate in internationalisation activities. This chapter discusses the characteristics of AE institutions that participated in Erasmus+ in the previous and current programme period, but also the characteristics of participants who benefit from the developed outputs (KA2) and/or mobility (KA1). On this basis, statements can be made about the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+ within the AE sector in Latvia.

4.2 Participating organisations in Erasmus+

The NA uses different databases to aggregate information on application, participant reports and final reports. The document analysis aims to make use of this information, mainly focusing on KA1 participant reports and information from applications. Considering that the data was collected separately for mobility projects (KA1 projects) and partnership projects (KA2 projects), the data analysis is also presented separately for these two groups of projects: Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals and Key Action 2: Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices.

4.2.1 2018-2020 period

The data provided by the National Agency (State Education Development Agency) on KA1 projects in the period from 2018 to 2020 provide information on the type of project recipient organisations. Out of a total of 54 approved projects (one project applicant may have submitted and implemented several projects), 22 approved projects are submitted by non-governmental organisations, 9 approved projects are submitted by small and medium sized enterprises, and 8 approved projects are submitted by adult education centres. Other organisations are represented in a smaller number, but at the same time their diversity shows wide opportunities for various organisations to receive Erasmus+ project funding (Figure 4).

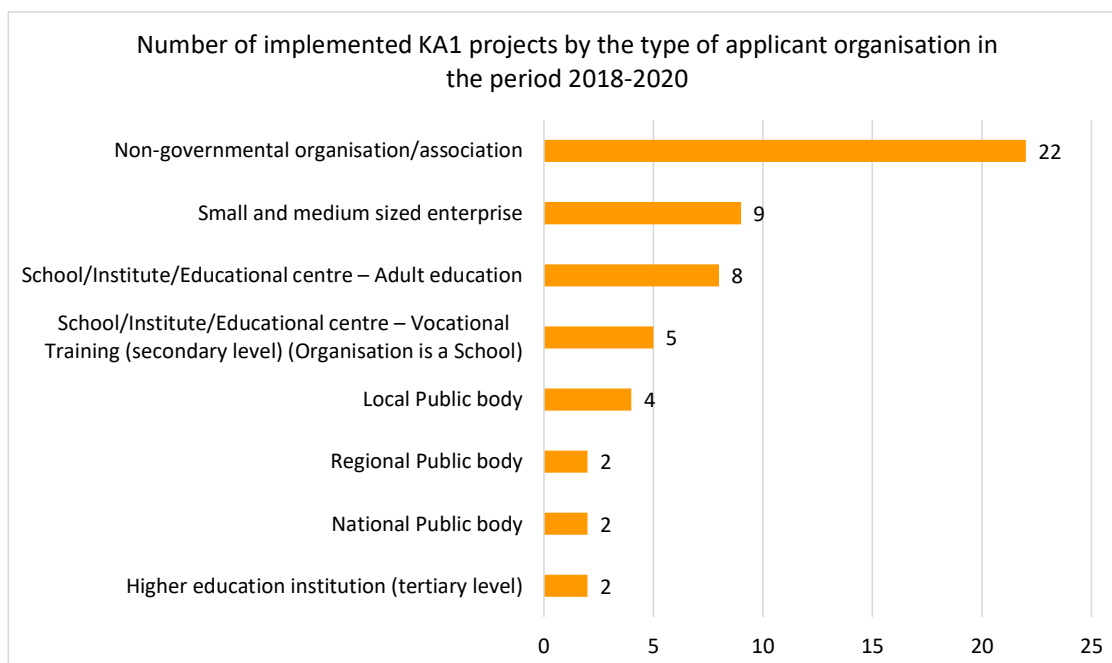


Figure 4: Number of implemented projects KA1 by the type of applicant organisation in the period 2018-2020

Statistics of awarded KA2 projects show that a total of 162 projects have been supported in the period from 2018 to 2020. 74 awarded projects were submitted by non-governmental organisations or foundations (Figure 5). 20 awarded projects were submitted by higher education institutions (tertiary level), while 17 awarded projects were submitted by foundations. A similar number of awarded projects (13) have been submitted by small and medium sized enterprises and adult education centres. Similarly to the KA1 project applicants, diversity of awarded organisations shows wide opportunities for various organisations to receive Erasmus+ project funding.

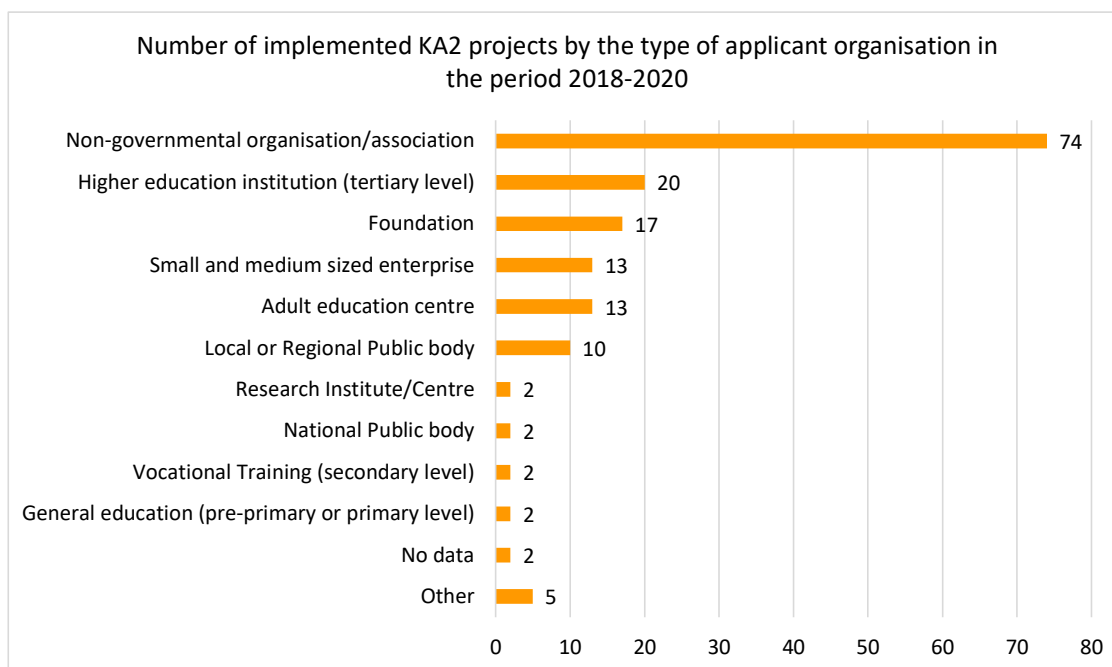


Figure 5: Number of implemented projects KA2 by the type of applicant organisation in the period 2018-2020

Survey of AE institutions, which participated as coordinators in a KA1 and KA2 project in Latvia, shows that almost half of organisations identify themselves as non-governmental organisations (NGO) or associations (49%), 22% have mentioned that they are adult education providers (school/ institute/ centre), and 11% have mentioned that they are enterprises.

4.2.2 2021-2022 period

According to the data provided by the National Agency on KA1 projects in the period from 2021 to 2022, out of a total of 53 approved projects (one project applicant may have submitted and implemented several projects), 26 approved projects are submitted by non-governmental organisations, and 18 approved projects are submitted by adult education centres. Compared to the previous period, the number of submitted and awarded projects by non-governmental organisations and adult education centres has increased (Figure 6).

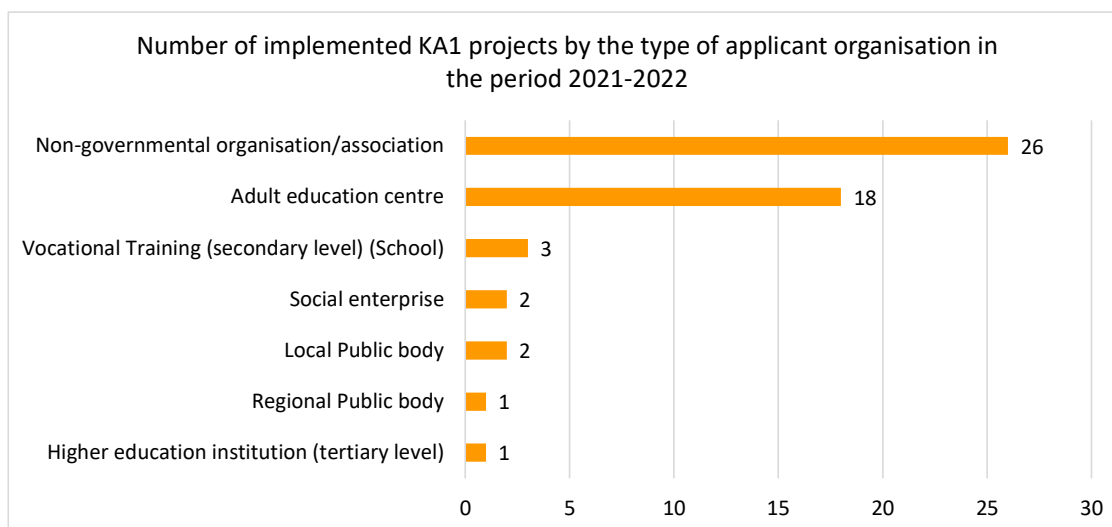


Figure 6: Number of implemented projects KA1 by the type of applicant organisation in the period 2021-2022

The data on awarded KA2 projects in the period from 2021 to 2022 show that a total of 87 projects have been supported. 52 awarded projects were submitted by non-governmental organisations or foundations (Figure 7). Similarly to the previous period, most projects were submitted and awarded by non-governmental organisation or associations. There is an equal number of awarded projects among small and medium sized enterprises and local or regional public bodies (10 projects in each group of organisations), while only 5 awarded projects were submitted by adult education centres.

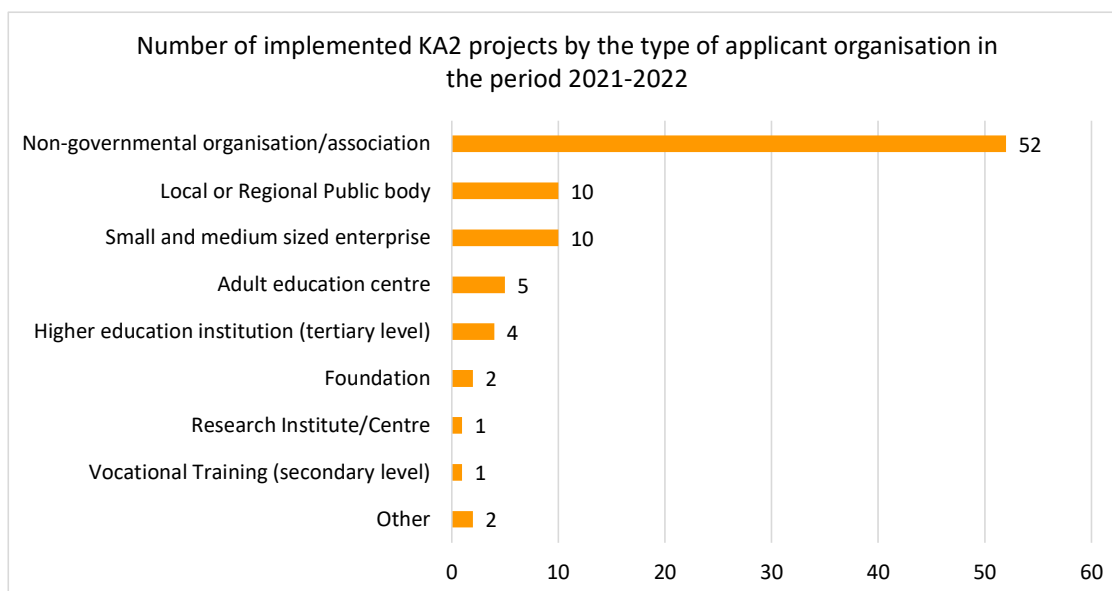


Figure 7: Number of implemented projects KA2 by the type of applicant organisation in the period 2021-2022

4.2.3 Size of participating organisations

Out of 45 organisations surveyed, 23 organisations or 51% are small organisations with 1-5 employees. 13 organisations or 29% of all surveyed organisations have 6-50 employees. Only 9 organisations (20%) have more than 50 employees (Figure 8).

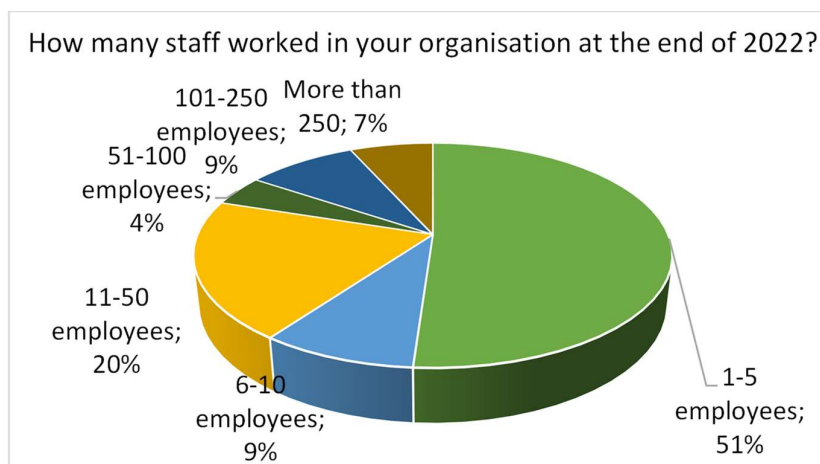


Figure 8: Staff working in organisation at the end of 2022

The number of adult learners participating in learning activities in 2022 varies in different organisations. 20% of organisations have very few adult learners (up to 10). The number of adult learners in 20% of the organisations ranges from 11 to 50. Large organisations with more than 250 adult learners make up 20% of organisations (Figure 9).

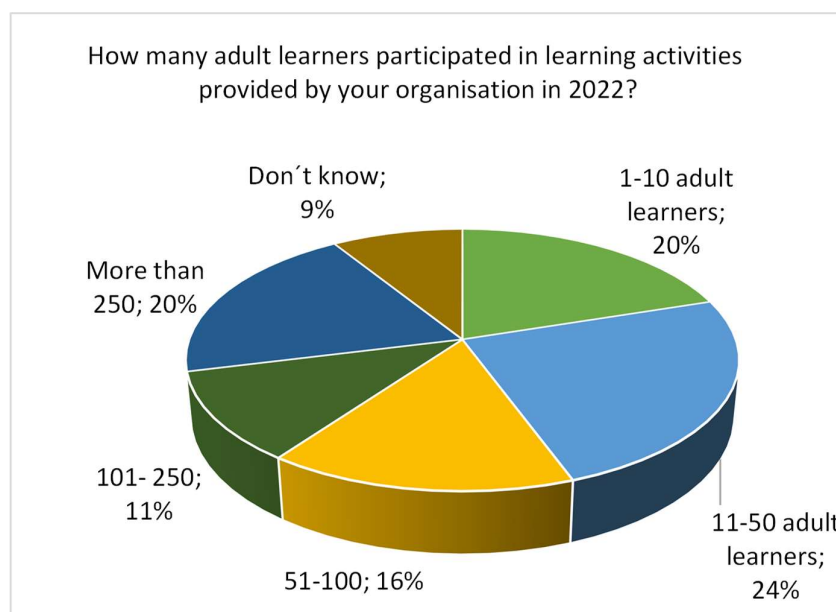


Figure 9: Number of adult learners participating in learning activities in 2022

4.2.4 Experience of organisations in the implementation of Erasmus projects and Erasmus+ accreditation for mobility

From 2020, the possibility of Erasmus accreditation has been created. Erasmus accreditation is a tool for active involvement in international exchange of experience and cooperation for organisations operating in adult education. Accreditation gives organisations the opportunity to apply for support for mobility projects in a simplified manner. Accreditation encourages organisations to strategically plan mobility in the context of organisational development and includes the Erasmus quality standards that accredited organisations must comply with. In total, there were 12 accredited organisations at the time of the research. Three organisations obtained accreditation in 2020, one organisation had obtained accreditation in 2021, and eight organisations had obtained it in 2022. Of all accredited organisations, individual accreditation was carried out for eight organisations, and for four - mobility consortium coordinator accreditation. Out of all the accredited organisations, 11 organisations currently implement projects in the field of adult education, and the total number of projects implemented by these organisations is 16 projects. The total number of participants involved in these projects is 300 participants (Table 2).

Nr.	Accreditation Call Year	Accreditation Application Type	Accreditation Organisation Size			Contracted Projects	Contracted participants
			Number of Learners	Number of Teaching Staff	Number of Non-Teaching Staff		
1.	2020	Accreditation for an individual organisation	-	-	-	3	37
2.	2020	Accreditation for a mobility consortium coordinator	-	-	-	2	40
3.	2020	Accreditation for an individual organisation	-	-	-	2	34
4.	2021	Accreditation for a mobility consortium coordinator	100	20	1	2	40
5.	2022	Accreditation for an individual organisation	203	15	6	1	22
6.	2022	Accreditation for an individual organisation	500	30	5	1	23
7.	2022	Accreditation for an individual organisation	4500	170	3387	1	23

8.	2022	Accreditation for an individual organisation	300	20	6	1	27
9.	2022	Accreditation for an individual organisation	261	25	11	1	9
10.	2022	Accreditation for a mobility consortium coordinator	30	1	0	1	12
11.	2022	Accreditation for a mobility consortium coordinator	2500	50	177	1	33
12.	2022	Accreditation for an individual organisation	1326	132	56	0	0

Table 2: Characteristics of accredited organisations (2020-2022)

Of the 45 organisations that participated in the survey, 6 currently hold an Erasmus accreditation in adult education.

Experience of surveyed organisations in the implementation of Erasmus projects is different. 32 organisations or 71% have participated in the KA1 projects on individual mobility for staff and adult learners in adult education. 26 organisations or 58% have participated in the KA2 projects on strategic partnerships (2014-2020) and partnerships for cooperation (2021-2027) in adult education.

40% of organisations have participated (as coordinator or partner) in more than five KA1 and KA2 projects within the Erasmus+ programme since 2014. 20% of organisations have participated (as coordinator or partner) in only one KA1 or KA2 project within the Erasmus+ programme (Figure 10).

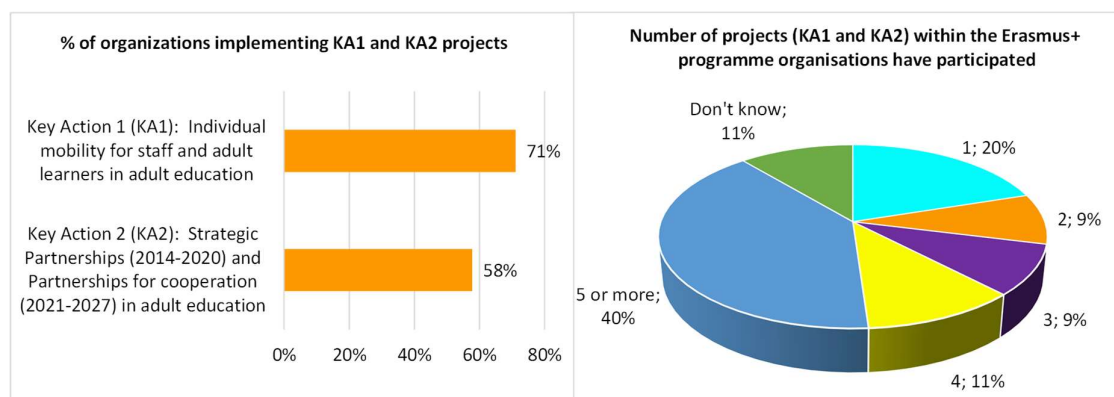


Figure 10: The number of organisations implementing KA1 and KA2 projects and the number of the projects implemented

When implementing the KA2 Erasmus+ projects 49% of surveyed organisation who have participated in the previous (2014-2020) and current (2021-2027) programme have had a role of a coordinator, while 47% of organisations have been partners (Figure 11).

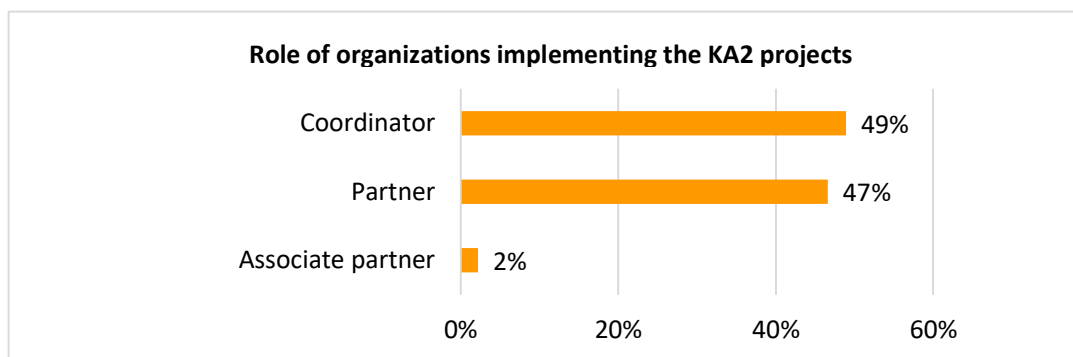


Figure 11: Roles organisation have in the KA2 Erasmus+ projects. Multiple answers possible

4.3 Adult learners' participation

The answers of surveyed organisations show that the five most frequently mentioned adult target groups are employed (36%), young adults (15-29 years old; 31%) women (31%) adults who live in a peripheral area (31%) and elderly (older then 65 years; 29%). The next two most frequently mentioned target groups are adults with lacking basic skills (22%) and unemployed adult learners (20%). 24% of surveyed organisations indicate that they have no specific target group among adults (Figure 12).

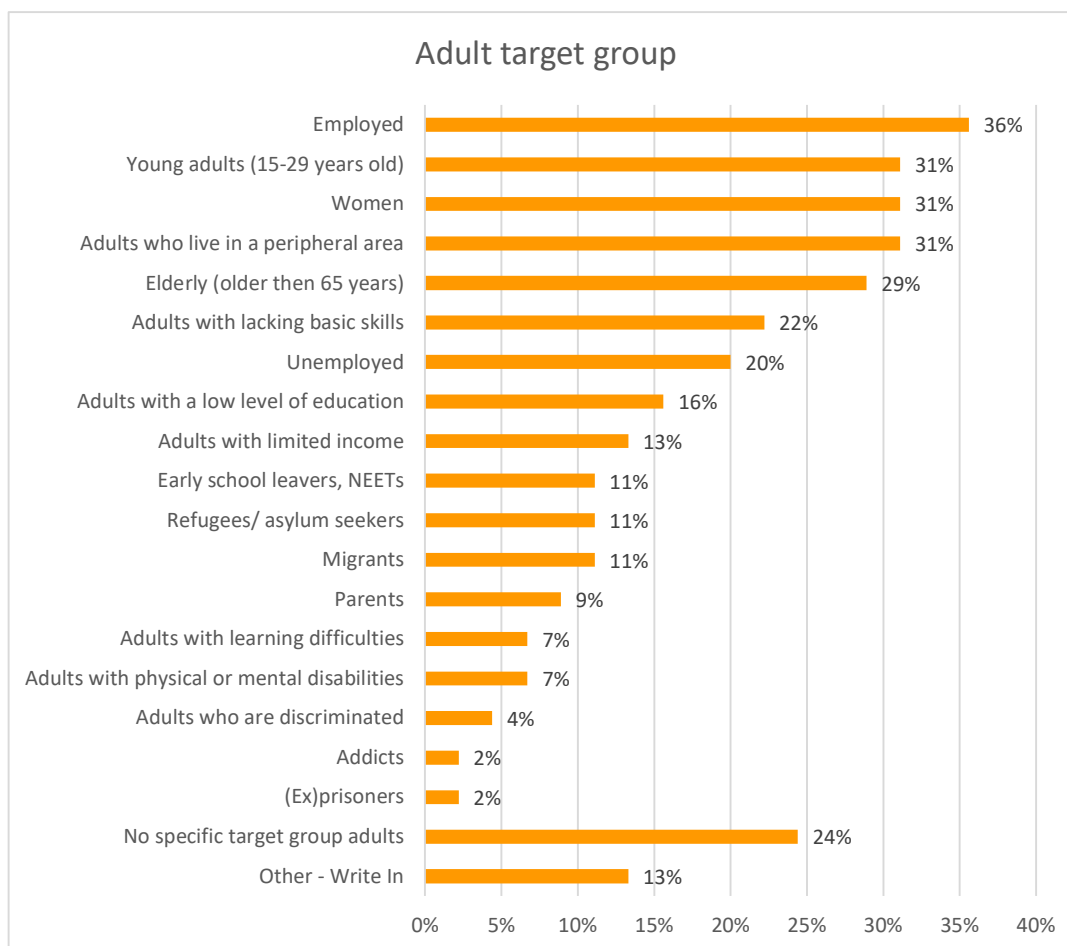


Figure 12: Adult target groups. Multiple answers possible

The data provided by the National Agency on participant gender in KA1 mobilities during 2018-2022 (Table 3) shows a stable trend that the proportion of women in KA1 mobilities is three quarters or 75%. This peculiarity of Latvia, that women participate much more actively in any kind of training, has already been identified in many other evaluations carried out in Latvia⁶, and shows a long-standing problem related to the involvement of men in educational processes in Latvia. It should be emphasized that, in order to change this trend, the

⁶ For example, the study "Evaluation of the usefulness, effectiveness and impact of EU fund investments in sustainable and high-quality employment and labour mobility in the 2014-2020 planning period" (FM2021/43 (TP IZV)) (BISS, 2022). The aim of the study was obtaining evidence about the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the investments under the priority axis "Employment and workforce mobility" of the operational programme "Growth and employment" of the European Union Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund for the 2014-2020 programming period. Among the evaluation methods used was counterfactual analysis: comparison of labour market outcomes of employment agency vocational training attendees (intervention group) and unemployed people who have not attended these courses (control group).

recruitment of men for educational activities should be given special attention and strongly encouraged.

Participant Gender	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Female	34	80	83	177	198	572
Male	11	28	29	50	64	182
No data	0	0	0	2	9	11
Total	45	108	112	229	271	765

Table 3: Participant gender in KA1 mobilities during 2018-2022

The data provided by the National Agency on participant age in KA1 mobilities during 2018-2022 shows that the largest number of mobility participants are aged 50+, and this number accounts for 37% (Table 4). The second largest age group represented in these mobilities is aged 40-49 (27%), while the third largest age group is aged 30-39 (22%). The smallest number of mobility participants are aged 17-29 (12%). The youngest participant was 17 years old, and the oldest – 74 years old.

Participant Age	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
17-29 years old	13	4	8	34	32	91
30-39 years old	15	32	33	45	45	170
40-49 years old	9	32	39	55	73	208
50+ years old	8	40	31	92	112	283
No data	0	0	1	3	9	13
Total	45	108	112	229	271	765

Table 4: Participant Age in KA1 mobilities during 2018-2022

There were no participants with fewer opportunities or with disadvantaged background in 2018-2020 KA1 mobilities. The number of participants with fewer opportunities in 2021-2022 KA1 mobilities was 54 persons (15 persons or 7% in 2021 and 39 persons or 14% in 2022) (Table 5).

Participants with fewer opportunities	2021	2022	Total
Total number of participants with fewer opportunities	15	39	54
% of all	6,6	14,4	10,8
Total number of participants	229	271	500

Table 5: Participants with fewer opportunities in 2021-2022

Interviews carried out as part of the case studies (see Annex 2) reveal that the organisations face difficulties in attracting certain groups to training activities and mobility visits. Representatives of three groups can be highlighted in particular: (1) Persons with low basic skills. Organisations face difficulties in motivating to learn or participate in mobility activities persons with low basic skills. In many cases, it has been their own choice not to continue their studies due to a lack of interest and motivation to learn. Educators admit that it is much easier to work with those who want to learn themselves than with those who show aversion to learning. (2) Roma women. It is difficult to motivate Roma women to participate in mobility visits because they lack self-confidence, they have no experience of being away from their families for a long time, they feel very dependent on men and their attitude towards learning

and mobility visits. (3) People with special needs in a wheelchair. It is difficult for people in wheelchairs to organize mobility visits to other countries because their travel and accessibility needs cannot always be met in all EU countries.

4.4 Obstacles for participating in Erasmus+

4.4.1 General mobility obstacles

In-depth interviews with organisations that have expressed interest in preparing project proposals in the past but have not submitted them reveal that the main reasons why organisations do not submit proposals are:

- 1) Lack of human resources to prepare and implement the project;
- 2) Lack of interest in this type of project;
- 3) Difficulties in finding a suitable partner;
- 4) The organisation is new or restructured and therefore has not yet had time to apply.

The situation with the lack of human resources in the organisation is described by the interviewed representative from a centre for continuing vocational education, which is a private educational institution. He points out that the organisation's administration does not have time to work on preparing a project application and finding a partner, and because of the workload, it is not really interested in investing resources in networking, formulating an idea, finding suitable partners, writing an application: "There is just not enough time for all of us in the administration here. Because there's the preparation, finding the partnership, or at least expressing the interest in becoming a partner, all that networking. [...] Mostly it's a lack of time and maybe a lack of interest".

It should be noted that the forms used so far for Erasmus+ project applications are also criticised, pointing out that the information required in these forms is significantly duplicated in many sections and that the preparation of proposals is a competition in "blah blah writing", and that the positive outcome is highly dependent on the specific experts involved in the evaluation and their subjective perceptions: "There have to be more specific criteria, because the four areas of evaluation where the scores are given and the scales, I think there is quite a lot of subjectivity on the part of the expert. I think there is an awful lot of duplication of information. There is so much 'water' to be poured into the applications! It is unnecessary! There should be more tangible, more serious things to check, rather than fiction writing".

Another interviewee states: "If only we had the resources and the time", acknowledging that all staff are already very busy. Secondly, interviewee says that the existing staff do not have a good enough command of English and in order to prepare the project application in English, funding would have to be found to hire additional staff: "All our staff are busy enough, that's point one. The second is English language skills. If we have to bring in a planner from outside, that's an extra cost". The shortage of English language skills was mentioned as a hindering factor by several organisations interviewed: "We wanted to participate, but there was a situation where we had to write the application in English. And we didn't have a person who could do it. That was the biggest problem". It must be concluded that potential project applicants have a misconception that project applications must be submitted in English. This

is not true, because project applications can be submitted in any EU language, including Latvian, and NA recommends submitting applications, especially the KA1 project applications, in Latvian.

In one of the interviews it was mentioned that when the organisation was preparing the project application, they were not able to complete it because they could not or did not know how to find a suitable partner to work with: "It was one of those times when I started to write a particular application, and we couldn't find any school that could put together the documents with us so quickly that we would be partners. That was the main thing that held us back. [...] At that point we didn't find one".

Representatives of two of the organisations interviewed admitted that they were not sufficiently interested in such projects at the moment: "We do not have the slightest intention or interest at the moment. [...] It is absolutely not relevant at the moment".

To encourage organisations to apply for Erasmus+ adult education projects in the future, one interviewee believes that both the application and reporting procedures for Erasmus+ projects need to be simplified. At the same time, two of the six organisations interviewed were considering preparing a project application at the time of the interviews, and one organisation was also preparing one for the upcoming call in February.

Survey among participating AE organisations shows that in general they are willing to apply to the Erasmus+ programme again in the future (Figure 13). Of all the surveyed organisations, 80% want to apply again, 2% answered in the negative, and 16% do not know if they will want to apply to the Erasmus+ programme again in the future.

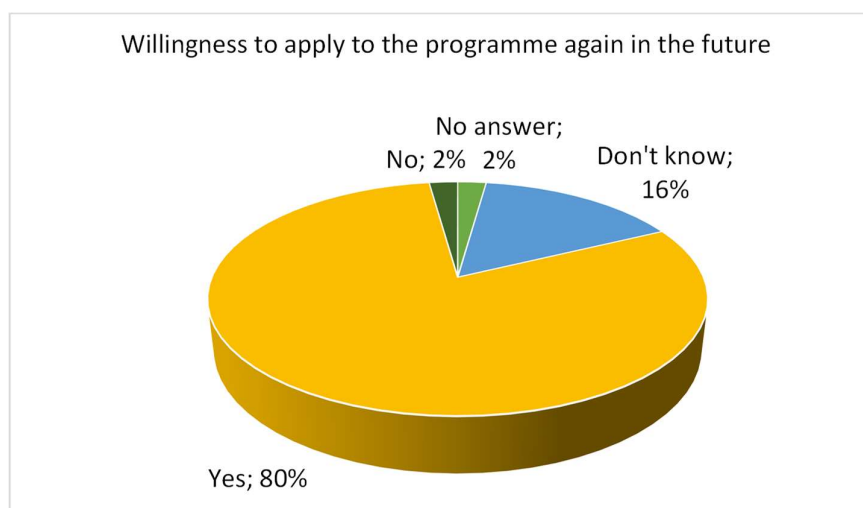


Figure 13: Willingness to apply to the Erasmus+ programme again in the future

The answers to the question, what is the biggest obstacle or barrier for your organisation to participate in Erasmus+, show that the main obstacle to preparing an application is that organisations lack human resources for project preparation. This answer was given by 13 surveyed organisations in total, stating that there is a lack of time to prepare the application, there is a lack of employees, the employees do not have a sufficiently good knowledge of

the English language to make contacts with international partners. Representatives of the three organisations also point out that it takes a lot of time to prepare an application, but due to limited funding, even well-evaluated projects are not funded. It does not motivate to prepare an application. These respondents admit that there is a lot of competition for the project applications.

4.4.2 Specific obstacles for KA1 mobility for adult learners

Surveyed organisations were asked whether they intended to organise mobility activities for adult learners in the framework of a future KA1 project "Learning mobility of individuals". Only 49% of all surveyed organisations answered affirmatively that they plan to apply for KA1 projects for individual learning mobility for learners in adult education in the future. 31% of all surveyed organisations found it difficult to give a specific answer and chose an answer option "don't know".

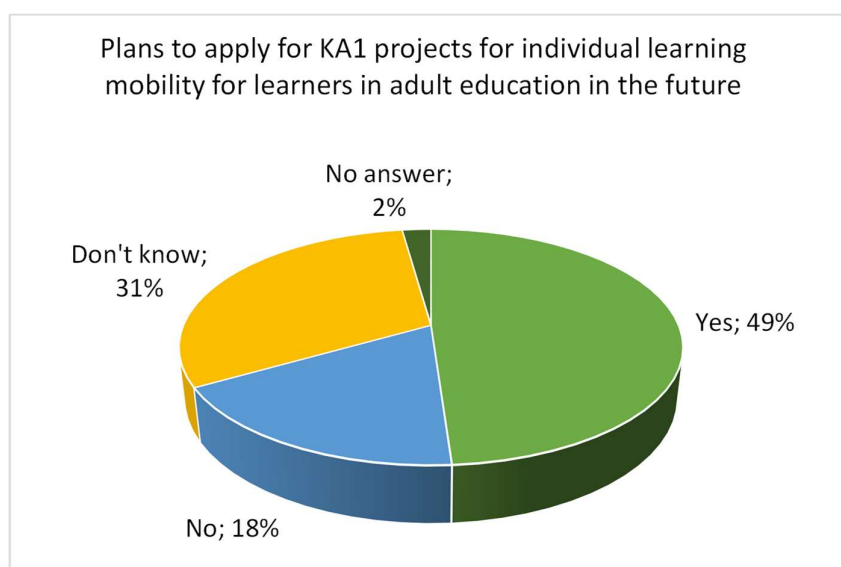


Figure 14: Plans to apply for KA1 projects for individual learning mobility for learners in adult education in the future

The reasons that prevent organisations from planning mobility activities for adult learners in the framework of a future KA1 project are the lack of human resources (several are already quite loaded with KA2 projects), as well as the lack of interest in this type of projects.

4.5 Conclusions on accessibility and inclusiveness

Characteristics of the adult education organisations participating in the Erasmus+ programme and in-depth interviews with non-participating organisations allows to make several conclusions on accessibility and inclusiveness of the Erasmus+ program in the adult education sector.

First of all, it can be pointed out that organisations that have received project funding are very different in terms of their status. Among them are non-governmental organisations, adult education centres, small and medium sized enterprises, different schools, institutes and educational centres, higher education institutions, local and regional public bodies, national public bodies, and others. This means that the organisation's legal status does not in any way prevent the organisation from preparing and implementing Erasmus+ projects. As the in-depth interviews with non-participating organisations reveal, the hindering factor is the human resources capacity of the organisation. If the organisation does not have specialists with project planning, writing and English language skills to make contacts with international partners, or these specialists are busy with other work, organisations lack the capacity to prepare a project application.

Secondly, for the organisation to mobilize its human resources for the preparation of the project application, it must be motivated to work with this type of projects. For example, private organisations that provide training at the daily work basis are sometimes not motivated to engage in additional projects, because the workload is provided for the performance of direct duties, but additional projects require attracting new employees, and these projects are also not as well predictable as the usual training events (you can't know, whether the applied project will be approved, cooperation with foreign partners is always associated with additional organisational risks, etc.).

Thirdly, some representatives of organisations also note that the preparation of the application is too complicated, and the project evaluation approach is relatively subjective, as well as the competition for projects is too fierce. These factors also slow down potential project applicants to prepare their applications.

Characteristics of participants, who, individually or in groups, have participated in KA1 mobilities during 2018-2022 shows a stable trend that the proportion of women in KA1 mobilities is significantly higher than that of men (75% vs. 25%). This peculiarity of Latvia, that women participate much more actively in any kind of training, is a long-standing problem related to the involvement of men in educational processes in Latvia. To change this trend, the recruitment of men for educational activities should be given special attention and strongly encouraged.

Administrative data on participants with fewer opportunities in 2021-2022 KA1 mobilities shows a positive trend that the participation of such persons increases a little every year. At the same time, difficulties remain in providing mobility visits to persons in wheelchairs, as environmental accessibility problems are still observed in EU countries, which complicate the organisation of mobility visits for persons in wheelchairs. Ensuring inclusion is also complicated for other target groups, for example, for persons with low basic skills, because they often lack motivation to learn, and special approaches are needed to motivate them; and for Roma women, who have low self-confidence and low ability to make independent decisions, they have no experience of living outside the family, and they are very dependent on the attitude of the men in the family towards learning and mobility visits to other countries.

5 Impact of Erasmus+ at meso level

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we look at the impact of Erasmus+ on the organisation. This includes the impact of Erasmus+ on how internationalisation and other Erasmus+ priorities are embedded in participating organisations, but also the quality of staff and the learning offer of participating organisations. As organisations could carry out various activities and projects with Erasmus+ funding, we first looked at the different types of products developed. We then asked what sustainable impact Erasmus+ participation had, including on the organisation and the learning.

5.2 Type of products developed and topics addressed

5.2.1 Type of topics addressed

The data provided by the National Agency on KA1 projects in the period from 2021 to 2022 provides information on the main topics of the projects, which shows that the most frequently mentioned topics are (Figure 15): New learning and teaching methods and approaches (24), Digital content, technologies and practices (11), Digital skills and competences (11), Cultural heritage (8), Green skills (6), Initial and continuous training for teachers, trainers and other education staff (6), Creating new, innovative or joint curricula or courses (5), Teaching and learning of foreign languages (5).

Other mentioned topics (each mentioned 1-4 times) are: Active ageing (4), Cooperation between educational institutions and business (4), Creativity, arts and culture (4), Employability (4), Environment and climate change (4), Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination (4), Key competences development (4), Physical and mental health, well-being (4), Work-based learning (4), Awareness about the European Union (3), Entrepreneurial learning - entrepreneurship education (3), Bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divide (2), Career guidance (2), European identity, citizenship and values (2), International relations and development cooperation (2), Democracy and inclusive democratic participation (1), Disabilities (1), Open and distance learning (1), Quality assurance (1), Reception and integration of refugees and migrants (1), Recognition, transparency, certification (1), Social assistance and welfare (1).

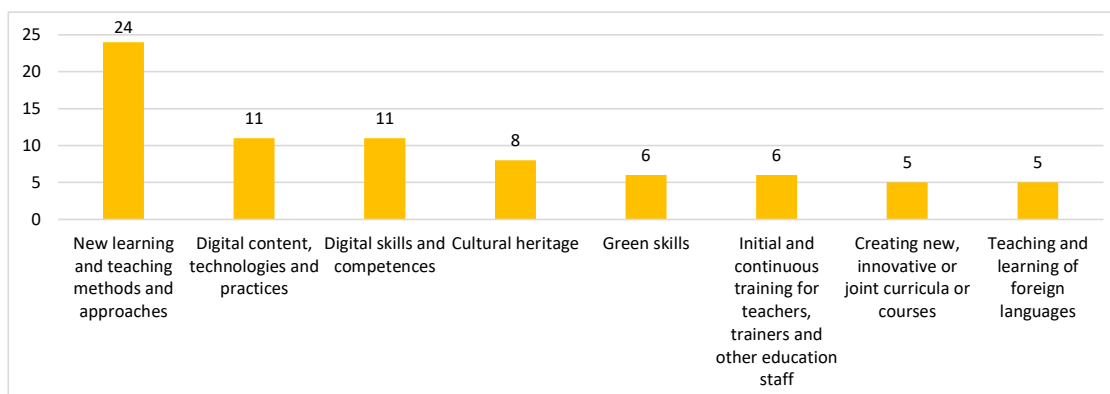


Figure 15: Number of awarded topics of implemented projects KA1 in 2021-2022

In the period from 2018-2022 the main types of mobility activities are courses and training and job shadowing (Table 6).

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Job Shadowing	13	52	37	74	125	301
Courses and training (SM-COUR-TRAIN)	32	53	74	113	86	358
Teaching or training assignments (SM-TTA)	0	3	1	14	7	25
Group mobility of adult learners (LM-GRP-ADULT)				2	9	11
Short-term learning mobility of adult learners (LM-SHORT-ADULT)				23	42	65
Invited experts (OA-INV-EXP)				3	2	5
Total	45	108	112	229	271	765

Table 6: Type of mobility activity. 2018-2022.

Most often, the duration of mobilities during 2018-2022 was 3-4 days (39%) or 5-6 days (33%) (Table 7).

Duration of the mobility	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
1-2 days	0	0	2	12	8	22
3-4 days	9	17	25	120	126	297
5-6 days	10	67	49	49	74	249
7-8 days	16	15	18	6	6	61
9-12 days	8	0	10	6	15	39
13-14 days	1	2	7	11	25	46
16-18 days	0	7	0	2	8	17
26-29 days	0	0	0	21	8	29
30-33 days	1	0	1	0	0	2
57 days	0	0	0	1	0	1
74 days	0	0	0	1	0	1
157 days	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	45	108	112	229	271	765

Table 7: Number of outgoing mobilities by their duration

The data provided by the National Agency on KA2 projects shows that out of 21 projects that have been applied for from Latvia (the applicant organisation is based in Latvia) in 2021-2022, the most often addressed priorities in adult education are (Table 8): (1) improving the availability of high-quality learning opportunities for adults (7 projects); (2) creating and promoting learning opportunities among all citizens and generations (6 projects); (3) improving the competences of educators and other adult education staff (6 projects). While the most often addressed horizontal priorities are (1) inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth, and sport (12 projects); (2) Common values, civic engagement, and participation (6 projects); and (3) addressing digital transformation through development of digital readiness, resilience, and capacity (4 projects).

Priorities addressed	Number
HORIZONTAL: Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth and sport	12
ADU: Improving the availability of high quality learning opportunities for adults	7
ADU: Creating and promoting learning opportunities among all citizens and generations	6
ADU: Improving the competences of educators and other adult education staff	6
HORIZONTAL: Common values, civic engagement and participation	6
ADU: Developing forward-looking learning centres	5
ADU: Creating upskilling pathways, improving accessibility and increasing take-up of adult education	4
HORIZONTAL: Addressing digital transformation through development of digital readiness, resilience and capacity	4
HORIZONTAL: Environment and fight against climate change	3
ADU: Enhancing quality assurance in adult education	1
HE: Stimulating innovative learning and teaching practices	1
YOUTH: Strengthening the employability of young people	1

Table 8: Priorities addressed by KA2 projects in 2021-2022 (Latvian applicants)

Looking at the topics addressed in the KA2 projects 2021-2022, it can be seen that most often the project applicants from Latvia are aiming at: (1) bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divide (4 projects); (2) creativity, arts and culture (4 projects); (3) cultural heritage (4 projects); (4) development of training courses (4 projects); (5) digital content, technologies and practices (4 projects); (6) new learning and teaching methods and approaches (4 projects); and (7) inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination (3 projects) (Table 9).

Topics addressed	Number
Bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divide	4
Creativity, arts and culture	4
Cultural heritage	4
Development of training courses	4
Digital content, technologies and practices	4
New learning and teaching methods and approaches	4
Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination	3
Active ageing	2
Community development	2
Creating new, innovative or joint curricula or courses	2
Democracy and inclusive democratic participation	2
Development of disadvantaged rural and urban areas	2

Digital skills and competences	2
Disabilities	2
Environment and climate change	2
European identity, citizenship and values	2
Promoting gender equality	2
Social innovation	2
Career guidance	1
Cooperation between educational institutions and business	1
Green skills	1
Human rights and rule of law	1
Initial and continuous training for teachers, trainers and other education staff	1
Key competences development	1
Open and distance learning	1
Physical and mental health, well-being	1
Quality assurance	1
Reaching the policy level/dialogue with decision makers	1
Reception and integration of refugees and migrants	1
Research and innovation	1
Tackling geographical remoteness and involving rural areas	1
Teaching and learning of foreign languages	1

Table 9: Topics addressed by KA2 projects in 2021-2022 (Latvian applicants)

According to the NA data on mobilities in 2018-2020, the broad field of education mobilities are categorized in 10 groups. Table 10 shows that 114 mobilities out of 265 or 43% have been organized in the education field. 15% of mobilities were in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and veterinary field, 13% were in social sciences, journalism, and information, and 12% were in arts and humanities.

	2018	2019	2020	Total
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	4	31	6	41
Arts and humanities	4	16	12	32
Business, administration, and law	2	5	14	21
Education	13	46	55	114
Engineering, manufacturing, and construction	2	4	5	11
Health and welfare	1	0	0	1
Information and Communication Technologies	0	1	0	1
Natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics	1	1	0	2
Services	4	0	3	7
Social sciences, journalism, and information	14	4	17	35
Total	45	108	112	265

Table 10: The field of education mobilities in 2018-2020

5.2.2 Type of products developed

Survey among participating AE organisations shows that 33% of the surveyed organisations have developed curricula, training modules, language courses or pedagogical concepts as part of participation in KA2 in Erasmus+ (Figure 16). A similar part of the respondents has developed a manuals and handbooks as part of the projects of the KA2 program (31%). Teaching materials for teachers/staff is the third most frequently mentioned answer (27%). 13% to 22% of the surveyed organisations have prepared the following outputs: websites (22%), online tools (18%), learning materials (13%), webinars or 'blended learning' courses (13%). Films or instructional videos and publications or books are mentioned less often.

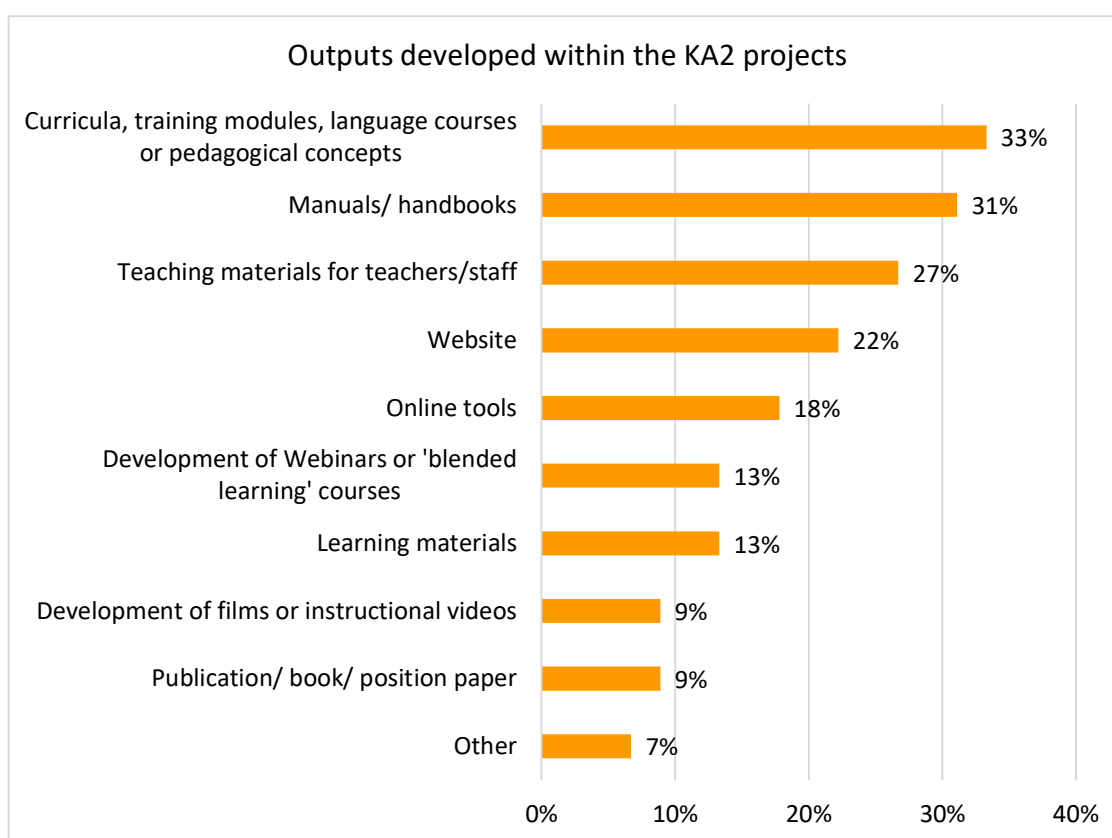


Figure 16: Outputs developed within the KA2 projects

The case analysis reveals that some of the materials developed are valued very highly. For example, the organisation that advocates for the protection of the rights of people with disabilities highlights the intellectual output of the KA2 project on intimacy needs, which includes methodological materials on how to improve the quality of emotional and physical intimacy for people with disabilities. Since the issue of sexuality for people with disabilities has been largely silent in Latvian society, these outputs are considered as groundbreaking in Latvia.

5.2.3 Added value of Erasmus+ support

In general, the Erasmus+ support has been decisive in the implementation of adult education activities in Latvia. As survey data among participating AE organisations shows, without support, most or some of the activities would not be carried out. Of all the surveyed organisations, 31% note that such activities would not be implemented at all, 27% indicate that similar activities would be partially implemented in a slimmed-down form. 22% think that similar activities would be partially implemented in a different form and content. 4% note that similar activities would be implemented in a different timeframe and later. Only 4% of respondents believe that such activities would be implemented in any case with or without Erasmus+ support (Figure 17).

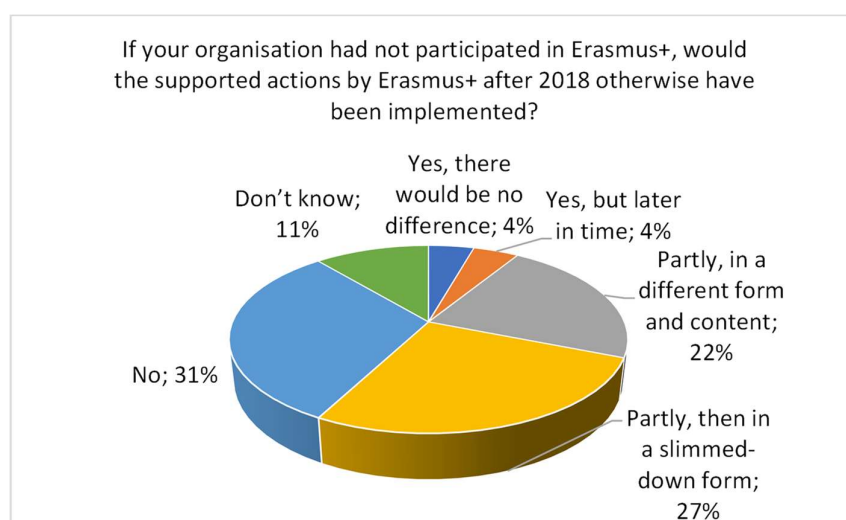


Figure 17: Opinion on the possibility that project activities could be implemented without Erasmus+ support

5.3 Impact at organisation level

5.3.1 Impact on internationalisation

To understand the internationalisation processes among different organisations and the impact of Erasmus+ on these processes surveyed organisations were asked about different internationalisation practices. The survey data shows that 73% of all organisations systemically participates in international networks and internationalisation activities. One third of the surveyed organisations has a policy/ strategy for internationalisation. In 27% of organisations, development of international competences is discussed in performance appraisals and career talks (e.g. as part of a personal development plan). 22% of organisations have some guidelines or agreed processes how to manage international projects (e.g. design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), but only one organisation (2%) have a dedicated budget for internationalisation activities (Figure 18).



Figure 18: Internationalisation characteristics in organisations

When assessing whether the conditions within their organisation to facilitate internationalisation processes have improved, remained the same, or worsened since 2018, most organisations indicated that the conditions to facilitate internationalisation processes have improved: 24% believe that they have significantly improved and 47% that they have improved. Only 4% believe that they have worsened.

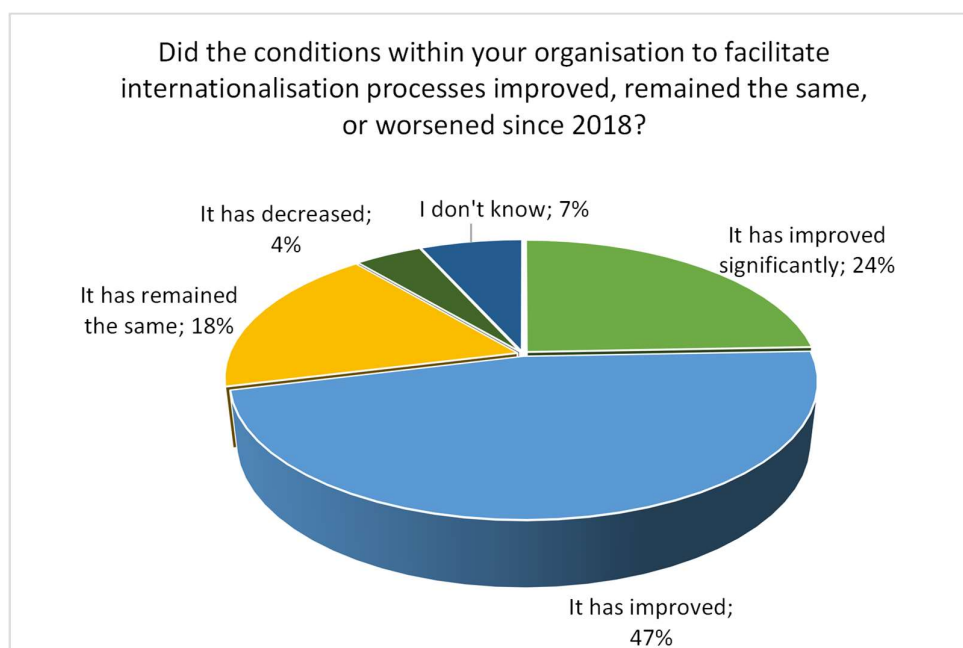


Figure 19: Evaluation of the internationalisation conditions

The opinion of the surveyed organisations on the statements regarding internationalisation shows that 87% of organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ their organisation is more aware of the added value of international projects (Figure 20). 85% of organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ the international network of their organisation has been strengthened. 82% of organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ the management of international projects (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning) has been improved. 76% of organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ HR/ staff policy for internationalisation within their organisation has been strengthened. A similar number of organisations (71%) agree that there is more support for internationalisation activities for professionals within their organisation.

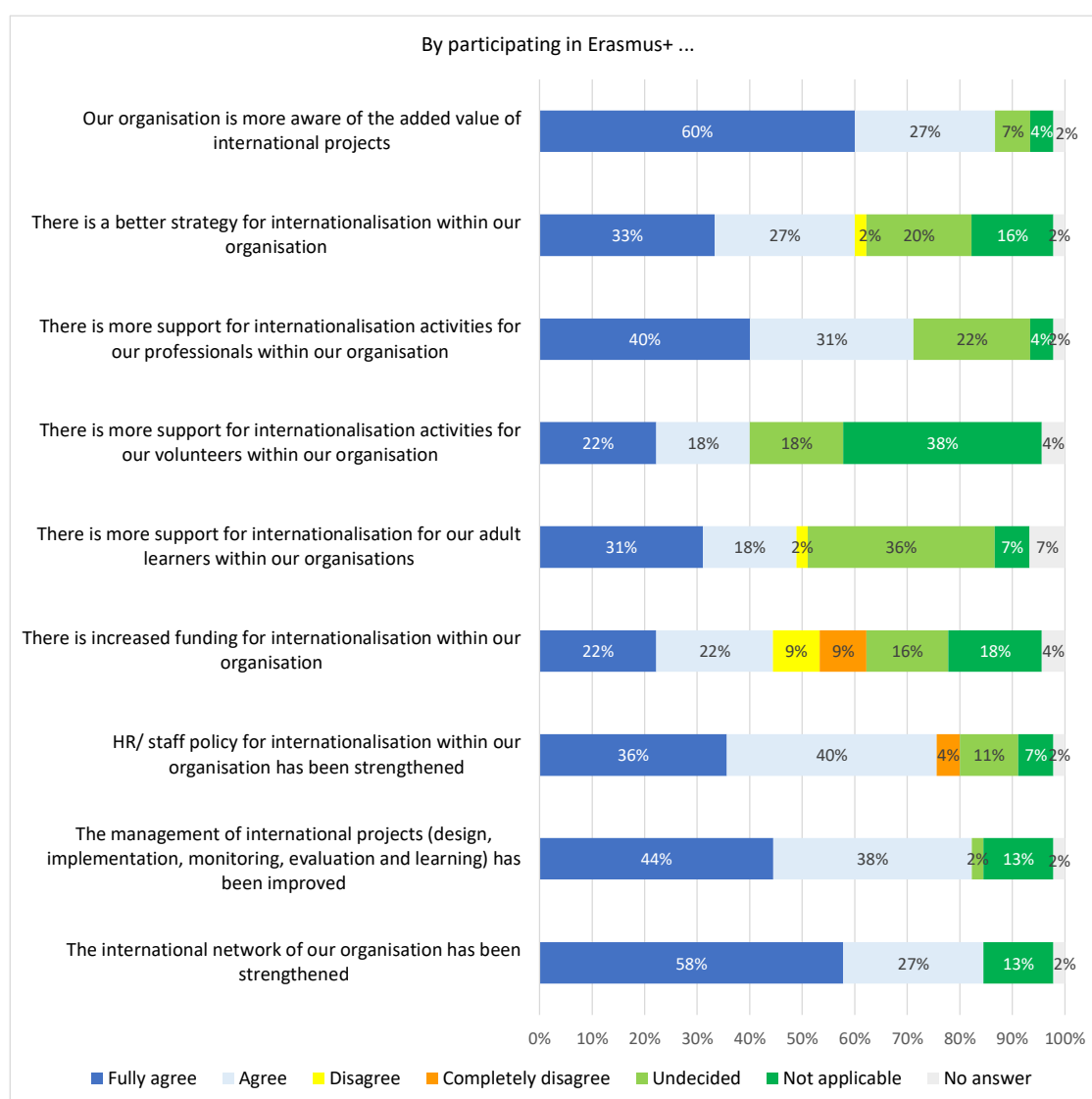


Figure 20: Opinion on statements regarding internationalisation

A relatively smaller number of organisations agree with such statements: there is a better strategy for internationalisation within our organisation (60%); there is more support for internationalisation for our adult learners within our organisations (49%); there is increased funding for internationalisation within our organisation (44%); there is more support for internationalisation activities for our volunteers within our organisation (40%).

5.3.2 Impact on learning offer

The opinion of the surveyed organisations on the statements regarding the impact of participation in Erasmus+ since 2018 on the development of the learning offer within the organisation and beyond reveals that participating in Erasmus+ has fostered the development of the learning offer a lot (Figure 21). First, 86% of organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ their learning offer is better aligned with the needs of adult learners. Second, 76% of organisations agree that their organisation is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities. Third, 74% of organisations agree that the accessibility of the learning offer has improved for different groups of adult learners. Fourth, 68% of organisations agree that their organisation is better able to use digital devices and technologies in their learning offer.

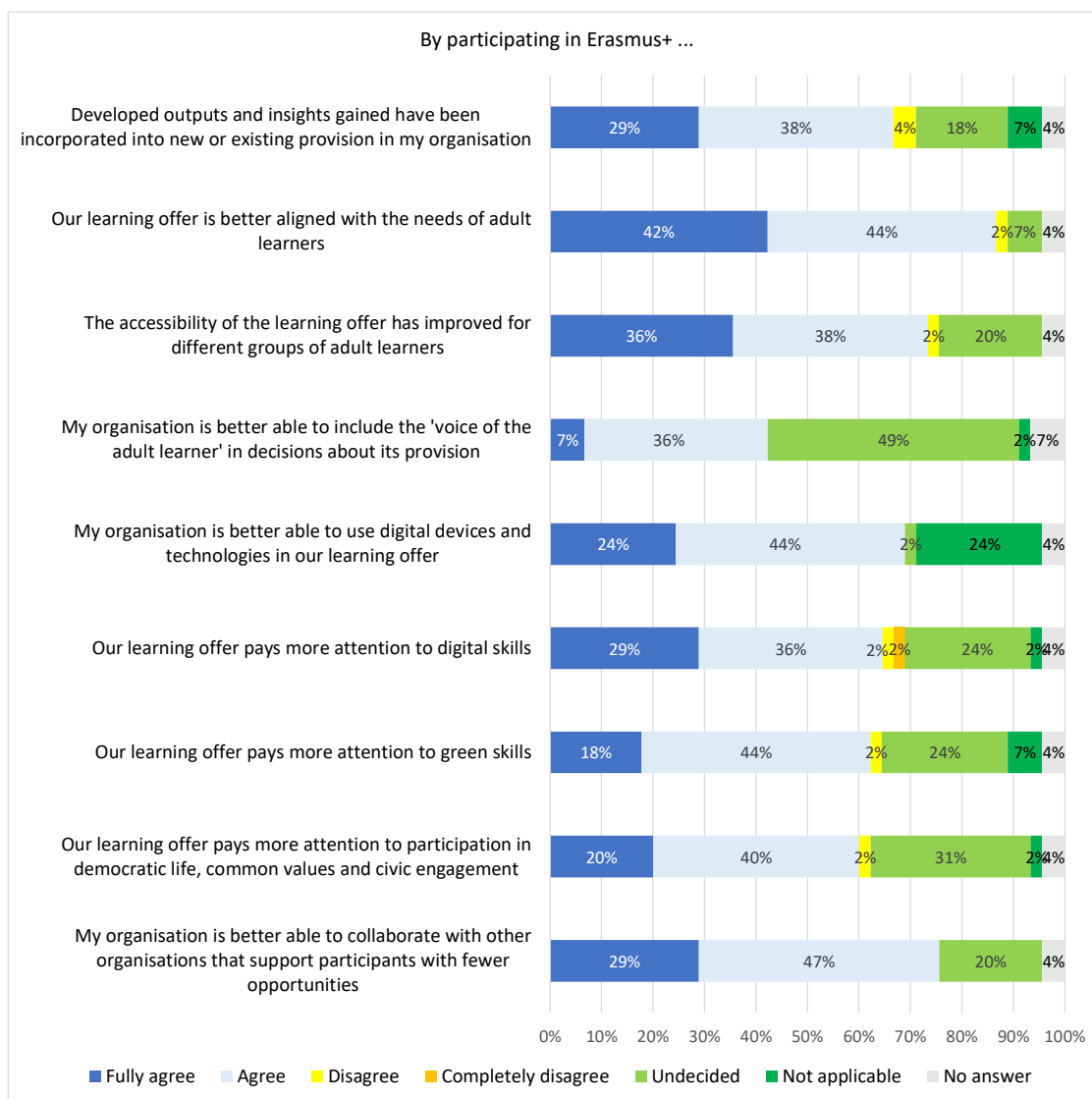


Figure 21: Opinion on statements regarding the learning offer

No less important is the fact that 67% of organisations note that the developed outputs and insights gained have been incorporated into new or existing provision in their organisation.

Participation in Erasmus+ projects has had the least impact on inclusion of the 'voice of the adult learner' in decisions about learning provision. Only 43% of organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ their organisation is better able to include the 'voice of the adult learner' in decisions about its provision.

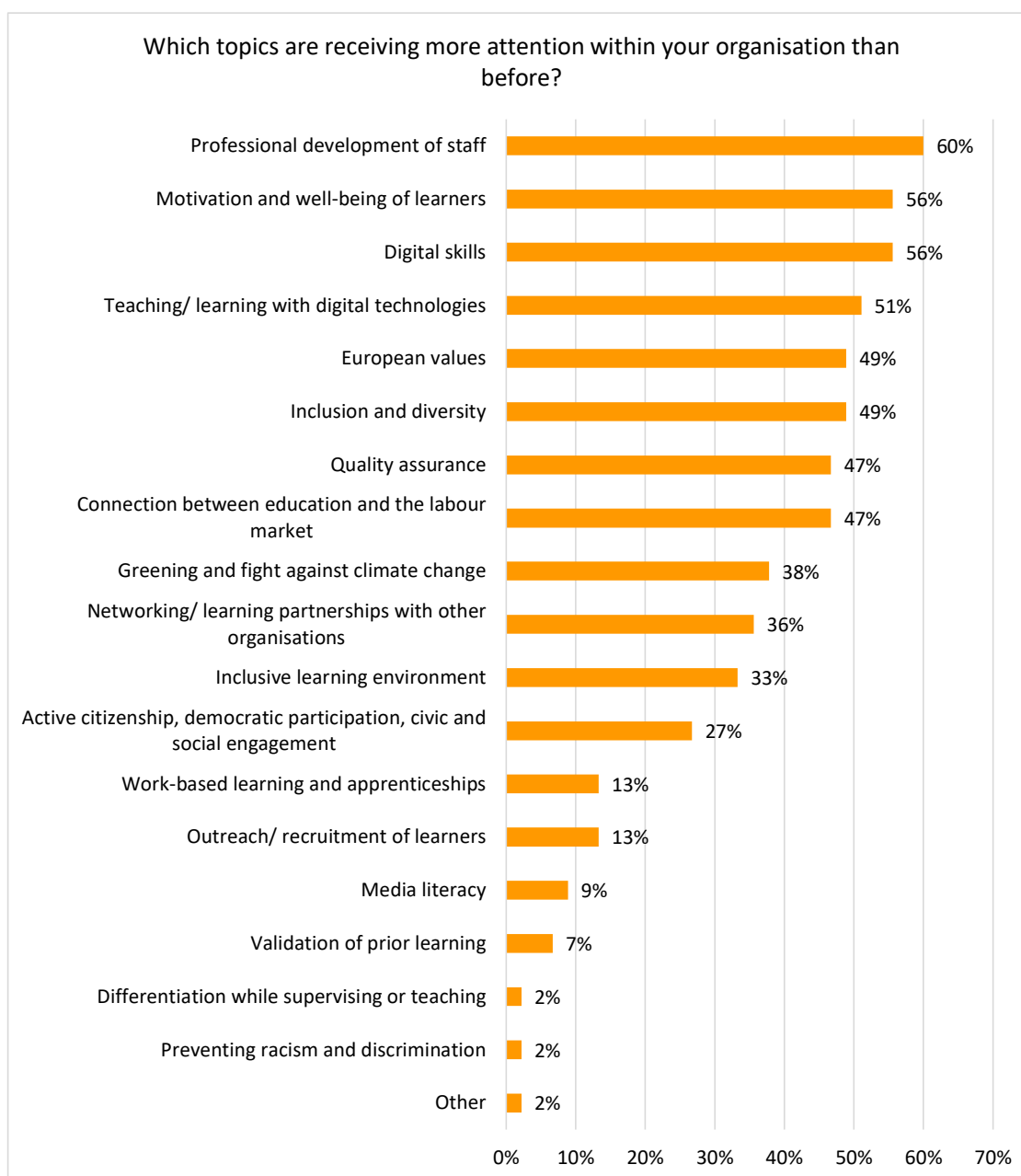


Figure 22: Topics receiving more attention within organisation than before

In response to the question “Now that your organisation has participated in one or more Erasmus+ projects since 2018, which topics are receiving more attention within your organisation than before?”, the four most frequently noted answers are: (1) professional development of staff (60%); (2) motivation and well-being of learners (56%); (3) digital skills (56%); and (4) teaching/ learning with digital technologies (51%) (Figure 22).

In general, the responses provided by the organisations can be illustrated by the following quote about the benefits of participating in Erasmus+: “Through KA1 projects, our educators

have had the opportunity to improve their knowledge, which gives our organisation the opportunity to increase the quality of the offered service - language training. With KA2 projects, we have created many new learning materials, textbooks, manuals, language learning applications, learning materials, videos and e-micro-courses, which are useful for our adult learners both in our classes and as an additional tool".

The representatives of the organisations indicate that all training programs they offer are supplemented with newly learned methods and elements, and the programs are regularly reviewed and supplemented. More specific examples that could be mentioned here are the fact that as a result of the Erasmus project, a diverse educational offer for seniors has been created, or a manual and a game "Peace, please" have been developed, which are regularly used in training on inclusive decision-making, on non-violent communication and on changing the organisational culture.

5.3.3 Impact on horizontal priorities

Inclusion and diversity

Survey results show that to promote inclusion and diversity 51% of surveyed organisations use the voice of the learners and this helps them to develop, monitor, and evaluate their offer (Figure 23).



Figure 23: Conditions that are in organisation facilitating inclusion and diversity

It is also important to point out that 49% of organisations are cooperating with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities, and the same number of organisations note that they train staff on inclusion and diversity. For a fifth of organisations or less there is a dedicated staff that is responsible for the coordination, communication and implementation of inclusion and diversity activities (20%), or they have procedures in place to assure our training offer is inclusive (18%) or they have an inclusion and diversity strategy

and action plan (16%). It should be noted that it is difficult for small non-governmental organisations to provide such aspects.

The answers to the question about the improvement of the delivery of adult learning regarding inclusion and diversity since organisations have participated in Erasmus+ show that all surveyed organisations tend to indicate a positive trend, while only 13% note that the delivery of adult learning regarding inclusion and diversity has improved very much, and 42% have mentioned rather much (Figure 24).

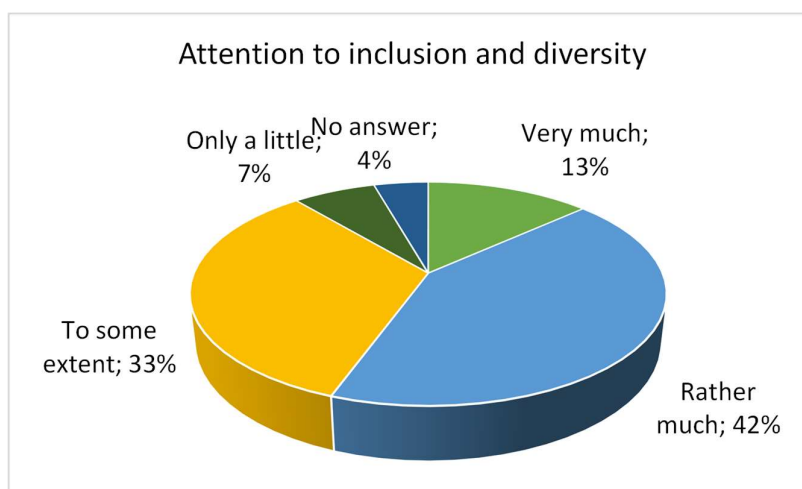


Figure 24: Improvement of the delivery of adult learning regarding inclusion and diversity

Digital transformation

More than two-thirds of the surveyed organisations use digital resources for teaching and learning activities (67%). 60% of organisations state that they have digital devices to use for teaching, 53% have mentioned that their staff have continuing professional development opportunities in the use of digital technologies (Figure 25).

The situation with digital technology provision for learners is relatively worse. Only 33% note that they have physical spaces that support teaching and learning with digital technologies. 20% have digital devices for learners, and only in 16% of organisations learners in need of special support have access to assistive technologies.

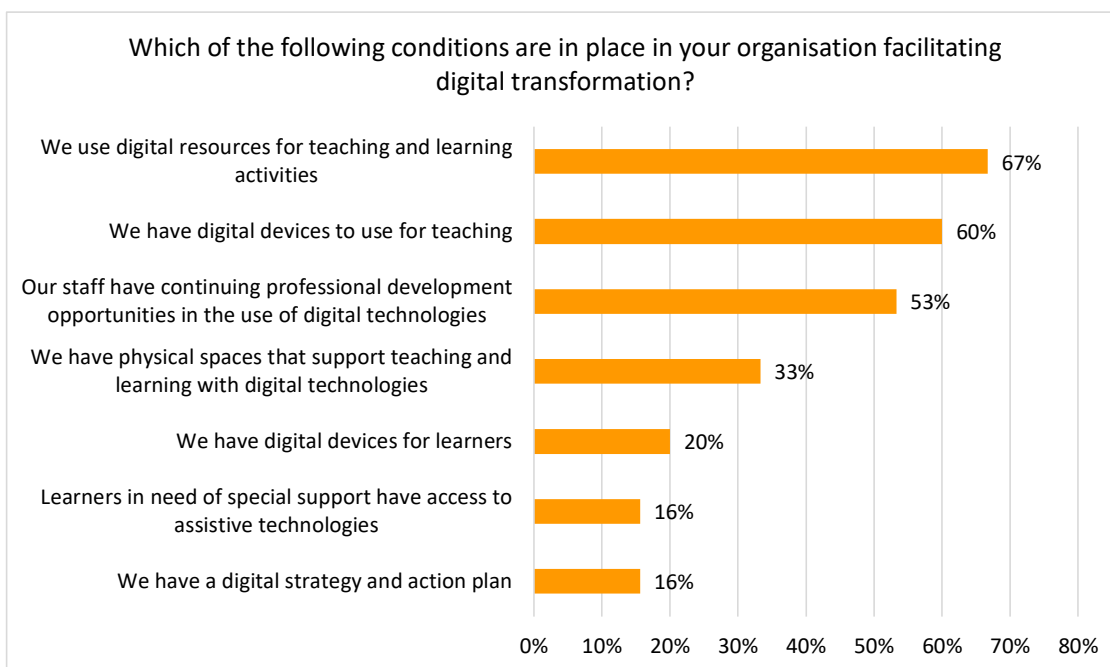


Figure 25: Conditions that are in organisation facilitating digital transformation

The answers to the question about the improvement of the delivery of adult learning regarding digital transformation since organisations have participated in Erasmus+ show that the focus on digital transformation has increased significantly more than on inclusion and diversity. 42% of surveyed organisations answer that the delivery of adult learning regarding digital transformation has improved very much, and 24% have mentioned rather much (Figure 26). Here, one of the additional stimulating conditions were the Covid-19 pandemic, when due to the limitations of physical meetings, people learned the possibilities of digital training.

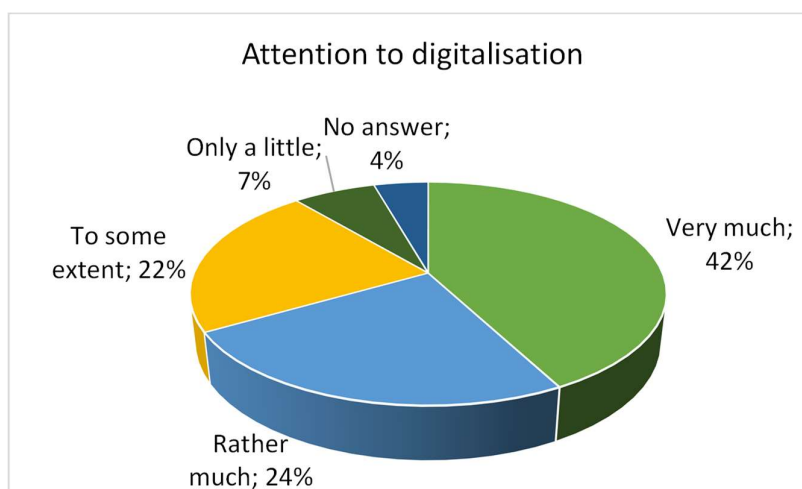


Figure 26: Improvement of the delivery of adult learning regarding digital transformation

Green transition

Regarding the green transition, 49% of the surveyed organisations indicate that they have embed green skills in their learning offer. An equally large proportion of respondents indicate that they train staff on good environmental practices. 44% of the surveyed organisations note that they collaborate with others to strengthen sectoral capacity to operate more sustainably (Figure 27).

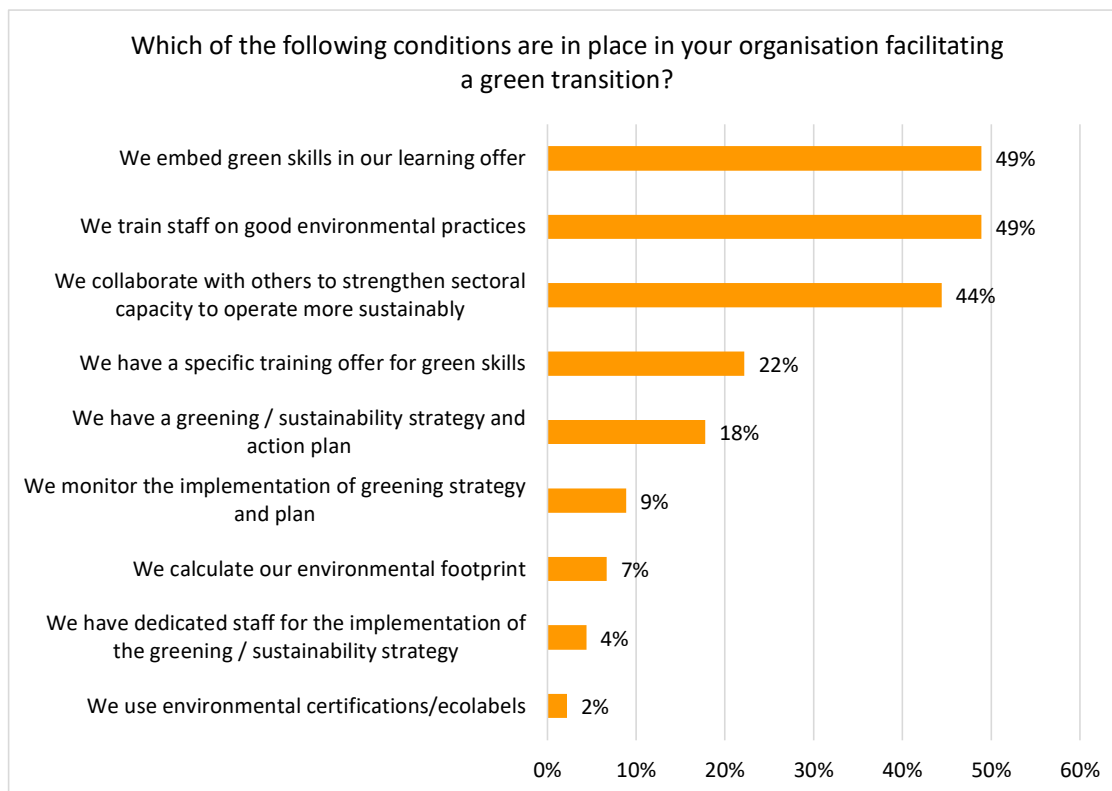


Figure 27: Conditions that are in organisation facilitating a green transition

The answers to the question about the improvement of the delivery of adult learning regarding the attention to environment and fight against climate changes since organisations have participated in Erasmus+ indicate that environment and fight against climate change have gain less attention than digital transformation. However, 20% of surveyed organisations answer that the attention to environment and fight against climate change within adult learning has improved very much, and 20% think that it has improved rather much (Figure 28).

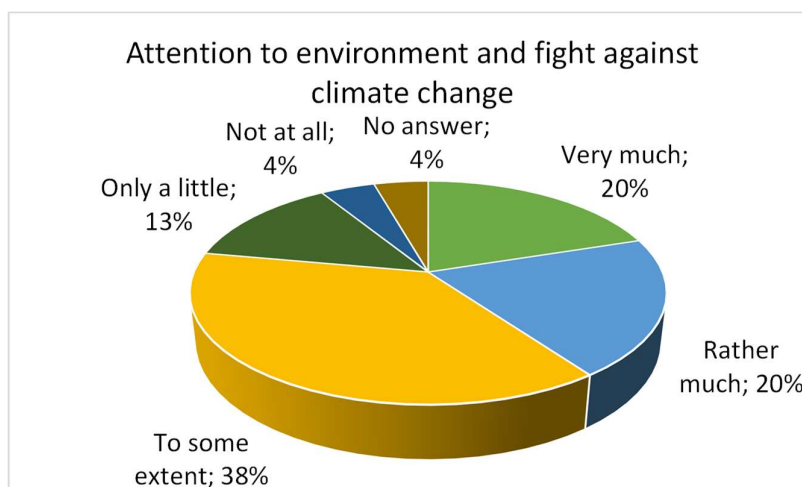


Figure 28: Improvement of the delivery of adult learning regarding the attention to environment and fight against climate change

According to the NA data on mobilities in 2021-2022 (Table 11), out of 500 mobilities implemented in these two years, 70 or 14% were implemented by using green travel green (in 2021 – 13%, in 2022 – 15%).

Mobility with green travel	2021	2022	Total
Yes	29	41	70
No	200	230	430
Total	229	271	500

Table 11. Number of mobilities with green travel in 2021-2022. Data provided by NA

Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement

Regarding the conditions that are in organisations to facilitate participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement, the highest self-assessment of Latvian organisations is in providing activities that empower learners to develop and express own opinions (76%). Other indicators are noted by organisations much less often. 53% of surveyed organisations have mentioned that their organisation offers spaces to learners in which they can take/experience responsibility. 40% of organisations offer activities, that activate democratic participation of learners. Only 9% of organisations have structures in place that allow learners to influence the learning offer (e.g. learners council) (Figure 29).

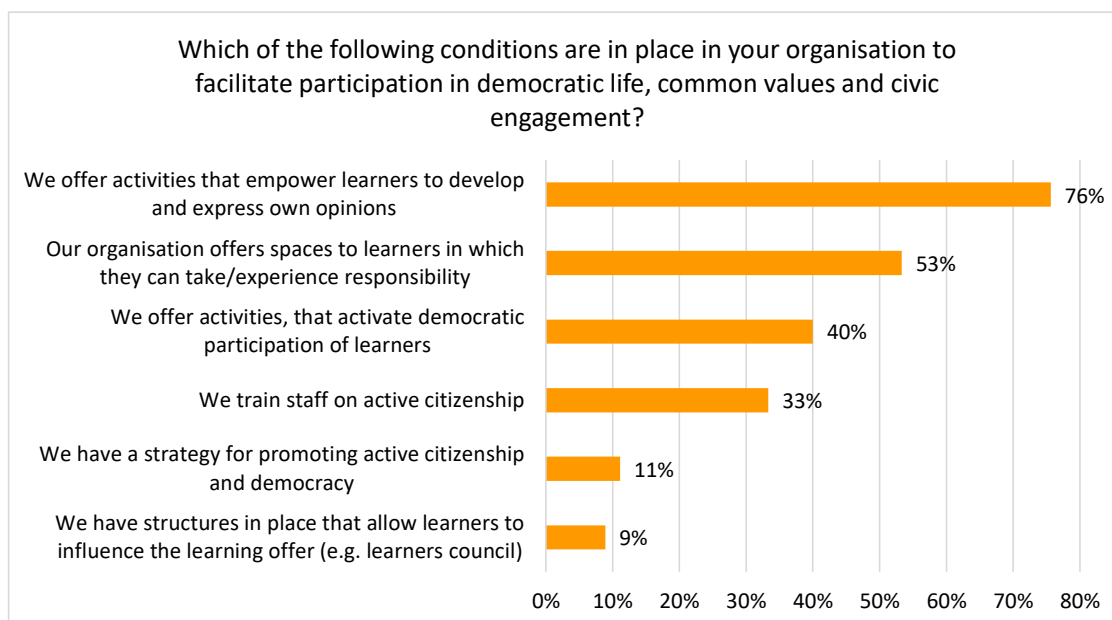


Figure 29: Conditions that are in organisation to facilitate participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement

The answers to the question about the improvement of the delivery of adult learning regarding the attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement since organisations have participated in Erasmus+ reveal that in 22% of surveyed organisations, the attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement has improved very much, and in 38% of surveyed organisations, it has improved rather much (Figure 30).

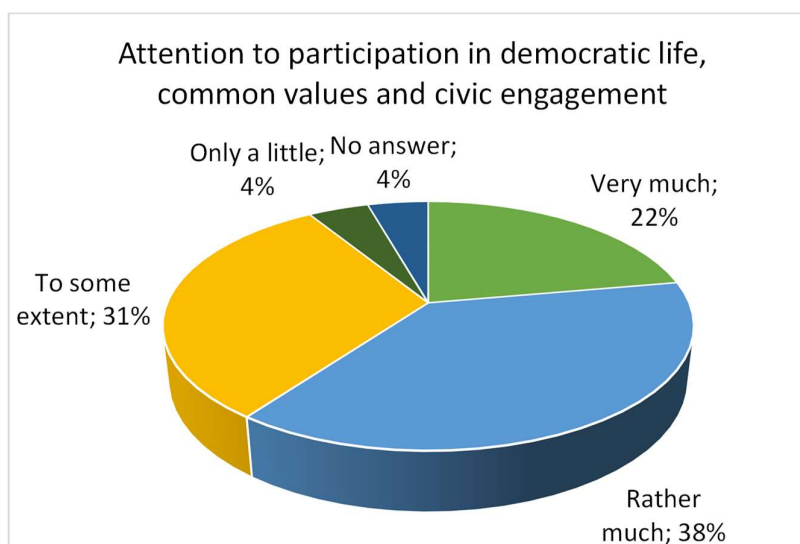


Figure 30: Improvement of the delivery of adult learning regarding the attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement

5.4 Factors hampering or stimulating impact

The usefulness and impact of KA2 project outputs is largely demonstrated by whether the organisations that developed these products continue to use them on a daily basis. The results of the survey show that 69% of the organisations that have implemented KA2 projects also use their developed materials (answers “very much” and “rather much”) (Figure 31).

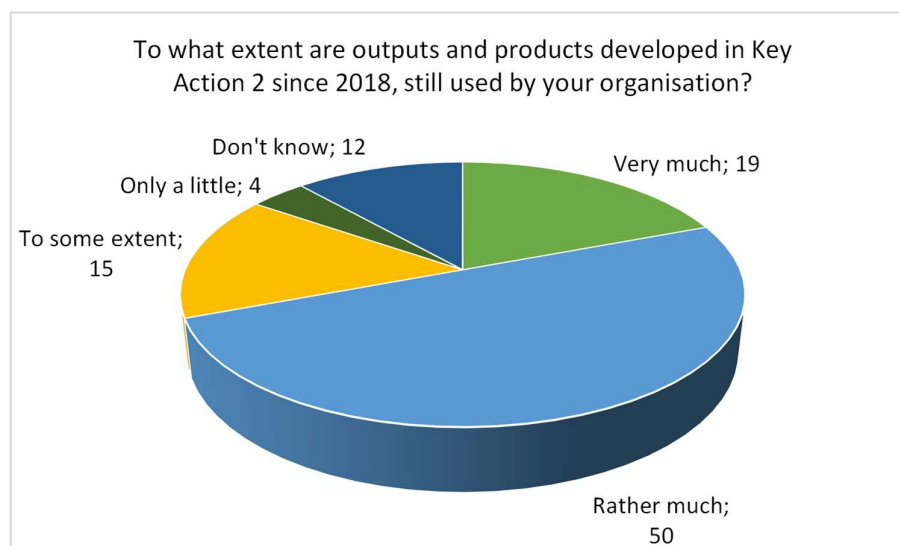


Figure 31: The usefulness of outputs and products developed in KA2 projects since 2018

The main hindering factors to use outputs and products developed with the support of Erasmus+ since 2018 are the small staff capacity of the organisation, change of employees. Covid-19 pandemic restrictions to meet hindered the testing and distribution of teaching materials in different countries.

Factors that encourage use of outputs and products developed with the support of Erasmus+ are: (1) the availability of the learning materials in different languages and on different platforms. This contributes to the fact that even foreigners in Latvia who do not know the Latvian language can use the learning materials; (2) focus of organisations to solve certain topics or problems or to work with certain target groups (seniors, persons with disabilities, Roma women etc.); (3) the high relevance of the developed teaching materials.

5.5 Conclusion

Participation in Erasmus+ projects has had the strongest impact directly on internationalisation of organisations. This is confirmed by several indicators, both in quantitative survey data, as well as in case studies and in-depth interviews. 71% of the surveyed organisations state that the conditions within their organisation to facilitate internationalisation processes have improved since 2018.

More than 70% of surveyed organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ the international network of their organisation has been strengthened, that the management of international projects (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning) has been improved, and HR/ staff policy for internationalisation within their organisation has been strengthened, and that their organisation is more aware of the added value of international projects. Participation in Erasmus+ projects has a relatively smaller impact on the increase of funding for internationalisation.

Participation in Erasmus+ projects has also had a significant impact on the learning offer of organisations. 86% of organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ their learning offer is better aligned with the needs of adult learners. More than 70% of organisations agree that their organisation is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities and that the accessibility of the learning offer has improved for different groups of adult learners. It is important that the materials produced as a result of the projects continue to be used, and this is confirmed by more than two-thirds of the organisations, which indicate that the developed outputs and insights gained have been incorporated into new or existing provision of their organisation.

While evaluating the impact of participation in Erasmus+ projects on horizontal priorities, it can be revealed that in the most significant impact of the projects has been on digital transformation. This is best demonstrated by the answers to the question about different aspects which have improved in the delivery of adult learning, since participation in Erasmus+. While 66% of organisations report that attention to digitalisation has improved very much and rather much, 60% mention that the attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement has improved, 55% mention that the attention to inclusion and diversity has improved, and only 40% mention that the attention to environment and fight against climate change has improved. The in-depth interviews and case studies allow to conclude that this was significantly facilitated by the implementation of Erasmus+ projects during the Covid-19 pandemic, when all meetings had to be organized remotely and planned events had to be reorganized so that digital tools were used.

In general, the Erasmus+ support has been decisive in the implementation of adult education activities in Latvia, because without Erasmus+ programme most or some of the learning activities in the adult education sector would not be carried out.

The main hindering factors to use outputs and products developed are the small staff capacity of the organisations and change of employees. The main stimulating factors are awareness of the organisation's mission and focus of organisations to solve certain problems or to support certain target groups (seniors, persons with disabilities, Roma women etc.). Factors that encourage use of outputs and products developed with the support of Erasmus+ are the high relevance of the developed teaching materials and the availability of the learning materials in different languages and on different platforms.

6 Impact of Erasmus+ at micro level

6.1 Introduction

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

6.2 Impact on staff

Regarding the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the professionalisation and development of staff the criterion that receives one of the highest rating among surveyed organisations is that staff can better map the results of the learning trajectories for our learners (80%). The second and third highest rates (fully agree and agree) receive the criteria that staff can better map the results of the learning trajectories for our learners (74%) and staff has better pedagogical and didactical skills (73%) (Figure 32).

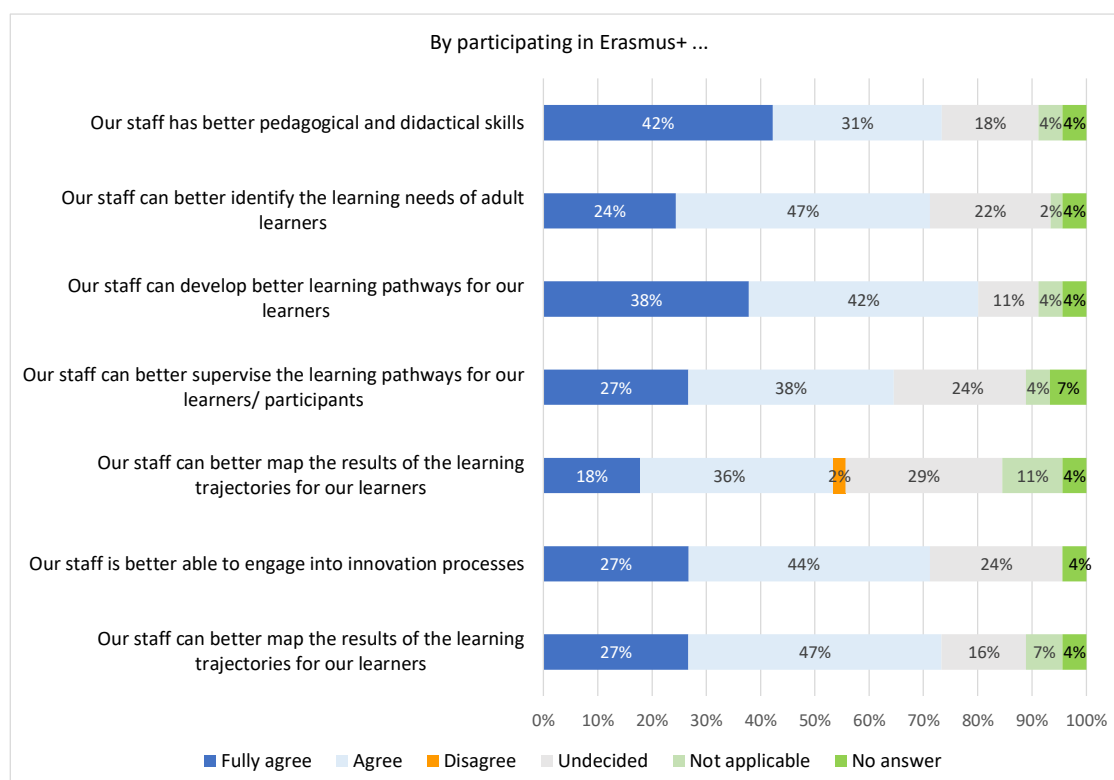


Figure 32: Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the professionalisation and development of staff

As a result of the implementation of Erasmus+ projects, organisations see significant improvements in terms of better international competences of staff (intercultural competences; international orientation; and personal development). 87% of surveyed organisations fully agree or agree with that. 78% of surveyed organisations have mentioned that by participating in Erasmus+ their staff has better language skills of at least one other EU language. A similar number of respondents (76%) admit that participation in Erasmus+ projects has promoted the following skills of employees: (1) staff is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities; (2) staff is better able to make use of digital learning technologies; (3) staff pays more attention to inclusion and diversity (Figure 33).

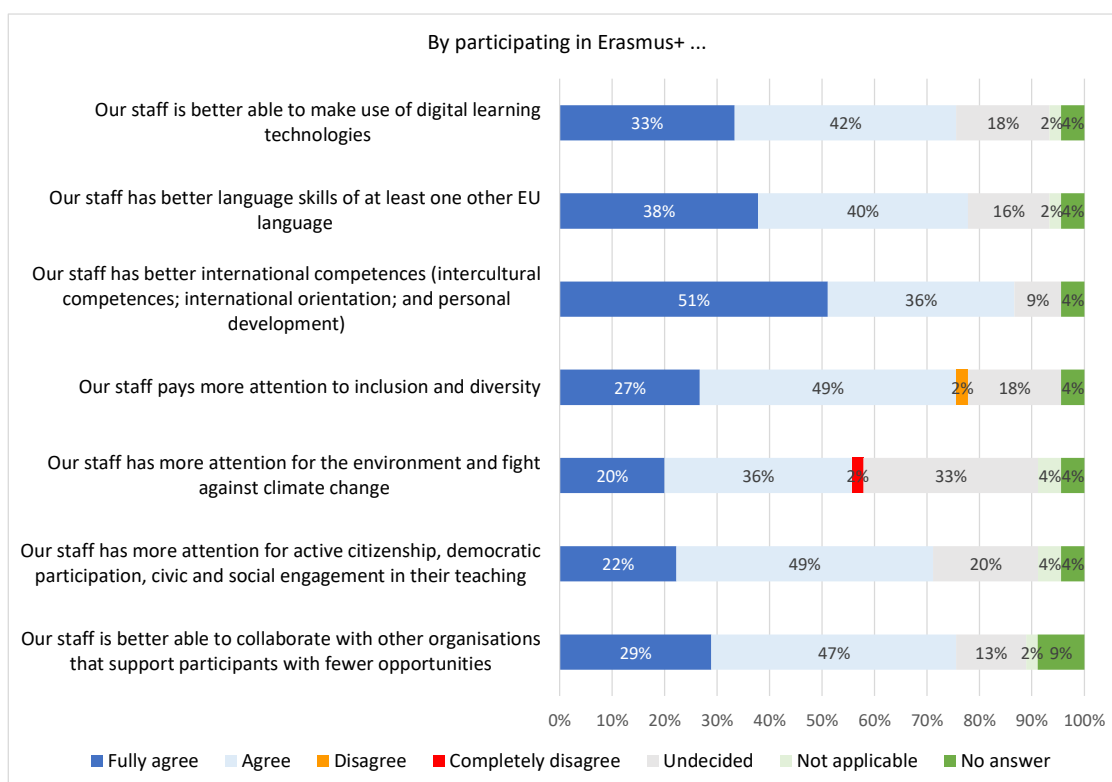


Figure 33: Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the professionalisation and development of staff

As concrete examples of how participation in one or more Erasmus+ projects since 2018 has improved the quality of staff in organisation, respondents have mentioned following aspects:

- 1) Erasmus+ projects have improved professional and cooperation skills;
- 2) Erasmus+ projects have increased self-confidence in being able to take on and implement European-wide projects;
- 3) Employees have become more active and courageous, confident in their abilities;
- 4) The ability of employees to perform in front of a large, diverse target audience and to deal with unpredictable situations has increased;
- 5) Employees' knowledge of foreign languages has improved;

- 6) Improved communication skills when cooperating with colleagues in other EU countries;
- 7) Erasmus+ projects have helped to understand diversity and cultural differences. Working in an international environment helped employees to become more open to different events and to understand what is happening in the world from different points of view.
- 8) Erasmus+ projects have fostered to use various IT tools and to learn about the possibilities of their use in adult education, including the use of augmented reality and virtual reality tools.

In the period from 2018 to 2020, a total of 291 participants completed the KA1 participant individual reports after mobility (Table 12). 47 filled individual reports in 2018, 125 in 2019, and 119 in 2020. In total, of all the participants who participated in the mobilities and completed the reports, 114 participated in job shadowing, 173 participated in structured courses or training events, and 4 participated in teaching or training assignments abroad.

Mobility Type	2018	2019	2020	Total
Job Shadowing	14	62	38	114
Structured courses or training events abroad	33	60	80	173
Teaching/training assignments	0	3	1	4
Total	47	125	119	291

Table 12. KA1 participant reports in 2018-2020

Evaluation of Erasmus+ mobility experience in general reveals that 82% of participants are very satisfied with their experience, and 18% are rather satisfied with their participation in mobility (Figure 34).

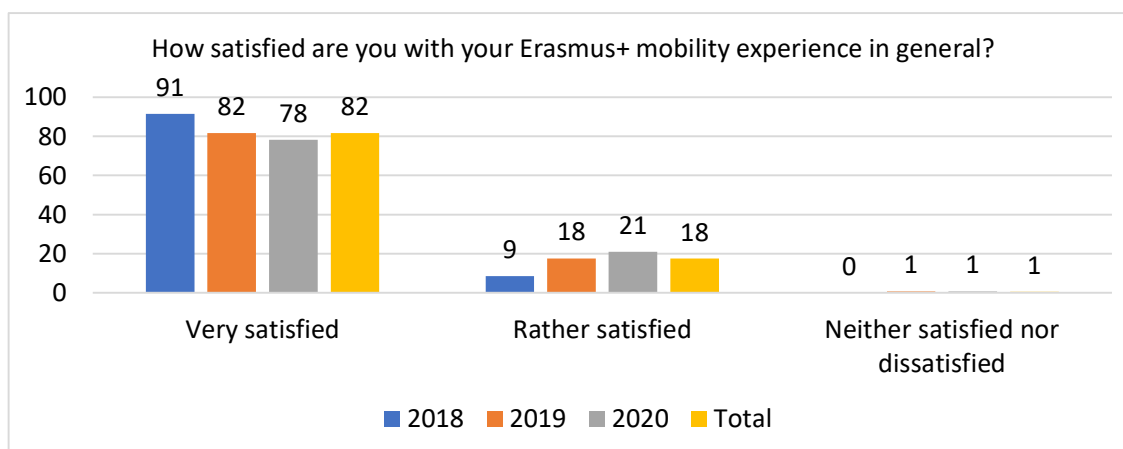


Figure 34: Evaluation of Erasmus+ mobility experience in general. %

All 291 KA1 mobility participants gave an affirmative answer to the question "Would you like to participate in other Erasmus+ activities in the future?". 99% or 297 participants would recommend this experience to a colleague.

A summary of respondents' assessments between 2018 and 2020 on the results of their mobility activities (Figure 35) shows that most participants agree that they have learned from good practices abroad (66% of all "strongly agree"). Considering the "strongly agree" statements, the next statements with the most "strongly agree" responses indicate that teachers/other staff at school have learnt to learn and have been given opportunities to share the knowledge they have acquired through their mobility activities with their colleagues (59% strongly agree on both statements).

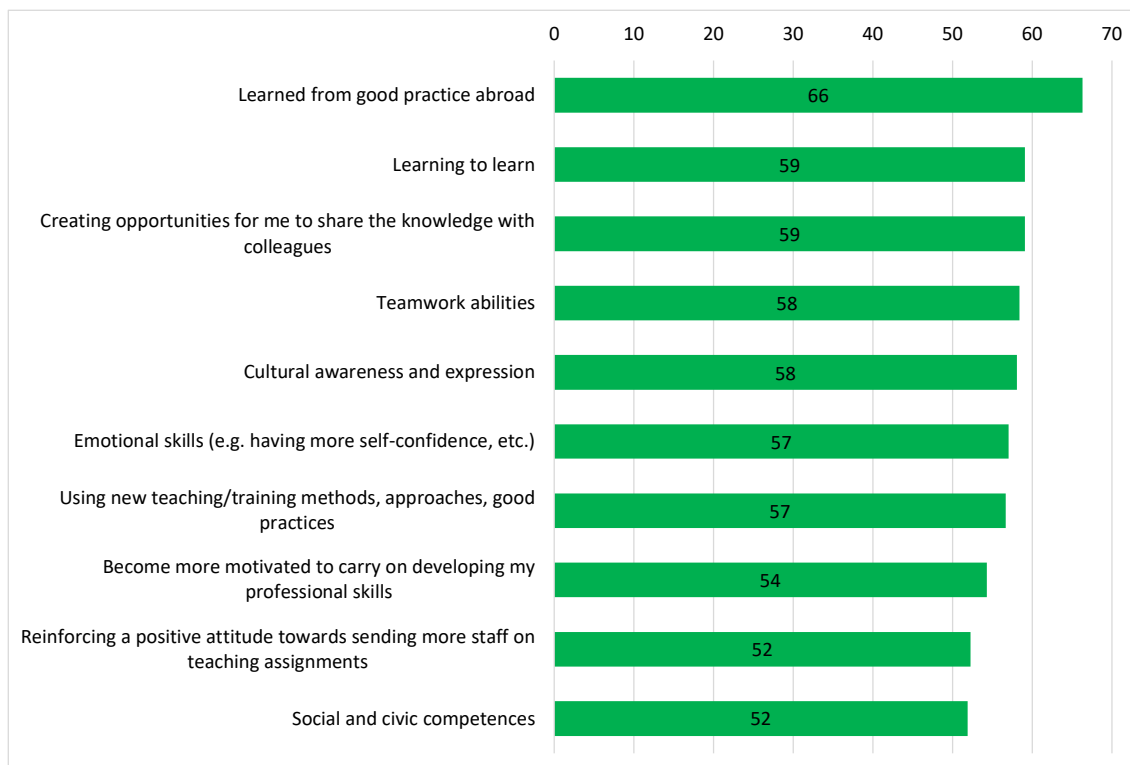


Figure 35: The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence. Top ten competences. Answers "strongly agree". %

Other highly rated areas were the improvement of teamwork abilities and the development of cultural awareness and expression (58% of 'strongly agree' responses on both). Similarly, respondents say that they have improved emotional skills (e.g. having more self-confidence, etc.) and that they now use new teaching/training methods, approaches, and good practices at their sending institution (57% tend to 'strongly agree' with both statements).

Only slightly fewer (54%) strongly agree that they have become more motivated to continue developing their professional skills.

Also, slightly fewer respondents (52%) strongly agree that as a result of their mobility, their institution's positive attitude towards sending staff on teaching assignments, job shadowing or training abroad has been reinforced. The same proportion (52%) of respondents strongly agree that their social and civic skills have improved.

Overall, they agreed that learning from good practices abroad had improved a range of useful competences for future work (both the ability to continue learning, to work in teams and use new teaching methods). This included the opportunity to share their learning with other colleagues. In addition to gaining competences that are directly applicable in their workplace, their self-esteem and motivation for further professional development have also been positively improved.

A full assessment of the impact of mobility on the development of certain competencies is presented in the figures in Annex 1.

6.3 Impact on adult learners

The four biggest benefits of adult learners from participation in Erasmus+ in the evaluation of the surveyed organisations are as follows (Figure 36):

- 1) By participating in Erasmus+ the living environment/ world of adult learners has been enriched (69%);
- 2) By participating in Erasmus+ adult learners have gained new social contacts outside of their own environment (65%);
- 3) By participating in Erasmus+ adult learners have become more assertive (64%);
- 4) By participating in Erasmus+ adult learners have started to participate more in activities in their own environment (60%).

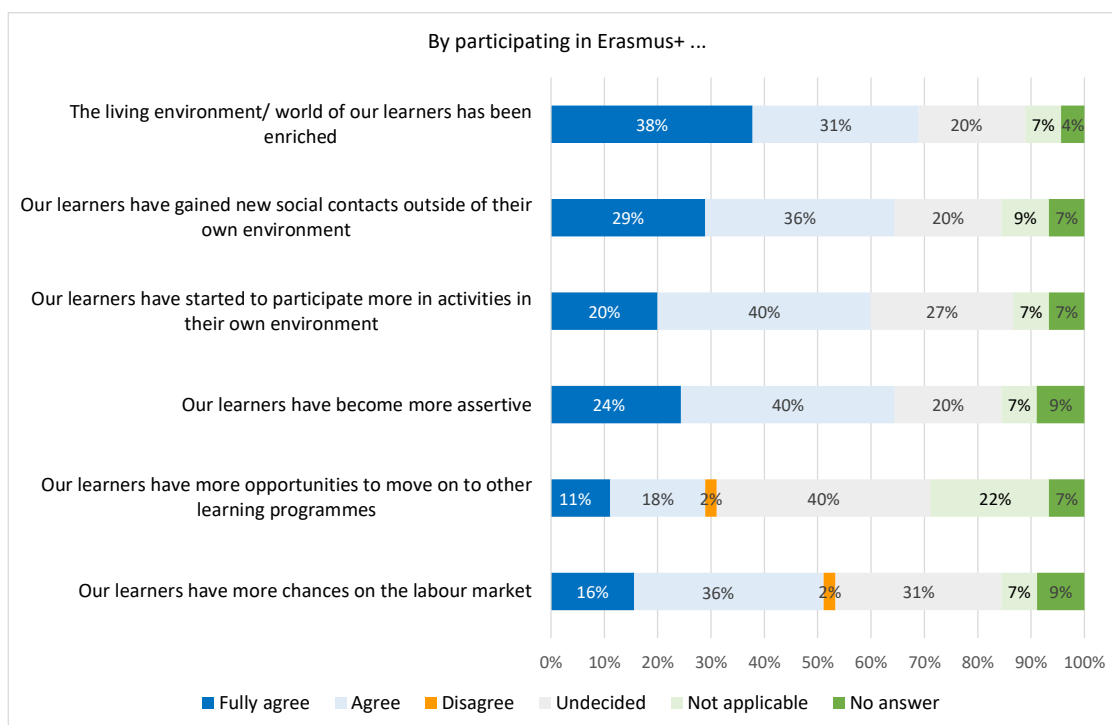


Figure 36: Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on adult learners in organisation

In-depth interviews with adult learners show the many and varied benefits they see in Erasmus+ projects. Adult learners point out that their English, communication, and cooperation skills have improved because of the mobility visits. Some mention that they have developed their digital skills in different ways, including to use different networking tools. They have learned to open a zoom link, to create a WhatsApp group, to navigating a google map, to understanding where they are, finding their way around the city. The Erasmus+ project has helped several interviewees to feel more confident because it has allowed them to analyse their problems, and the support of other project participants have strengthening them.

In one of the cases, the organisation's goal for the mobility visits was to encourage Roma women to engage in awareness-raising, to acquire new skills and to participate in society. A positive result of this mobility was that Roma women themselves realised that they need Roma women's organisation in their city and started to create it. The Roma activist who was the main initiator of the Roma women's organisation pointed out that the mobility visits helped Roma women to get to know how life is elsewhere and to realise that Roma women in Latvia "can be independent from men, that they can manage on their own, that they can be independent". Now, in the newly created association, they organise training for Roma women and children, because "the problem in our association is that the visitors are mostly illiterate, they can't do anything themselves, and we have to hold their hand all the time. [...] We have realised that we must train our Roma women, illiterate women, to read and write, which is what we are doing. They come to us with their children, and they learn. The children learn separately. [...] We teach reading and writing, mostly to the mothers, we teach the children the Latvian language, and how to integrate into school, kindergarten, integrate into Latvian culture, but also not to forget their Roma culture".

In another case, interviewed adult learner was interested in setting up her own business, and the training she received within a project motivated her to take the plunge and start this business: "I was always thinking that I should start something of my own and this was one of the motivating events. As a result, I started my own company". Overall, this is an excellent example of the impact of the Erasmus+ adult learning project, as it confirms that such training has a role to play in promoting entrepreneurship.

6.4 Conclusions

The highest rated impact of Erasmus+ participation on the organisation's employees is related to significant improvements in terms of better international competences of staff (intercultural competences; international orientation; and personal development). 87% of surveyed organisations fully agree or agree with that. A large proportion of the surveyed organisations (over 70%) also indicate that by participating in Erasmus+ their staff can better map the results of the learning trajectories for learners, their staff has better language skills of at least one other EU language, staff is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities, staff is better able to make use of digital learning technologies, staff pays more attention to inclusion and diversity, and staff has better pedagogical and didactical skills. The individual reports of KA1 mobility participants (from 2018 to 2020) reveal that KA1 mobility participants during their mobility visits have improved a

range of useful competences for their future work, including organising the work in teams and use new teaching methods. In addition to gaining competences that are directly applicable in their workplace, their self-esteem and motivation for further professional development have also been positively improved. All in all, we can conclude that participation in Erasmus+ has a significant impact on the professionalisation and development of staff.

The main impact on adult learners from participation in Erasmus+ according to the opinion of the surveyed organisations is that the living environment/ world of adult learners has been enriched (69%), adult learners have gained new social contacts outside of their own environment (65%), adult learners have become more assertive (64%) and adult learners have started to participate more in activities in their own environment (60%).

In-depth interviews with adult learners reveal that as a result of participation in projects, adult learners not only acquire foreign language skills, certain professional skills, gain higher self-confidence and life experience, but in some cases even found their own companies or non-governmental organisations in order to promote personal, social and economic well-being.

7 Impact of Erasmus+ at macro level

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we look at the impact of Erasmus+ beyond participating organisations. It addresses aspects such as how other organisations benefitted from the project outcomes, adjusting their provision/ offer, but also whether adjustments have been made to (government and/ or sectoral) policies at the national and regional level due to Erasmus+ projects.

7.2 Impact on other organisations

Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on other organisations who did not participate in the project can be seen in cases when these organisations also get some benefit from the project outcome. In general, the surveyed organisations believe that similar organisations have benefitted from the project outcomes and have adjusted their provision/ offer. 20% fully agree and 49% agree with this statement (Figure 37).

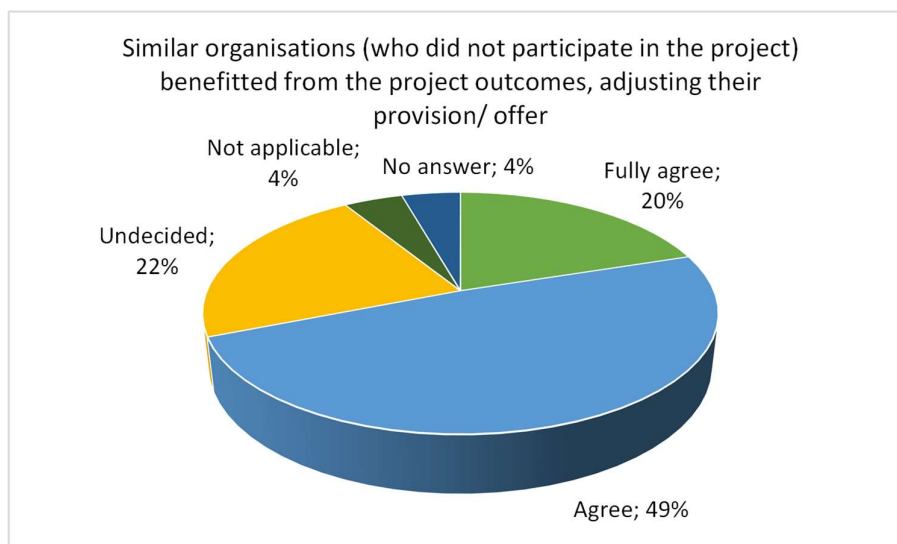


Figure 37: Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on other organisations

7.3 Impact on national, regional and sectoral policies

Compared to other aspects, there is less certainty among surveyed organisations about the impact of projects at the local or regional level. Only 2% fully agree and 29% agree with the statement that by participating in Erasmus+ adjustments have been made to government and/ or sectoral policies at the local or regional level (Figure 37).

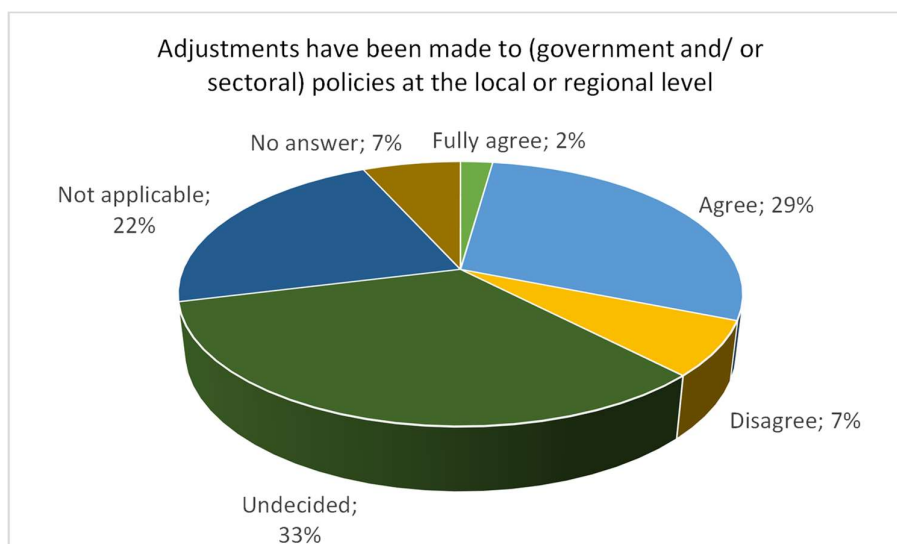


Figure 38: Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on regional policies

The assessment of the impact of projects at the national level is even lower than the impact of projects at the local and regional level. Only 16% agree with the statement that by participating in Erasmus+ adjustments have been made to government and/ or sectoral policies at the national level (Figure 39).

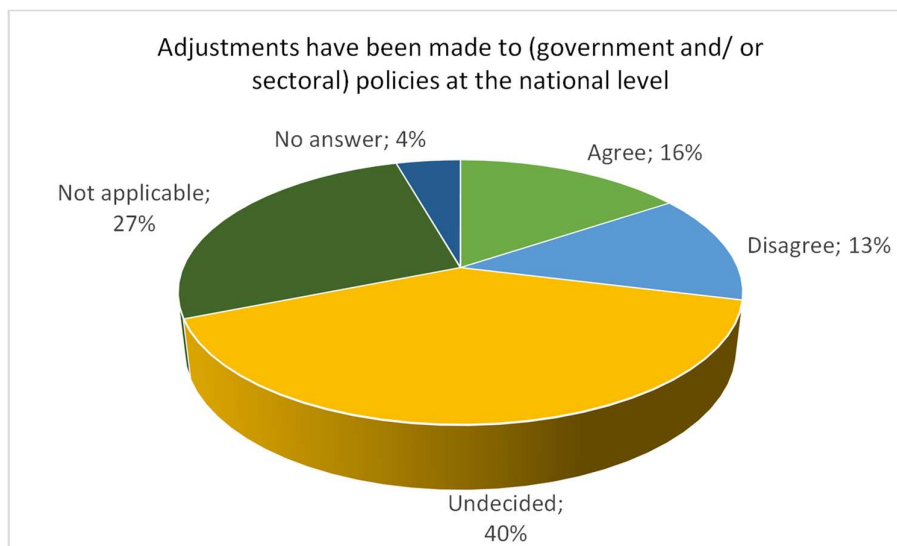


Figure 39: Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on national policies

The case studies also show that the impact of Erasmus+ is mostly attributed to the level of organisations and individuals, as in none of the cases did the project coordinators or training participants mention examples of how project results were used systemically at the national or regional level. Positive examples of cooperation and distribution of results were more pronounced in relation to other organisations and cooperation with local municipalities.

In some cases, the private initiatives of the project participants – adult learners can also be very positively evaluated in a wider context. For example, the training participants' initiatives to create their own companies, which they were encouraged to develop by the Erasmus+ project experience in training, as well as the initiative of Roma women to create their own non-governmental organisation for the support of Roma women.

Another positive example with the potential to become a wider movement is a development of the Senior University in Latvia. The Senior University movement, created and developed through Erasmus projects is a direct result of the Erasmus project, because the project manager was introduced to the idea of the Senior University in Portugal through an Erasmus project on digital skills for adults 55+ in 2017.

Now this is an activity beyond Erasmus+ projects, and currently it is supported from different sources of funding and involving different organisations, including several municipalities and senior organisations.

7.4 Conclusions

The impact of Erasmus+ beyond participating organisations can manifest in the involvement of other organisations in testing and using results developed in KA2 projects. In general, 69% of the surveyed organisations believe that similar organisations have benefitted from the Erasmus+ project outcomes and have adjusted their learning provision/ offer.

Compared to other aspects, there is less certainty among surveyed organisations about the impact of Erasmus+ projects at the local, regional, and national level. 31% of the surveyed organisations believe that by participating in Erasmus+ adjustments have been made to government and/ or sectoral policies at the local or regional level, and even fewer organisations (16%) believe that by participating in Erasmus+ adjustments have been made to government and/ or sectoral policies at the national level. It must be concluded that the main impact and importance of Erasmus+ is precisely at the meso and micro level, positively influencing the organisations that implement the projects and adult learners in Latvia.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY POINTERS

8 Support of NA: strengths and challenges

8.1 Key findings

The accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

Looking at the diversity of the applied projects and the organisations that receive funding, it can be concluded that the Erasmus+ program is available to the most diverse organisations: both by legal status and size of the organisation, as well as by thematic interest and target groups. The hindering factor for organisations to apply is the human resources capacity of the organisation. If the organisation does not have specialists with project planning, writing and English language skills to make contacts with international partners, or these specialists are busy with other work, organisations lack the capacity to prepare a project application.

The analysis of the characteristics of the KA1 mobilities' participants reveals that the proportion of women in KA1 mobilities is significantly higher than that of men (75% vs. 25%). This peculiarity of Latvia, that women participate much more actively in any kind of training, is a long-standing problem related to the involvement of men in educational processes in Latvia. To change this trend, the recruitment of men for educational activities should be given special attention and strongly encouraged.

NA data on participants with fewer opportunities in 2021-2022 KA1 mobilities shows a positive trend that the participation of this group increases a little every year. At the same time, difficulties remain in providing mobility visits to persons in wheelchairs, as environmental accessibility problems are still observed in EU countries, which complicate the organisation of mobility visits for persons in wheelchairs. Ensuring inclusion is also complicated for other target groups, for example, for persons with low basic skills, because they often lack motivation to learn, and special approaches are needed to motivate them.

Impact at meso level

Quantitative survey data, as well as case studies and in-depth interviews confirms that participation in Erasmus+ projects has the strongest impact on internationalisation of organisations. 71% of the surveyed organisations agree that the conditions within their organisation to facilitate internationalisation processes have improved since 2018. More than 70% of surveyed organisations agree that by participating in Erasmus+ the international network of their organisation has been strengthened, that the management of international projects (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning) has been improved, and HR/ staff policy for internationalisation within their organisation has been strengthened, and that their organisation is more aware of the added value of international projects. Participation in Erasmus+ projects has a relatively smaller impact on the increase of funding for internationalisation.

The study reveals that participation in Erasmus+ projects has a significant impact on the learning offer of organisations. 86% of organisations point out that by participating in Erasmus+ their learning offer is better aligned with the needs of adult learners. More than 70% of organisations agree that their organisation is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities and that the accessibility of the learning offer has improved for different groups of adult learners. More than two-thirds of the organisations indicate that the developed outputs and insights gained have been incorporated into new or existing provision of their organisation.

In general, the Erasmus+ support has been decisive in the implementation of adult education activities in Latvia, because without Erasmus+ programme most or some of the learning activities in the adult education sector would not be carried out.

Within the impact of participation in Erasmus+ projects on horizontal priorities, the most significant impact of the projects has been on digital transformation. 66% of organisations report that attention to digitalisation has improved very much and rather much. The in-depth interviews and case studies suggest that this was significantly facilitated by the implementation of Erasmus+ projects during the Covid-19 pandemic, when all meetings had to be organized remotely and planned events had to be reorganized so that digital tools were used. The research reveals that the second horizontal priority on which participation in Erasmus+ projects has had the greatest impact is democratic life, common values and civic engagement. 60% of organisations state that the attention to participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement has improved. 55% of organisations note that the attention to inclusion and diversity has improved, and only 40% mention that the attention to environment and fight against climate change has improved.

The main hindering factors to use outputs and products developed are the small staff capacity of the organisations and change of employees. The main stimulating factors are awareness of the organisation's mission and focus of organisations to solve certain problems or to support certain target groups (seniors, persons with disabilities, Roma women etc.). Factors that encourage use of outputs and products developed with the support of Erasmus+ are the high relevance of the developed teaching materials and the availability of the learning materials in different languages and on different platforms.

Impact at micro level

The highest impact of Erasmus+ participation on the organisations' staff can be seen in significant improvements in terms of better international competences of staff. 87% of the surveyed organizations agree that participating in Erasmus+ improves intercultural competences, international orientation, and personal development of their employees. By participating in Erasmus+ organisations' staff has better language skills, is better able to collaborate with other organisations that support participants with fewer opportunities, is better able to make use of digital learning technologies, and staff has better pedagogical and didactical skills. Employees of participating organisations have improved a range of useful competences for their future work, including organising the work in teams and use new teaching methods. In addition to gaining competences that are directly applicable in their workplace, their self-esteem and motivation for further professional development have also

been positively improved. All in all, participation in Erasmus+ has a significant impact on the professionalisation and development of staff.

Regarding the adult learners, the study shows that by participating in Erasmus+ the living environment/ world of adult learners has been enriched, adult learners have gained new social contacts outside of their own environment, they have become more assertive and have started to participate more in activities in their own environment. As a result of participation in projects, adult learners not only have acquired foreign language skills, certain professional skills, gained higher self-confidence and life experience, but in some cases even founded their own companies or non-governmental organisations in order to promote personal, social and economic well-being.

Impact at macro level

The impact of Erasmus+ beyond participating organisations in terms of how other organisations benefitted from the project outcomes is best revealed in case study interviews. The experience of the closely analysed organisations reveals that other organisations are involved both in testing and use of the results of KA2 projects. Organisations are happy to cooperate with each other and to use the outputs prepared by other organisations. The only preconditions for this are that the outputs are prepared in high quality and available in both Latvian and English. 69% of the surveyed organisations believe that similar organisations have benefitted from the Erasmus+ project outcomes and have adjusted their learning provision/ offer.

Impact of Erasmus+ projects at the local, regional, and national level is less pronounced than other benefits. 31% of the surveyed organisations believe that by participating in Erasmus+ adjustments have been made to government and/ or sectoral policies at the local or regional level, and 16% of the surveyed organisations believe that by participating in Erasmus+ adjustments have been made to government and/ or sectoral policies at the national level. The case studies, positive examples of cooperation and distribution of results were more pronounced in relation to other organisations and cooperation with local municipalities. All in all, the main impact and importance of Erasmus+ can be revealed at the meso and micro level, positively influencing the organisations that implement the projects and adult learners in Latvia, but it is less vivid at the macro level.

8.2 Policy pointers

How to increase the accessibility and inclusiveness of Erasmus+

- In the study, the support provided by the NA (the State Education Development Agency) during both project preparation and implementation was evaluated very positively. Such support needs to be continued.
- To promote the more active involvement of men, as well as persons with low basic skills, in training activities, organisations should be inspired to think more about different approaches to encouragement and motivation, possibly also by preparing projects in which such motivation strategies are tested.

- To promote the involvement of new and inexperienced organisations in Erasmus+ projects, it is recommended to simplify the project application form, reducing the need to repeat similar information in different sections.
- For Erasmus+ projects to cover a larger number of organisations and have a greater impact, it is necessary to evaluate whether the funding available to Latvian applicants for adult education projects should not be increased. It should be noted that the available funding is determined not by the National Agency, but by the European Commission.

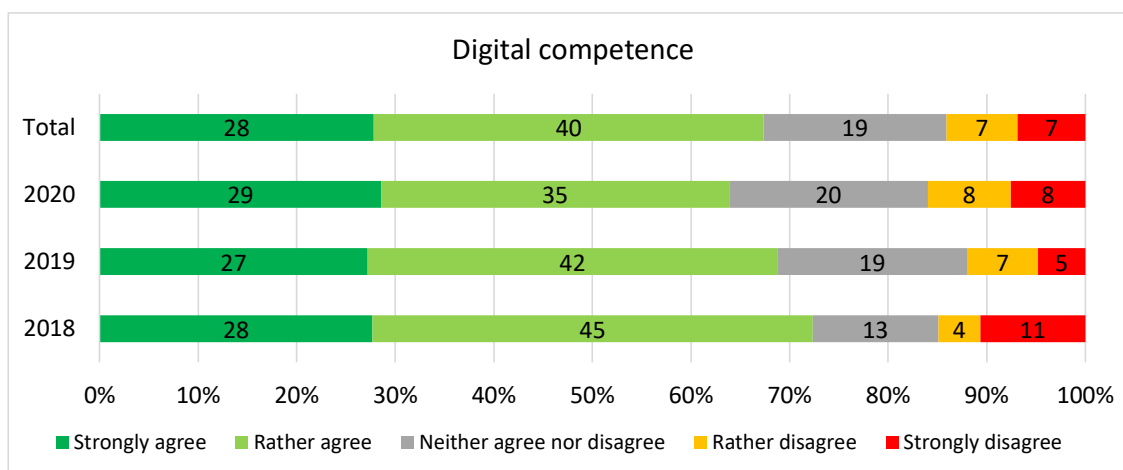
How to increase the impact at macro level

- To increase the impact of Erasmus+ projects beyond participating organisations, it is recommended that more emphasis be placed in the training of organisations on measures to promote the dissemination and wider application of project results (in the stage of preparation of project applications).
- To increase the impact of Erasmus+ projects on policies at the national, regional and local level it is recommended that, in training activities, organisations should be inspired to think more about macro level impact and involvement of relevant municipalities and state institutions as important stakeholders in the implementation of projects.

Annexes

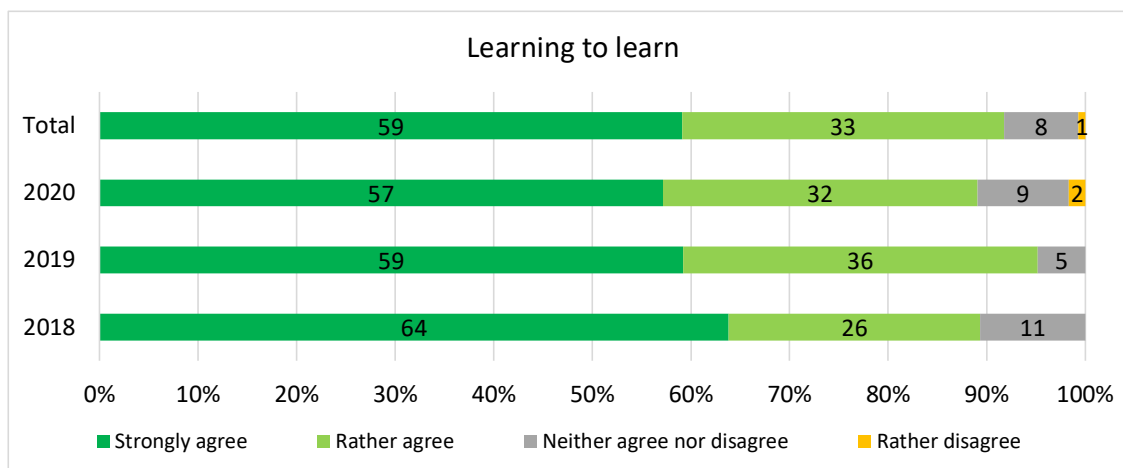
Annex 1: KA1 participant reports in 2018-2020

Figure 1.1. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Digital competence. %



Source: Data provided by NA

Figure 1.2. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Learning to learn. %



Source: Data provided by NA

Figure 1.3. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Social and civic competences. %

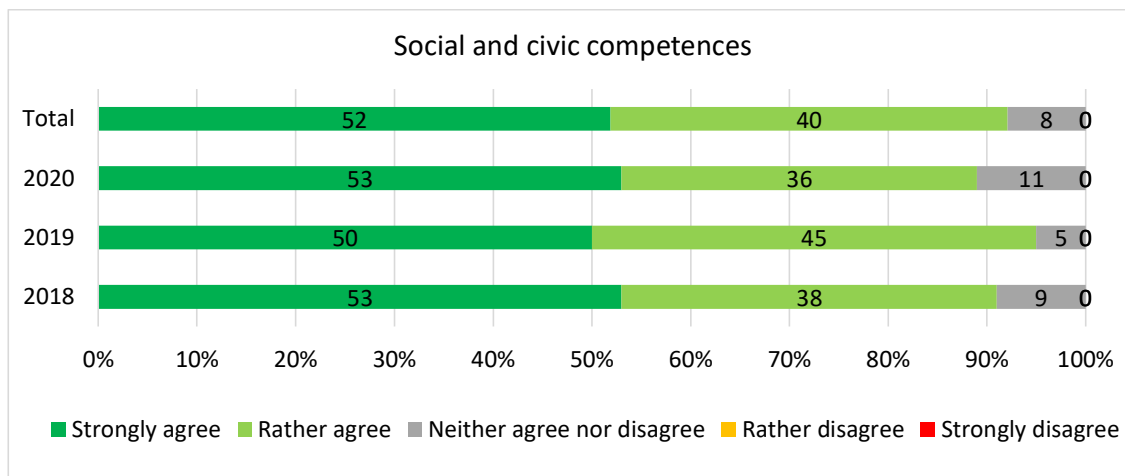


Figure 1.4. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. %

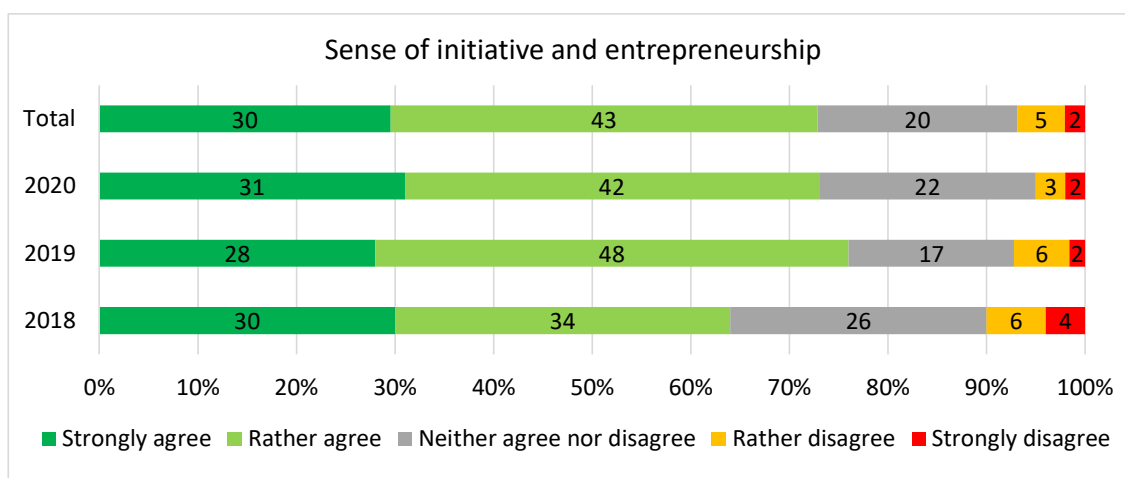


Figure 1.5. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Cultural awareness and expression. %

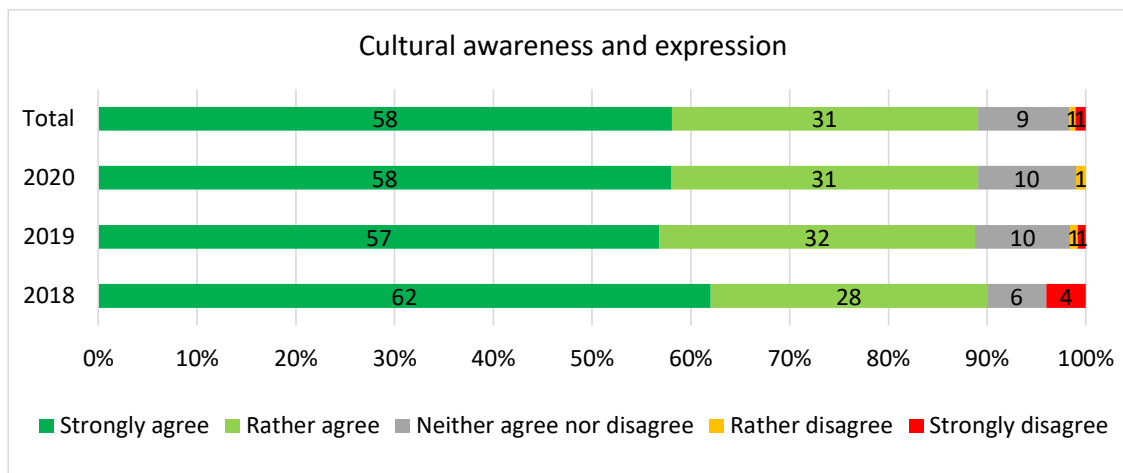


Figure 1.6. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Improved my career and employment opportunities. %

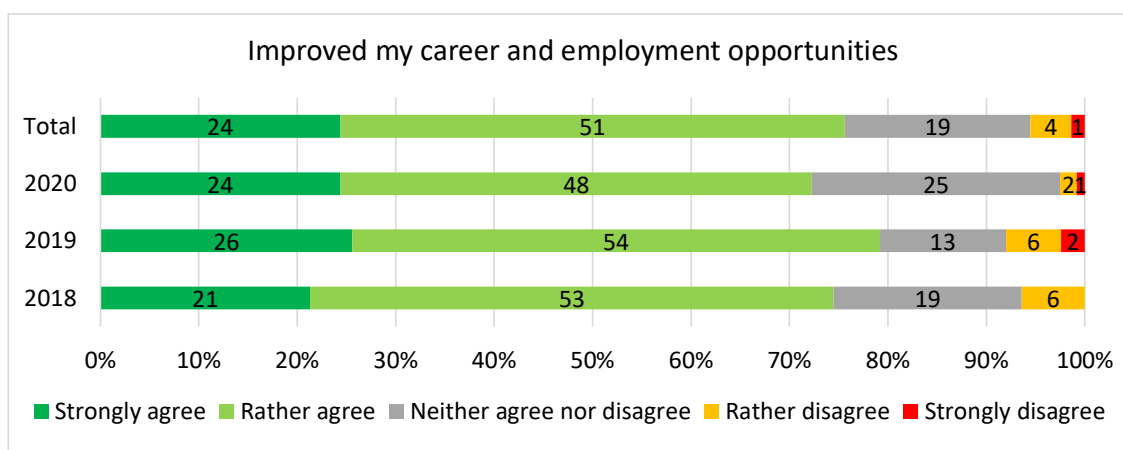


Figure 1.7. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Become more motivated to carry on developing my professional skills. %

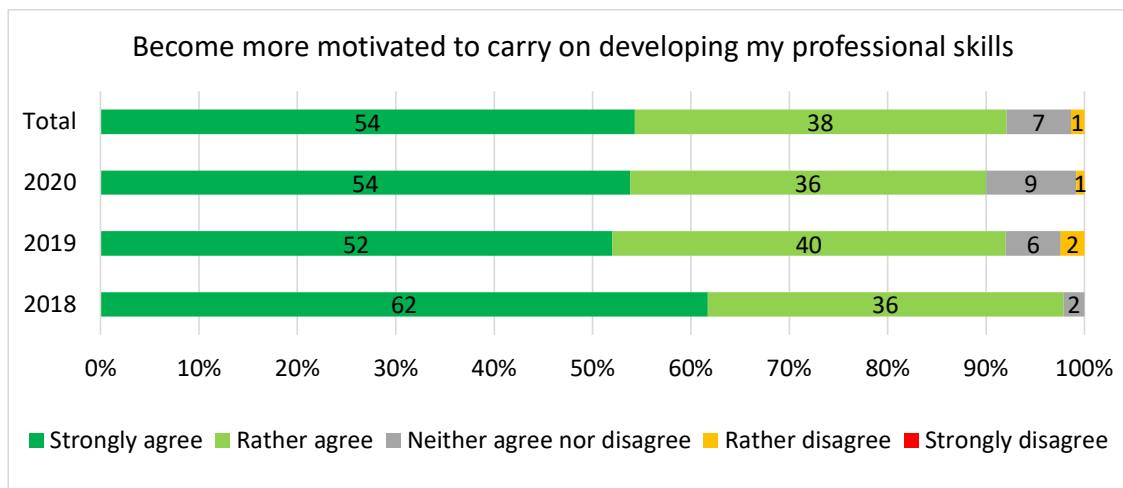


Figure 1.8. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Learned from good practice abroad. %

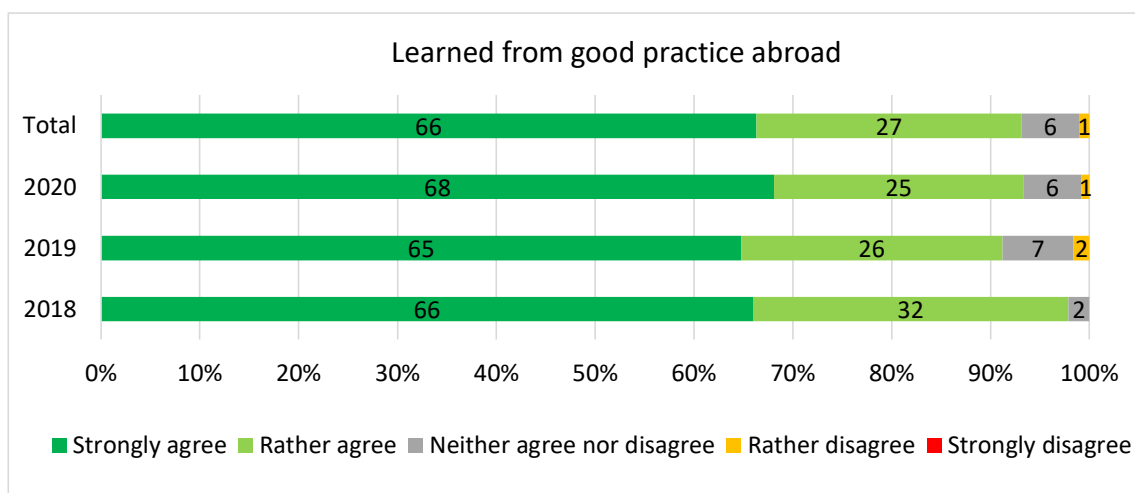


Figure 1.9. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Gained practical skills relevant for my current job and professional development. %

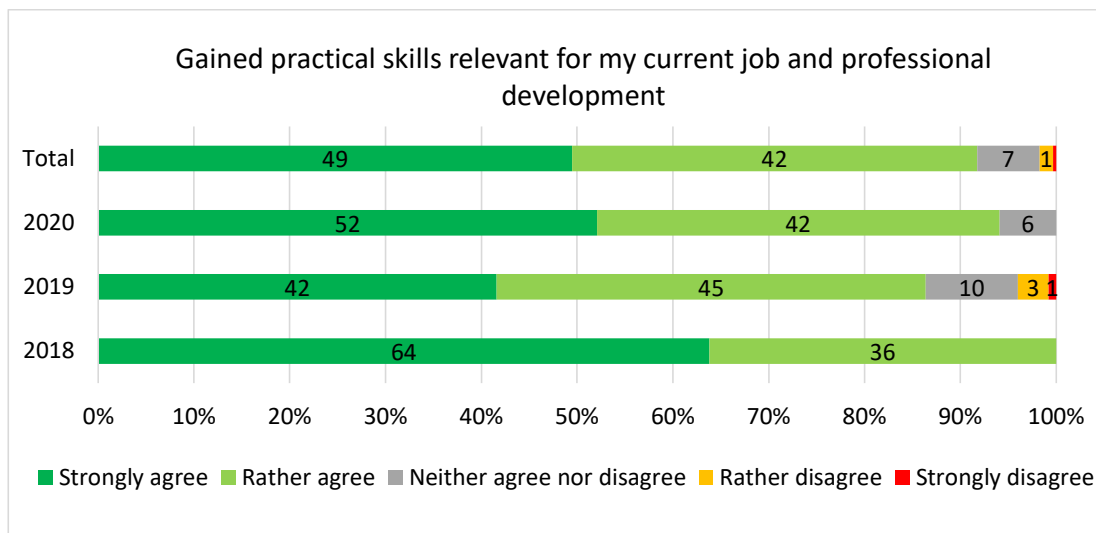


Figure 1.10. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Improved my knowledge of the subject I am teaching and/or my professional field. %

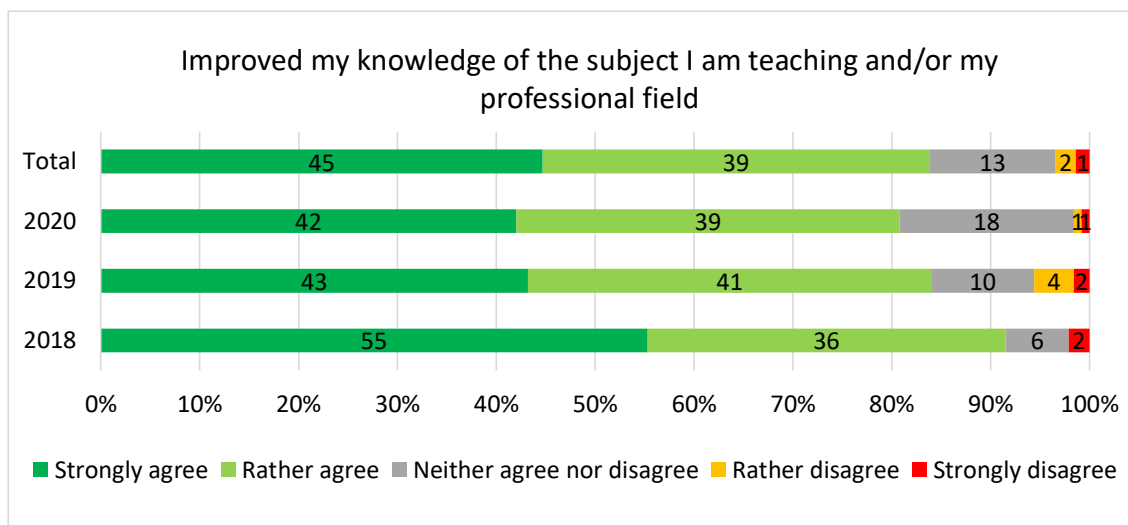


Figure 1.11. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Been able to experiment and develop new learning practices and teaching methods. %

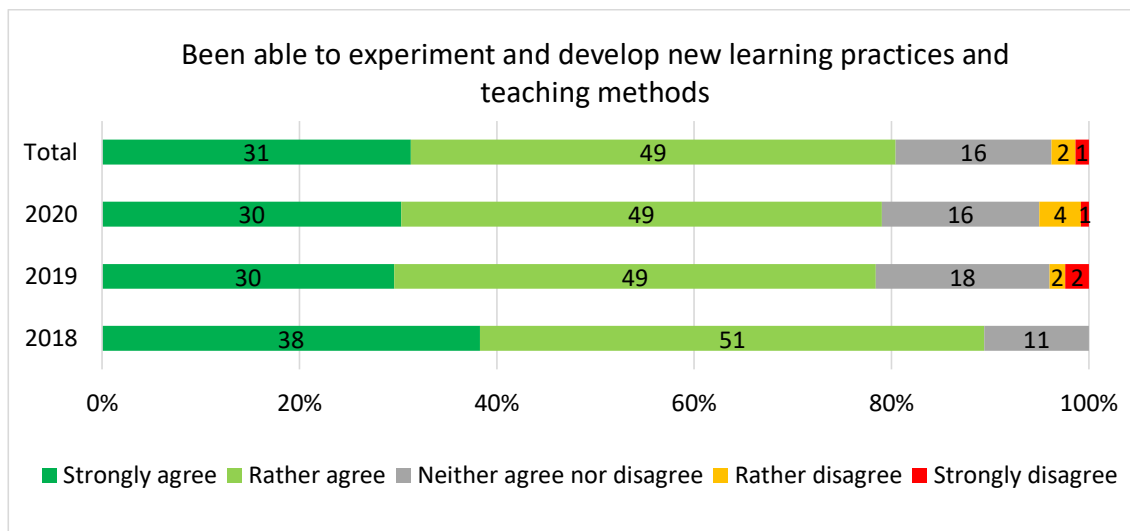


Figure 1.12. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Built up new contacts/expand my professional network. %

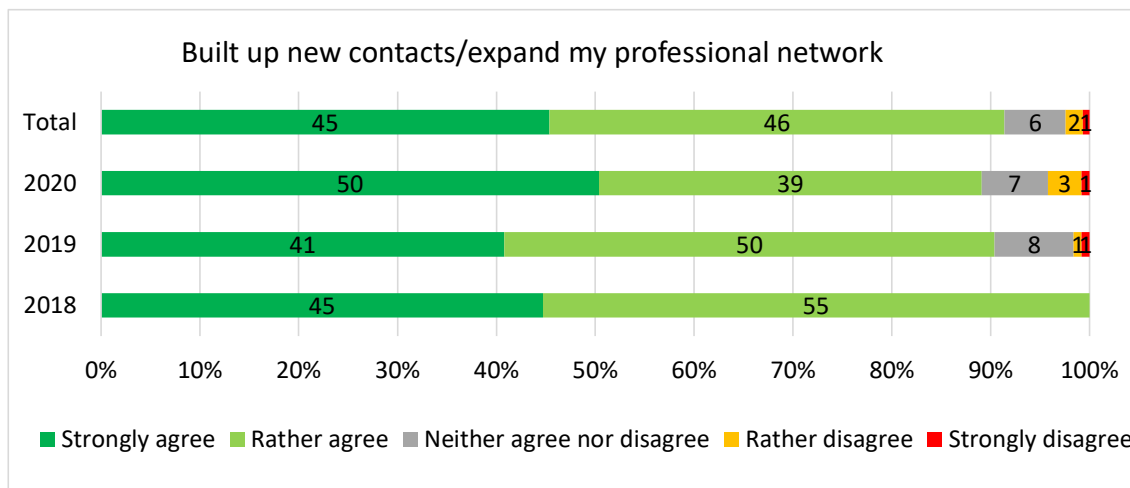


Figure 1.13. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Improved my knowledge of education systems in other countries. %

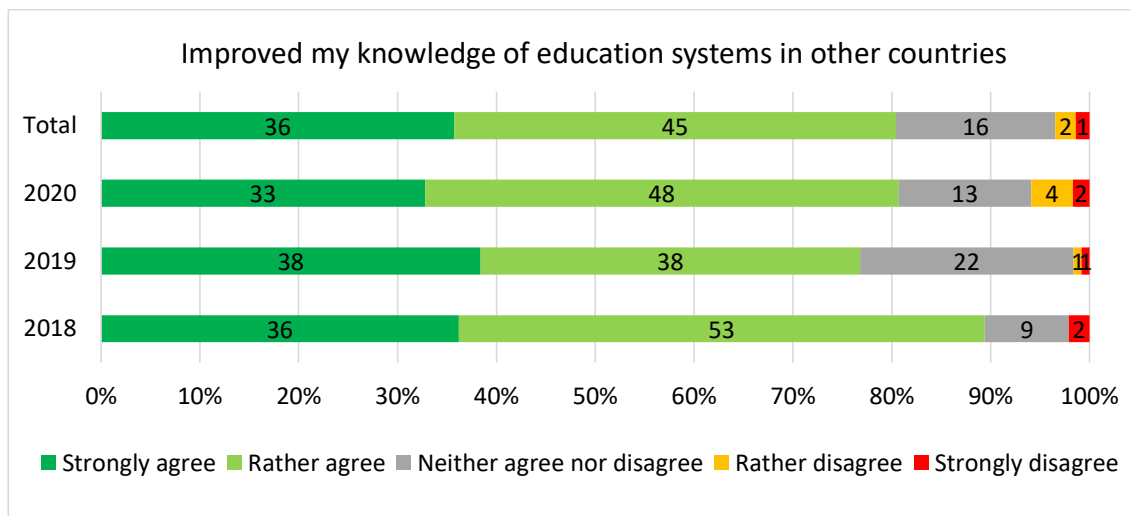


Figure 1.14. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Improved my awareness of methods for assessing and giving credit for skills or competences acquired in formal and informal learning context. %

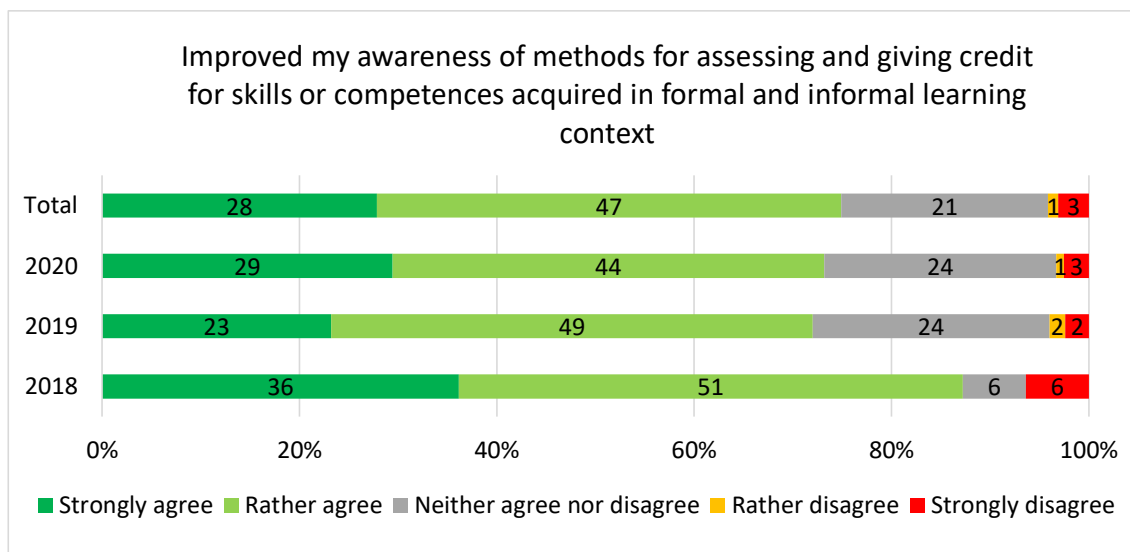


Figure 1.15. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Become better aware of European funding mechanisms for projects in my field of education and training. %

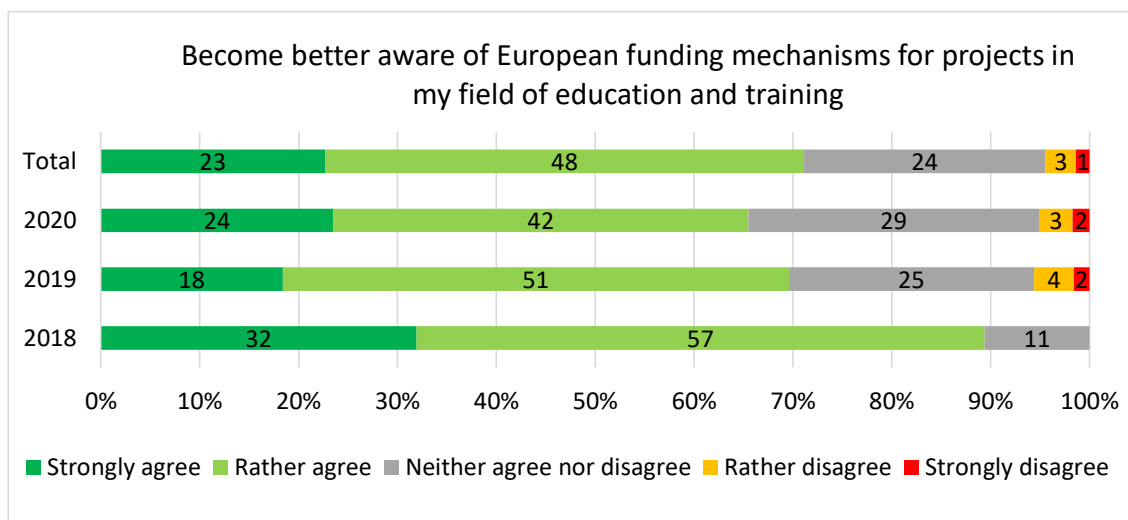


Figure 1.16. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Analytical skills. %

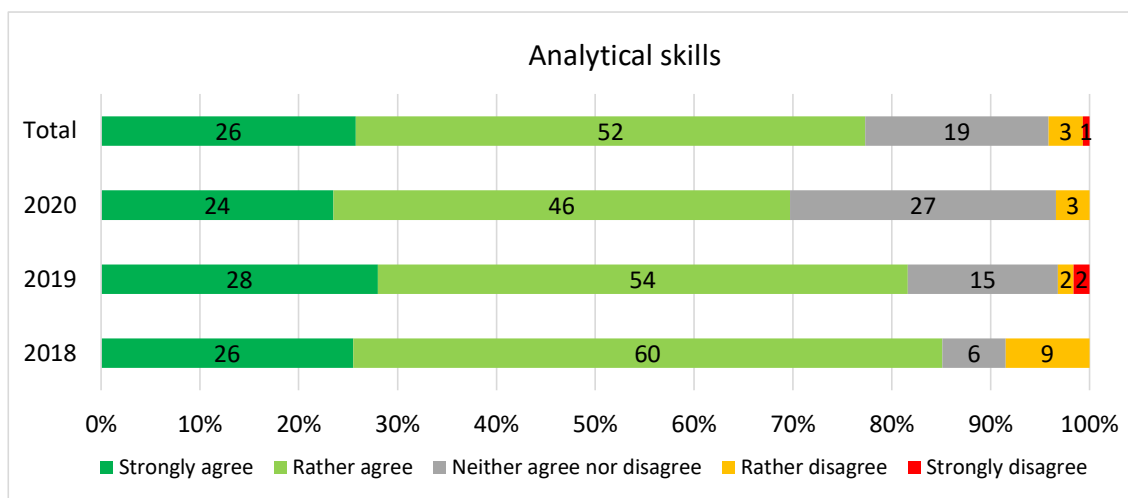


Figure 1.17. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Practical skills (e.g. planning and organising, project management, etc.). %

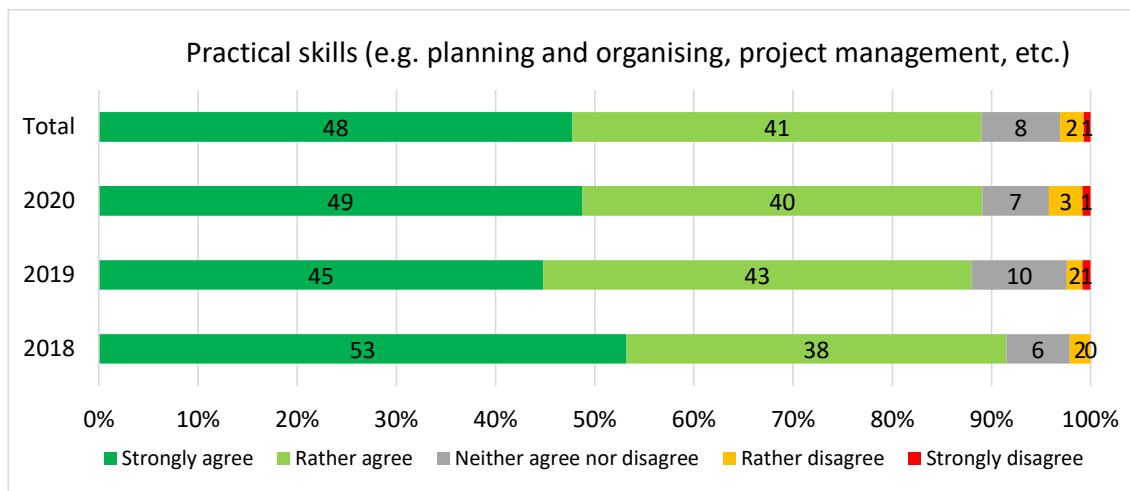


Figure 1.18. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Organisational/management/leadership skills. %

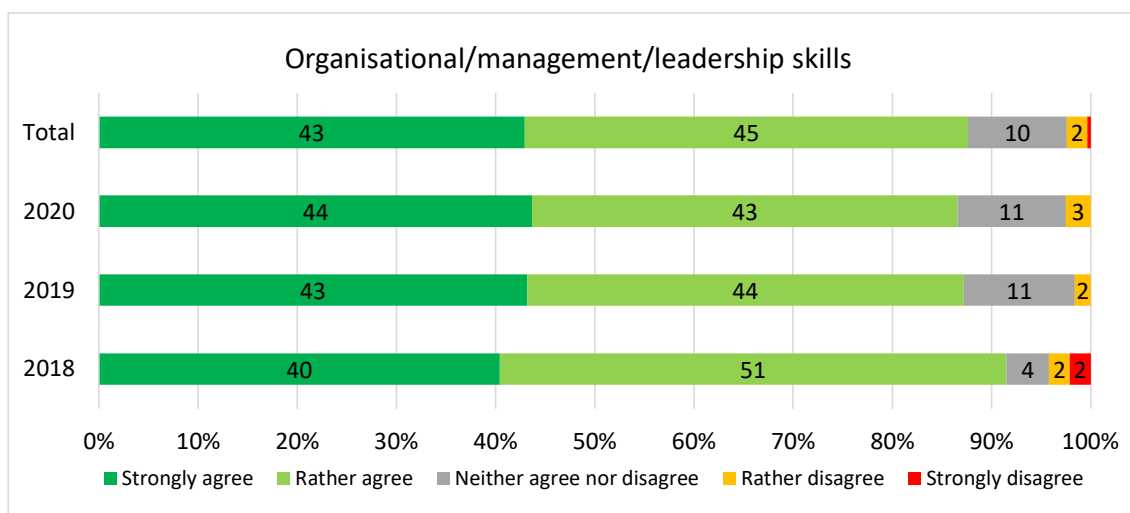


Figure 1.19. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Teamwork abilities. %

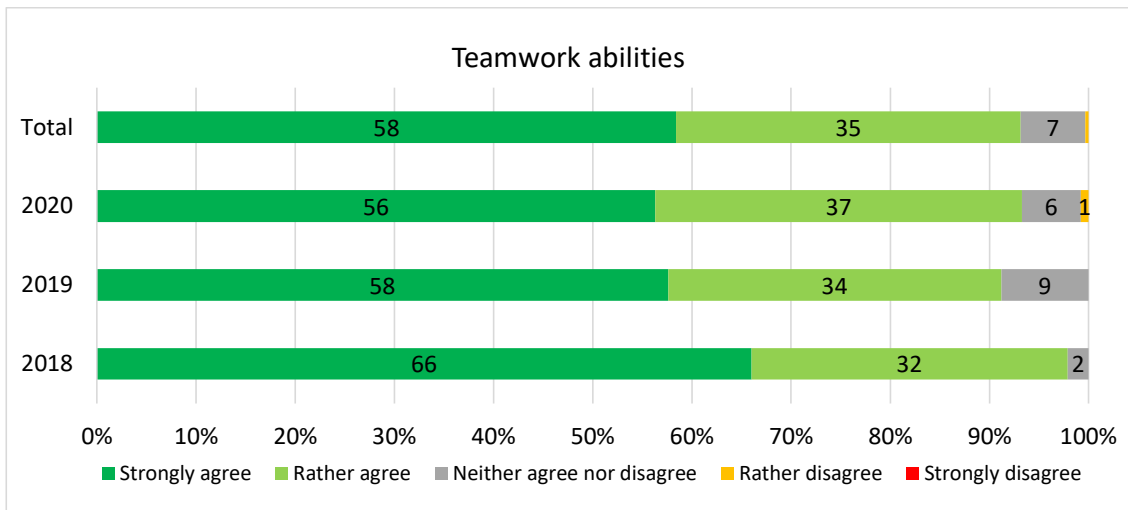


Figure 1.20. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Emotional skills (e.g. having more self-confidence, etc.). %

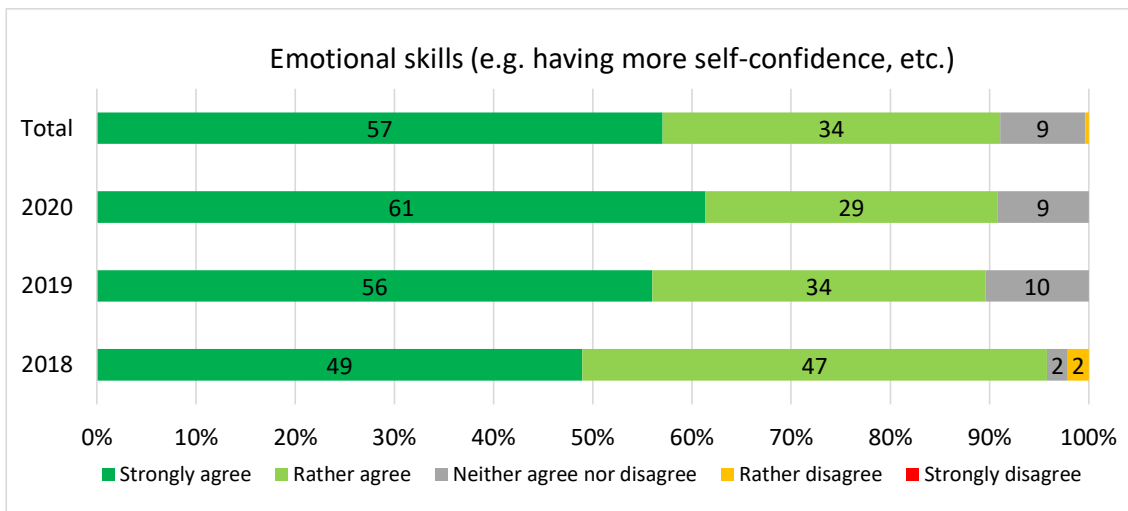


Figure 1.21. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Creating opportunities for me to share the knowledge acquired through my mobility activity with colleagues. %

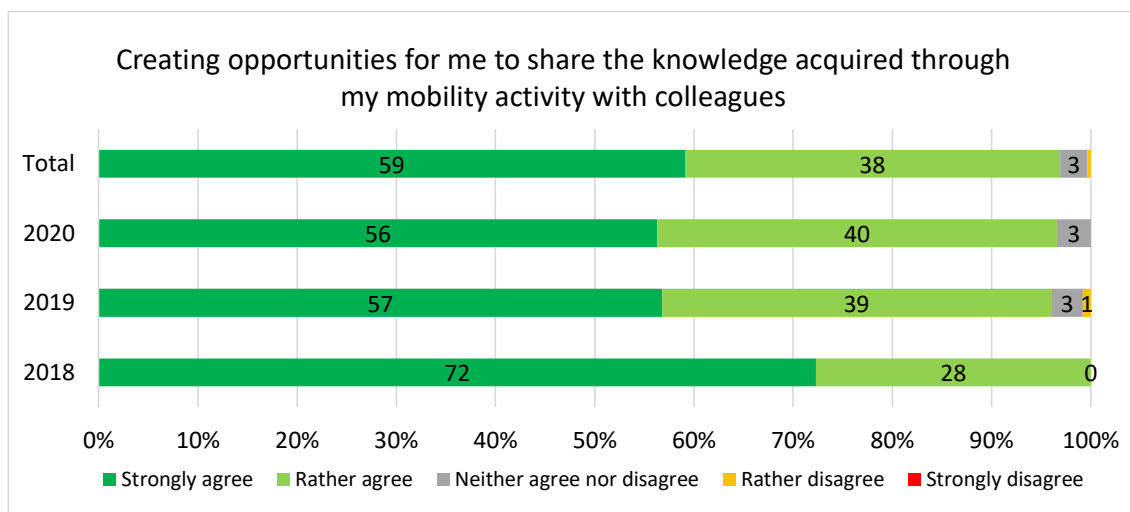


Figure 1.22. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Using new teaching/training methods, approaches and good practices at my sending institution. %

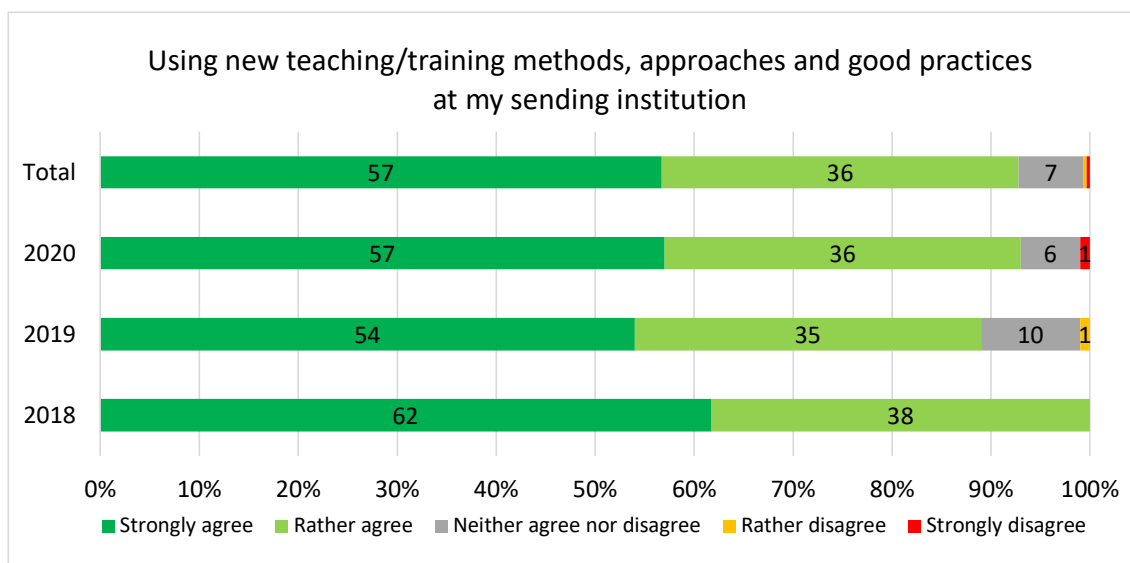


Figure 1.23. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Introduction of new subjects or curricula at my sending institution. %

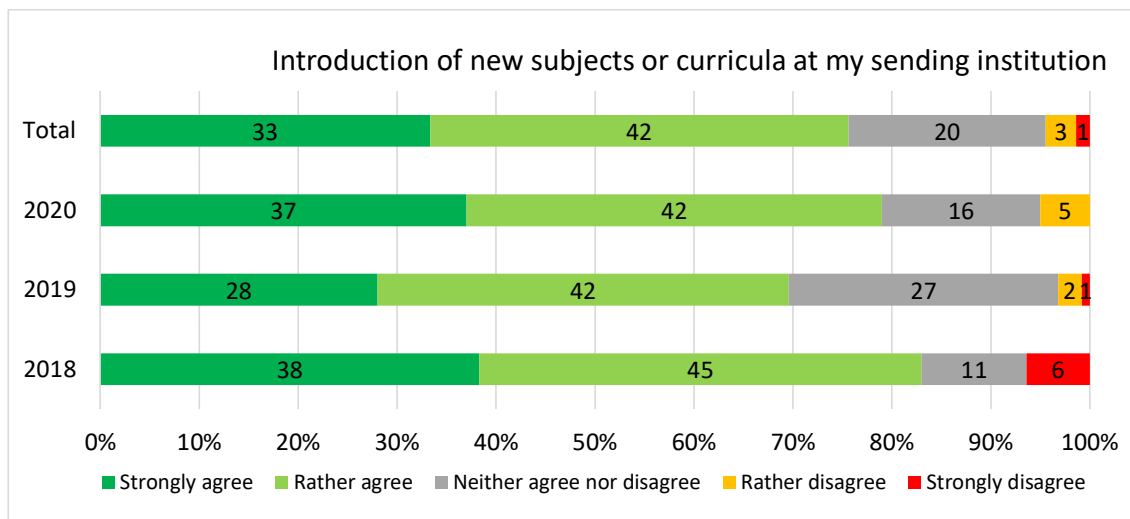


Figure 1.24. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Creating opportunities for the launch or development of new educational activities such as curriculum development, development of joint courses or modules, academic networks, etc. %

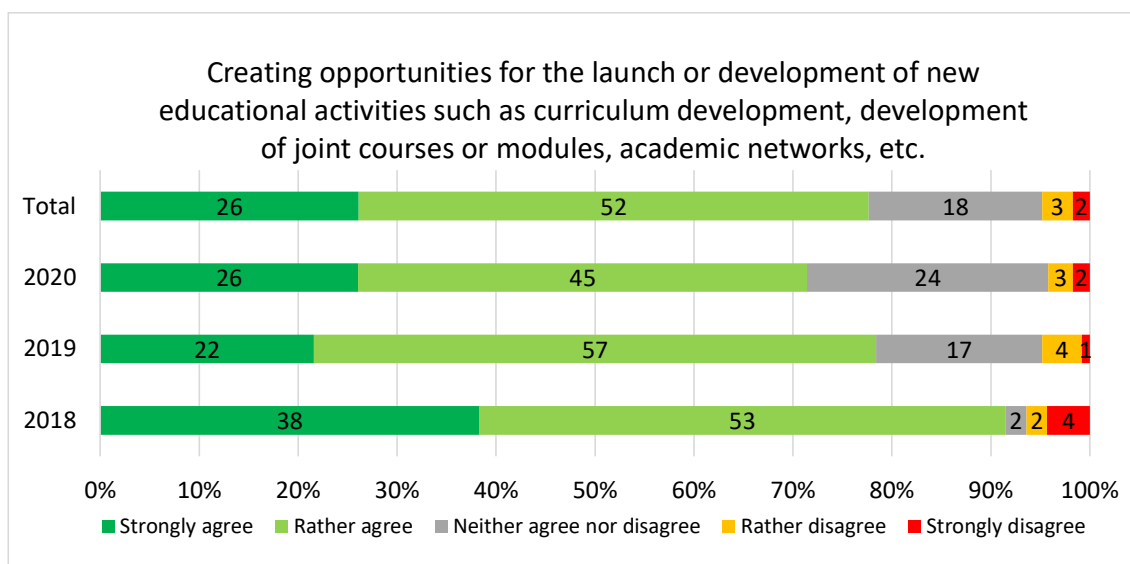


Figure 1.25. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Reinforcing a positive attitude of my sending institution towards sending more staff on teaching assignments, job shadowing or training abroad. %

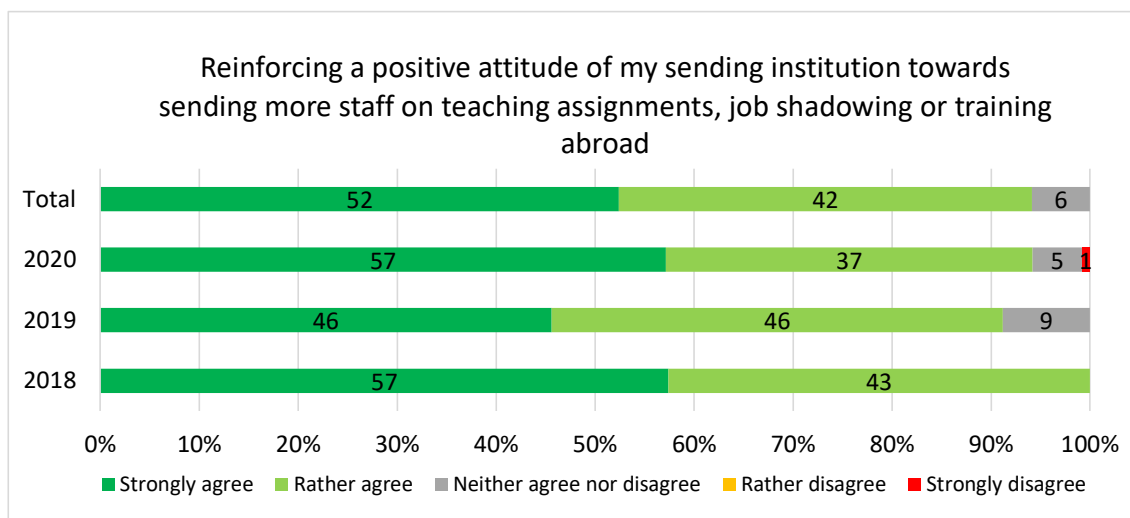


Figure 1.26. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Improving the organisation and management at my sending institution. %

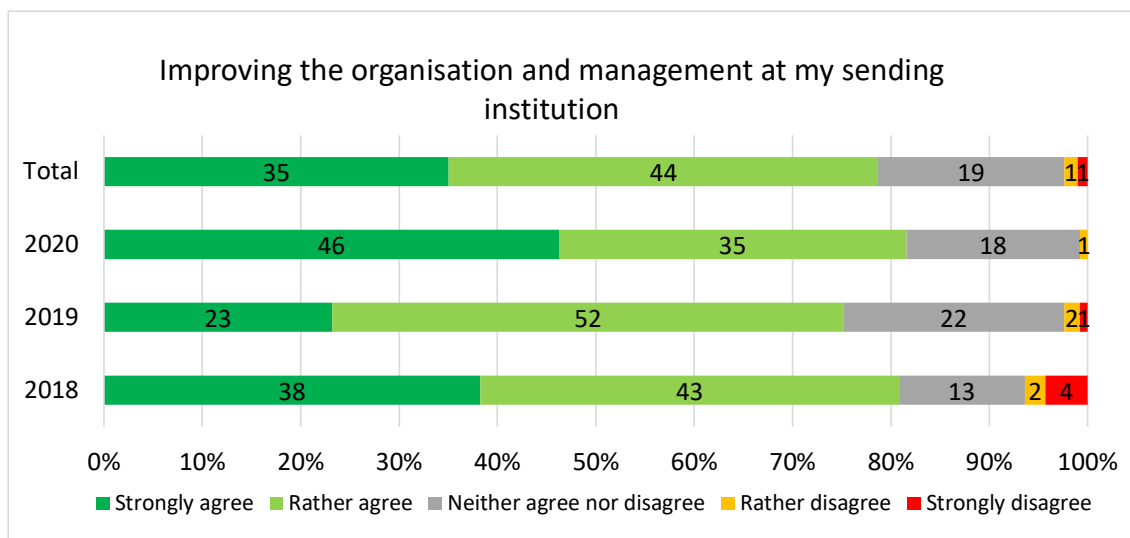


Figure 1.27. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Strengthening the cooperation with the partner organisations in this project. %

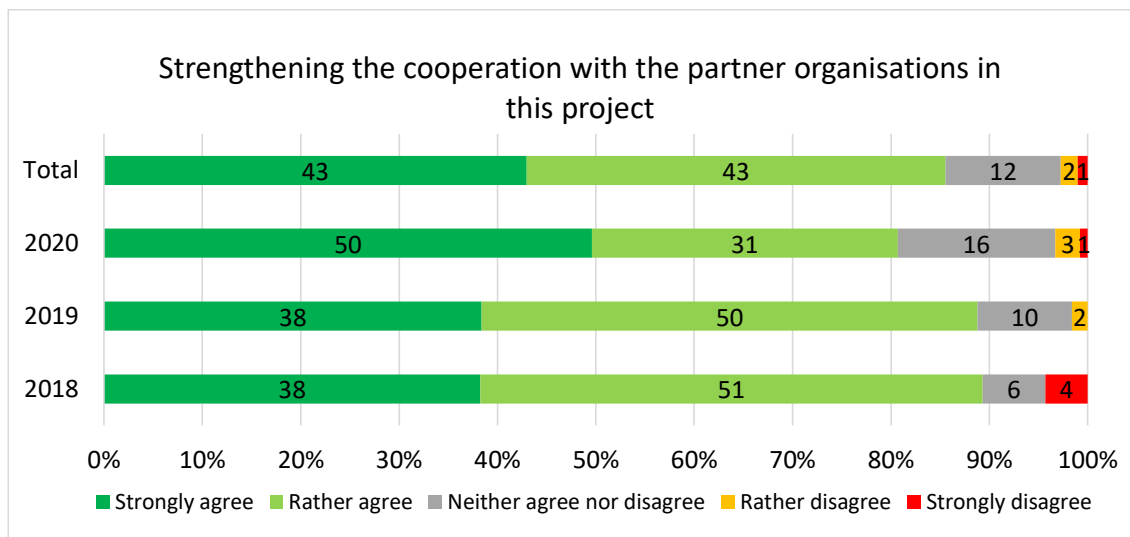


Figure 1.28. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Strengthening my sending institution's efforts to internationalise its activities. %

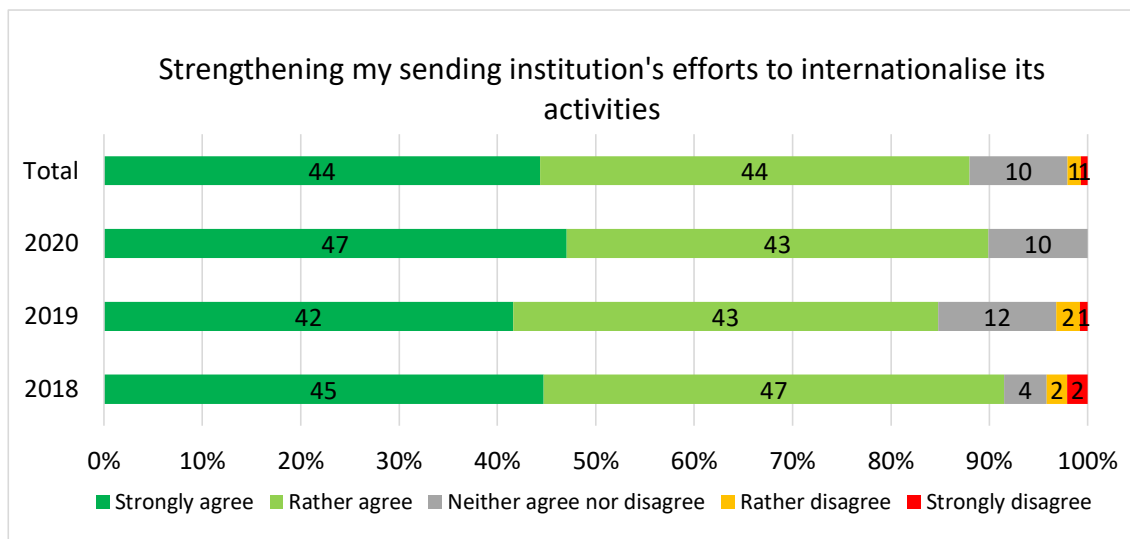


Figure 1.29. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Strengthening my sending institution's cooperation with players in the labour market. %

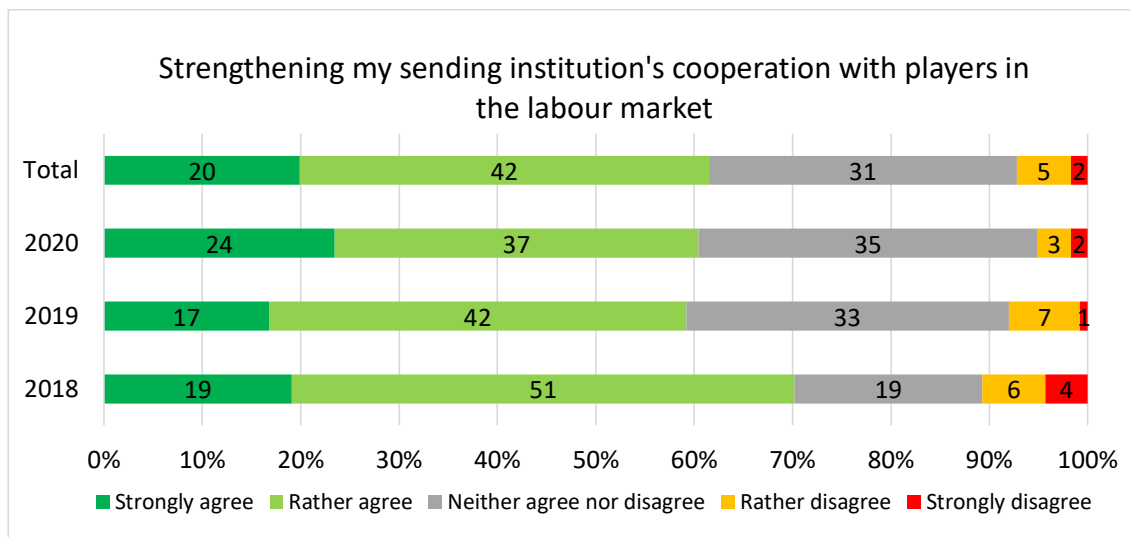


Figure 1.30. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Strengthening my sending institution's cooperation with players in the civil society. %

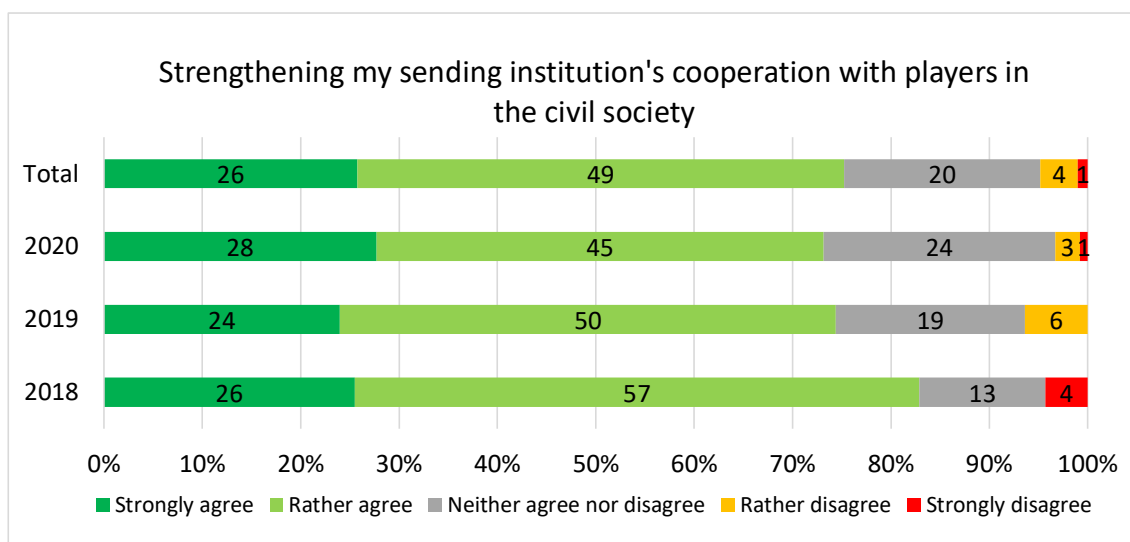
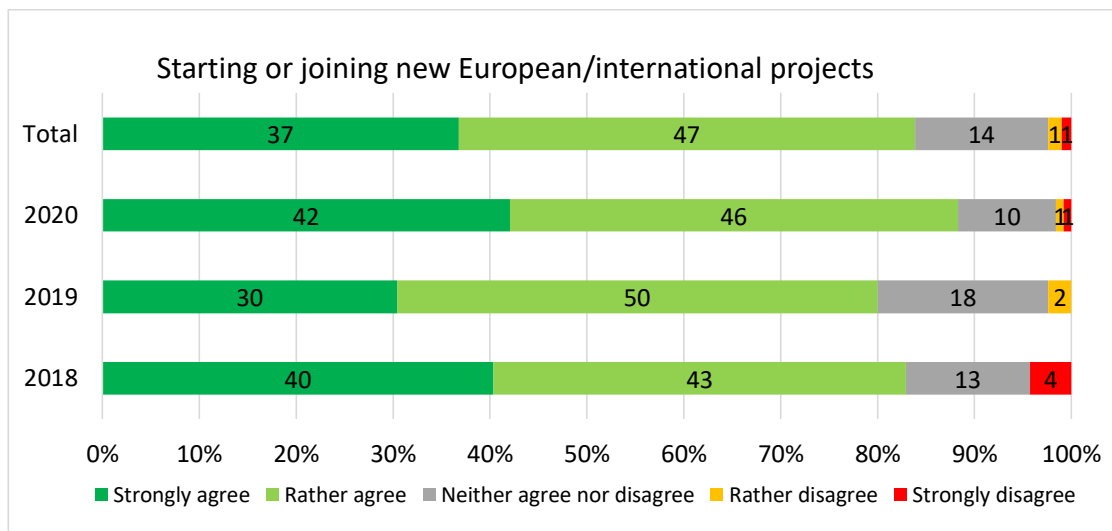


Figure 1.31. The positive impact of mobility on the development of specific competence: Starting or joining new European/international projects. %



Annex 2: Individual case study reports

Case study 1. Women's NGOs Cooperation Network

General characteristics of the organisation

Women's NGOs Cooperation Network is the largest women's rights and advocacy network in Latvia, the national coordinator of the European Women's Lobby, with about 45 women's organisations. It is also a cooperation partner of the Ministry of Culture on Roma integration issues, with a focus on capacity building for women.

The Women's NGO Network implements only KA1 projects. In cooperation with other organisations, they have applied for Erasmus+ projects since 2014. In 2020, the organisation was accredited for Erasmus+ in the field of adult education, and in 2021 received Erasmus+ funding for project implementation. Both adult educator and adult learner mobilities are implemented in their projects. The two main target groups the organisation works with in the context of adult learner mobility are women from the Roma ethnic group and women with disabilities.

In order to identify project experiences, two project leads were interviewed for this case study, as well as one adult educator representative and four adult learners who participated in the mobility. In total, seven individuals were interviewed, and six interviews were conducted. Interview period - October - December 2023

Experience with Erasmus+, challenges addressed, and outputs created

The organisation has applied for and received Erasmus+ accreditation for KA1 projects for the duration of the Erasmus+ programme until 2027. In 2021, the organisation submitted its first application as an accredited organisation. The project in question ended on 30.11.2022 and the final report has been submitted and evaluated. In 2022, the organisation submitted a second funding application, and this project is currently under implementation. The planned end date of the project is 31.05.2024.

Objectives of the Erasmus Plan as defined by the organisation (what it intends to achieve in the framework of the Erasmus accreditation, through mobility):

- 1) To ensure the availability of up-to-date knowledge, skills, and competences for women in non-governmental organisations in addressing local, national and European Union issues.
- 2) To build the capacity of women with fewer opportunities for active participation in society.
- 3) To improve the pedagogical, digital and cooperation skills for sustainable development of the Latvian Women's NGO Network and member organisations.

As a result of the project, mobility visits of Roma women and women with disabilities have been carried out, which have contributed to raising the self-confidence and capacity of these target groups and their involvement in social processes, as well as to the establishment of a Roma women's organisation in Ventspils.

Impact at organisation, staff and learners' level

At organisational level, Erasmus+ projects have been an opportunity to develop staff skills and experience through mobility visits. Erasmus+ mobility visits have been an excellent complement to long-term capacity building training for persons with disabilities and Roma women organised by other projects.

At a staff level, the mobility visits provided both positive emotions and ideas on how to move forward: "It opened my eyes to look wider. To look for partners, to go on exchange trips, to invite people to visit us". For example, a Roma women's activist says that she gained a lot from these visits in terms of how to involve other members in her organisation: "We know now how to involve them, how they do it, invite them, set the table, sit down, talk. They are invited for an hour, the next time for two hours, they are drawn in, and then when they start working, there is someone who likes to knit, someone likes to sew, someone likes to make beads, bracelets, well, to do handicrafts, so that people are interested. So, they come willingly, you don't have to look for them, they come because it's in their interest".

At the level of adult learners, mobility visits for women with disabilities and Roma women showed how organisations work outside Latvia and provided insights and ideas on how they could work further. As the project coordinator points out, when they return from the mobility visits, "they are more daring, they feel stronger, more knowledgeable, more empowered. They open up". In preparation for and during these visits, the participants acquire skills they have never had before, such as opening a zoom link, creating a WhatsApp group to exchange information, navigating a google map, understanding where they are, finding their way around the city. Many of the participants were not even aware of the possibilities and features that can be used and enjoyed on their phones.

It is important that the mobility visits also give the participants more confidence in themselves: "At the beginning there was a kind of fear, anxiety. But the more you participate, the more that anxiety goes away. There is more confidence that you can".

Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)

The organisation's goal for the mobility visits was to encourage Roma women to engage in awareness-raising, to acquire new skills and to participate in society. One of the wider impacts in this context is the creation of a Roma women's organisation in Ventspils, where Roma women themselves realised that they needed such an organisation and started to create it:

"In cooperation with the network of women's organisations, a Roma women's organisation in Ventspils has been created. It is the first in Latvia. Our aim is to give them the knowledge and skills they need to start their own organisation. I have just given a training in Ventspils, and they have got money from the city and have set up a Roma centre. The first delegation was basically from Ventspils, our aim was to create an active, functioning core there. [...] The whole evaluation was based on what they saw, what was transferable, what they could do, in what way, what inspires them. Here is the result. They went with us to the town hall with their programme, then repaired, raised all sorts of funds to solve its problems".

The Roma activist who was the main initiator of the Roma women organisation in Ventspils points out that the mobility visits helped Roma women to get to know how life is elsewhere and to realise that Roma women in Latvia "can be independent from men, that they can manage on their own, that they can be independent". Now, in the newly created

association, they organise training for Roma women and children, because "the problem in our association is that the visitors are mostly illiterate, they can't do anything themselves, and we have to hold their hand all the time. [...] We have realised that we have to train our Roma women, illiterate women, to read and write, which is what we are doing. They come to us with their children and they learn. The children learn separately. [...] We teach reading and writing, mostly to the mothers, we teach the children the Latvian language, how to integrate into school, kindergarten, integrate into Latvian culture, but also not to forget their Roma culture".

Added value of Erasmus+

In an interview, the representatives of the organisation emphasised that they try to implement different projects in synergy, and that one project complements the other. As a positive example, they mention their experience of one year of a capacity-building training programme for persons with disabilities and Roma women in another project. This programme offered training in digital skills, financial literacy, communication and group work to the target group. The Erasmus+ mobility visits, on the other hand, provided an important complement to these trainings, as it was an opportunity to communicate and gain experience in a different environment outside Latvia, and to put into practice the knowledge gained through contact with representatives of other countries. As stated in the interview, "You could say that Erasmus+ was the icing on the cake for us".

Overall, the organisation's manager and project coordinator have a very positive view of the Erasmus+ accreditation tool for adult education. The fact that the particular organisation has obtained the status of this accredited organisation makes it easier for the organisation to work and plan its work in a longer period of time: "Accreditation is one such tool for which we are very grateful that we won that competition".

Success and fail factors

The project manager and coordinator acknowledge that working with their two main target groups is very challenging, with both successes and failures. In the case of Roma women, it is very difficult to motivate them to participate. They are not generally very outgoing and going to another country is a particular challenge that they both fear and sometimes do not see the motivation to participate. In the case of Roma women, one of the ways to encourage their participation has been the study stipend, which is very motivating and makes them more responsible about participating in the mobility visit. The fact that these women had previously participated in other training was also a very important factor: "They have never been abroad, they don't know the languages, they don't feel comfortable because there are so many unknowns. We had to inspire them, to motivate them, that everything will be okay. And finally, the mobilities that they took part in were successful. If it wasn't for the previous courses, the different team-building activities, we wouldn't have reached that audience. [...] Women have to be motivated to leave their children at home, to motivate family members that she will leave the family for a while. How will a man look at it in the family? He may not allow it, there are a lot of components that have to come together for them to go on mobility".

Difficulties in involving women with disabilities in mobility visits were caused by mobility restrictions for wheelchair users. Unfortunately, in several country visits, mobility for wheelchair users could not be ensured for this reason.

Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme

The head of the organisation and the project coordinator consider that the projects or parts of projects focusing on the mobility of educators do not cause any difficulties for their organisation and are implemented very successfully without any problems. It is considerably more difficult to organise visits of adult learners of their specific target groups (Roma women and women with disabilities). The organisation of these visits requires significantly more effort, both to motivate women to go on a mobility visit, to prepare for the visit and during the visit itself. Therefore, the head of the organisation considers that funding for working with such complex target groups is insufficient: "For adult learners. It is a huge challenge. For example, none of us realised how much it would take to prepare for the visit. In some cases, while being in a preparation visit, we realised that the infrastructure was not ready there. For example, only disabled people of groups I and II can be taken there, but disabled people of group III will not be able to be present. This was just the case in Iceland. [...] We couldn't plan a programme anywhere so that everybody can use their wheelchair and, at the same time, to fit it into the budget".

Case study 2. Ogre Technical College

General characteristics of the organisation

Ogre Technical College is a vocational education institution, which is also offering formal adult education and has its own Adult Education Centre. The organisation is characterised by a long and extensive experience in the implementation of Erasmus+ projects. Compared to other organisations, the high capacity and professional project management team of the organisation should be highlighted.

To identify the project experience, a group interview was carried out with four interviewees: the director, the project manager, the head of the Adult Education Centre and an educator (also the museum manager) who had participated in the educator exchange. One adult learner who participated in the mobility was interviewed separately. In total, five persons were interviewed, and two interviews were conducted. Interview period: October-December 2023.

Experience with Erasmus+, challenges addressed, and outputs created

Ogre Technical College is an experienced Erasmus+ project implementer. The Erasmus history shows 65 projects involving Ogre Technical College - both as a partner and as an applicant (including rejected and reserve list projects). The organisation implements projects in three education sectors: school, vocational and adult education, but in adult education it works only with KA1 projects. The first KA1 project implemented by the organisation in the field of adult education is the project "Increasing the know-how of adult educators in Ogre technical school", launched in 2018, where three mobilities for adult education staff were implemented.

In 2019, the organisation was approved for the project “Digital Communication and Innovative Learning Methods in Adult Education”, where five mobilities for adult education staff were implemented.

In 2022, the organisation was approved for the project “Promoting international adult education in Latvia”, which ended on 31.12.2023. 10 learner mobilities and one staff mobility were implemented in this project.

In 2022, Ogre Technical College received Erasmus accreditation in the field of adult education until 2027. The organisation has set the following objectives for its Erasmus plan:

- 1) To provide work shadowing opportunities for staff and teachers of the Adult Education Centre in partner organisations in the European Union.
- 2) To provide short-term exchanges for learners of the Adult Learning Centre, fostering both skills in the chosen profession, digital skills and English language skills.

Impact at organisation, staff, and learners' level

At the organisational level, Erasmus+ projects have had a positive impact both on the institutionalisation of international cooperation (an international cooperation unit has been set up) and on the targeted planning of its work. Ogre Technical College has developed an Internationalisation Strategy 2017-2025, which has set as its main priority a targeted drive towards excellence, which entails internationalisation and strengthening of the competitiveness of the educational institution, as well as striving for internationally competitive activities.

Ogre Technical College is an active project promoter, and, as the project manager points out, each project has a specific mobility objective to be achieved. One of the examples mentioned in the field of adult education is the mobility visits, which were aimed at learning about the ways in which adult education centres attract and work with learners who have a low level of education, as this target group is not easy to attract. One of the innovations the organisation has developed since the visit is one-to-one coaching for adults: “We were in several adult education centres. They shared with us how they do one-to-one training for adults, which we had not implemented. We brought it from Portugal. And now we are also successfully offering one-to-one training to adults”. Another example that the educators have learnt is how to organise training in a beekeeping museum.

At the level of adult learners, a mobility participant who took part in a visit to Germany and received training in turning for people with no prior knowledge gave his opinion on his participation. Overall, he was satisfied with his participation in the mobility visit, but would have liked such training to be longer, as he felt that the time allowed was too short (one week). If the training had been two weeks, professional skills could have been acquired at a less superficial level. Otherwise, the training is considered to be well organised and interesting.

Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)

Taking into account that Ogre Technical College cooperates with various sectoral expert councils that assess the training needs in different sectors, Ogre Technical College, when developing its projects, takes into account the training needs identified by these various

cooperation partners and tries to address them through Erasmus+ needs. For example, associations in the agricultural and industrial machinery sector have pointed out that there is a need for locksmiths with turning skills in the labour market. To address this, the Ogre Technical College organised training in Germany, where eight locksmiths learned the basics of turning: "So the industry put us in groups of adults, we trained them here and then the eight adults went to Nierburg with our trainer to a practical training centre for the agricultural sector and learned. And the benefit is, we have contributed to the sector because the skills that they need, they are developing. In turn, we got our teachers involved". A similar example has also been implemented in cooperation with beekeepers, where Latvian beekeepers as well as a teacher from the Ogre Technical College learned about beekeeping in Germany.

It should be also emphasised that the projects organised by the Ogre Technical College are characterised by synergies between several fields of education: adult education, vocational education, school education, the development of museum training programmes, etc.

Added value of Erasmus+

Ogre Technical College actively cooperates with educators from many different countries, and it sees opportunities to build wider networks through Erasmus+. The organisation emphasises that in order to develop adult education towards constant growth both locally and at European level, it is essential to target new regions and countries for international cooperation, to motivate staff to make more use of international opportunities, and to promote the development and learning of courses in a foreign language. Clearly, without the networking and cooperation opportunities offered by Erasmus+, this would not be possible.

Success and fail factors

Project coordinators of the Erasmus+ projects are very positive about the flexibility offered by two factors: 1) Ogre Technical College's extensive experience as an organisation, with partners in many countries; and 2) the flexible attitude of the Erasmus+ Project Monitoring Unit. "It is good that this project is flexible. [...] We could change the partner, we can be flexible, mobile. Yes, that's valuable. If we were to get stuck on that one thing... When Germany says we can't do it at that time. But we have to implement the project by then, so we will find another solution. And because we are a big school, we have a lot of opportunities, we have a lot of partners... I think it's brilliant".

Overall, the organisation is very positive about the cooperation with the State Education Development Agency, and stresses that it is very good that the State Education Development Agency acts as a cooperation body rather than a controlling body: "You can always call and ask around. For example, if at other times you can't find something in in this large amount of information, the State Education Development Agency colleagues are always helpful".

The implementation of projects is hampered by the fact that certain budget lines are subject to financial constraints which are not in line with the current market situation. Several examples are given here. Firstly, the constraints on transport costs are no longer adequate as transport costs have increased significantly. To address this situation, transport costs are co-financed from management costs. Secondly, the constraints on course funding make it

difficult to find suitable courses: “The most difficult or disproportionate thing in adult education is that no courses can be found for that amount. If I’m not mistaken, it was €70 a day. If you want to go away for a week and really learn, for example, a marketing programme or something, then in reality it is impossible to finance it”.

Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme

In their interviews, project participants indicate that they generally value the opportunities offered by Erasmus+ very highly and are quite satisfied with the conditions of the programme. At the same time, it is repeatedly noted that the available funding for courses should be increased: “There is excellent support for accommodation, travel, daily allowances, it is all enough and we can sponsor the travel costs from the management costs. But this issue of courses...”. Another aspect that causes some problems is the requirement that only adults with low basic skills can participate in mobility visits for adults. It would be easier for the organisation to work if this condition did not exist and the programme was open to all adult learners, because this condition artificially divides the already established groups of learners, and such mobility visits are very necessary for all adult learners: “For example, we could already put in the plan that there is a mobility visit at the end of September to go to Germany for a week for practical training. And then the whole group goes. But no. Of the ten, two or three will go, but those who already have higher education, who are Latvian, they drop out”.

Regarding the project for individuals with low skills, the implementers acknowledged that it is more challenging to engage and motivate this group to participate: “If someone has low skills, how do you engage them at all? ‘I don’t want to, I won’t learn!’ How to get him to go abroad? We need to give opportunities to people who want to and can. It would be good if this restriction was removed”.

Case study 3. “Project Net”

General characteristics of the organisation

“Project Net” is a very experienced organisation in the implementation of various projects, having implemented both KA1 and KA2 projects in adult education within Erasmus. One of the aims of this organisation is to promote lifelong learning and education for seniors by organising a Senior University. In order to find out project experiences, the case study involved interviews with the project leader, two staff members of the organisation, one of whom participated in the mobility visit, and two adult learners who participated in the mobility. In total, five people were interviewed and five interviews were conducted. Interview period: October-December 2023.

Experience with Erasmus+, challenges addressed, and outputs created

“Project Net” has implemented both KA1 and KA2 projects in adult education under the Erasmus programme. The organisation started KA1 in adult education in 2016 with the project “Agro-European Tourism - how to reinvigorate rural areas”. This project has implemented two mobilities for adult education staff. The mobility visits were nine-day training courses for the

staff of the organisation who wanted to learn about sustainable proposals and contribute to the creation of new training opportunities for learners in this field. The aim of the training was to gain knowledge on how to revitalise rural areas by creating coherent growth plans that have a positive impact on employment. The project and the training strengthened the capacity of the organisation, the mobility participants acquired both practical knowledge on how to revitalise rural areas based on the needs of the labour market and rural populations and knowledge in permaculture.

The KA1 project "Emotional Management for the adult long-life education", applied for and approved in 2017, has implemented three mobilities for adult education staff. In 2017, the organisation was also awarded a KA2 project in adult education "Digital acquisition through intergenerational learning". This project explored the possibilities of involving grandchildren of elderly grandparents in learning digital skills.

Three mobilities for adult education staff were implemented in the KA1 project "Third age university for adult life-long learning", applied for and approved in 2019. These mobility visits have gained knowledge from the host organisation "RUTIS" in Portugal on the training model for seniors in the creation of a Senior University. Also approved and launched this year was the KA2 project "Promoting financial, digital and entrepreneurial competences for vulnerable adults (women) with restricted access to the digitalised market (home based)", which focused specifically on developing women's financial, digital and entrepreneurial skills in a remote working situation.

The KA1 project "Capacity Building and Digitalisation of Adult Educators at the Virtual Senior University", applied for and approved in 2021, implemented 10 mobility visits for staff. In the project, Senior University educators were introduced to different models of Virtual Senior Universities, non-formal learning methods and strengthened their pedagogical skills on how to better teach older learners at a distance.

In 2022, the KA1 project "Development and validation of a framework for recognition and assessment of competences of older learners in senior education organisations and initiatives in Latvia" was approved for the organisation. In 2022, the organisation also launched a KA2 project in adult education "Enhancing adult educators' and senior women digital competences for better access in tailored LLL opportunities for civic engagement and participation", and in 2023 a KA1 project "Development and integration of the social innovation "Senior Radio" in third generation education in Latvia".

Impact at organisation, staff and learners' level

At the level of the organisation, the Erasmus programme and the projects implemented have been of great importance, because it is thanks to these projects that the organisation has realised its mission to create the Senior University in Latvia and to organise training and various educational events for this target group - seniors. The Senior University teaches seniors different skills, but the main focus is on the following training programmes: languages, digital skills, healthy living and nutrition.

The interviewees, who have been involved in the organisation's activities and mobility visits in addition to their direct work, speak highly of their mobility experience. They stress that participation in such projects and mobility visits is necessary both for personal development

and for motivation to involve other participants in such activities. It also helps them to overcome their insecurities about knowing a foreign language, most often English: "I try to participate because it gives me an informative, educational and developmental base. [...] It is also very important for my own development. And for sharing this experience with the people I work with. I can encourage people to get involved, because a person should not be a scholar of a foreign language to be able to participate and understand".

The adult learners interviewed, who are also participants in the Senior University, are very positive about their mobility visits and stress that it is very important to learn how senior training is organised in other countries and makes them realise that the way training is organised at the Senior University in Latvia is one way of training seniors, but it is possible to develop activities in different ways. Mobility visits give adult learners confidence, encourage new ideas and activate participation in various educational activities in Latvia as well. Seniors also highlight the opportunity to learn English during such visits, as many seniors have relatively weaker English skills than young people in Latvia.

As for the specific skills that seniors have acquired, digital skills are particularly highlighted. For example, seniors are proud that they have learnt to use e-signatures before their grandchildren did and that they are able to advise their grandchildren: "Everything is digital now and we all got e-signatures. [...] They are very happy that they can tell their grandchildren how to do it".

Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)

The Senior University is an activity beyond Erasmus+ projects, although Erasmus+ projects gave a start to this idea. Currently this activity is supported from different sources of funding and involving different organisations. The project manager also hopes that the movement will grow and reach even wider groups and organisations of seniors.

Added value of Erasmus+

The Senior University movement, created and developed through Erasmus projects and other projects of the organisation, is a direct result of the Erasmus project. The project manager was introduced to the idea of the Senior University through an Erasmus project on digital skills for adults 55+ in 2017. "For the first time in my life, I saw seniors 70+ learning. Our partners in Portugal are currently training 60 000 seniors in 305 centres. If I had not met the Portuguese partners through my trusted partners back then, I would never have started working towards a Senior University. That is 1000% Erasmus' merit. I am very happy, very grateful and very positive! [...] We met Portuguese people and Portuguese people opened a whole new world for me".

In interviews, project participants emphasised that the training organised by Erasmus+ projects has encouraged seniors to engage in more serious and, in a sense, responsible training, as the training leads to certificates. As one interviewee says: "If it wasn't for Erasmus, we would just sing a bit, dance a bit, learn languages. But now we do it really seriously. Every month we have something to learn. And at the end of the year, we have a graduation when we give out the certificates".

Success and fail factors

One of the success factors of the projects is the great enthusiasm, sense of mission and supportive attitude of the head of the organisation and the project coordinator towards the partners, the staff involved in the project and the learners. It was repeatedly mentioned in the interviews that it was the project manager who inspired the senior citizens to organise the training, to take part in the mobility visits and to implement new ideas and activities.

As a barrier to organise training for seniors is mentioned the difficulty to find trainers, because seniors have a lot of free time during the day, and it is quite difficult to attract trainers for daytime training, as trainers have their direct work responsibilities during the day: "Maybe the finding trainers is a barrier, it is not so easy to get trainers during the day".

Another success factor of the project implementation, which was strongly emphasised by the head of the organisation and the project coordinator, is the professional and supportive attitude of the State Education Development Agency towards the project implementers. In the interview, it was emphasized that specialists from the State Education Development Agency working in the field of adult education are very professional and responsive. An important aspect is that the personnel working on adult mobility remains unchanged for many years: "I have had the same contact person for adult mobility for ten years. Very professional, supportive, always available for advice. You can see that the adult sector is really looked after. [...] I can say that it is a very big plus that we have professional people who have been responsible for this sector for years".

Thirdly, the fact that Erasmus projects are 80% funded upfront and very timely, and that there is never a delay in the final funding, is noted as a positive factor: "Another thing that is very good is that 80% is funded upfront and then at the end there is 20 or 30%, depending on the project. This is also a very big benefit, because if we do projects in education, we don't have to worry that we won't have the funding. The funding is always counted correctly, as it is written in the contract. Since 2013, we have never had a single delay in reporting, evaluation or funding".

Other key success factors are a motivated project implementation team and support from partner organisations, for example, the municipalities are supporting certain projects by providing premises, or in some cases there're is a close cooperation with the municipal education coordinator.

Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme

One of the seniors, who is herself involved both as a project coordinator and as a participant in mobility for educators, and who also runs her own organisation in a rural area, notes that the main barrier for her to get involved in Erasmus+ projects is the 20% funding that has to be secured initially by the participants themselves and paid out after the Final Report: "The only barrier for me as a beginner is this 20% barrier, that I have to find this funding. There are no other barriers, the main thing is to do what is written on paper, not forgetting to prepare the documents that are required, to prove the implementation of the activity".

Case Study 4. “EVA-93”

General characteristics of the organisation

The organisation is a training centre and a relatively inexperienced project implementer. It has only participated in the Erasmus+ programme as a KA2 project promoter. It is important to note that the training centre is located in Livani and is focused on the economic development of the Latgale region. The main activities of the organisation are promotion of entrepreneurship, provision of consultancy and training in occupational safety and fire safety.

In order to identify their experience, the project manager, two employees of the organisation and two adult learners who participated in the training provided by the project were interviewed in this case study. In total, five people were interviewed and five interviews were conducted. Interview period: October-November 2023.

Experience with Erasmus+, challenges addressed, and outputs created

The organisation has submitted its first Erasmus+ project application in Latvia in 2020. So far, it has only applied for KA2 projects. In 2020, it launched the project “Entrepreneurship in 365 days”. The project created a training platform for entrepreneurship learning in a self-learning format, including a mentoring component.

In 2022, the organisation submitted and launched the KA2 project “Real-World Education to foster environmental awareness”. The project is currently under implementation and will end in December 2024. The project aims to develop an innovative, inclusive and flexible pedagogical approach to foster environmental awareness and sustainable development skills.

Impact at organisation, staff and learners’ level

At the organisational level, the benefits highlighted in the interviews are international cooperation and increased visibility both in Latvia and internationally. It is also thanks to Erasmus+ projects that the organisation has learnt how to interactively address and present itself to learners in different ways, how to present information in an interesting way, and participation in projects has promoted digitisation, which, together with Covid-19 constraints, has facilitated the fact that everything can be done remotely on online platforms. Participation in international projects has also contributed to the cohesion of the organisation's staff, the project implementers.

Another important benefit has been the increase in staff self-confidence, as a result of successful project experiences, as well as the positive recognition of project results as best practice: “The benefit of it all is knowing that we can do it. Yes, the word 'project' used to be something distant and unknown, but now we know because we have already coordinated two projects ourselves. We are well appreciated. It has raised our self-confidence and visibility because our projects are well appreciated by the Agency and by Europe. And both have been awarded the status of best practice. We have developed ourselves professionally”.

The project staff interviewed are very positive about the cooperation with foreign partners, the exchange of experiences with other partners and the intercultural communication experience. The importance of creative and meaningful collaboration is particularly emphasised as it develops the personality and creative potential of the employee: "Working in this kind of projects is creative, and in this way I can develop myself as a person, develop my creative potential, which leads to new ideas. This is the biggest benefit".

The "Entrepreneurship 365 Days" project coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, when restrictions on gatherings were in place, so the online training offered was particularly appreciated by the participants. The fact that participants were also provided with smart devices (tablets) to participate in the project was particularly positive, and this was very important because of the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic: "The programme was just super. It was in the right place at the right time. I didn't believe that all the devices would be provided. None of my friends had that experience. I really liked it. Really, really". The participants interviewed said that taking part in the training boosted their self-confidence and motivated them to make positive changes in their lives - to learn something new, to change jobs or even to start their own business.

Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)

One of the case study interviews was with participants of the "Entrepreneurship 365 Days" project who had received the training offered. The information provided in the interview shows that the participant was interested in setting up her own business, and that the training she received motivated her to take the plunge and start this business. Overall, it is a very good experience and shows that entrepreneurship training has the potential to contribute to the creation of new businesses: "I was always thinking that I should start something of my own and this was one of the motivating events. As a result, I started my own company". Overall, this is an excellent example of the wider impact of the Erasmus+ Adult Learning project, as it confirms that such training also has a role to play in promoting entrepreneurship.

Added value of Erasmus+

One of the added values and benefits of the Erasmus+ projects is that the organisation has gained more visibility both nationally through dissemination and publicity activities and internationally. As stated in one of the interviews, "we went out at republic level and also at international level. So we are known not only in Latvia but also in Europe. It is available to all EU countries. They know that there is a training centre. And they also know partners in other European countries".

Success and fail factors

The success factors of the project are the extensive international network of the organisation's management, as well as the modern approach to communication with the trainees, which focuses on positive motivation and a kind and encouraging attitude. As one of the project participants says: "I liked the attitude and communication of the training centre. Cool,

modern, up-to-date... So that you don't feel smaller, slicker, more ignorant than them for one second".

Overall, the organisation's experience of the project is seen as very successful by all stakeholders (management, staff and participants), so no one had much to say about any failures in the interviews. However, it can be mentioned that the biggest difficulty is the documentation of the project, which is something that needs to be given a lot of attention in the projects' implementation: "The challenges are more related to the documentation. Sometimes there is a hitch in getting all the formalities in order".

Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme

In several interviews with the staff implementing the project, it was expressed that the support provided by the State Education Development Agency has been very important in the implementation of the project, and it is therefore important to continue to provide such advisory support in the future: "I think that the maximum support is given because there is always the possibility to consult. It is what is needed to develop the project. You always get the support you need from the State Education Development Agency".

In the interviews with the project coordinators, it was also pointed out that, with the changing economic situation (inflation, rising wages), the different per diem rates in the different countries do not seem fair anymore: "Of course, this is in line with European guidelines and everything else, but if the daily rate varies so much between the national partners... Because we work very hard, we strive for excellence in our work. We really try to do everything very well so that we are happy with the result. But the payment varies threefold among member states... That prompts the question - why is that?"

To strengthen the impact of the programme, the head of the organisation recommended organising more national events presenting good practices: "Please organise something so that project implementers can share their projects and we can also adopt something that is ready-made, it would make life easier. If you organise such events, please put us on your contact list. We also want to learn something. [...] If there are events with partners, coordinators from Latvia, then there is a guarantee that there will be materials in the national language, because the largest group of learners is not such that we can say - who doesn't know English nowadays? It's not like that.

Case Study 5. "Apeirons"

General characteristics of the organisation

The Association of People with Disabilities and their Friends "Apeirons" is a well-known, very active public organisation in Latvia that advocates for the protection of the rights of people with disabilities. The organisation was founded in 1997. The aim of the association is the integration of people with disabilities into society. It implements both KA1 and KA2 projects under the Erasmus+ programme.

In order to identify their experience, the case study involved interviews with the organisation's manager, the project manager, another member of staff, and two adult learners participating in the mobility. In total, five people were interviewed and five interviews were conducted. Interview period: December 2023.

Experience with Erasmus+, challenges addressed, and outputs created

The organisation has been participating in the call for proposals for adult education projects since 2014. The first adult education project to be approved is the KA2 project "SPECIAL INTIMACY NEEDS EDUCATOR: Assisting differently abled people with the improvement of their emotional and sexual needs". This project ended in April 2021. As an intellectual output of the project, an intimacy needs knowledge dissemination platform has been developed, which includes methodological materials on how to improve the quality of emotional and physical intimacy for people with special needs.

The organisation is currently implementing the KA1 project "Harmonisation of social standards and improvement of the education system for the development and strengthening of basic competences for persons with severe intellectual disabilities", submitted in 2022. To expand and diversify the quality of adult education provision and to enable people with intellectual disabilities to receive education adapted to their individual abilities in Latvia, the project aims to improve the knowledge and skills of professionals working with people with severe intellectual disabilities in order to promote the development and strengthening of their basic competences.

Impact at organisation, staff and learners' level

The biggest benefit at the organisational level of the project is that the organisation has access to an internationally developed resource that provides information, examples, questionnaires to understand and talk about the sexual needs of people with disabilities, especially mental disabilities: "The biggest benefit is that on this website specialintimicy.eu, the e-course is available and still usable. There are good questions, both questionnaires and with illustrative examples. That is the biggest value of it. After the project, we use these things, it is not that they are neglected. So one benefit is that we have a very good resource in the organisation. [...] It's a very good tool that we can use in the future".

Secondly, Erasmus+ projects are a good international experience for the organisation and a way to gain international visibility. As a result, the organisation has established and further developed cooperation with partners in other countries through Erasmus+ projects: "It is the cooperation with partners that is very well established".

At staff level, Erasmus+ projects are those that give the organisation's staff the opportunity to develop themselves professionally, to gain new knowledge and to be inspired to work further: "Many thanks to Erasmus for giving us the opportunity to develop and gain new knowledge". In another interview, a trainee said that being part of the project gave her: "A better understanding of what is happening in other countries and a better understanding of how to go about my own work. Of course, a better understanding of the topic. It was also a very good experience for myself".

The interviewees also say that their English, communication, presentation, and cooperation skills have improved as a result of the international cooperation. Unplanned but forced by the Covid-19 pandemic, they have also developed the skills to work remotely, to use different networking tools, and this is helping the organisation after the pandemic: “What was not planned was the remote working. That fell on my head like snow. We had to somehow live with the circumstances, adapt quickly to the circumstances. It was also good for the organisation, because we learned to reorganise and bring in extra resources, to reallocate resources. Thus, this can be seen as an unexpected and positive benefit for the organisation”.

At an individual level, the Erasmus+ project has helped several interviewees to feel more confident because it has allowed them to analyse their problems and to find a way to talk about the negative examples that have been in their lives: “Exactly how to talk so that these examples can be heard. [...] It's a very specific example [...] but I have much more clarity on how to explain to a blind or partially sighted person their personal boundaries, because often in life there is this overwhelm and people come and they try to pull them somewhere. In principle, those boundaries have been broken down. [...] [It is] important that we are able to control, to oppose, so that these boundaries are not violated”.

Wider impact (other organisations and policy level)

One of the project's contributions to the wider society is to raise the issue of sexuality for people with disabilities. It should be stressed that this topic is largely silent in Latvian society, mostly no one talks about it and does not understand that sexuality issues are relevant for persons with all types of disabilities, too. If it is accepted to talk about and pay attention to, for example, environmental accessibility, then the topic of sexuality is in a sense both provocative and futuristic for the Latvian society (project implementers' terms), because in many cases no one is ready to talk about it in public: “The fact that we started talking about these sexuality issues at all. I think that the biggest problem of the whole society is that we are afraid to talk about the fact that for people with disabilities sexuality is one of the indicators of quality of life, and there are many problems related to these issues. [...] One is that we started to talk about it, and the other is that we mobilised people with disabilities themselves, because we also organise focus groups, we talked about what these materials should be, what should be reflected in them. We found that this is a problem that needs to be talked about”.

The project had a wider impact because it involved other NGOs working with people with disabilities as a key target group, and the materials and discussions developed in the project have been useful to them: “We also invited representatives from other organisations to participate in the training. For example, the association of blind people “See Me” took part. The leaders of these organisations can then discuss these things in their own organisations. [...] So we involved representatives of other organisations and we spread the information. I think that's cool”.

The project has had a wider impact on the development of various social services in Latvia. For example, the project “Harmonisation of social standards and improvement of the education system for the development and strengthening of basic competences for persons with severe intellectual disabilities” helps to justify the need and provision of a support person, a mentor service, and is used to lobby for this service in municipalities, specifically in the Riga

City Municipality: "A very important thing is a support for people with intellectual disabilities, namely, job educators, mentors. This is something that is very much needed and there is a quiet hope that maybe next year it will happen, because it is all at the policy level and it is also a question of money".

Added value of Erasmus+

The main added value of Erasmus+ projects, according to the interview participants, is that these projects allow to learn how different social services or forms of support are organised in Europe, it is an opportunity to gain new experience and implement it in Latvia: "The opportunity to get information about what is happening in Europe, not only here in Latvia. It is an opportunity to feel part of the whole of Europe, to learn something new, to gain some new experiences. To know what to implement here".

The participants of the interviews point out that Erasmus projects are the ones that allow to update various issues that have not been touched on in Latvia so far, to get to know solutions unknown in Latvia in providing support, to get to know partners, which has an in-depth experience in solving some challenges: "I think that in Erasmus projects you can raise topics that are really topical and necessary. And you can find partners who are already working in the field or who are also interested in it, and then work together to find solutions".

Success and fail factors

In the opinion of the organisation's management, the success factor of Erasmus+ projects is that the organisation chooses very carefully which projects to participate in and only participates in those that are in line with the organisation's priorities, not in all projects where there would be opportunity to participate: "What makes us successful is that we don't jump into every project we can jump into. We try to align them quite carefully with our priorities. We set priorities every year in the organisation. [...] It's not like that everywhere. Often small organisations are involved in something to grow their muscles. We look more from the point of view of our interests".

Speaking specifically about the Special Intimacy Needs Educator project, participants in the interviews spoke highly of the knowledge and experience they had gained, but also pointed out that the fact that the project took place during the Covid-19 pandemic contributed a little to the feeling of incompleteness, because all the training and meetings took place remotely, which, while providing the necessary knowledge, is not as emotionally fulfilling as face-to-face meetings: "The exchange of experiences was wonderful. It's just a pity that the second part was in zoom, because informal communication is also important. I personally missed that. Because it is often in the informal conversations that all sorts of tricks come out".


The interviewees also expressed the opinion that the hardest part is not to implement the project, but to write it, because writing a project requires certain skills: an understanding of project management, international cooperation, the ability to define project goals and objectives, to formulate and plan the main activities to achieve the objectives, and to present all this in a form that the evaluators can understand, in good English. Once the partners have been found and the main activities defined, implementation is the easy part. NGOs also find it difficult to find staff competent enough to prepare such project applications: "The hardest

part is writing the project. Not the conditions, but the elementary lack of human resources, because there are not enough people with sufficient English-speaking capacity. However, to be able to write these projects to a good standard, there is also a bit of a need for understanding and a bit more insight”.

Need for additional support strengthening the impact of the programme

In interviews, the organisation's management indicates that managing and implementing international projects requires quite high skills, such as knowledge of English, the ability to communicate with partners, the necessary documentation and the ability to implement the project within the planned deadlines. At the same time, projects show that Latvian specialists have relatively significantly lower daily rates than specialists from many other countries, which is wrong. “Managing or being involved in international projects is undoubtedly one of the big challenges, especially for organisations in our sector. We have noticed that people have quite low project writing and implementation skills. Of course, one reason is the lack of language. [...] And it is also very difficult to keep people in organisations with good project implementation skills, project managers... And what we have noticed is that you cannot always expect equal salaries. [...] The rates for experts in Latvia are completely different than the rates in France, Spain, the UK. Thus, you end up with a kind of unequal treatment of people, because the work is already being put in at the same level. We do live in the same euro area”.

The project coordinators are generally very positive about the support provided by the State Education Development Agency in writing the project application and stress the need for this to continue: “In the 'Easy to do' project, colleagues with no previous experience of Erasmus projects worked on the application. And then there were like mentors who helped them through the whole writing process. It was very good, because every now and then we were nudged and guided. [...] The mentor was such a very, very good thing because there were also workshops and there was one person you could call and ask all sorts of questions about planning and writing projects. [...] And in the end, the project also polished up to such a very good level. The motivation was very high because this is the kind of thing we really want to do. And then the motivation was to write it in a very good way. I think that mentoring is such a good thing”.



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