



Mid-term Evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020

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INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following national mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme informs a wider evaluation being undertaken by the European Commission as required under Articles 21.2 and 21.3 of the Erasmus+ regulation. The Irish evaluation was commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills, as the National Authority for the Erasmus+ programme, and was carried out by O'BRIEN/Governance Design¹. The report responds to pre-determined questions set by the Commission. As some of these questions are seeking to understand effectiveness through impact, it was necessary to look to the predecessor programmes of Erasmus+ that operated in Schools, Vocational Education and Training, Adult and Higher Education and in the Youth sector, prior to their inclusion together under Erasmus+ in 2014. The Erasmus+ programme includes two fields: Education and Training and Youth. The programme operates three key actions: Key Action 1 is Learning Mobility of Individuals and Key Action 2 is Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices. These two actions apply to the Education and Training and Youth fields. Key Action 3 is Support for Policy Reform and applies on a decentralised level to the Youth Field only. In a national context, the Department of Education and Skills is responsible for policy development and implementation regarding the Schools, Vocational Education and Training, Adult and Higher Education elements of the Erasmus+ programme. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has responsibility for the development and implementation of policy regarding the Youth element of the programme. The programme is administered by two national agencies. Léargas is responsible for the Schools, Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education sectors participating in the Education and Training Field; it is also responsible for the Youth Field. The international section of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) is responsible for the participation of the Higher Education sector in the Education and Training Field.

O'BRIEN/Governance Design would like to extend warm thanks to Léargas and to the HEA for their significant support and assistance in collating data and distributing and promoting participant surveys. Both organisations were also very generous with their time in contributing their views to this evaluation². The enthusiasm of the individuals in both organisations, for the programme, and for its benefits, was evident from the outset of our engagement with this process. Their expressed opinions are motivated by their wish to make the Erasmus+ programme even more impactful than they already believe it to be. Their evident experience and expertise has informed and greatly strengthened this report's recommendations. We would also like to take the opportunity to express our thanks to all the participants who contributed to this evaluation through surveys and via telephone interviews. The extent of their willingness to participate and the quality of the responses received, are indicators of the value that the Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes have represented. Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to the international section of the Department of Education and Skills for its continued assistance throughout this evaluation.

¹ For any matters requiring clarification, contact details for O'BRIEN/Governance Design are included in appendix 1.

² Participants in consultation meetings held with the national agencies are detailed in appendix 1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme in Ireland highlighted the inter-connected nature of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and complementarity, and added-value and sustainability. The evaluation is clear that participants are, by a vast majority, impacted positively by their experience of the programme. The specific objectives relating to improving labour market skills and employment opportunities, and increasing cultural awareness and appreciation, are all in evidence. The less measurable benefits of increases in confidence and enthusiasm are also reported, as are the forming of professional relationships and of friendships, many of which have continued for several years. Equally, what the programme is trying to achieve is shown to be relevant, adding value, and very much aligned with national priorities.

The question therefore becomes less about the effectiveness, relevance, and added-value of the programme and more about how demand for the programme can be encouraged and grown. The evaluation has four primary recommendations in this regard and they relate to process, policy, utilisation of peer advocates, and sustainability for national agencies.

Firstly, there are aspects of the application processes underpinning the Erasmus+ programme which are creating intrinsic barriers to participation. Individuals and organisations, particularly those in more vulnerable and less well-resourced sectors, appear to be most impacted by current application arrangements; it is recommended that this situation is addressed. Secondly, Erasmus+ has become increasingly well-embedded in national policy regarding higher education and youth. The inclusion of specific strands of the programme into adult education, school and VET policy would confirm to those sectors that participation is an integral contributor to meeting their organisational objectives. Thirdly, for the national agencies, promotion of the programme and dissemination of its outcomes is an ongoing priority. The views of participants are that the most effective promotion comes from peers within their sector who can speak about their experiences; the national agencies could further utilise this extensive promotional resource. Finally, if demand is to be driven through the development of revised application processes, additional national policy references, and peer advocate promotion, the sustainability of dealing with this demand on the part of the national agencies requires equal consideration. In this regard, a number of recommendations are made with the objective of freeing up some of the resources currently invested in financial oversight and reporting.

These and other supporting recommendations are included in the body of this report. They reflect the enthusiasm of the national agencies and the participants for the programme and are proposed in the spirit of maximising the evident and important benefits that Erasmus+ represents.

PART I: METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme was tailored to ensure that, in addition to Erasmus+, the views of participants and information pertaining to the predecessor programmes was captured.

In terms of data sources, the following approach was taken: As the evaluation included almost a decade of combined participation in Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes, it was decided to focus upon key points over that time i.e., 2007, 2010 and from 2014-2016. Data from 2007 for the Education and Training Field was derived from the 2010 *Interim Evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 in Ireland*³. The 2007 data for Youth was provided by Léargas. Data from 2010 was sourced from information provided by Léargas and the HEA. The grouping of this data followed the same configuration as applied to the 2007 data. The specific form of categorisation adopted has been included in appendix 4 as a guide for future evaluators of this and subsequent programmes. Data from 2014-2016, the period of Erasmus+ to date, was made available by Léargas and the HEA.

In addition to data, the following information sources were accumulated and analysed: National Agency reports to the European Commission on their annual implementation of the programme; agency strategy documentation and workplans; national policy in education and training and youth; and other secondary sources, including academic research.

The following primary research also informed the mid-term evaluation: A series of interviews with both national agencies were undertaken between March and May 2017. Six online surveys were designed to reflect the different types of participants of current and predecessor programmes across both fields. The surveys included statement questions using a seven-point Likert scale and invited responses to open-ended questions (appendix 2). To contribute to the establishment of counterfactual evidence, statements regarding a range of matters asked participants to self-evaluate if they would have experienced the same impact in the absence of their participation in the programme. The number of responses received to these surveys, between March and April 2017, are included in appendix 3. Telephone interviews were undertaken with 5% of the respondents to the online survey to clarify and expand upon specific responses they provided (the breakdown of those spoken with is also available in appendix 3). Telephone interviews were chosen to increase our ability to direct questions to participants of the predecessor programmes who may have been less likely to be able to attend focus groups or other in-person forms of consultation. In addition, a briefing event for Youth Field KA1 applicants was attended to inform the evaluation, as a replacement for telephone interviews with this participant cohort.

³ The report was carried out in 2010 by Indecon International Economic Consultants for the Department of Education and Skills.

PART II: MID-TERM EVALUATION OF ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

1.1 EFFECTIVENESS (Questions 1-9)

INTRODUCTION

The following section seeks to establish the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ programme in Ireland to date, in achieving its specific and general objectives, and in influencing relevant national policy. It also considers the impact of the integration of programmes on the effectiveness of the resulting Erasmus+ programme and describes some of the actions taken to further enhance Erasmus+ in Ireland. Finally, this section examines the proportionality and distribution of the programme's budget and draws some conclusions on the current dissemination approaches and tools. In carrying out this analysis, recommendations for improvement are highlighted.

FINDINGS RE: EFFECTIVENESS OF ERASMUS+ IN ACHIEVING SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES (Q1)

The following section presents some introductory findings regarding the Education and Training and Youth fields. It then looks at the specific objectives associated with each.

DATA TRENDS IN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND YOUTH FIELDS

As indicated in the methodology section, the data informing this evaluation is derived from 2007, 2010 and from the period 2014-2016. Appendix 4 includes tabular representations of that data.

Before progressing to a narrative regarding effectiveness, there are some notable elements of these numbers. Taking KA1, Learning Mobility of Individuals, first: Higher education student mobility increased by 38% between 2007 and 2010 and has increased steadily, if more modestly, over the duration of the Erasmus+ programme. HE staff participation was at its highest in 2014 and has seen a marginal decline since. The adult education number in 2015 (10) is anomalous and reflects a low level of participation caused by a combination of late and unsuccessful applications that year. School education staff saw their highest participation in 2014; participation has reduced from those levels since, but in the longer-range context, participation is stronger than during the predecessor programme. VET learner

and staff numbers have seen some decline over the period of Erasmus+. Youth mobility data indicates that participation in the field has more than doubled between 2014 and 2016.

In terms of strategic partnerships (KA2) in the education and training field: the school sector, when 'schools only' and 'school education' figures are combined, shows a steady increase in activity between 2014 and 2016. This is followed by partnerships within the VET sector which increased from 7 in 2014 and 2015, to 11 in 2016. Higher education strategic partnerships have remained relatively steady at 2 projects each year in 2014 and 2015 and 1 in 2016. Partnerships in the adult education sector have decreased from 7 in 2014 to 3 in 2016. In the youth field, whilst the level of applications has increased from 2014 levels, the number of successfully contracted projects decreased from 9 in 2014 to 6 in 2016. The higher initial numbers were due to transfers of unused funding from KA1 Mobility actions to Strategic Partnerships in the early years of the programme; there is now close to full allocation of funding in Mobility. Structured dialogue (KA3) has seen quite consistent levels of success rate with 4 projects awarded in 2014 and 3 in both 2015 and 2016. Léargas has been encouraging a shift in activity types in Structured Dialogue from Innovation to Best Practice, which it anticipates will have better dissemination potential within the Youth sector.

WHAT IS MOTIVATING PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMME?

In establishing perceptions of effectiveness on the part of participants, it's equally important to understand what motivated them to participate in the programme and if those motivations align with the programme's objectives. Therefore, as part of the consultation process with participants in the Education and Training and Youth fields, we asked them that question. The responses from those that participated in the predecessor programmes, and in Erasmus+, are largely consistent. For students, it was the chance to improve on language skills, to experience a different culture, to experience different working methodologies: in short, to avail of new opportunities. The overarching reason expressed by staff across the sectors was to share practice: for professional development reasons, for the good of the organisation, for the good of students and young people. They also want to build networks with partner organisations. For organisations themselves the motivations articulated are not dissimilar; they want to broaden their experiences and to learn and share good practice. A sample of the motivation responses is included in appendix 5.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING FIELD

The specific objectives of the Education and Training field are *summarised* under the following sections. The first objective, which relates to the improvement of key competences and skills, focuses on the individual. The second and fourth objectives are more interested in the impact of the programme on the organisation or institution; the liberty has been taken to bring these together. The third and fifth objectives relate more closely to policy - life-long learning and languages - and so these are also addressed together.

Specific objective a: To improve competences and skills, with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society

Taking competences and skills for the labour market first: three statement questions were put to participants of the predecessor programmes and the current programme. The first asked whether they believed that participation had positively influenced their labour market skills, the second if it had influenced their employment opportunities, and the third asked whether they believed their skills would have increased to the same extent had they not participated in the programme. The full results are provided in appendix 6. The outcomes are an endorsement from participants of the value they place on the programme in terms of its contribution to their skills and employment opportunities.

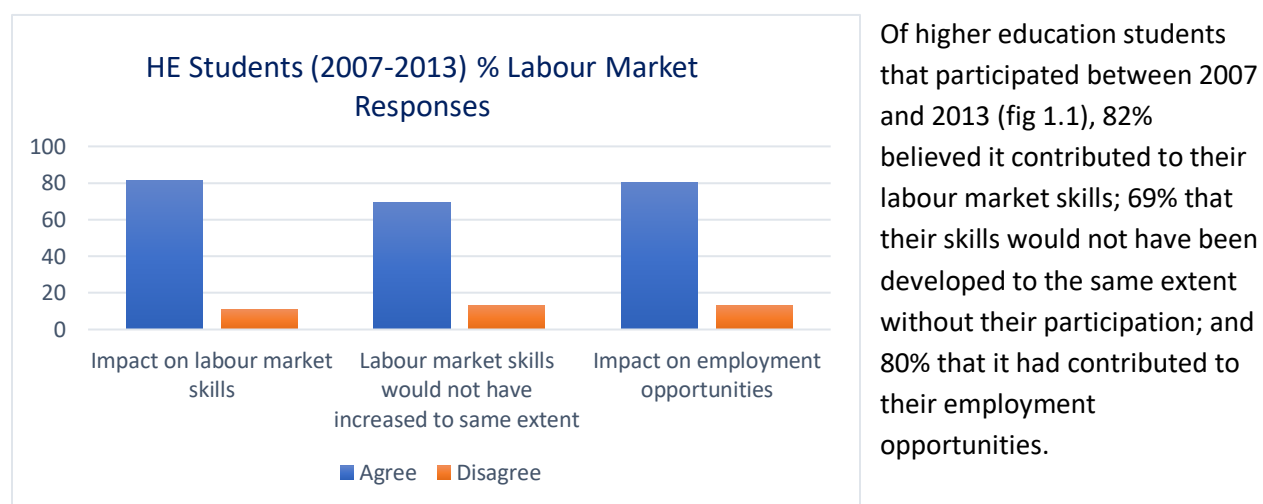


Fig 1.1. HE Students (2007-2013) responses to labour market statements

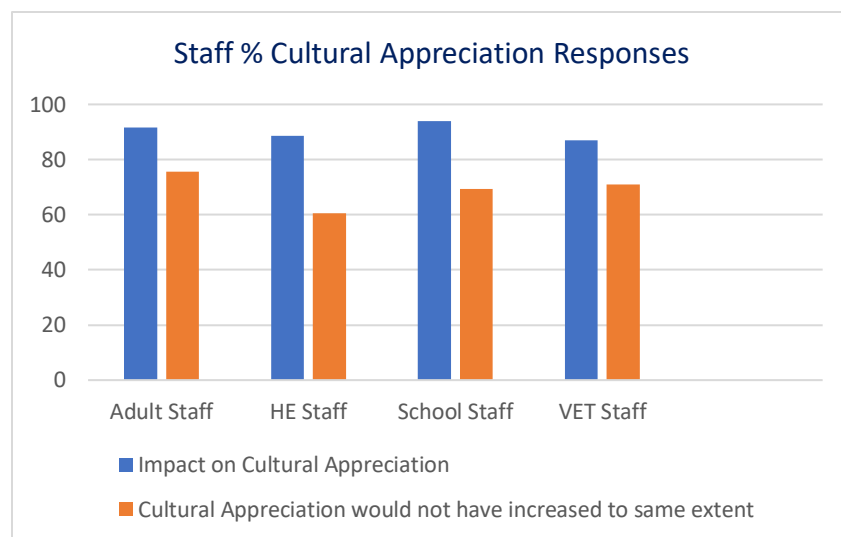
Respondents were asked not to respond to this question if it did not apply to their current context. In telephone interviews, the reasons behind these answers included that the programme had provided 'international experience', had taught 'adaptability'⁴ and, for an individual now working with a large accountancy body, it simply "looked good on my CV"⁵. From this cohort of respondents, this is a very positive reflection of their historical participation in the programme. A lower figure of 71% of Erasmus+ participants believed it had impacted on their employment opportunities, but this cohort also had significantly higher responses of 'neither agree nor disagree' than their predecessors, suggesting that they may not know, or yet know, what impact it will have on their employment.

From a cultural perspective, participants were asked if they had become a more active member of society following participation in the programme and if their cultural appreciation had increased beyond where it would be, without participation. HE students involved in both the 2007-2013 programme and the Erasmus+ programme recorded high levels of agreement that they had become more active members of society after participating in the programme. Only 3% and 9% in each cohort disagreed that this was the case. They had a similarly high degree of agreement that

⁴ Respondent #68 HE Student Erasmus

⁵ Respondent #67 HE Student Erasmus

the programme had increased their cultural appreciation; 90% in the 2007-2013 cohort with 49% strongly agreeing, and 87% in the Erasmus+ programme, with 34% strongly agreeing. 57% of the 2007-2013 cohort believed that their cultural appreciation would not have been as high if they had not participated in the programme and 70% of Erasmus+ agreed with this statement. Staff



participants also considered, across the board, that their appreciation of other cultures had increased because of their participation and that it would not have increased to the same extent without that experience. The figures for individual cohorts are included in appendix 7. A combined average of the predecessor programme and Erasmus+ staff participant responses is represented in fig 1.2.

Fig 1.2. Combined predecessor programme and Erasmus+ staff participant agreement responses to cultural appreciation statements

Participants in the programme have also reported, through blogs and online posts, coming to understand culture that is “under the surface”⁶ through participation and, more broadly, having been given an opportunity to mature through the experience⁷.

Specific objectives b and d: To foster quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation at the level of education and training institutions/ To enhance the international dimension of education and training

It is important to acknowledge that the participation of individuals in a programme like Erasmus+ can have a corresponding impact upon institutions. At least three quarters of staff participants in each sector participating in the Education and Training field agreed to varying levels that their participation in the programme had led to an increase in subsequent interaction with European institutions and colleagues (appendix 8). The HEA also notes similar connections between individual mobility and the internationalisation of organisations.⁸ The operation of Erasmus led to higher education institutions establishing international offices, which have now evolved to manage diverse international remits. The definitive number of partnerships that have evolved from Erasmus and Erasmus+ between Irish higher education institutions and their European

⁶ Blog of individual who participated in a one-year *European Voluntary Service (EVS)* placement: 15 October 2015. Available at: <http://www.leargas.ie/blog/evs-arrival-training/>

⁷ Trinity News, Tuesday, April 11, 2017. Available at: <http://trinitynews.ie/my-experience-as-an-erasmus-student/>

⁸ National agency interview, 21 April 2017

counterparts is not available, but one higher education university offers that it has developed over 100 such exchange partnerships⁹. At an organisational level, in the context of strategic partnerships, over 90% of those education and training organisations responding to the online survey across the sectors agreed to some level that their participation had led to quality improvements in their organisations and the introduction of new practices. 100% agreed that it had led to an increase in innovation and subsequent internationalisation (appendix 13).

One of the ways in which individuals and organisations across the sectors identified that participation in Erasmus+ could be increased is to further embed it in national policy and institutional strategy. The Léargas Strategy Statement 2015-2017 includes a goal to “build awareness amongst stakeholders of the value of international collaboration and the advantages of implementing an international strategy in their organisation” (2014:8). The HEA has also identified the importance of increasing the intrinsic value of the programme to higher education institutions¹⁰. This type of institutional approach could help to contextualise and raise the value of the involvement of individuals, and to provide the type of institutional support for participation that staff, but also students, would like to see growing (appendix 10). The following blog reference from a teacher in a school that attended monitoring and evaluation training, provides a good example of when mobility is evidently strategic:

*The school is embedding a European dimension to its practice and is sending staff to professional development opportunities in Europe in leadership, strategic management, monitoring and evaluation, conflict mediation, inspiring facilitation and inclusive teaching and training*¹¹

In higher education, internationalisation has become a significant element of national policy and is now a pillar of the annual agreements between higher education institutions and the funding body, the HEA. The HEA, in its Yearly National Agency Reports has tracked the importance of the increased number of references to the programme in national policy (YNAR, 2012:3). Beyond contributing to numbers in terms of mobility, there is also a need to continue to describe the contribution that participation can make, from an organisational perspective, to professional development and to the enhancement of teaching and learning strategies. In this context, it is a means of fulfilling institutional objectives as opposed to an unrelated pull on resources. This topic is revisited in the response to Q3, regarding the influence of Erasmus+ on national policy.

Specific objectives c and e: To promote the emergence and raise awareness of a European lifelong learning area designed to complement policy reforms at national level and to support the modernisation of education and training systems / To improve the teaching and learning of languages and to promote the Union's broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness

One of the concepts closely associated with **lifelong learning** is continuous professional development and therefore the effectiveness of the programme in this area has been taken as an indicator to

⁹ Available at: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/international/erasmus>

¹⁰ National agency interview, 02 March and 21 April 2017

¹¹ Erasmus+ School Education: The Kindling of a Flame, 04 March 2016. Available at: http://www.leargas.ie/blog/erasmus_school_education_ka1_st_kevins_college/

contribute to specific objective c. Léargas noted in its *Yearly National Agency Report 2014* that it was too early in the programme to be able to see impact on staff participants but that “education professionals see Erasmus+ as a useful vehicle for learning more about how to manage changes in curriculum and assessments methods and in school self-evaluation” (2014:2). As part of this evaluation, staff members of adult, higher, VET and school education, were asked to indicate their level of agreement with two statements relating to professional development. The first asked if participation in the programme had contributed positively to their professional development, whilst the second asked if they believed their professional development would not have been enhanced to the same extent if they had not participated in the programme (appendix 11). Collectively the responses show very positive trends across the board. Aggregating the responses from ‘somewhat agree’ to ‘strongly agree’, the lowest percentage recorded was 85% agreeing that the experience had positively contributed to professional development (Adult education staff participating in the Erasmus+ programme); the highest was 100% agreement in the VET staff category that participated in Erasmus+. In terms of the level of agreement that their professional development would not have been enhanced to the same extent had they not participated in the programme, the range of agreement was from 78% (Schools staff, Erasmus+) to 97% (Adult Education staff participating in the 2007 to 2013 period). All this activity is contributing to the lifelong learning of individuals and to the national education and training system.

The reported involvement of staff, students and organisations in both a legacy programme, and in the Erasmus+ programme, is another indicator of how participation has contributed to lifelong learning in a European context. 15% of adult education staff participants who responded to the survey indicated that they had participated in both Grundtvig and Erasmus+; 19% of school staff participated in Comenius and Erasmus+; 49% of VET staff respondents participated in Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus+; 19% of higher education staff had experience of Erasmus and Erasmus+; and 24% of organisations stated they had participated in both a partnership project between 2007-2013 and a strategic partnership under Erasmus+. Whilst this ongoing relationship with the programme is very positive and needs to be encouraged and supported, it also reinforces the need to continue to seek new participation in the programme from all sectors, a requirement that was identified by the 2014 *Yearly National Agency Report*, in which Léargas reported:

The majority of approved projects under KA1 and KA2 had some experience of international collaboration either through previous programmes such as LLP or through virtual partnerships in eTwinning (2014: 3-4).

The funnel that is being created between eTwinning and Erasmus+ is in line with the effects that Léargas is trying to achieve through the cohesion of its international activities (see Q19). But the need for a continuous stream of new demand for the programme is critical.

It is recommended that in seeking to increase demand for Erasmus+, the national agencies deepen their focus on new applicants or, as relevant, on increasing the participation of low-involvement current participants.

This task would be greatly supported by the Commission addressing issues of proportionality in the application process (raised under Q11 and Q13) and by increased representation of the programme in national policy (discussed under Q3).

In terms of **Specific Objective e**: there is an intention nationally to publish a ten-year strategy which addresses the fact that Ireland “in common with other English-speaking countries, has not prioritised learning of foreign languages when compared to other countries”¹²; this is further referred to below under Q3. As part of this anticipated strategy, the Irish Minister for Education and Skills has called for an increase in participation in Erasmus+ as a measure towards improving language proficiency. Again, the motivation of participants to date to engage with the programme is interesting to note, in terms of the extent to which improving language skills and/or language teaching, played a part in that decision (appendix 12). For higher education students (Erasmus+), 55% agreed to some level with the statement *I participated in the programme primarily to improve my language skills*. However, 36% disagreed with this statement; perhaps underlining the other benefits associated with the programme for students not pursuing language programmes or language skills. Staff were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: *Participation in the programme improved my teaching of languages within my home institution*. They were also asked only to respond to that statement if it applied to their context. The highest percentage of agreement under Erasmus+ came from school staff, with 67% agreeing to some extent and 11% disagreeing. In telephone interviews, a school staff respondent clarified that her language skills had been good before she went but that the immersion in the language during her stay had renewed her interest and sharpened her skills; something which she believes brushed off on her students¹³. It is notable that unlike in previous programmes there is no project-type in Erasmus+ that focusses specifically on language learning and teaching in schools. However, considering the Minister’s avowed intention to double the number of schools offering more than two foreign languages as part of Transition Year programmes (the year between the mid and end-of-cycle examinations in Irish secondary schools), the positive responses from school staff on the impact of the experience on their language teaching, suggests that a focus could be placed on encouraging growth in this area, in order to enhance and sharpen existing language skills.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the role that Erasmus+ could play as part of a CPD framework for the school sector to support the intended national languages strategy.

¹² Minister for Education and Skills statement. Available at: <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2017-Press-Releases/PR17-04-19/html#sthash.S2Xq3p8i.dpuf>

¹³ Respondent #153 Comenius school staff participant

In terms of other supports that the Erasmus+ programme provides to learners, the national agencies were both supportive of the benefits of the OLS language tool and the following recommendations are made in that regard:

It is recommended that the OLS tool be given to students who know they will be participating in Erasmus+ (i.e., where it is a mandatory part of their programme) from the outset of their studies. It is also recommended that it should be accessible by higher education staff participating in Erasmus+. Finally, the development of a linguistic support tool appropriate for adult, school and VET staff partaking in shorter mobility periods, is worthy of consideration.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE YOUTH FIELD

The specific objectives of the youth field are *summarised* under the following sections. The first and third objectives relate to the improvement of competences and skills of young people and the promotion of their participation in democratic life and in policy reforms. The second and fourth objectives are more closely related to improvements and enhancements in youth work and to the role of youth workers as support structures for young people. Two sections follow which look at these related objectives together.

Specific objectives a and c: To improve the level of key competencies and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities / To complement policy reforms and support development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy

Youth mobility figures (KA1) since 2007 are captured in appendix 4. Participation between 2014 and 2016 has doubled. Those participants who self-identified as having ‘fewer opportunities’ is a steady average of 40% from 2014 to 2016 as can be seen in fig 1.3.

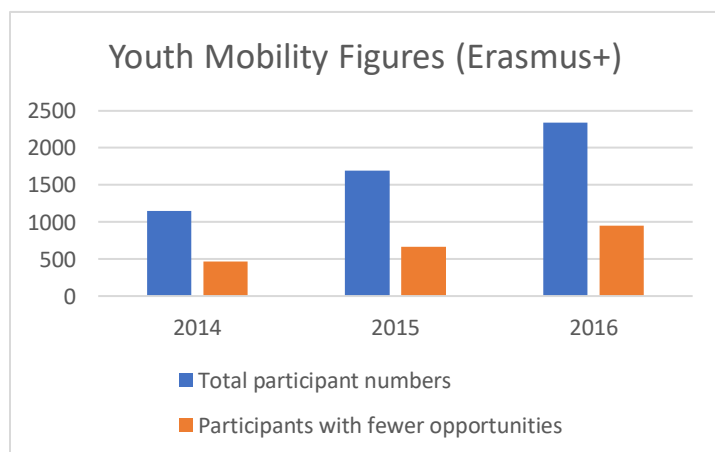


Fig.1.3 Youth mobility figures / participants with fewer opportunities

The nature of the fewer opportunities experienced by individuals participating in the Youth Field is not captured at programme level. In terms of supporting formal and informal learning through certification of the mobility taking place, the *Youthpass Impact Report*¹⁴ published by the European Commission, confirms that certificates issued in Ireland between 2007 and 2012 showed similar progress to other countries (p.55).

¹⁴ Available at: <https://www.youthpass.eu/downloads/13-62-225/Youthpass%20Impact%20Study%20-%20Report.pdf>

The majority of participants responding to the Youth field survey were youth workers, administrators and others participating in the coordination and management of activities under this field. From their own perspectives, they rated their engagement with the programme highly in terms of increasing their labour market skills (92%) and they considered that it had a direct impact on their subsequent employment opportunities (79%) (appendix 6). 92% (Erasmus+) also agreed that it increased their cultural appreciation and 87% confirmed that it had led to subsequent interaction with European organisations and colleagues (appendix 8). 20% of respondents had participated in both the Youth in Action and Erasmus+ programmes; again, this is a positive trend but also highlights the importance of increasing the number of new participants.

The *National Youth Strategy* (2015) published by the Irish Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), presents findings that in 2012, over one-third of young people reported being involved in some form of political activity and 39% reported being involved in a club or society (2015:2). Structured Dialogue awarded application numbers in Erasmus+ between 2014 and 2016 (appendix 4) have been relatively modest; the maximum approval rate of applications was at 60% over that period. However, the number of participants within awarded projects has reached over 700 (in 2014) and the profile of Structured Dialogue is increasing: for instance, its role is explicitly acknowledged by the DCYA and it features as one of its consistent routes for policy consultation¹⁵.

Specific objectives b and d: To foster quality improvements in youth work / To enhance the international dimension of youth activities and the role of youth workers and organisations

Strategic partnership contracted numbers in the Youth field have decreased between 2014 and 2016 from 9 to 6 projects awarded; the success rate has also decreased from 50% to 21%. As referred to above, this is a result of the transfer of funds to Strategic Partnerships from the Mobility action prior to the Mobility budget coming close to fully utilised. Participants in partnership projects were questioned about the impact participation had on their organisations from the perspectives of quality improvements; the introduction of new practices; increases in innovation; and increases in the internationalisation of the organisation (appendix 13). Overall the response rates were very positive.

FINDINGS RE: EFFECTIVENESS OF ERASMUS+ IN ACHIEVING GENERAL OBJECTIVES (Q2)

The responses to the Specific Objectives also contribute to the national response to the General Objectives of Erasmus+. This section looks at targets set by the General Objectives and to which Erasmus+ participation is a policy contributor.

Europe 2020 Targets and Benchmarks: In its narrative regarding progress against Europe 2020 targets, the Commission notes Ireland's economy is recovering and growing following a recession "that saw

¹⁵ National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015 – 2020 (DCYA: 2015). Available at: <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/playandrec/20150617NatStratonChildrenandYoungPeoplesParticipationinDecisionMaking2015-2020.pdf>

output contract by almost 8% between 2007 and 2009”¹⁶. It also notes that as a small open economy, the country is vulnerable to cyclical and external influences. The improvement in economic conditions in recent years corresponds with reported improvements in national progress against Europe 2020 targets¹⁷. Taking the targets that relate most closely to the Erasmus+ programme:

- The employment rate in Ireland of 20-64-year-olds was 68.7% in 2015 (target 75%);
- In 2015, 6.9% of students left school early, ahead of the European negative target of 10%;
- In 2015, 52.3% of all 30-34-year-olds obtained a higher education degree, above the European target of 40%;
- National data in 2014 shows that 27.6% of people were at risk of poverty or social inclusion, against a European target of reducing the number of people at risk by 20 million. The European average is 24.4%.

Whilst a correlation between the cause and effect of participation in Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes and progress against these targets is beyond the capacity of this evaluation, it is important to note its potential contribution to improving employment rates and to reducing the high percentage of individuals at risk of poverty and social exclusion. From a national policy perspective, discussed under the next question, these objectives are of primary importance.

Education and Training 2020: A series of Education and Training benchmarks have been set for 2020¹⁸. Ireland’s reported progress in 2015 against these EU targets is as follows¹⁹:

- 96% of children participate in early childhood education (positive target 95%)
- 15-year-olds reported as under-skilled in reading, maths, and science are 10.2%, 15% and 15.3% respectively (negative target 15%)
- 6.9% are early leavers from education and training (negative target 10%)
- 52.3% of people aged 30-34 have completed some form of higher education (positive target 40%)
- 6.5% of adults reported as participating in lifelong learning (positive target 15%)
- 75.3% of employed graduates aged 20-34 have at least upper secondary education attainment having left education 1-3 years ago (positive target 82%).

The target most directly tied to Erasmus+ is for 20% of higher education graduates between 18 and 34, with an initial vocational qualification, to have spent some time studying or training abroad. In terms of progress against this target, the Irish international strategy policy²⁰ reports that:

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/ireland/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/ireland/progress-towards-2020-targets/index_en.htm

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/key-indicators_en?field_country_csec_key_tid%5B%5D=213&field_country_csec_key_tid%5B%5D=234&field_year_ind_key_value%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=2015

²⁰ Irish Educated, Globally Connected, An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020 (2016)

In 2011/12, 10.14% of NFQ Level 8 graduates studied or undertook a placement abroad—a mobility rate which is in line with the European average and upon which the sector will build. Erasmus+ provides a strong mechanism for increasing outbound mobility. We will aim to be ahead of the European average by 2020 (2016:36).

Considering the positive impact that Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes have been shown to have on respondents contributing to this evaluation across the sectors, there is an opportunity for national policy to tease out how the fields and actions of Erasmus+ can provide part of the infrastructure required to also bolster the other target areas which Ireland is continuing to seek to meet; i.e., by providing youth, lifelong learning, and employment opportunities.

Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018): The Commission's *Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report 2015*²¹ refers to the fact that the European cooperation framework will use existing instruments and synergies with other policies to promote the participation of young people in democratic processes, and to help them develop skills such as citizenship and intercultural understanding (p.3). It also notes that the *Inclusion and Diversity Strategy* for the Erasmus+ youth field²², adopted late 2014 and implemented in 2015, highlights and strengthens the commitment to inclusion and diversity throughout the programme. Ireland is one of eight countries currently working with a Commission action team in the context of tackling its relatively high youth unemployment rates²³. The rates of engagement in higher education in Ireland, whilst welcome and positive, create concerns of the type of divide that is described by the Commission in its communication to the European Parliament:

The gap is widening between young people who study, are confident of finding a job and engage in social, civic and cultural life, on the one hand, and those with little hope of leading a fulfilling life and who are at risk of exclusion and marginalisation, on the other hand.²⁴

The initiatives taken by Léargas and government policy to promote participation in the Youth field of Erasmus+, are particularly important in the context of seeking to reduce this gap.

FINDINGS RE: THE INFLUENCE OF ERASMUS+ ON RELEVANT NATIONAL POLICY (Q3)

Irish and European policy objectives, as evidenced through the country's progress in terms of Education and Training 2020 and Europe 2020 targets, are significantly aligned in education and training and youth. As a result, there is a natural correspondence between the objectives of Erasmus+ and national policy. The issue that the national agencies have identified is therefore less one of how to influence policy from an ideological perspective, but rather how to integrate Erasmus+ into the named

²¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/erasmus-plus-annual-report-2015.pdf>

²² http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/inclusion-diversity-strategy_en.pdf

²³ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52012XG1220\(01\)&from=EN#ntc11-C_2012394EN.01000501-E0011](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52012XG1220(01)&from=EN#ntc11-C_2012394EN.01000501-E0011)

²⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52015DC0429&from=EN>

infrastructure which is publicly identified as contributing to the implementation of policy. The pursuit of the inclusion of Erasmus+ in national policy across the sectors is also linked with the significantly diminished resources that the sectors have experienced over the last ten years and from which they are gradually, if not fully, recovering. Any initiative which the sectors are being encouraged to engage with must be understood as meeting integral rather than extraneous objectives. As a connected matter, the feedback from staff and students on Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes highlights their wish to feel that their organisations are actively supporting and valuing their participation.

In terms of policy relating to higher education, the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (2011) sets the overall framework to which the updated international education strategy²⁵ and skills strategy²⁶, refreshed in 2016, both have regard²⁷. The latter policies cross-refer to each other and feature references to Erasmus+; quite comprehensively so in the case of the international education strategy. This is a development that the international section in the HEA has sought to realise over a number of years²⁸ and has now culminated with international education being part of the annual agreements made between the HEA as funding body and the higher education institutions it funds. The suite of core policies in the area of Youth: *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (2014), the *National Youth Strategy* (2015) and the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making* (2015), all make some reference to the youth field of Erasmus+ and refer in particular to the consultative routes with young people that have emerged from Structured Dialogue.

Léargas has also published its inputs to several national policies highlighting how Erasmus+ can contribute to policy objectives in the school, adult and vocational education and training sectors.²⁹ However, in common with many other European countries, internationalisation in those sectors, does not create an obvious inward economic value. The strategy and funding for these sectors is also not centrally managed in the same way as it is in higher education. Therefore, the identification that Léargas has already made of the need to engage with policy and decision-makers across these sectors (YNAR 2008 and 2009) is essential. To take just one example of how policy in these areas could align further with Erasmus+: one of the intended actions from the *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019* (2014) is to ensure that “information on the current qualification and skills profile of FET staff is collated with a view to assessing CPD needs of the sector, which in turn will inform the development of a CPD strategy for the sector” (2014:10).

It is recommended that consideration be given to the role that Erasmus+ could play as part of a CPD framework for the further education and training sector.

²⁵ Irish Educated Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland (2016-2020) (2016)

²⁶ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (2016)

²⁷ The focus on international education is further illustrated through the development of a *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners* (2015) and the intended development of an associated International Education Mark.

²⁸ National agency meeting 2 March and 21 April 2017

²⁹ <http://www.leargas.ie/resources/?cat=16#anchor>

Finally, from a policy perspective, whilst the impacts of the United Kingdom determining to leave the European Union are yet unknown, it seems reasonable to surmise, based on related trends³⁰, that it may lead to an increase in inward mobility and partnership requests for Ireland as an English-speaking country. There will be different levels of impact and absorption possible across the sectors. In a higher education context, for example, Ireland currently attracts three times more inward than outward mobility. The capacity of Irish institutions and organisations to facilitate increased demands, and the potential accompanying advantages and disadvantages, is another issue of policy that is likely to require some consideration in the national response to Brexit. In doing so, the wider potential benefits of the programme from reputational, future investment, labour market migration and economic benefits may need to be considered along with important matters of capacity and balance.

It is recommended that the issues highlighted here regarding Erasmus+ are taken into consideration when planning for the impact of Brexit at a national level.

FINDINGS RE: NATIONAL ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES (Q4)

The national agencies routinely seek to address the issues that arise in the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme; the annual reports to the Commission highlight trends in that context and actions taken or planned. Both agencies have also undertaken notable and noteworthy strategic initiatives intended to enhance and promote the programme; the effectiveness of these will be better capable of evaluation in time. The following represents only a selection:

- The establishment and promotion of policy matrixes to illustrate for participants how their participation is contributing to European and national objectives in individual sectors (this obviously supports the pursuit of further integration into national policy that was discussed above);
- Conducting surveys, and promoting the results, to confirm the wider economic benefits of facilitating inward mobility: it is estimated that higher education exchange students from certain regions can each generate three to four visitors across the regions of Ireland³¹;
- The intended implementation of an impact assessment framework which is currently being workshopped with participants³². The framework will enable participants to self-evaluate and benchmark the impact of their participation in Erasmus+ on a summative and formative basis;
- Participation in a working group³³ to develop a competence framework for leadership skills in youth organisations; and

³⁰ "Latest figures show the volume of international students applying to UK colleges is falling, while the number of international applicants to Irish universities has jumped by 17 per cent this year" Irish Times, 29 March 2017. Available at:

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/brexit-is-a-big-opportunity-for-irish-universities-says-education-firm-1.3029704>

³¹ <http://www.hea.ie/news/erasmus-brings-over-25000-visitors-ireland-%E2%80%93-worth-%E2%82%AC14m-economy>

³² <http://www.leargas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2016-L%C3%A9argas-Forum-Impact-presentation.pdf>

³³ The working group also includes representation from the National Youth Council of Ireland, which has been an important and active proponent of Erasmus+ in Ireland and in its engagement with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).

- Facilitating the engagement of previous higher education Erasmus+ participants with potential participants in schools – an approach to the promotion of the programme that participants across the sectors have identified as important (see Q17).

Beyond these types of initiatives, a need was identified to also pursue systematic advertising of the programme which would require an appropriate budget; for instance, airport advertising is being undertaken this year, but could reap further benefits if continued on a cyclical basis. In terms of promoting forward planning for participation in Erasmus+, schools are being targeted by the higher education national agency. As Léargas is currently working with the school sector directly to promote school staff participation, it may be able to offer advice on school engagement strategies.

It is recommended that the biannual meetings between the national agencies and the national authority are used to share advice on the school sector, as an area of some common interest, albeit from different perspectives, for the national agencies.

FINDINGS RE: RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS (Q5)

The mobility, strategic partnership and structured dialogue actions are at different stages of development and embeddedness and so the establishment of relative effectiveness is likely to require a further period of implementation. In the meantime, the reported effectiveness of the actions by participants (Q1), and their increased appearance in some areas of national policy (Q3) are positive indicators for their collective advancement over the rest of the programme, and from 2020.

FINDINGS RE: EFFECTIVENESS AND INTEGRATION / SCOPE FOR FURTHER PROGRAMME CHANGES (Q6)

There is a positive national view that the integration of the predecessor programmes into Erasmus+ has been effective and has streamlined the associated objectives advantageously. As documented in their Annual Reports, the national agencies have spent significant time in promoting the new brand and explaining the Erasmus+ programme to potential and previous participants. In the school sector, a lot of effort was placed in justifying the reorientation of the action to demonstrably meet organisational as well as individual needs. However, overall Léargas considers that this more strategic approach is beginning to find its legs, and will yield medium to long-term benefits. Other longstanding school participants have found the extension of visits to 5 days in the Long-Term Training activities, in the context of Strategic Partnerships, to be unnecessary. As a connected issue, the difficulty of finding and covering the cost of substitute teachers was referenced by several respondents.

It is recommended that Léargas monitors school participation in the 5-day Long-Term Training activities, and that any decline in participation is given attention in the end-of-programme evaluation.

Léargas also identified that the integration of youth into Erasmus+ has presented some challenges at a grassroots level, particularly in the context of its less formal operational nature when compared to the education and training sectors. However, the association of the Youth Field with Erasmus+ has also raised its profile and visibility at a European level; as noted by a representative of Léargas “Erasmus+ has everyone’s interest at different political levels” (Léargas meeting, 11 April). The integration of the programme under one brand has perhaps also made it more pliable at a European level. Both agencies complimented how quickly the Commission has been able to focus the programme on current and developing issues such as radicalism, and digital media literacy (a matter returned to under Q16).

Overall, therefore, it is considered that the integration of programmes to form Erasmus+ is becoming increasingly effective. However, the view of the national agencies is that to maximize the effectiveness arising from the integration, it is critical that the programme should continue in its current configuration for the foreseeable future, while recognising the value of sector-specific operational approaches.

It is recommended that the Erasmus+ programme remains in its current configuration to maximise its effectiveness.

FINDINGS RE: PROPORTIONALITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF BUDGET (Q7)

The budget available nationally to support the implementation of Erasmus+ is thought to be adequate. Where issues are identified, they relate to distribution and certain operational matters. The view emerging from the national agencies is that more flexibility, within agreed limits, would be beneficial to the implementation of the programme in Ireland and to the maximum utilisation of available budget. That flexibility would enable the agencies to respond to issues of national context which may require a percentage of the set budget to be redistributed appropriately to where it is in demand (e.g., where there are oversubscriptions in an area such as adult education, or where budget has been assigned to international regions which are not taken-up by students). This increased level of management of the budget by the agencies, within an agreed framework, would also decrease the administrative burden that is incurred by having to request reallocations of budget and having to return funds to the Commission. On a related matter, the fact that there is no provision to carry forward budget is considered to be unfortunate, particularly in the context where committed budget is underspent due to an over-estimation on the part of institutions of take-up; this has arisen in the higher education sector. In that context, it is notable that to assist in addressing under-spend of budget due to over-estimations

of participation on the part of higher education institutions, the Department of Education and Skills has committed to underwrite over-expenditure for the HEA up to 200,000 euros, on a pilot basis.

In terms of allocation to the Youth Field, concerns were expressed by the national agency that the administrative costs incurred by organisations managing a 5-day activity, that may take place within the context of a three to six-month project, are not currently recognised in their entirety by the budget. This contributes to a drain on resources in a vulnerable sector, which it is feared may result in youth organisations choosing not to continue participation because of sustainability issues. Several comments from respondents to the Youth Field surveys regarding the significant administrative input required to organise these events, reinforces this concern.

FINDINGS RE: IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES (Q8)

Quite significant challenges arose for the agencies with the introduction of Erasmus+ (as discussed in Q6); beyond issues of branding and programme promotion discussed previously, these also included IT issues, which are revisited in Q14. However, from a programme perspective, its implementation is now reasonably stable. As emphasised above, it is considered extremely important that the stability of the current configuration of the programme is maintained so that new challenges and difficulties that can take away from the promotion and implementation of the programme are avoided. Other issues that have arisen emerge from the national context and from the operational aspects of the programme.

The downturn in the economy from 2007 features strongly in the national reports of the agencies as they describe the difficulties across all sectors in committing resources to participate in the programme. These manifested themselves in, for instance, the lack of availability of cover for teaching staff (YNAR, 2008:36) and even difficulties in sourcing speakers for study visits (YNAR, 2011:3). Whilst the economy has improved, the sectors engaging with the programme are only beginning to see their staffing levels recover. Since 2010 there has also been substantial structural change in the education and training system at all levels, which has impacted institutions, government departments and government agencies. The Yearly National Agency Report for 2014 includes, for instance, reference to the creation of Education and Training Boards³⁴ and the impact of that development on the programme (2014:2). The level of change experienced in this sector has presented a residual challenge for Léargas in gaining traction between the sector and Erasmus+. As suggested above, the support the programme can provide to CPD might provide one avenue of mutual interest. The significant opportunities the programme can provide to VET students, is of course another.

The existence of these types of national contextual issues emphasises the fact that Erasmus+ is not operating within a vacuum, but also that further embedding in national policy and organisational strategies may help to buffer the programme from fluctuations in available resources.

³⁴ There are 16 ETBs nationally. Their remit is broad and includes involvement in schools, further education and training, and adult and community education.

At an operational implementation level, continuing challenges around the limited flexibility in distribution of budget are referred to under Q7. Reporting to the Commission also presents implementation challenges and this is taken up further in the context of Q10.

FINDINGS RE: DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION TOOLS (Q9)

As noted in terms of enhancement initiatives (Q4) the national agencies are innovating their approaches to promoting and evaluating participation in Erasmus+. In its implementation of an impact assessment framework, Léargas envisages itself having a role in sharing best practice across the programme and giving additional support to improve the impact of projects (Erasmus+ Performance Framework, p.11). This work should also make a very significant contribution to future evaluations of this nature. Both agencies are also promoting the outcomes of the programme through, for instance, the encouragement of participant blogs and individual stories through their websites and otherwise.

In the spirit of the institutions taking ownership of the promotion of the programme, they are also being encouraged by the agencies to make participation in the programme visible. The HEA notes: “We want institutions to improve the visibility – list those that engaged in Erasmus+, develop the concept of Erasmus+ scholars; it’s not just about travel” (Meeting with international section of HEA, 21 April). Student and staff participants in the Education and Training Field were asked their views on how to increase demand for the Erasmus+ programme and one of their repeated recommendations was around the mobilisation of advocates to promote the programme to peers (appendix 14 includes a sample of their recommendations). This suggests that there is room for additional activities on the part of institutions in all sectors in this regard; encouragement of which could form part of an agency project focused on creating advocates of participants (this is revisited under Q17).

Both national agencies also pointed to the need for information from the Commission regarding national involvement in centralised projects. This would increase their ability to align the strands of Erasmus+ cohesively and strategically, and to disseminate progress against the programme’s objectives in a national context (this is revisited under Q10). Finally, the introduction of the dissemination platform by the Commission is welcomed; however, a more user-friendly representation of the information is suggested to attract a wider audience.

1.2 EFFICIENCY (Questions 10-15)

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this analysis is on the level of efficiencies arising from the management of the programme; the integration of programmes into Erasmus+; the implementation of the programme's actions; the simplified grant system; the IT tools provided for the programme; and the deployment and optimisation of human and financial resources. In doing so, opportunities for improvement, simplification, programme changes and transferability are identified.

FINDINGS RE: EFFICIENCIES ARISING FROM DIVISION OF TASKS (Q10)

Overall, the national agencies and national authority reported that they are satisfied with the current division of tasks within the Commission and nationally. Meetings between the national authority and national agencies take place at least twice a year; and otherwise, as required. The national agencies are also of the view that communication with the Commission is good and that the Commission has sought to support the national agencies; particularly at the point of the introduction of Erasmus+ when technical issues arose. However, some suggestions were made for how to optimise responsibilities further. As referred to under Q9, the national agencies identified that it would be very beneficial to have more information regarding national involvement in centralised activities and it is recommended that this be explored further. While the logistical and technical difficulties with making information across so many actions available is understandable, the national agencies believe this is an area of centralised information that would assist in their implementation of decentralised activity.

It is recommended that information on national involvement in centralised activities is routinely made available to the national agencies.

A more significant issue regarding the tasks associated with the programme, is the reporting on decentralised actions by the national agencies to the Commission. Reporting is of course an essential requirement from an accountability and transparency perspective, but it is also made more time-consuming due to repetition and some contradictions within the forms to be completed; the lack of correspondence between report sections and workplan sections, which may seem relatively minor, also greatly adds to the workload associated with reporting. A streamlining of the content of the report to be completed and alignment of the workplan and reporting sections would be very welcome and is recommended. In doing so, the agencies suggest that an over-emphasis on impacts be avoided; impacts can be difficult to establish in the short-term, and they often can't capture the benefits of the more tacit

knowledge acquired through the programme and often cited by participants in the online survey and during telephone interviews.

Again, in terms of reporting, both national agencies raised the advantages that would be presented by the Commission finalising the annual report template for the national agencies before the summer of the previous year. Being without the confirmed format beyond this, as is currently the case, is increasing the pressure on the agencies to turn the report around by the middle of February. Both agencies are also of the view that the submission of financial returns by the middle of February is too early and they look forward to contributing to the consultation process for revised financial regulations, at the earliest opportunity.

It is recommended that the format of the report to be completed by the national agencies is streamlined, aligned with the workplan, and available by the summer of the year prior to the reporting deadline.

FINDINGS RE: RESULT OF INTEGRATION ON EFFICIENCY (Q11)

In a context where there are two national agencies responsible for the implementation of Erasmus+, the integration of the funding streams available across the Education and Training field, and the inclusion of the Youth field, has increased knowledge of the programme in its entirety. This is reported as leading to more informed referral of potential participants³⁵. The integration of the education and training and youth fields has, however, also continued some matters of proportionality that were raised in Yearly National Agency Reports prior to the commencement of Erasmus+ (2008 and 2009). The administrative burden for participants is equally high regardless of the amount of financial support they are receiving. This is off-putting for some applicants (an issue that was raised by several contributors to the participant surveys), particularly those from smaller organisations which are often the target audience. In addition to streamlining the application process for all applicants, a more proportionate mechanism for first-time newcomers to the programme, requiring financial support below an agreed threshold, could encourage their involvement in the programme. It is suggested that this could be done in a manner that in no way undermines the necessary transparency and process that is appropriate to the receipt and expenditure of public monies. This development could also begin to address issues of ‘churn’; the same organisations participating and the requirement for additional new organisation participation. This issue is revisited in Q14 regarding the grants system and Q17 when the success of the programme in reaching its target audience is considered.

It is recommended that the application process for Erasmus+ is streamlined and that a more proportionate application process is introduced, particularly for certain first-time applicants.

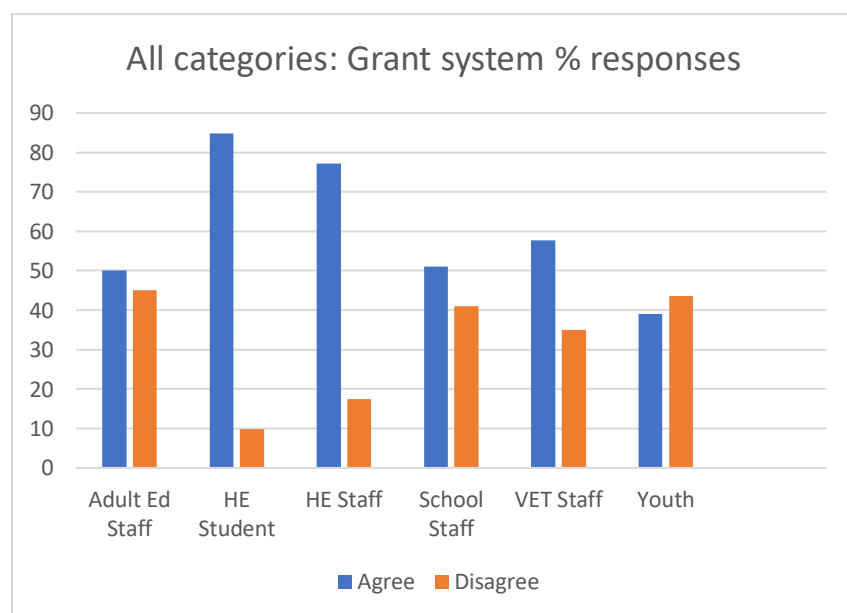
³⁵ Meeting with international section of HEA, 24 April 2017.

FINDINGS RE: RELATIVE EFFICIENCY OF ACTIONS (Q12)

The relative efficiency of actions was not something that arose strongly during the evaluation. Application requirements and IT issues (at least at the outset of the programme) were identified across the Fields and Actions as presenting barriers, for some, to better programme efficiency.

FINDINGS RE: EFFICIENCIES ARISING FROM SIMPLIFICATION OF GRANT SYSTEM (Q13)

In its current Strategy Statement (2015-2017), Léargas notes that it makes a particular effort “to clarify and—where possible—simplify what can be challenging application, administrative and reporting procedures” (2014:4). The mobility participants in Erasmus+ were asked their views on the grant system and to indicate on a scale between strongly disagree and strongly agree that the grant system is user-friendly (“easy to understand and apply for”) (appendix 15). 85% of higher education students agreed



that it was user-friendly but a higher percentage than for most other questions answered in the negative (10%). 77% of higher education staff agreed that it was user friendly, but again the negative percentage is higher than for most other questions at 17%. Youth participants were negative about the grant system, with 39% agreeing that it was user-friendly; 43% disagreed with the statement. Adult staff were split between agreeing and disagreeing; 50% agreed.

Fig 1.4. % responses to statement that grant system is easy to understand and apply for

School and VET staff scored this statement similarly with 51% and 58% agreeing respectively and 41% and 35% disagreeing. The higher disagreement rates amongst these sectors is in line with their open-ended comments regarding the challenges that the application process can present for smaller and resource-stretched entities, including: *Make the application form easier – it is a challenge* (Adult Ed Staff, Erasmus+ resp. #31); *Time spent on paperwork is not spent in support of young people* (Youth field, Erasmus+ resp. #2); and, *The only barrier was the very complicated ...long- winded, time consuming application form. In fact, it was such a barrier it put me off ever applying again* (School Staff, Erasmus+ resp. #102).

As noted, under Q13, the introduction of a more proportionate grant application process that would encourage organisations with fewer resources to engage with the programme, is highly recommended.

For some, the grant application process has represented a barrier that couldn't be overcome. In the Yearly National Agency Report 2014, it was reported that in a survey of Youth Exchange applicants, "47% of them find the application process for Erasmus+ to be a significant barrier" to applying (2014:2). The same report refers to anecdotal evidence that fewer than expected applications for strategic partnerships in the school sector, was due to the application process being perceived as "very bureaucratic and non-conducive to schools participating in the programme" (2014:2). This returns to the issue regarding the current lack of proportionality in the programme, which is evidently deterring some organisations from engaging, or engaging again.

In terms of other grant issues, there is a view from Léargas that standardising budget headings has been helpful; although different legacy interpretations of headings requires support from the national agency. As noted under Q7 regarding budget proportion and distribution, both national agencies are of the view that further flexibility in their management of the grant system, within agreed limits, would increase the efficiency of the programme and the utilisation of the available budget. Within allocated grants, the ability to move between cost headings was recommended as an important means of reducing the administration for beneficiaries and for the national agencies in dealing with amendment requests.

It is recommended that flexibility, within agreed limits, is introduced to the national management of the grant system to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme.

FINDINGS RE: EFFICIENCIES ARISING FROM PROGRAMME IT TOOLS (Q14)

As the Commission is aware, several issues arose with the IT tools introduced with Erasmus+ and these have been commented on previously by the agencies as part of the annual reports. The introduction of so many tools at one time represented significant learning challenges for the agencies, who in turn needed to provide support to beneficiaries. The number of different and disconnected tools is also a matter for concern. It is suggested that a greater impression of uniformity and cohesion between the IT tools could be provided through the front-end user-view. It is also identified that in future, the introduction of IT tools would benefit from a greater focus on the user experience.

It is recommended that future IT developments are introduced first through a pilot process, with the support of national agencies, to improve the user experience prior to widespread roll-out.

Familiarity with the Erasmus+ IT tools is considered to have increased since 2014, in parallel with the ongoing improvements that the Commission has made. As one participant put it: "the system is improving with use" (Grundtvig and Erasmus+, resp. #37). The dashboard is noted by the agencies as a

very welcome development which is providing easy access to programme data; a claim that is supported in the ease with which Erasmus+ data could be compiled to inform this evaluation, as against the relative difficulties of collating data across the predecessor programmes. The introduction of online-forms for KA3 is another IT development which is considered by the national agency to represent an improvement, and is being positively received by applicants in turn.

FINDINGS RE: EFFICIENCY OF NATIONAL DEPLOYMENT AND OPTIMISATION OF HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES (Q15)

The national economic context from 2007 had a significant impact not only on the sectors engaging with Erasmus + and its predecessor programmes, but also on the national agencies themselves. During that period, staff were reassigned within one agency to cover unrelated roles (HEA YNAR, 2009) and shortfalls of up to a quarter of the staff complement were experienced by the other (Léargas YNAR, 2013). Staffing arrangements have improved, with a number of vacancies recently filled in Léargas, and the first full-time equivalent person joining the international section of the HEA since it was established in 2007. However, it will take time before new staff have acquired the type of specialist and broad-ranging experience that is required in the promotion, implementation, and support of a programme like Erasmus+.

Despite these challenges, both agencies have utilised available resources to the best of their abilities. The HEA has applied the learning it has acquired from Erasmus+ to its administration of other international programmes, which has reduced some resource-intensive learning challenges. Léargas has restructured twice in recent years to establish the best configuration to support the Erasmus+ programme, and to appropriately segregate its duties. The support of the Commission in introducing proportionality to the grant application process, streamlining the agency reporting requirements, and introducing greater flexibility to budget management, could lead to further optimisation of the human and financial resources available to implement Erasmus+.

1.3 RELEVANCE (Questions 16-17)

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of continued relevance of Erasmus+ comments upon the needs and problems that the Erasmus+ objectives are designed to address; and seeks to establish the level of success of the programme in reaching its target audience.

FINDINGS RE: CONTINUED RELEVANCE NATIONALLY OF ERASMUS+ OBJECTIVES (Q16)

The national authority and agencies all noted the flexibility and adaptability of the Erasmus+ programme

in addressing current issues. For instance, an emphasis on employability, including youth employment, became very evident under Erasmus+. That attention aligned the programme with the Irish national agenda and important synergies arose at national and European levels. The programme has also been contextualised in terms of migrant issues and the importance of assisting integration into societies. At the same time, Erasmus+ has remained consistent with its core values; working inter-culturally, building connections, and sharing practice. In addition, while national reporting against the Europe 2020 and ET2020 indicators is positive on many fronts (discussed in Q1), there is room for further progress, to which continued and expanded implementation of Erasmus+ could contribute. On both European and national fronts, therefore, Erasmus+ is considered to continue to play a relevant and important role.

FINDINGS RE: SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME IN REACHING ITS TARGET AUDIENCE NATIONALLY (Q17)

It appears that whilst the participant numbers in the Youth Field are showing a healthy increase, the percentage in the fewer opportunities category is remaining at an average of 40% (see appendix 4). As noted previously, the nature of the fewer opportunities experienced by individuals participating in the Youth Field is not captured at programme level, making it difficult to form recommendations for how percentage participation could be increased. Initiatives have been taken by the national agencies to build strategies for inclusion and diversity by engaging with non-participants of Erasmus+ as well as with participants³⁶. Participants have also been encouraged to bring non-participants to forums and information sessions.

To understand why target audiences may not be participating in Erasmus+, questionnaire respondents were asked if they had experienced barriers in applying. These were open-ended responses, but they provide a sense of what issues arose. In the responses from Youth Field participants, there were several references to the application process. Some considered that filling it out was difficult “but not impossible” (Youth field, resp. #40), others were more negative citing it as a reason for not making more applications (Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus+, resp. #35, #27). A respondent whose organisation participates in several European programmes said that “none of the application forms are as repetitive as Erasmus+” (Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus+, resp. #42). An adult education staff member related that she is dyslexic and found the application form a very significant barrier to participation (Grundtvig, resp. #45). A further participant, who has both succeeded and failed in making applications under Erasmus+, said that some organisations have resorted to using private companies to complete their application forms to overcome this barrier, something which he considers completely against the spirit of the programme (Erasmus+, Adult Education Staff, resp. #42). Funding was also named as a barrier for some. Comments included, “the old Comenius system of having a budget total was much easier” (School staff Comenius and Erasmus+, resp. #150), “many of the young people couldn't afford to pay for the travel up front” (Youth field, resp. #19), and “the travel allowance didn't cover the cost of

³⁶ <http://www.leargas.ie/news/inclusion-diversity-strategy-in-the-field-of-youth-launched/>

summertime flights” (Youth field resp. #8).

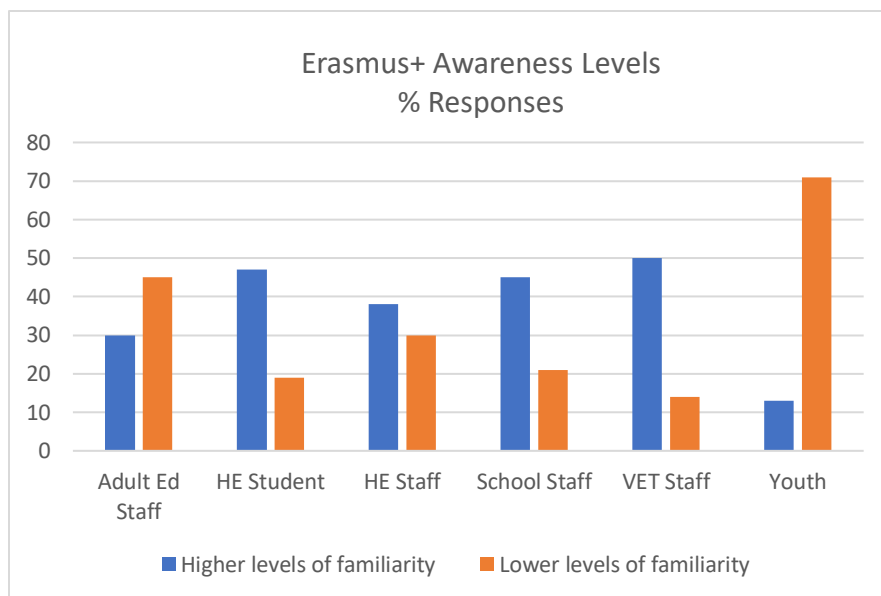
As noted under Q16, Erasmus+ has shown itself to be responsive to economic and now, increasingly, societal concerns of exclusion and marginalisation. However, as indicated in previous questions, it is important that this spirit of flexibility and adaptability is also extended into the requirements the programme places on target audiences who are likely to have less capacity and financial means to engage with Erasmus+ as a method of addressing their issues. Without improvements to the application process, the programme is carrying intrinsic barriers to participation for some sectors; the proportionality of application process recommendation above is seeking to assist the Commission in addressing this. A related recommendation arising in the interviews with national agencies, and one already communicated to the Commission by the HEA, is that a preparatory visit for individuals with disabilities should be facilitated for those considering longer stays abroad under the mobility action, to assure them that the potential setting meets their requirements; this could be facilitated through a budget heading, but also requires the support and promotion of the organisations and institutions from which these potential applicants will be travelling.

From a national policy perspective, it is notable that the updated *International Education Strategy for Ireland* (2016-2010), published in 2016 and discussed under Q3, identifies a need in higher education to examine mobility under Erasmus+ to establish if disadvantaged students are availing of mobility opportunities; it undertakes that a review of “the number of grant holders as a proportion of Erasmus+ students (or the proportion of those who undertake non-compulsory Erasmus+ programmes) will be undertaken to see if disadvantaged students are adequately represented” (2016:43). The findings from this, if applied successfully, could also increase Ireland’s progress against the ET2020 target on mobility.

It is recommended that the end-of-programme evaluation identifies the outcomes from this review, and seeks to establish if any aspects of its methodology and process have applicability to other sectors.

On the premise that lack of information and awareness of the programme can provide a barrier to participation of the target audience (as found by Beerkens et al., in their 2013 study of participants and non-participants in Erasmus³⁷) questionnaire respondents were also asked their opinions as to how well-known the programme is amongst their peers. Their answers are indicated in fig 1.5 (and in appendix 16) which shows responses of higher familiarity (i.e., ‘very familiar’ and ‘moderately familiar’) and lower familiarity (i.e., ‘not at all familiar’ and ‘slightly familiar’). These percentages are not scientific in that this evaluation hasn’t been able to corroborate that they are accurate; they are, rather, opinions. However, considering the interest and enthusiasm for the programme that respondents conveyed, it seems reasonable to surmise that they are equally interested in their sectors and have a good sense of how

³⁷ Souto-Otero, Manuel, Huisman, J., Beerkens, M., de Win, H. and Vujic, S. 2013. Barriers to international student mobility: evidence from the Erasmus program. *Educational Researcher* 42 (2), pp. 70-77.



alive the programme is for their peers. It seems equally reasonable to observe that the further one gets from formal organisations and institutions, the more difficult it is to systematically target potential participants. This provides additional support for the notion that participants themselves could assist in promoting the programme to their peers.

Fig 1.5 Opinions on Erasmus+ Awareness Levels responses expressed by participants (all sectors)

It is recommended that each agency considers further how it can work to create a framework in which current and previous participants can formally and informally act as advocates for the programme within their sectors.

1.4 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COHERENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY (Questions 18-19)

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of coherence and complementarity examines current and potential synergies within the Erasmus+ programme and with other national and international programmes available in Ireland. It also comments on the matter of tensions, inconsistencies, and overlaps.

FINDINGS RE: COHERENCE OF PROGRAMME AND SYNERGIES (Q18)

The decentralised actions that make up Erasmus+ are considered to be coherent; the education and training sectors have an integral connection with each other whilst the youth sector shares the same

objectives and core values; the fields together form parts of a natural continuum. It is important, however, that the distinct culture of the youth field receives ongoing acknowledgement, to ensure that its less formalised nature is facilitated equally to the more formalised structures that tend to characterise education and training. The advantages of engagement between the sectors nationally are also beginning to emerge, as is the potential for approaches, and even language, in one sector being used to inform the strategy and practice of another. Collaborative activities such as the biannual meetings held by the national agencies and the national authority provide a means of exchange at that level. For participants, attendance at the annual Léargas forum has assisted in providing an opportunity for colleagues across sectors to connect. The Annual Erasmus Lecture run by the HEA, focuses on raising awareness across the higher education sector of the benefits of mobility and sharing practice. It is important that the current configuration of Erasmus+ remains stable, to maximize the resources that can be invested by both the national agencies and participants in fostering the synergies that the programme is presenting.

FINDINGS RE: COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES (Q19)

The experience of both national agencies has enabled them to exploit opportunities for complementarity between Erasmus+ and other programmes. On a practical level, the experience for the HEA in administering an international programme with Brazil, provided it with the systems and knowledge to support its engagement with non-EU partner countries under Erasmus+. Léargas is responsible for a series of other European initiatives, which do not attract funding³⁸. These programmes are targeting the same sectors for participation as Erasmus+ and so the agency has focused on communicating their connections e.g., e-Twinning can provide a gateway to mobility projects as well as potentially to strategic partnerships. As a result, a mutually supportive framework is increasingly in evidence which is making the most not only of Erasmus+ but also of the related initiatives being driven by each agency. Neither is Erasmus+ reported as creating overlaps or tensions with national programmes.

1.5 EUROPEAN ADDED-VALUE AND SUSTAINABILITY (Questions 20-21)

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of European added-value and sustainability addresses whether the Erasmus+ programme,

³⁸ <http://www.leargas.ie/programmes/>

and its predecessor programmes, represent added-value; if that can be increased; and how an increased budget can be implemented effectively.

FINDINGS RE: REPRESENTATION OF ADDED-VALUE (Q20)

As noted in the Commission guidance for this mid-term evaluation, the added-value of the Erasmus+ programme can be informed by the responses to the preceding questions. As noted under Q1, participants in Erasmus+ mobility were asked to confirm whether their labour market, cultural skills and professional development would have increased to the same extent if they had not been participants in Erasmus+. The responses, overall, very much confirmed that these positive increases would not have been experienced in the absence of the programme. Equally, those involved in strategic partnerships identified a positive increase in their subsequent engagement with international partners. Initial research also suggests that the programme leads to further economic impacts through increased visitor numbers associated with inward mobility participants³⁹.

These are the more tangible benefits that have come from the programme. The less evident benefits that can arise from Erasmus+ participation and lead to personal, social, cultural, and economic added-value are more difficult to establish, but no less significant. There is no competing programme nationally that can provide the scope and scale of opportunity that Erasmus+ represents, or the infrastructure of connections and recognition that facilitates mobility and strategic partnership. It would seem reasonable to assert on that basis, and in the light of the feedback from participants, that considerable value is being added nationally through the existence of Erasmus+.

FINDINGS RE: IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INCREASED BUDGET (Q21)

The prospect of an increased budget for the remainder of the Erasmus+ programme is welcome. However, as the phrasing of the Commission's question suggests, it does create some challenges. On an overall structural level, a more even distribution of the budget across the 7 years of the programme would have been beneficial in terms of forward planning on the part of both the national agencies and participants. A relatively sharp increase in budget will require a corresponding increase in participation in the programme and a demand from new participants (discussed in Q1 and Q17). More participation in the programme leads in turn to a requirement for further support from the national agencies and increased reporting and financial management oversight. In a higher education context, the challenge of stimulating participation is not minimal, but the trend of higher education student participation in Ireland is continuing to increase (as seen by the ET 2020 targets, p.13), which, coupled with the on-going promotional efforts of the agency, should provide a corresponding funnel for Erasmus+. Notwithstanding this, the agency will be focusing on trying to encourage more participation from target

³⁹ <http://www.heai.ie/news/erasmus-brings-over-25000-visitors-ireland-%E2%80%93-worth-%E2%82%AC14m-economy>

student audiences (Q17) and promoting the programme, with institutions, to higher education staff who have significantly lower awareness levels than students. Léargas will be continuing to try to increase engagement in some sectors whilst having to turn applicants away in other sectors (e.g., adult education). The focus of both organisations will be on ensuring that the quality of applications remains consistently high, regardless of access to increased funding.

More flexibility for both organisations, within agreed limits, on how they manage the national budget for Erasmus+, would increase the likelihood of their being able to maximise their utilisation of the budget and ensure that monies are being distributed to best effect (as discussed under Q7 and Q13). Continued national support will also be required in driving demand through reference to the specifics of Erasmus+ in policy and implementation plans; through the discourse of relevant government departments; and through the promotion of other influential state agencies and other organisations, such as unions and representative bodies, that are interacting with the education and training and youth fields (Q3). These collective efforts can contribute to Erasmus+ being understood as a contribution to meeting organisational strategy and national policy; to become embedded in this manner could safeguard consistency of participation in a changeable economic context. The introduction of budget increases over the remainder of the programme, will provide an additional stimulus for further collaboration nationally to drive the demand for the programme.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

It is clear from the evidence provided, and based on a significant number of contributions from participants in the predecessor programmes, as well as in Erasmus+, that **the programme is effective and important**. As indicated throughout this report there are areas in which the **efficiency of Erasmus+ could be enhanced**, which would have a correspondingly positive impact on its effectiveness.

The **programme has remained relevant** by responding to the social, cultural and economic developments taking place across Europe and internationally. However, it has done so in a manner that remains consistent with its core values of working inter-culturally, building connections, and sharing practice. The current configuration of Erasmus+ is **operating coherently** and, in an Irish context, it is **complementing national, European and international programmes and projects**. The evidence from the participants, and otherwise, leads to a firm conclusion that the programme is also **adding value**. The **sustainability of Erasmus+ can be supported further** by actions taken at a national and European level.

A series of recommendations for improvement in effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability, are included in the body of this report, and highlighted by coloured boxes within the context of the narrative.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: EVALUATOR CONTACT DETAILS AND NATIONAL AGENCY PARTICIPANTS

EVALUATOR CONTACT DETAILS

If clarification is required on any aspect of this report, please contact O'BRIEN/Governance Design:

Company name: O'BRIEN / Governance Design

Report authors: Trish O'Brien / Sarah King

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20/21 St Patrick's Road
Dalkey
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www.obriengd.ie

NATIONAL AGENCY PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Consultative meetings took place with the national agencies on several occasions from March to May 2017. Participants from the national agencies are detailed below:

Léargas participants: Jim Mullin; Fionnuala Broughan; Lorraine Gilligan; Lorraine McDyer; Anne Molloy.

Higher Education Authority (HEA) participants: Gerry O'Sullivan; Mary Dunne; Mary May; Mariana Reis De Almeida; Magdalena Staniek; Patricia Tutty.

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY QUESTIONS

STUDENT PARTICIPATION SURVEY QUESTIONS – HIGHER EDUCATION, VET AND YOUTH

Question 1: Why did you decide to participate in the programme?

Open Ended

Question 2: Did you experience any barriers to participating in the programme?

Open Ended

Question 3: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

3.1 The relevance of my skills to the labour market increased through my participation in the programme.

3.2 The relevance of my skills to the labour market would not have increased to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme.

3.3 Participation in the programme had an impact on my subsequent employment opportunities (please only answer this question if it is applicable to your context)

3.4 I became a more active member of society following my experience on the programme.

3.5 My appreciation for other cultures increased due to my participation in the programme

3.6 I would not have appreciated other cultures to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme.

3.7 I participated in the programme primarily to improve my language skills.

3.8 The grant system for Erasmus+ is easy to understand and apply for. *(For ERASMUS+ participants only)*

3.9 The IT tools I used when submitting information to the national agency were easy to understand and use. *(For ERASMUS+ participants only)*

Rating Scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Question 4: How well known do you think the Erasmus + programme is amongst students/young people?

Rating Scale:

Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Extremely familiar
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Question 5: How do you think that the profile of Erasmus+ could be increased amongst students/young people?

Open ended

Question 6: Do you have any suggestions for how to increase participation of students/young people in the Erasmus+ programme?

Open Ended

Question 7: Are there any developments you would like to see in the Erasmus+ programme?

Open Ended

STAFF PARTICIPANT SURVEY QUESTIONS – HIGHER EDUCATION, ADULT EDUCATION, VET AND SCHOOL EDUCATION

Question 1: Why did you decide to participate in the programme?

Open Ended

Question 2: Did you experience any barriers to participating in the programme?

Open Ended

Question 3: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

3.1 Participation in the programme improved my teaching of languages within my home institution (please only answer if this is applicable to your context)

3.2 Participation in the programme contributed positively to my professional development

3.2 My participation in the programme had broader benefits for my home institution

3.4 Participation in the programme increased the international dimension of my activities in my home institution

3.5 Participation in the programme increased the quality of my activities in my home institution

3.6 Participation in the programme increased the level of innovation that I brought to my activities in my home institution

3.7 My appreciation for other cultures increased due to my participation in the programme

3.8 I would not have appreciated other cultures to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme.

3.9 Participation in the programme led to an increase of my subsequent interaction with European institutions and colleagues

3.10 My professional development would not have been enhanced to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme

3.11 The grant system for Erasmus+ is easy to understand and apply for. *(For ERASMUS+ participants only)*

3.12 The IT tools I used when submitting information to the national agency were easy to understand and use. *(For ERASMUS+ participants only)*

Rating Scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Question 4: How well known do you think the Erasmus + programme is amongst HE/ADULT/SCHOOLS/VET staff?

Rating Scale:

Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Extremely familiar
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Question 5: How do you think that the profile of Erasmus+ could be increased amongst HE/ADULT/SCHOOLS/VET staff?

Open ended

Question 6: Do you have any suggestions for how to increase the participation of HE/ADULT/SCHOOLS/VET staff in the Erasmus+ programme?

Open Ended

Question 7: Are there any developments you would like to see in the Erasmus+ programme?

Open Ended

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (ALL FIELDS) – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Question 1: Why did you decide to participate in the Strategic Partnerships action?

Open Ended

Question 2: Did you experience any barriers to participating in the Strategic Partnerships action?

Open Ended

Question 3: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

3.1 The Strategic Partnership we engaged in led to quality improvements for our organisation

3.2 The Strategic Partnership we engaged in led to the introduction of new practices to our organisation

3.3 The Strategic Partnership we engaged in led to an increase of innovation in the organisation

3.4 The Strategic Partnership we engaged in increased the subsequent internationalisation of our activities

3.5 The Strategic Partnership we engaged in has benefits for the organisation as a whole

3.6 The Strategic Partnership we engaged in provided an opportunity to discuss problems with similar organisations

Rating Scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Question 4: In your opinion how familiar are organisations in your sector with the Erasmus+ programme in general?

Rating Scale:

Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Extremely familiar
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Question 5: How well known do you think that the opportunity to engage in Strategic Partnerships under Erasmus+ is amongst organisations in your sector?

Open-ended

Question 6: How do you think that the profile of Erasmus+ could be increased?

Open-ended

Question 7: Do you have any suggestions for how to increase the participation of organisations in Strategic Partnerships?

Open Ended

Question 8: Are there any developments you would like to see in the Erasmus+ programme?

Open Ended

APPENDIX 3: SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND INTERVIEWEES BY CATEGORY

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

CATEGORY	RESPONDENTS ⁴⁰⁴¹
Adult education staff	Grundtvig (28); Erasmus+ (13); Both (7)
Higher education students	Erasmus (90); Erasmus+ (158); Both (13)
Higher education staff	Erasmus (13); Erasmus+ (44); Both (13)
School staff	Comenius (102); Erasmus+ (24); Both (30)
Vocational education and training staff ⁴²	Leonardo da Vinci (9); Erasmus+ (10); Both (18)
Youth	Youth in Action (6); Erasmus+ (18); Both (6)
Organisations	Partnership project (15); Erasmus+ (20); Both (11)

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWEES

CATEGORY	INTERVIEWEES
Adult education staff	Grundtvig (2); Erasmus+ (1); Both (1)
Higher education staff	Erasmus+ (1); Erasmus and Erasmus+ (4)
Higher education students	Erasmus (2); Erasmus + (4)
School staff	Comenius (2); Erasmus+ (1); Both (1)
Vocational education and training staff	Leonardo da Vinci (1); Erasmus+ (2); Both (1)
Partnerships / strategic partnerships	Partnerships across previous programmes (2); Strategic Partnerships under Erasmus + (4); Both (3)

⁴⁰ Respondents who indicated that they had participated in both programmes were directed to the appropriate Erasmus+ survey and their responses are included as part of the Erasmus+ cohort data.

⁴¹ Respondents did not have to answer every question posed in the survey and so response rates to certain questions are lower than the overall number of respondents who engaged with the survey. However, all those categorised as a respondent answered at least one question on the survey.

⁴² On two occasions surveys were issued with a view to capturing VET student views. Unfortunately, only 4 responses in total were received and so that data is not included in this report.

APPENDIX 4: PROGRAMME PARTICIPANT FIGURES AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

KA1 – LEARNING MOBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL (EDUCATION AND TRAINING)

Mobility	LLP	
	2007	2010
HE Students	1817	2511
HE Staff	211	224
Adult Education Staff	34	58
School Education Staff	98	145
VET Learner & Staff	256	673

'HE Students' consists of 'Erasmus Student Mobility' outgoing participant numbers.

'HE Staff' consists of 'Erasmus Staff Mobility' outgoing participant numbers.

'Adult Education Staff' consists of 'In-service training', 'Preparatory visit', 'Assistantships' and 'Visit & Exchange' participant numbers.

'School Education Staff' consists of 'In-service training', 'Preparatory visit' and 'Assistantship' participant numbers.

'VET Learner and Staff' consists of 'Mobility' and 'Preparatory visit' participant numbers

Mobility	Erasmus+		
	2014	2015	2016
HE Students	2972	3100	3376
HE Staff	295	273	262
Adult Education Staff	97	10	83
School Education Staff	243	198	205
VET Learner & Staff	893	845	785

'HE students' consists 'Traineeship' and 'Studies' outgoing participant numbers.

'HE Staff' consists of 'Erasmus Staff Mobility for Training (STT)' and 'Erasmus Staff Mobility for Teaching Assignments (STA)' outgoing participant numbers.

'Adult Education Staff' consists of staff mobility participant numbers.

'School Education Staff' consists of staff mobility participant numbers.

'VET Learner and Staff' consists of learner and staff mobility participant numbers.

The figures shown in the data tables above reflect the number of participants in projects approved by the national agency. The number of participants in contracted projects may vary slightly from those approved due to change in applicant circumstances between the time of application submission and the notification of approval.

Sources of data:

2007 Data Source - Analysis of *The Interim Evaluation Study on the Implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 in Ireland* by Indecon International Economic Consultants (Indecon).

2010 Data Source - Analysis of National Agency statistical data.

Erasmus+ Data Source - Analysis of National Agency statistical data.

KA1 – LEARNING MOBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL (YOUTH)
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Mobility	Historical	
	2007	2010
Participant Total	1,184	1,096
Number with Fewer Opportunities	358	307
% with Fewer Opportunities	30%	28%

'Participant total' consists of participant numbers from the following Youth in Action programme actions; 'Youth Exchange', 'EVS', 'Youth in the World' and 'Youth Support System - Training and Networking'.

Mobility	Erasmus+		
	2014	2015	2016
Participant Total	1145	1690	2344
Number with Fewer Opportunities	470	662	952
% with Fewer Opportunities	41%	39%	41%

'Participant total' consists of youth worker mobility, volunteers and youth exchange participant numbers.

The figures shown in the data tables above reflect the number of participants in projects approved by the national agency. The number of participants in contracted projects may vary slightly from those approved due to change in applicant circumstances between the time of application submission and the notification of approval.

Sources of data:

Analysis of Youth in Action and Erasmus+ National Agency statistical data

KA2 - COOPERATION FOR INNOVATION AND THE EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES (STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS) - EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Partnerships	LLP	
	2007	2010
Higher Education	N/A	N/A
Adult Education	20	22
School Education	104	41
VET	0	10

Strategic Partnerships	Erasmus+		
	2014	2015	2016
Higher Education	2	2	1
Adult Education	7	4	3
School Education (Incl. 'Schools Only')	24	28	33
VET	7	7	11

The figures shown in the Erasmus+ data table above reflect the number of partnership projects contracted by the national agency.

Sources of data:

2007 Data Source - Analysis of *The Interim Evaluation Study on the Implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 in Ireland* by Indecon International Economic Consultants (Indecon).

2010 Data Source - Analysis of National Agency statistical data.

Erasmus+ Data Source - Analysis of National Agency statistical data.

KA2 - COOPERATION FOR INNOVATION AND THE EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES (STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS) - YOUTH

KA205 - Strategic Partnerships for Youth	2014	2015	2016
Applications Received	18	31	29
Applications Contracted	9	9	6
Success Rate (%)	50%	29%	20.69%
Organisations involved in Contracted Projects	33	34	18
Participants in Contracted Projects	915	1,120	707

The figures shown under 'Applications Contracted' in the data table above reflect the number of partnership projects contracted by the national agency.

Source of data: Analysis of National Agency statistical data.

KA3 - SUPPORT FOR POLICY REFORM (STRUCTURED DIALOGUE) - YOUTH

KA347 - Dialogue between young people and policy makers	2014	2015	2016
Applications Received	7	5	5
Applications Awarded	4	3	3
Success Rate (%)	57.14%	60%	60%
Organisations involved in Awarded Projects	19	8	7
Participants in Awarded Projects	704	668	604

The figures shown under 'Applications Awarded' in the data table above reflect the number of Structured Dialogue projects approved by the national agency. The number of contracted projects may vary slightly from those approved due to change in applicant circumstances between the time of application submission and the notification of approval.

Source of data: Analysis of National Agency statistical data.

APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANT MOTIVATION – SAMPLE RESPONSES

STUDENTS

The opportunity to improve my language skills, gain experience in navigating unfamiliar situations, gain independence, and improve self-reliance **HE Student 2007-2013**

It was an amazing opportunity and chance to experience work abroad **VET Student 2007-2013**

I desperately wanted to seek work experience outside of Ireland and was given the opportunity to do so. The Erasmus+ programme assisted in that **HE Student Erasmus+**

STAFF

My organisation was developing new programmes for teens and wanted to research European models **Adult Staff 2007-2013**

For the transnational experience of tackling a shared challenge-different perspectives, new approaches and shared learning - powerful stuff! **Adult Staff Erasmus+**

Great opportunity for us as staff to see how the process of youth work in Europe operates. An amazing experience for our young people to learn skills and experience new cultures **Youth Field, Erasmus+**

To deepen my understanding of another culture as part of enhancing my cross-cultural management teaching and to deepen my collaborations **HE Staff Erasmus+**

An invitation to teach at a prestigious centre and an opportunity to meet with leading international scholars working in my field **HE Staff 2007-2013**

We wanted to visit Eastern European countries because we were beginning to have new pupils start in our school from places like Poland Lithuania, Czech Republic etc. **Schools Staff 2007-2013, Comenius**

I wanted to learn about the VET system in another country, particularly how they run apprenticeship training **VET Staff 2007-2013 (LDV)**

To meet international partners and to learn from other providers and implement new techniques **Adult Education Staff, Erasmus+**

Part of our core mission to educate, train, change and develop society **VET Staff, Erasmus+**

ORGANISATIONS

There was an opportunity to learn from practice in other countries.

To learn more about rural entrepreneurship and specific supports that should be targeted towards them to increase employment.

To further develop staff and young people, and my own competence as a trainer.

We saw the value of looking outside of the island of Ireland for collaboration and fresh ideas for the work we have been doing.

To advance the education and experience of our youth workers and youth and to see the work of other similar organisations.

To gain more knowledge of European youth work methodologies and practice.

It was a great opportunity to collaborate with other European organisations to undertake a research project of huge interest.

APPENDIX 6: LABOUR MARKET SKILLS RESPONSES

Statement 1: The relevance of my skills to the labour market increased through my participation in the programme.

HE student response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	7	3	7	25	23	27	92

HE student response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	4	6	7	16	38	64	43	178

Statement 2: The relevance of my skills to the labour market would not have increased to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme.

HE student response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	6	5	16	21	20	22	91

HE student response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	6	11	15	21	43	52	30	178

Statement 3: Participation in the programme had an impact on my subsequent employment opportunities.

HE student response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	5	4	6	22	20	32	92

HE student response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	4	3	26	24	36	30	126

Statement 1: The relevance of my skills to the labour market increased through my participation in the programme.

Youth in Action response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	1	3	2	0	0	7

Youth response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	1	4	14	5	25

Statement 2: The relevance of my skills to the labour market would not have increased to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme.

Youth in Action response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	1	4	1	0	0	7

Youth response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	2	3	1	4	11	4	26

Statement 3: Participation in the programme had an impact on my subsequent employment opportunities.

Youth in Action response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	3	0	2	2	0	0	7

Youth response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	2	0	2	2	7	6	19

APPENDIX 7: CULTURAL APPRECIATION RESPONSES

Statement: My appreciation for other cultures increased due to my participation in the programme

Adult Ed Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	1	4	5	18	29

Adult Ed Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	1	0	0	6	11	19

HE Student 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	5	0	3	15	23	45	92

HE Student 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	2	6	12	32	60	59	174

HE Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	1	0	0	2	2	9	14

HE Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	1	0	5	4	18	28	57

School Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	0	0	6	8	29	65	110

School Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	0	0	0	0	11	41	54

VET Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	1	1	0	1	5	9

VET Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	0	0	6	15	22

Youth 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	6

Youth 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	1	1	3	6	13	24

Statement: I would not have appreciated other cultures to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme.

Adult Ed Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	0	1	3	6	10	6	29

Adult Ed Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	2	1	2	4	2	9	20

HE Student 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	5	5	10	10	17	14	22	93

HE Student 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	5	17	15	16	24	43	56	176

HE Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	1	0	1	4	7	1	14

HE Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	5	5	5	11	8	9	14	57

School Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	6	11	6	14	13	27	33	110

School Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	4	3	4	2	9	10	21	53

VET Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	1	2	2	0	3	9

VET Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	2	3	2	6	9	22

Youth 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	6

Youth 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	1	3	6	7	6	24

APPENDIX 8: STAFF PARTICIPATION AND INCREASED INTERACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS RESPONSES

Statement: Participation in the programme led to increased subsequent interaction with European institutions and colleagues

Adult Ed Staff response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	1	0	3	7	5	10	28

Adult Ed Staff response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	1	0	2	5	3	8	20

HE Staff response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	0	2	7	4	13

HE Staff response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	1	0	9	9	11	25	56

School Staff response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	7	6	8	22	22	34	102

School Staff response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	2	0	6	4	13	25	53

VET Staff response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	0	1	3	4	9

VET Staff response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	0	1	8	18	28

Youth 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	1	1	2	1	0	6

Youth 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	3	5	4	11	23

**APPENDIX 9: PARTICIPATION LEADING TO ORGANISATIONAL BENEFITS
EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESPONSES**

Statement: My participation in the programme had broader benefits for my home institution

Adult Ed Staff response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	2	1	10	14	28

Adult Ed Staff response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	2	0	0	1	4	12	20

HE Staff response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	1	3	3	6	13

HE Staff response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	4	8	21	23	57

School Staff response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	7

School Staff response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	1	8	20	18	48

VET Staff response 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	0	1	1	6	9

VET Staff response 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	1	0	1	2	4	20	28

APPENDIX 10: VALUING PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION - SAMPLE COMMENTS

Question: How could participation in the Erasmus+ programme be increased in your sector?

Adult Staff

Support in regard to cover for your classes while you are away so you don't have to play catch up with lessons and students do not fall back.

HE Students

More encouragement from lecturers and tutors on certain courses.

Have tutors communicate or even visit the students abroad to learn what they are doing. There was no communication with tutors once we completed the forms, even on our return. They could use these examples in lectures to encourage others.

More promotion of its long-term benefits, and more encouragement from lectures to take part and promoting it as a good option, and not just a possible option for some students.

Home institutions should not discourage students from taking time out from their strict curriculum to explore different ways of studying. Too much emphasis on deadlines & not enough on personal growth & personal understanding of the subject leads to students feeling under too much pressure in their home institution to participate in Erasmus.

HE Staff

Recognise participation in the Erasmus+ programme in performance and progression metrics. For example, "internationalisation" of my home institution is a stated priority area for development, but it is not readily taken into account. This encourages staff to spend their time on activities that are measured directly, such as publication or funding proposals, instead.

By valuing it more when it comes to promotions.

Increase the understanding and recognition of staff undertaking Erasmus+ activities at a university management level. It is somewhat undervalued.

Making meaningful and deep participation in Erasmus and other internationalisation activity as a performance assessment criteria.

School Staff

Initially, an awareness campaign to inform people of opportunities. However, at a national level, policy should allow staff to participate in mobilities. This is not always a case due to the practicalities involved in releasing staff for periods of time.

The encouragement of Principals to appreciate the value of involvement and perhaps substitution cover for Primary teachers.

The need to provide substitution cover is imperative as then schools can ensure that there is at all times continuity if and when any team member is abroad or fully occupied during visits.

VET Staff

This very much depends on management buy-in to the programme. We are fortunate in that management at our organisation see lots of value for students and staff in participating in mobilities, hence participation is encouraged.

Promote the programmes to the head of institutions and education and training boards so that it is supported from the top down and encourage institutions to build internationalisation into their mission statements.

Make participation in such programs part of their career progression.

APPENDIX 11: CONTRIBUTION OF PROGRAMME TO CPD RESPONSES

Statement 1: Participation in the programme contributed positively to my professional development.

Adult Ed staff response 2007 - 2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	0	0	0	0	5	22	29

Adult Ed staff response 2014 - 2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	1	0	0	0	4	13	20

HE staff response 2007- 2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	1	0	0	1	5	7	14

HE staff response 2014 - 2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	0	0	0	3	17	34	56

School staff response 2007 - 2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	0	0	0	5	28	74	109

School staff response 2014 - 2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat at Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat at agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	0	0	0	1	13	38	54

VET staff response 2007 - 2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	0	0	2	6	9

VET staff response 2014 - 2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	0	0	6	16	22

Statement 2: My professional development would not have been enhanced to the same extent if I had not participated in the programme

Adult Ed staff response 2007 - 2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	0	7	5	16	29

Adult Ed staff response 2014 - 2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	1	0	1	2	7	7	20

HE staff response 2007- 2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	2	4	3	5	14

HE staff response 2014 - 2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	3	0	5	10	18	19	56

School staff response 2007 - 2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	2	0	7	25	23	50	108

School staff response 2014 - 2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	3	2	5	3	11	29	55

VET staff response 2007 - 2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	0	0	1	0	3	4	9

VET staff response 2014 - 2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	1	0	0	1	10	10	22

APPENDIX 12: LANGUAGE MOTIVATION AND IMPACT RESPONSES

Statement: I participated in the programme primarily to improve my language skills

HE Students 07-13	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	10	13	4	10	11	22	22	92

HE Students 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	26	21	13	16	24	31	38	169

Statement: Participation in the programme improved my teaching of languages within my home institution (please only answer if this is applicable to your context)

Adult Ed Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	3	1	0	6	0	2	2	14

Adult Ed Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	1	2	0	9	1	0	0	13

School Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	2	5	2	8	12	16	18	63

School Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	1	3	0	8	4	9	11	36

VET Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	4

VET Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	2	2	0	3	1	0	2	10

HE Staff 2007-2013	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	8

HE Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	4	4	0	17	2	2	3	32

APPENDIX 13: PARTICIPATION LEADING TO ORGANISATIONAL BENEFITS - STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Statement: The strategic partnership project we engaged in led to quality improvements for our organisation

2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	1	3	11	16	31

Statement: The strategic partnership project we engaged in led to the introduction of new practices to our organisation

2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	2	7	11	11	31

Statement: The strategic partnership project we engaged in led to an increase in innovation in the organisation

2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	0	4	13	14	31

Statement: The strategic partnership project we engaged in increased the subsequent internationalisation of our activities

2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	0	0	0	7	7	17	31

APPENDIX 14: PARTICIPANT VIEWS ON UTILISATION OF PEER ADVOCATES – SAMPLE COMMENTS

Question: How could participation in the Erasmus+ programme be increased in your sector?

Adult Staff

In our centre participation increased after our first mobility. This was due to the enthusiasm shown by those who had participated. I think that visits, by those who have participated in mobilities and who have experience in applying for this grant, to adult education centres may increase interest.

HE Students

Speaking to previous participants really helped me understand what to expect. A system for allowing everyone to do that would be great.

Talks from people who went on an Erasmus year. I did a talk a few months after I came back, and while I was positive then, I understand more now how it benefited me, and what a unique experience it was, so I think talks from people a few years later rather than a few months would be better.

Students who have participated in the programme should be sent to talk to classes in the same subject area as them to talk about their experiences, because a personalised account of Erasmus is much more convincing than a factual list of reasons why you should participate.

HE Staff

Maybe have ambassadors of people who have done it and have positive stories to tell.

Staff workshops and information sessions may be helpful so that past staff members can speak to interested staff about the benefits of going abroad and widening their academic or administrative knowledge and connections with universities across the EU.

School Staff

Greater highlighting of the benefits from members who have been involved going in to schools highlighting benefits. Link ups with schools of participants on exchanges for pupils in language areas perhaps.

Make staff more aware of value of programme. People who have participated should be asked to talk to staffs about benefits of programme.

VET Staff

Send teachers and students who have participated to give talks in other institutions

Youth

People on the ground, talking to the young people.... not just the youth workers/ organisations. Have a quick 15min chat with a capturing video in the youth service itself.

APPENDIX 15: PARTICIPANT GRANT AND IT RESPONSES

Statement: The grant system for Erasmus+ is easy to understand and apply for

Adult Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	5	2	1	4	4	2	20

HE Student 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	6	8	9	44	63	38	171

HE Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	4	4	3	4	20	20	57

School Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	5	9	7	4	13	8	5	51

VET Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	6	3	2	3	8	4	26

Youth 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	1	7	2	5	2	2	23

Statement: The IT tools I used when submitting information to the national agency were easy to understand and use

Adult Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	1	3	1	2	8	2	20

HE Student 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	7	9	35	39	64	14	169

HE Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	2	2	2	5	4	21	20	56

School Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	3	6	10	5	9	10	9	52

VET Staff 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	0	2	3	2	5	12	3	27

Youth 2014-2016	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	4	1	7	2	5	2	2	23

APPENDIX 16: ERASMUS+ AWARENESS LEVELS RESPONSES

Statement: How familiar do you think [staff/students in your sector] are with the Erasmus+ programme?

Adult Ed 2014-2016	Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Total
	5	4	5	5	1	20

HE Student 2014-2016	Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Total
	7	26	57	70	11	171

HE Staff 2014-2016	Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Total
	3	14	18	14	7	56

School Staff 2014-2016	Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Total
	6	5	18	15	9	53

VET Staff 2014-2016	Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Total
	1	3	10	9	5	28

Youth 2014-2016	Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Total
	7	10	4	3	0	24