

# MID-TERM EVALUATION OF ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME 2014–2020 FINLAND

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Antti Eronen, Katri Haila &  
Katri Lahtinen, Tapio Kuure



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<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The European Union's Erasmus+ programme is a funding scheme to support activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. The objective of the programme is to develop the quality of education and youth work, to improve young people's level of education, skills, competences and employment opportunities, and to promote active citizenship and social inclusion. In the field of sports, the programme aims to tackle cross-border threats to the integrity of sports and to promote and support good governance and voluntary activities in sport. The programme period covers the years 2014–2020. This is a mid-term evaluation report concerning the implementation of the programme in Finland. The European Commission and the Member States are required to submit such a report halfway through the programme period.</p> <p>Erasmus+ has been the most significant programme enhancing internationalisation in the field of education in Finland. International mobility has become an integral part of Finnish education especially in the higher education sector, but internationalism and mobility are considered strategically important issues in the entire field of education.</p> <p>Erasmus+ has contributed remarkably to the degree of internationalisation of young people in Finland and improved the quality of youth work in Europe. The programme has provided opportunities for engaging in international activities also to the most vulnerable young people and promoted their social inclusion.</p> <p>All in all, the Erasmus+ programme functions well in Finland and the increasing programme budget can be effectively absorbed. The programme has had a significant impact on teaching staff's professional skills, teaching methods, intercultural skills and mindsets. The cooperation projects have had long-term impacts at the institutional level.</p> <p>The significance of the Erasmus+ programme is expected to grow further, if the national financing will be decreased and the programme funding increased towards the end of the programme period. The majority of the actors in the field of education experience that Erasmus+ is a significant part of the international cooperation of their organisation.</p> <p>Adjustment to the new integrated programme structure has, however, been partly challenging. The challenges have mostly dealt with the burdensome administrative structures and responsibilities related to the application procedure. The level of reporting required by the programme, such as estimating the amount of grants based on the number of days spent abroad, has turned out to be laborious.</p> <p>Cooperation between the different political actors within the Erasmus+ programme has been significant, and the cooperation should be further developed also in future. The guidelines for project management should be clarified and the administrative workload should be lightened, for example in respect of the application and reporting requirements. Digital reporting methods should be developed especially due to their increased availability, quality and reliability, and the transfer of student records between educational institutions should in future be carried out mainly electronically. From the equality perspective, it is important to reconsider the inclusion of those fields that originally were left outside the scope of student mobility in the Erasmus+ programme.</p>	
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<b>Tiivistelmä</b>	<p>Erasmus+ on Euroopan unionin koulutus-, nuoriso- ja urheiluohjelma, joka rahoittaa toimialoilla tehtävää eurooppalaista yhteistyötä. Ohjelman tavoitteena on koulutuksen ja nuorisotyön laadun kehittäminen sekä nuorten koulutustason, taitojen, osaamisen ja työllisyysmahdollisuuksien parantaminen sekä aktiivisen kansalaisuuden ja sosiaalisen osallisuuden edistäminen. Urheilun alalla ohjelman tavoitteena on urheilun integriteettiin kohdistuvien rajat ylittävien uhkien torjunta, urheilun hyvän hallinnon ja vapaaehtoistoiminnan edistäminen. Ohjelmakausi on 2014–2020. Komissio ja jäsenmaat toimittavat ohjelmakauden puolivälissä ohjelman väliarvion.</p> <p>Erasmus+ on ollut merkittävin suomalaisen koulutussektorin kansainvälisyyttä lisäävistä ohjelmista. Kansainvälisestä liikkuvuudesta on tullut merkittävä osa suomalaista koulutusta erityisesti korkeakoulutuksen piirissä, mutta kansainvälisyys ja liikkuvuus nähdään strategisesti merkittävänä osina koko koulutussektorilla.</p> <p>Erasmus+ on tukenut merkittävästi suomalaisten nuorten kansainvälistymistä ja nuorisotyön laatua Euroopassa. Ohjelma on tarjonnut kansainvälistymismahdollisuuksia myös muita heikommassa asemassa oleville nuorille ja edistänyt yhteiskunnallista osallisuutta.</p> <p>Kokonaisuudessaan Erasmus+ -ohjelma toimii Suomessa hyvin ja sen lisääntyvä rahoitus käytetään tehokkaasti. Ohjelmalla on ollut merkittävä vaikutus henkilökunnan ammattitaitoon, opetusmetodeihin, kulttuurienvälisiin taitoihin sekä ajattelutapoihin. Yhteistyöprojektien vaikutukset instituutiotasolla ovat pitkäkestoisia.</p> <p>Erasmus+ -ohjelman merkitys tulee kasvamaan entisestään, jos kansallinen rahoitus vähenee ja ohjelmarahoitus kasvaa ohjelmakauden loppua kohden. Suuri osa koulutussektorin toimijoista koki, että Erasmus+ -ohjelma on merkittävä osa organisaation kansainvälistä yhteistyötä.</p> <p>Sopeutuminen uuteen keskitettyyn ohjelmarakenteeseen on osin ollut haastavaa. Haasteet ovat liittyneet erityisesti hakemusprosessin raskaisiin hallinnollisiin rakenteisiin ja velvoitteisiin. Ohjelmassa vaadittu raportointitaso, esimerkiksi tukien estimointi ulkomailla vietettyjen päivien lukumäärän mukaan, on osoittautunut työlääksi.</p> <p>Yhteistyö eri poliittisten toimijoiden välillä Erasmus+ -ohjelman sisällä on ollut merkittävää, ja yhteistyötä tulee myös tulevaisuudessa kehittää. Projektien hallinnointiin liittyvää ohjeistusta tulee selvittää ja hallinnollista työtaakkaa keventää, esimerkiksi hakemus- ja raportointivaatimusten osalta. Digitaalisia raportointikeinoja tulee kehittää erityisesti niiden helpon saatavuuden, laadun ja luotettavuuden vuoksi, ja opiskelijatietojen siirtäminen koulutusinstituutioiden välillä tulee ensisijaisesti tehdä digitaalisesti. Tasa-arvon kannalta on tärkeää, että alun perin opiskelijaliikkuvuuden ulkopuolelle jätettyjen sektorien mahdollisuuksia tulla Erasmus+ -ohjelman piiriin harkitaan uudelleen.</p>	
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<b>Referat</b>	<p>Erasmus+ är Europeiska unionens utbildnings-, ungdoms- och idrottsprogram, som branschvis finansierar det europeiska samarbete som bedrivs inom nämnda sektorer. Programmets syfte är att utveckla kvaliteten på utbildningen och ungdomsarbetet samt att förbättra ungdomarnas utbildningsnivå, färdigheter, kunskaper och sysselsättningsmöjligheter. Vidare avser programmet främja aktivt medborgarskap och social delaktighet. Inom idrotten syftar programmet till att bekämpa gränsöverskridande hot som omfattar idrottens integritet och att främja god förvaltningspraxis inom idrotten. Vidare vill man främja frivilligverksamheten. Programperioden är 2014–2020. Kommissionen och medlemsländerna gör upp en mellantidsrapport i medlet av programperioden.</p> <p>Erasmus+ har varit det mest betydelsefulla programmet vad gäller att satsa på ökad internationalisering inom den finländska utbildningssektorn. Den internationella mobiliteten har blivit en framträdande del av den finländska utbildningen speciellt inom högskoleutbildningen. Internationaliseringen och mobiliteten anses strategiskt vara verkningsfulla inom utbildningssektorn.</p> <p>Erasmus+ har på ett framträdande sätt påverkat de finländska ungdomarnas internationalisering och ungdomsarbets kvaliteten i Europa. Programmet har möjliggjort internationalisering också för ungdomar som är i en sämre situation samtidigt som det har främjat samhällelig delaktighet.</p> <p>På det hela taget fungerar Erasmus+ på ett bra sätt i Finland. Den ökade programfinansieringen används på ett effektivt sätt. Programmet har haft stor inverkan på personalens yrkeskicklighet, undervisningsmetoder, interkulturella färdigheter samt tänkesätt. Samarbetsprojektens effekter på institutionsnivån är långvariga.</p> <p>Programmet Erasmus+ kommer att öka i betydelse ytterligare om den nationella finansieringen minskar och programfinansieringen ökar mot slutet av programperioden. En stor del av aktörerna inom utbildningssektorn uppgav att programmet Erasmus+ är en anmärkningsvärd del av organisationens internationella samarbete.</p> <p>Till en del har anpassningen till en ny, centraliserad programstruktur utgjort en utmaning. Utmaningarna ansluter sig speciellt till ansökningsprocessens tunga administrativa strukturer och skyldigheter. Den rapporteringsnivå som programmet kräver, t.ex. en estimering av stöden enligt antalet dagar som mottagarna har tillbringat utomlands, har visat sig arbetsdryg.</p> <p>De olika politiska aktörernas samarbete inom programmet Erasmus+ har varit betydelsefullt. Satsningar på samarbetet görs också i framtiden. De instruktioner som ansluter sig till administrationen av projekten behöver klargöras och den administrativa arbetsbördan behöver underlättas t.ex. gällande ansöknings- och rapporteringskraven. De digitala rapporteringssätten utvecklas speciellt med tanke på deras tillgänglighet, kvalitet och reliabilitet. Överföringen av studerandedata mellan utbildningsinstitutionerna ska i första hand göras digitalt. Med tanke på likställdheten är det viktigt att på nytt överväga om de sektorer som ursprungligen har lämnats utanför studeranderörligheten kan tas in i programmet Erasmus+.</p>		
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# Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	9
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	11
<b>2 MATERIALS AND METHODS</b> .....	13
2.1 Education .....	13
2.2 Youth and sports .....	13
<b>3 EFFECTIVENESS (QUESTIONS 1–9)</b> .....	15
3.1 Education .....	15
3.1.1 Realisation of the objectives .....	15
3.1.2 Effects on policy development .....	19
3.1.3 Effects on professional growth .....	19
3.1.4 Dissemination of results .....	20
3.1.5 Integration of the previous programmes .....	21
3.1.6 Implementation of the programme .....	21
3.1.7 Budget allocation .....	22
3.2 Youth and sports .....	23
<b>4 EFFICIENCY (QUESTIONS 10–15)</b> .....	31
4.1 Education .....	31
4.1.1 Division of tasks .....	31
4.1.2 Efficiency gains and losses after the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ .....	32
4.1.3 Efficiency of different actions of the programme .....	35
4.1.4 Human and financial resources .....	36
4.1.5 IT tools .....	36
4.2 Youth and sports .....	37
<b>5 RELEVANCE (QUESTIONS 16–17)</b> .....	41
5.1 Education .....	41
5.2 Youth and sports .....	42
<b>6 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COHERENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY (QUESTIONS 18–19)</b> .....	45
6.1 Education .....	45
6.2 Youth and sports .....	46

<b>7</b>	<b>EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE AND SUSTAINABILITY (QUESTIONS 20–21)</b> .....	47
7.1	Education .....	47
7.2	Youth and sports .....	48
<b>8</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	50
8.1	Education .....	50
8.2	Youth and sports.....	52
	Annex 1. List of standard questions.....	54
	Annex 2. List of interviews (education).....	57
	Annex 3. List of interviews (youth & sports).....	58
	Annex 4. E-survey results (education).....	59

## ABSTRACT

The aim of the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme 2014–2020 was to answer a list of standard questions on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and complementarity as well as the European added value and sustainability of the programme. The data for evaluating the education sector included semi-structured interviews, an e-survey and an analysis of key documents. In the field of education, a total of 17 people took part in the interviews and a total of 312 people responded to the survey. In the field of youth and sports, a total of 51 people took part in the interviews and a total of 142 people responded to the surveys.

Erasmus+ has played the most significant role in the internationalisation of the Finnish education sector. All in all, the programme functions well and effectively in Finland. The increased programme funding is efficiently used in Finland. In the field youth and sports, the beneficiaries, youth workers and youth organisations were satisfied with Erasmus+ Youth in Action chapter as a whole, especially concerning the effectiveness, relevance and European added value.

In the field of education, the recommendations were, in brief, as follows:

- The policy level cooperation that has been conducted within Erasmus+ should be enhanced in the future.
- The administrative workload should be lightened, for example through simplifying the application process and reporting. To improve the administrative routines and to make it easier for students to plan and complete mobility periods, digital routines should be integrated into the programme in a larger scale.
- The implementation of the system of simplified grants should be further developed.

- With regard to the increase in the programme funding, the possibilities to increase vocational mobility, mobility of staff and global mobility should be taken into account. At the same time, it is recommended that the use of the resources within Erasmus+ Master Loan be reconsidered.

In the field of youth and sports, the recommendations were, in brief, as follows:

- The possibilities to support youth workers' mobility, long-term development projects and the Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA) by the National Agencies (NAs) should be ensured and further promoted.
- The formats and approaches of the youth chapter should also in the future promote the inclusion of all young people and enable the participation of those with fewer opportunities, including newly-arrived immigrants, young people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- The youth chapter should promote equal opportunities for and equal access to international mobility regardless of one's place of residence and/or economic or social situation, for example.
- The National Authorities should ensure sustainable financial and administrative support to the implementation of the programme at the national level.
- In order to establish closer links between policy and practice also at the European level, the cooperation and exchange of information in the youth field between the European Commission, the National Authorities and the National Agencies should be intensified.
- The formats of youth exchanges could be developed to better correspond to the current practices and needs in the field.
- The existing structures within the youth chapter should be critically assessed.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report is the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme 2014–2020. Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Its budget of EUR 14.7 billion provides opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain experiences, and volunteer abroad.

In Finland, the budget for the programme between 2014 and 2016 was around EUR 80 million. An average of over 1,100 organisations participated in the programme activities annually in 2014–2016. In 2016, approximately 18,300 people took part in Erasmus+ (summarized in Figure 1).

<b>Erasmus+ in Finland</b>
Total of approx. 80 million € (2014–2016)
Average of over 1,100 organisations / year
Approx. 18,300 people in 2016
<b>Erasmus+ 2014–2020</b>
14.7 billion €
125,00 organisations
4,000,000 people

**Figure 1. Basic information on the Erasmus+ programme excluding global mobility.**

Until the end of 2016, the Erasmus+ National Agency in Finland was CIMO (Centre for International Mobility), which was merged with the Finnish National Board of Education in the beginning of 2017. The name of the new organisation is the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI).

The aim of the evaluation was to answer a list of standard questions on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and complementarity as well as the European added value and sustainability of the programme. The set of questions was based on guidelines issued by the Commission. The Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation is one of the main sources

in the impact assessment that will be prepared to accompany a possible proposal for a successor programme in 2021.

The report is structured so that the different fields of the programme (education and youth & sports) are handled separately under each of the main objects of evaluation. The numbers under the subtitles of Youth and sports refer to the evaluation questions (see Annex 1). Ramboll Management Consulting was responsible for the evaluation of the education field, while Tapio Kuure was responsible for the evaluation of the youth and sports field. The evaluation was conducted between September 2016 and February 2017. The list of standard questions which the evaluation responds to is included in Annex 1.

## 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Education

The data for evaluating the education sector included semi-structured interviews, an e-survey and an analysis of key documents. The interviews were conducted as face-to-face and telephone interviews between September and November 2016. The 17 interviewees included staff members from the National Agency CIMO and the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as project leaders from the different sectors of education. The interviewees are listed in Annex 2.

The e-survey was addressed to people in all those sectors of education that have been involved in projects funded by Erasmus+. The number of respondents was 312. Some of the survey results are included in the report, and additional results from the survey are presented in Annex 3. The majority (62%) of the respondents represented general education, 13% represented vocational education, 11% represented higher education and 14% adult education (see Annex 3). It shall be noted that even though the proportion of respondents representing higher education is relatively low, 70% of the higher education institutions responded to the survey. The survey was sent out in the end of October and it was kept open for three weeks. The analysis of the survey included both qualitative and quantitative methods.

### 2.2 Youth and sports

The evaluation process began on 20 September 2016, when a meeting between the steering group for the evaluation and the researchers responsible for the practical evaluations was held. Data gathering began on 29 September with qualitative interviews. A total of 51 people took part in the qualitative, semi-structured interviews which were conducted until the beginning of January. The five main themes of the evaluation questions were used as the themes for the interviews. Some of the interviews were conducted with groups and some with individuals, and they took place in different locations around Finland. A small

portion of the interviews was conducted over the telephone. Material was also acquired through two online questionnaires. The first online questionnaire was directed at actors on the operational level of youth work: project leaders, youth workers and young people who had participated in the projects. Forty people responded to the questionnaire. The second online questionnaire was directed at actors on the strategic level of the programme, and 102 people responded to it. The questionnaires were open for three weeks in November. The national results of the transnational RAY surveys were also used as an extra source of information in the study. A total of 414 young people and 128 project leaders had responded to the survey in 2013. The survey, conducted in 2015–2016, had been answered by 446 young people who had participated in the projects and by 101 project leaders.<sup>1</sup>

The evaluation material concerning the field of sport and physical activity was mainly gathered through telephone interviews. The interviews were specifically targeted at the National Agency, programme experts, project leaders and one project that was being planned.

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1 CIMO 2016: Erasmus+: Youth in Action – research-based survey. Surveys from 2015 to 2016. Draft of an unpublished research paper; Fakta Express 3A/2014. CIMO. [http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime\\_product\\_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/43132\\_Fakta\\_Express\\_3A\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/43132_Fakta_Express_3A_2014.pdf)



## 3 EFFECTIVENESS (QUESTIONS 1–9)

### 3.1 Education

#### 3.1.1 Realisation of the objectives

The starting point in Finland is quite clear. The Erasmus+ programme and the predecessor programmes have been an integral part of the Finnish education system already for a long time. The work has been well-organised and funds have been utilised efficiently. The use of the available resources has been more natural for certain parts of the education system than others. However, it is possible to identify certain areas for development.

Based on the interviews conducted during the evaluation as well as the division of the pro-programme's resources, the contributions of the Erasmus+ programme have played a significant role in the internationalisation of the Finnish education sector as a whole. International activities are an inseparable part of the organisations' operation. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of respondents in all levels of education answered that international cooperation and mobility would be implemented considerably less or practically not at all without the Erasmus+ programme. It should be highlighted that approximately one in four adult education respondents and general education respondents answered that international cooperation and mobility would be implemented practically not at all without the Erasmus+ programme (26% and 23%, respectively).

The Erasmus+ programme is the most significant source of funding directed at international cooperation<sup>2</sup>. Up to 86% of the higher education respondents completely agreed with the e-survey statement: "Erasmus+ is a significant part of my organisation's international cooperation" (Figure 2). Furthermore, 75% of the higher education respondents agreed with the statement "International cooperation and mobility would have decreased significantly without the Erasmus+ programme". Hence, it can be stated that the Erasmus+

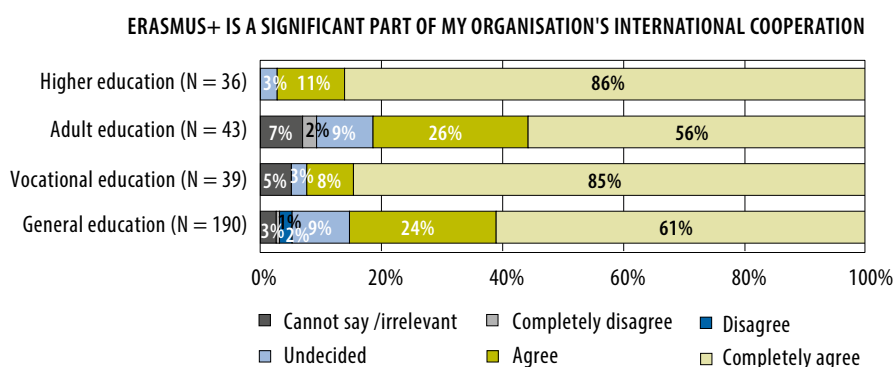
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<sup>2</sup> In this report, we use the word international (cooperation or mobility) to refer to all cross-border cooperation and mobility, not only to the international dimension of Erasmus+ (e.g. KA107), which refers to cooperation and mobility with third countries.

programme has remarkably contributed to the specific objective of enhancing the international dimension of education and training in higher education in Finland.

Similarly, the majority of the respondents from the other sectors of education agreed with the above mentioned statements. Up to 85% of the general education respondents agreed that Erasmus+ is a significant part of internationalisation of their organisation (Figure 2). Within the general and adult education, the funding is divided between a greater number of organisations. Other modes of international cooperation in the sector of general education include twin schools in other countries and school trips abroad. Other sources of funding include Nordplus programme and funding from the Finnish National Agency for Education. General education also utilises home-based internationalisation where foreign visitors come to visit schools in Finland.

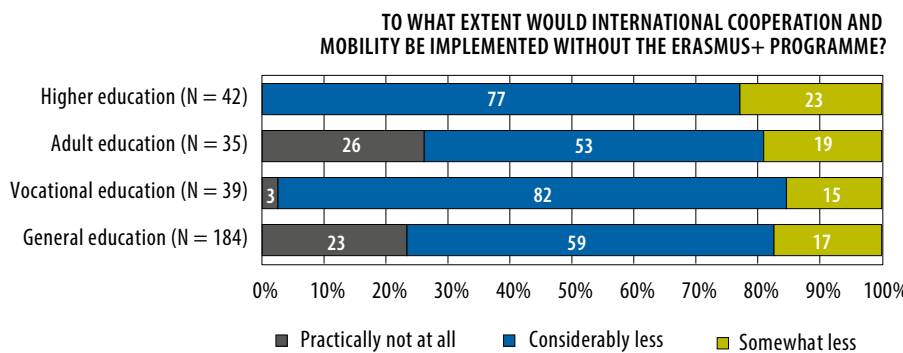
The awareness of the programme seems to be at a high level also within the sector of general education. Nevertheless, the initiative to apply for Erasmus+ funding depends strongly on the principal or leader of the individual organisation. The principal has a lot of influence on whether teachers are encouraged to participate in international cooperation. If the principal does not consider internationalisation or participating in the programme to be worthwhile, the school may not take part in the programme. International cooperation is an important goal, but not as an integral part of the activities as in higher or vocational education. Up to 83% of general education respondents considered that internationalisation is a goal in their organisation. It should be noted that the respondents did not represent all schools within the general education sector. The organisations of the respondents had participated in the Erasmus+ programme. Therefore, these respondents presumably react positively to internationalisation.



**Figure 2.** Erasmus+ is a significant part of my organisation's international cooperation.

Erasmus+ is an extremely important source of funding for general and adult education in Finland. Around one in four respondents in both sectors answered that international

cooperation would not exist without Erasmus+ funding (Figure 3). At the same time, it should be noted that the majority (62%) of the adult education respondents answered that international mobility of students is irrelevant in their field. For example, the e-survey respondents mentioned a shortage of human resources for international cooperation and development projects as a challenge. On the other hand, the respondents emphasised the increasing needs to strengthen international cooperation in adult education, for example due to immigration. Like in general education, the principal plays a significant role in encouraging to international cooperation in the adult education sector.



**Figure 3.** To what extent would international cooperation and mobility be implemented without Erasmus+ programme? (N = 300)

The added value produced by Erasmus+ is also clear both in higher education and in vocational education and training, because there would be considerably less international activities without Erasmus+ (Figure 3). The Erasmus+ programme supports higher education and vocational education and training in several ways. In these sectors, the mobility of students directly enhances their skills and employability. The possibilities to improve language skills are also evident. The mobility of staff supports professional development which can have positive indirect effects in the organisations.

In the survey, the respondents from the sectors of general education, higher education, vocational education and training and adult education highlighted the effects of the programme in the following areas:

- increased cooperation in the improvement of education and curricula due to long-existing partnerships in other Erasmus+ projects
- better understanding of partners due to the exchange process
- development of pedagogy, increased knowledge on the markets of international education

- joint education models and modules that meet the needs of European education
- increased cooperation in research
- adopting good practices from elsewhere
- new ways of teaching and learning through specific projects, e.g. benchmarking, e-learning tools, STEM skills assessment, etc.
- peer learning and networking of the staff
- reflecting one's own actions and skills both at personal and organisational level
- increased know-how both in substance and project management
- embedding internationality in the organisations
- enhancing European identity
- improving the attractiveness of the organisations

Other factors mentioned by the Finnish respondents include an increased quality of mobility projects and the recognition of studies completed abroad as a part of the studies at home (credit transfers).

The Finnish institutions of higher education and vocational institutions have good pre-conditions to utilise the funding allocated for international cooperation. In these sectors, the institutions have experienced staff that is focused on international cooperation and mobility. Instead, in general education, there is lack of full-time staff working for international cooperation. As mentioned above (3.1.1), the principal plays a significant role in how active the internationalisation is. In general education, the mobility and international cooperation can motivate staff and increase their professional skills in many ways. The e-survey showed that international cooperation within the Erasmus+ programme has also had a positive effect on wellbeing at work and staff cooperation within the workplace. The projects conducted with Erasmus+ funding in Finland have enabled the staff to introduce new teaching tools and methods. In addition, the international cooperation has given inspiration and new solutions to the curriculum. The respondents also pointed out that in addition to improving the language skills of both the staff and the students, their self-esteem as well as willingness to use another language has increased. In addition, mobility has had an important impact on equality as it offers pupils who could not otherwise afford to travel abroad an opportunity to visit other countries and gain new experiences. Overall, international cooperation is one aspect of the Finnish general education. Because there are a large number of organisations within general education, the proportion of participation is lower than in the smaller sectors. The importance of the Erasmus+ programme is most clearly present in the overall internationalisation of the education system – especially in higher and vocational education. It is difficult to say what kind of effects the different projects have on specific organisations or whether the results have been used by other

organisations. Individual experiences of both staff and pupils have such indirect positive effects on the organisations that are difficult to specify.

### 3.1.2 Effects on policy development

In Finland, there are few examples of Erasmus+ or the predecessor programmes which have had a clear effect on the national policies guiding the development of the education system. The programme funding has worked as a framework, and it has been used to strengthen different aspects of international cooperation. According to the Strategy of the Internationalisation of the Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015<sup>3</sup>, mobility should be a part of all levels of education. Experiences from the previous programmes and the availability of funding have influenced setting this target.

Some interviewees emphasised that the Finnish education system is well-organised and constantly being developed. It was also stated that the best way that the Erasmus+ programme affects the system level development of the Finnish education system is by facilitating large EU-level processes, such as the Bologna process and the Copenhagen process, and by increasing cooperation between the policy makers. The official processes have also helped to facilitate informal cooperation and relations.

### 3.1.3 Effects on professional growth

E-survey respondents considered that professional growth in their organisations is linked to Erasmus+ actions. Finnish general education teachers are well-educated and very independent. In this kind of situation, the effects of the programme come in the form of individual experiences that shape and develop professional approaches in work. In general education, the respondents also stressed the significance of improvement of intercultural skills and encouragement to further international cooperation.

Individual mobility has been the key driver of the programme results in Finland. First of all, a major part of the budget has been allocated for individual mobility in higher and vocational education. Individual experiences of students and staff are meaningful in a very direct manner. Furthermore, the partnership projects have also made individual experiences of mobility and international cooperation possible and allowed focusing on certain thematic issues. It is possible that the partnership projects have wider and longer-lasting effects on the Finnish education organisations than individual mobility.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Culture published policies promoting internationality in higher education and research in 2017–2025. The packages of actions include e.g. strengthening the visibility of Finnish higher education and research in Europe and globally. Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland. 2017:11.

### 3.1.4 Dissemination of results

Larger projects are expected to effectively disseminate their results. Other organisations should be able to have access to the results of different projects and to utilise them accordingly in their own work. A successful dissemination process would increase the effectiveness of partnership projects, which could also further a system level change within the education sector. Dissemination of the project results, a common challenge in all programme and project work, is mentioned as one of the key areas for improvement in the programme implementation in Finland.

Only 32% of all e-survey respondents told that they exploit the results of other projects. Even though the majority of the funding is used for mobility, this figure indicates that the approaches and tools for disseminating the results of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes are ineffective. One reason for not utilising the results of other projects is the lack of time. The VALOR Dissemination Platform was described as unattractive and not very user-friendly. The search function of the platform, for example, was described as difficult to use. The EPALE service used by the adult education sector was, however, found useful as it is possible to add blog posts, news, calendar entries, pictures, etc. and to link the contents to social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Other channels for disseminating results and utilising results from other projects included training sessions organised by the National Agency, sharing experiences between schools in the same municipality, and building new personal contacts.

It should be noted that the respondents were people who have been involved in Erasmus+ project work. Thus, it is possible that the proportion of people utilising the project results would be even lower if the survey had also included those not involved in the projects.

From the perspective of the Finnish National Agency, the dissemination of results could be better supported with more focused efforts and additional resources for identifying and disseminating the most interesting results at national level. Implementation does not happen without a focused effort and support.

Because of the uncertainties involved in achieving and disseminating results in large-scale projects, the programme funding should focus on increasing the number of individual mobility projects and more but smaller-scale projects encouraging the establishment of international connections. A larger number of smaller-scale projects would involve more organisations, people and perspectives, which would help to produce direct and meaningful individual experiences. However, this would probably require that the administrative workload be decreased, as smaller organisations do not necessarily have the resources or competences to manage transnational projects.

### 3.1.5 Integration of the previous programmes

According to the evaluation data, the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has not had any major implications for the effectiveness of the programme in the Finnish education sector. The administrative burden of the project management received some criticism (see efficiency below). However, the changes in comparison to the previous programmes are not necessarily direct consequences of the integration itself, but of choices made in the planning of the programme instead.

One clear consequence of the programme integration is the adoption of the common brand that has increased the awareness of the programme and boosted the programme communication in Finland. The Finnish National Agency has organised joint events for all stakeholders within the programme. This is one of the examples related to more efficient communication practices. For the National Agency, the integration of the programme has not been a special challenge, because the National Agency was also responsible for the previous programmes.

In the education sector, issues related to the brand of Erasmus+ were not brought up during the evaluation process. The name Erasmus is well-known and has a good reputation within the education sector in Finland, and therefore it was a natural choice for the programme.

### 3.1.6 Implementation of the programme

In the Finnish education sector, the Erasmus+ programme has been implemented efficiently. This can be concluded from the overall stable and fluent operation of the programme as well as the precise use of the funds allocated. During the evaluation, stakeholders have not raised any major issues related to the implementation that would threaten the effectiveness of the programme in Finland. People working with the programme, both the staff at the National Agency and the stakeholders, have experience from the previous programme period. Stakeholders have had some concerns related to the increased administrative burden, which together with the budget cuts in the education sector might hinder the future possibilities to apply for funding.

The National Agency supports effective project work through well-organised information and guidance services. The Erasmus+ programme is well-known among the target group. This has positive effects on the number of applications. During the evaluation, the interviewees stated that increased marketing efforts could generate even a higher number of applications. For example, early childhood education and care is a sector where there are not yet that many applicants, but where the situation could easily be remedied through concentrated effort.

The Finnish National Agency received very positive feedback on the responsiveness and versatile support it provides to the stakeholders. The higher education institutions have also increased the mobility numbers through their own funding. This is also an indication that increased programme funding can be efficiently used in Finland. According to the survey, 88% of respondents completely or somewhat agree that their organisation will actively use Erasmus+ funding in the future. The desire to continue working with the programme tells that the Finnish individuals and organisations find the funding very relevant.

### 3.1.7 Budget allocation

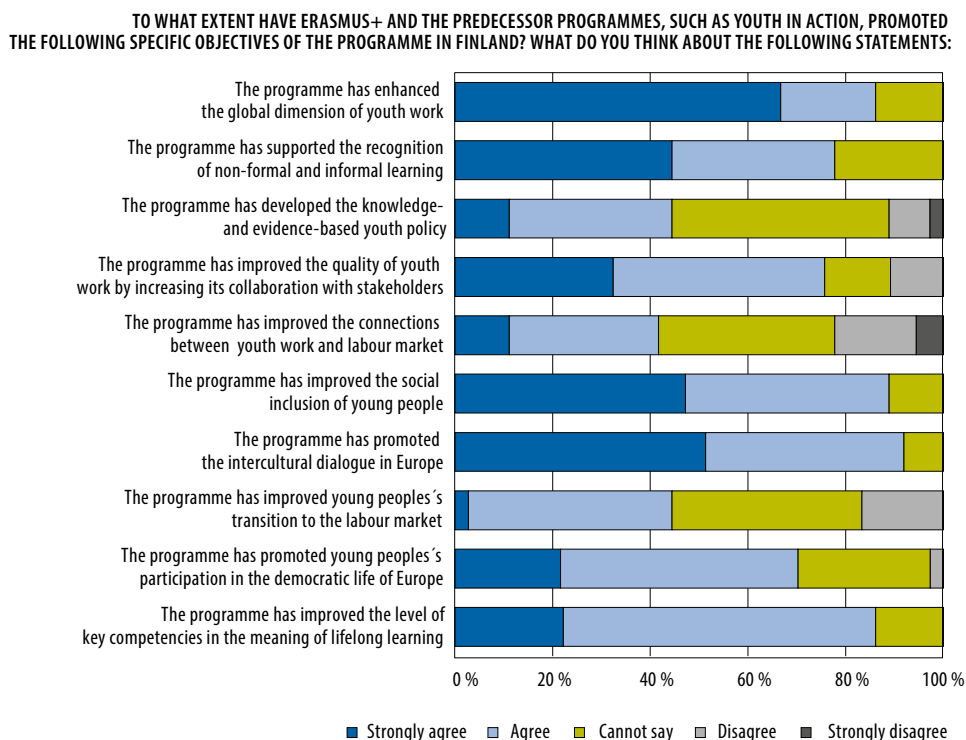
When assessing the size, allocation and uses of the current budget against the statements concerning the effectiveness of the programme, the situation looks good. In higher education and vocational education and training, the majority of the annual budget is allocated for individual mobility. In general education, the budget for KA2 strategic partnerships is higher than the budget for mobility. The budget for KA2 in general education is higher than in the other sectors. In the different sectors, partnership projects also facilitate individual experiences. All in all, the partnership projects may have a more goal-oriented effect on the participating organisations. So far, there are few examples of these results being utilised by other organisations or of the partnership projects having wider impact on the national education system.

Hence, it seems justified to allocate a major part of the funding for individual mobility especially in the sectors of higher and vocational education. The funding for mobility directly engages students and gives them opportunities to learn new skills and languages. As the dissemination and implementation of project results is currently on an uncertain basis, a reasonable approach could be to maximize the number of Finnish organisations that plan and execute projects based on their own needs. This could mean a greater number of smaller projects instead of a few larger ones. Especially in the sector of general education, where the number of potential organisations is high, smaller projects would provide even more opportunities for participation. The budget for partnership projects should be increased overall. Especially in higher education, the number of projects is extremely low at the moment, which is in contrast to the previous programme periods. It should also be considered if the Finnish National Agency could enhance the dissemination and implementation of the project results with additional funding. A small amount of additional funding allocated for the dissemination of the results could have a major leverage effect on the entire programme in Finland.



## 3.2 Youth and sports

1. The implementation of the specific objectives pursued by the Erasmus+ programme and the predecessor programmes in the youth field were evaluated through the online questionnaires and the qualitative interviews. Figure 4 presents the opinions of the strategic level actors on whether the objectives of the programme were achieved. For the purposes of this study, strategic level actors refer to bodies of regional government, municipal youth services, youth organisations, educational institutions for youth work, church youth work and the steering group of the Youth in Action programme.



**Figure 4.** To what extent have Erasmus+ programme and the predecessor programmes, such as Youth in Action, promoted the following specific objectives of the programme in Finland?

The most important observations drawn from the figure are as follows:

- A total of 102 people responded to the online questionnaire. 60% of the respondents were actors involved in municipal youth services, 10% in church youth work, 8% in youth organisations and 4% in the regional government. Only one of the 20 members of the steering group for the predecessor programme, Youth in Action, responded. The role of the regional government

in the implementation of the programme is somewhat minor, which shows in the small number of responses. It can be assumed that the reason for the low response rate among the members of the steering group of the Youth in Action programme is the fact that the final evaluation is conducted first now, almost three years after the end of the programme period (2007–2013). It should be further noted in the evaluation of the numbers presented in Figure 4 that while a total of 102 people responded to the questionnaire, only 42 people answered to the actual theme questions. Because of this, the figure presented above is only an example on how the specific objectives are evaluated on the strategic level of implementation in Finland. The material gathered through the qualitative group interviews and individual interviews does, however, support the numbers presented in the figure.<sup>4</sup> Also, the material gathered through the above mentioned CIMO surveys of 2013, 2015 and 2016 supports the numbers in the figure.

- According to the figure, the objectives have been best achieved in the following areas: key competences and skills in lifelong learning, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion of young people, stakeholder cooperation, identification and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and enhancing the international dimension of the programme. There was most dispersion in responses to the questions that deal with the transition of young people from education and training to work, the links between the youth field and the labour market, and the development of evidence-based youth policy and youth work.
- Young people and group leaders evaluated the achievement of the objective of youth employment more positively in the interviews than the strategic-level experts. Almost 90% of the respondents to the questionnaire directed at young people and group leaders somewhat agreed or completely agreed with the statement that youth programmes increase young people's possibilities in the labour market.

The effectiveness of the programme on youth employment can be observed from two perspectives. On one hand, the programme has indirect effects on employment through the development of key competences, as the programme improves the young people's general conditions for entering the labour market. The most important of these are the enhancement of social skills and the improvement of intercultural dialogue. Empirical evidence about this can be found in a comparative survey conducted in the EU Member

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<sup>4</sup> A list of the individuals and groups that were interviewed can be found in Annex 4.

States within the RAY research network.<sup>5</sup> The importance of improving young people's social skills and its empirical measuring has been studied in Finland by the National Workshop Association (NWA), which is worth mentioning in this connection.<sup>6</sup> The interviews conducted for this evaluation and for the mid-term evaluation of the preceding Youth in Action programme provide information to be utilised in the broader international comparison of changes in the social status of young people as a consequence of the different actions of the programme.<sup>7</sup>

The long-term and multiplier impacts of the programme are also related to the employers' opinions on the importance of international experience when recruiting new employees. According to a study conducted in Finland, employers do not pay attention to international experience during the recruitment process. However, they value the attributes that are often connected with international competences and skills. They also value the skills and knowledge that international experience produces. It was assessed in the study that in addition to the traditional attributes that result from international experience – language skills, tolerance and inter-cultural competence – a new, extended set of attributes has emerged. This new international competence also includes resilience, productivity and curiosity.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, youth exchanges also include mechanisms with direct effects on youth employment. As the funding for youth exchanges is partly based on the labour input of young people themselves, young people tend to meet local entrepreneurs and search for summer jobs in order to earn money especially in smaller towns. Summer job experiences also play a role in the transition from school or studies to the working life.

In the mid-term and final evaluations of the Youth programme and the mid-term evaluation of the Youth in Action programme<sup>9</sup>, effectiveness was also examined in detail from the perspective of the organisations managing the projects. In these evaluations, the EU youth programmes were seen as producing continuity in the international activities in the youth field. Other factors producing effectiveness include the expansion of the organisa-

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5 Fennes, Helmut with Susanne Gadinger & Wolfgang Hagleitner 2014: Transnational Analysis. Results from the surveys with project participants and project leaders in November 2010 and May 2011. Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action.

6 National Workshop Association (NWA) 2015: Sosiaalinen vahvistaminen käsitteenä ja palveluina. Sosiaalisen vahvistamisen kehittämistoiminnan tuloksia ("Social empowerment as a concept and as services. Results of the development process of social empowerment"). Briefly in English: [http://www.tpy.fi/site/assets/files/1382/workshop\\_pedagogy.pdf](http://www.tpy.fi/site/assets/files/1382/workshop_pedagogy.pdf)

7 Ministry of Education and Culture 2010: The Interim Evaluation of the «Youth in Action» programme (2007–2013). National report Finland. Unpublished report 2010.

8 Demos Helsinki 2013: Piilotettu osaaminen ("Hidden competences").

9 Ministry of Education 2008: EU:n Nuoriso-ohjelma 2000–2006, Suomen loppuraportti ("The EU Youth Programme 2000–2006, Final report, Finland."). Publications of the Ministry of Education 2008:37.

tions' international networks and the stronger position of youth activities both in the local communities and in the municipal organisation. The projects also enhance the professional qualifications of the organisations' employees. The projects have increased local visibility and resources for international activities in the youth field. The research reports of the RAY network support the above mentioned observations, and the reports describe the leading organisations as learning organisations.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, a report based on the national material obtained through the new RAY surveys supports the assessments presented above.<sup>11</sup>

The effects of youth exchanges, EVS (European Voluntary Service) and the preceding youth initiatives affect the entire local communities especially in rural and non-built-up areas. Young people are not the only ones affected by these activities: for example, EVS volunteers participate in the activities of the community in many ways and encounter people from different generations – from children to the elderly.

2. When it comes to the realisation of the general objectives of the Erasmus+ programme in Finland, the most significant contribution of the youth programme has appeared in the form of reduced marginalisation and social empowerment of the youth. In practice, cooperation has occurred sporadically in the form of multidisciplinary collaboration between schools, healthcare and social services and the labour administration. The scale of the programme is, however, rather small, so its effectiveness at national level in Finland is limited. At this point, it is not possible to examine whether the situation has progressed in relation to the predecessor programmes. Based on the qualitative interviews conducted for this study, it can be assessed that the actions of the programmes are quite suitable for working with young people with multiple problems. Working with multi-problem young people requires cross-sector cooperation and high professional qualifications. From this point of view, the programme has the potential and capacity to interfere with youth marginalisation. Realising this potential, however, entails high requirements for the professional qualifications of youth workers. Currently, these requirements are not always met. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 51 people in different parts of Finland. Young people and group leaders as well as youth workers and unit leaders were interviewed.<sup>12</sup>

3. The programme has influenced policy developments both locally and nationally. At local level, Erasmus+ and its predecessors have strengthened the position of youth services

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10 Fennes, Helmut with Susanne Gadinger & Wolfgang Hagleitner 2014: Transnational Analysis. Results from the surveys with project participants and project leaders in November 2010 and May 2011. Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action.

11 CIMO 2016: Erasmus+: Youth in Action – research-based survey. Surveys 2015-2016. Draft of an unpublished research paper.

12 A list of the interviewees can be found in the attachment.

in the local government by increasing their visibility and resources for international youth work.

4. In Finland, the state supports the implementation of the programme at national level by participating in the funding of the National Agency. The state covers over 50 per cent of the administrative expenses incurred by the programme to the National Agency. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has also supported the marketing activities and dissemination of the results of the Youth in Action programme. For example, 7,700 people in 19 different locations took part in the events related to the European Youth Week in 2013.<sup>13</sup>

5. The effectiveness of the various actions of the programme has been evaluated in more detail in the mid-term and final evaluations of the Youth programme in 2008 and 2010, the mid-term evaluation of Youth in Action programme, and the RAY network's research reports, which are worth mentioning at this point.<sup>14</sup> To sum up the results of the above mentioned evaluations, it may be stated that the effectiveness of each action can be proved. However, the actions vary considerably in terms of the different dimensions of effectiveness, such as their immediate, long-term and multiplier effects. For example, a one-week exchange period, a two-year exchange process with supervision and an EVS period that lasts from 6 to 12 months or a short, supported EVS period all have different effects.

When comparing the effectiveness of the different actions, the high number of participating young people is the determining factor that makes youth exchanges more effective than some other actions, i.e. it has the highest volume. Youth exchanges also reach the young people in the most varied ways. As far as the EVS is concerned, the determining factor is its long duration, which affects the multiplier effects both during the volunteering period and years after it. Both immediate and delayed, long-term effects can be identified in both actions. The developments in the information technology (Facebook, Skype, Messenger, etc.) have increased the multiplier and long-term effects of both actions, because technology has facilitated networking and the expansion and maintenance of networks.

In the qualitative group interview conducted at the Centre for International Mobility CIMO (National Agency), an idea about dividing youth exchanges into two functional groups was introduced. The first group would consist of exchanges that last 1–2 weeks. The teams participating in these exchanges could be formed at a short notice. These

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<sup>13</sup> Youth in Action Programme. National Agency Yearly Report 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Education 2008: EU:n Nuorisiohjelma 2000–2006, Suomen loppuraportti. ("The EU Youth Programme 2000–2006, Final report, Finland."). Publications of the Ministry of Education 2008:37; Ministry of Education and Culture 2010: The Interim Evaluation of the «Youth in Action» programme (2007–2013), National report, Finland. Unpublished report 2010; Fennes, Helmut with Susanne Gadinger & Wolfgang Hagleitner 2014: Transnational Analysis. Results from the surveys with project participants and project leaders in November 2010 and May 2011. Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action.

teams could function according to a pre-determined program. The teams would be built during the exchange. This type of short-term exchange periods have effectiveness of their own, and these exchanges could be the first step towards longer-term solutions especially in countries in which conditions for youth work are not satisfactory. Short-term exchanges provide young people with an opportunity for once-in-a-lifetime experiences and lower the threshold for applying for longer and more challenging exchanges later on. This would also lower the threshold for young people who for one reason or another have difficulties in committing themselves to long-term processes. The second group would consist of more traditional youth exchange processes, which last 1–2 years including team building in the home country, planning the project, visiting the other country and hosting in the home country. This type of youth exchanges where young people themselves actively participate in all phases of the project would still be the priority.

6. At this point, it is difficult to determine how the integrated programme model has increased effectiveness, as the programme has only been going on for three years. One can assume that the integrated model would have increased and improved the multidisciplinary cooperation, which would have, in turn, enhanced effectiveness. There is, however, no empirical evidence of this yet. The most important outcome drawn from the material collected for this evaluation in the form of qualitative interviews and structured questionnaires is that effectiveness cannot yet be evaluated. The most popular response to questions assessing effectiveness was “Do not know”, which was usually the least chosen option in questions that evaluated the other parts of the programme. In most cases, the respondents always had some kind of opinion.

Cooperation between youth work, educational institutions, social services and the labour administration has been developed in Finland in connection with the predecessor programme, Youth in Action, and will also be developed in the future in connection with the successor programme. Local actors in the field of youth work in Finland have a long history of practical cooperation. Some of these practices have been transferred into the Finnish legislation as a consequence of shifts in attitudes and political debate. The EU youth programmes have not so much affected this development but, rather, been in line with the development of the Finnish youth service system.

In the past few years, the Finnish legislation concerning the youth has been revised in many respects. The new key statutes, such as the Local Government Act, the Child Welfare Act, the Pupil and Student Welfare Act, the Decree on the core curriculum for basic education, and the Youth Act, all emphasise the significance of the participation of the youth, the resulting active citizenship and cross-sector cooperation.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, the Finnish

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15 National Workshop Association (NWA) 2015: Sosiaalinen vahvistaminen käsitteenä ja palveluina. Sosiaalisen vahvistamisen kehittämistoiminnan tuloksia (“Social empowerment as a concept and as services. Results of

legislation supports and is in line with the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme. Attitudes towards multidisciplinary, cross-sector forms of activity are already positive.

As for the integrated model, it has had the most profound effect on the Sport Chapter in the Erasmus+ Programme, which has developed from an experimental, pilot-type activity into a more stable and schematic form. This advances the continuity of the work. The greatest problem in regard to the field of sport and physical activity is the centralised application process. It is difficult to reach the grassroots level in a larger scale through the centralised application process, as the funds are allocated to large organisations that have enough liquidity to complete the projects. Experiences gained from the youth programmes show that actors at local, grassroots level would be able to carry out small-scale international projects that have far-reaching effects.

The decentralisation of the programme would, however, require considerably more resources. In the interview material collected for this evaluation in Finland, various visions about the development of the programme were presented. One vision described a trajectory from a pilot programme into a centralised programme and further, with increased resources, to a decentralised programme. Another vision described the current, centralised model as the future standard with no alternatives.

7–8. As a northern and geographically long country, Finland faces special problems related to its distance from the continental Europe. Long distances increase the travel costs for both the young participants and the group leaders. Situations vary within the country so that the current distance measuring system works when the person leaves from the capital, Helsinki, but it does not work in other parts of the country. For example, a young person from Utsjoki has to travel 1,000 kilometres to Helsinki, where the journey is really supposed to begin. Young people, team leaders, youth workers and unit managers alike, who took part in the qualitative interviews in different parts of Finland, wished that the travel costs would be compensated according to the real costs. Straight-line distances do not correspond to the real travelling distances from one country to another.

Due to the high travel costs, attention has also been paid to the compensation paid to the young participants which is smaller than that of the adult youth workers. This is considered unfair.

9. Finland considers that improving the quality of youth work in the participating countries is very important. In Finland, the quality of youth work is very high due to the profes-

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the development process of social empowerment"). 2015. [http://www.tpy.fi/site/assets/files/1372/sosiaalinen-vahvistaminen-k\\_sitteen\\_-ja-palveluina.pdf](http://www.tpy.fi/site/assets/files/1372/sosiaalinen-vahvistaminen-k_sitteen_-ja-palveluina.pdf)

sional education available and required in the field. Education is available at all levels from vocational institutes to universities of applied sciences and academic education, i.e. Master's degrees. These programmes, including the NA's own training, provide youth workers with specialised training fulfilling the needs of the international exchange programmes and the EU programmes.

The TCA training of the Erasmus+ programme in the field of youth work is a significant element improving the quality of international youth work. It is also a significant training program in terms of numbers: during the programme period 2007-2013, the Finnish TCA reached more than 4,400 youth workers in the countries that participated in the programme.<sup>16</sup> Improvements in the quality of youth work affect both the quality of the projects and the dissemination and exploitation of the results of the projects.

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<sup>16</sup> The number covers the TCA training activities funded by Finland.



## 4 EFFICIENCY (QUESTIONS 10–15)

### 4.1 Education

#### 4.1.1 Division of tasks

The cooperation and division of tasks between the Commission, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Agency CIMO are well-functioning, and very little criticism was presented towards this theme in the evaluation interviews and the e-survey. Cooperation as a whole was described as efficient.

The hierarchy of Finnish organisations is considered flat. Most of the people operating within the programme know each other well, which makes cooperation easy. Finland has a fairly unified point of view on the programme and on how it should be developed. The National Agency CIMO was praised for its non-hierarchical organisation.

There is room for improvement in making the voices of all forty National Agencies heard in the Commission. According to the evaluation data, a more structured way of collecting feedback and suggestions would ensure that everybody has their voice heard and that the most relevant messages go through. However, the Commission's operations were considered more open than before and the introduction of Yammer was seen as a positive initiative. In addition, the Commission has taken a more active role in listening.

After the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+, possibilities for decision-making at the national level have somewhat decreased. Both the interviewees and the e-survey respondents brought out that the national level should have more freedom of action in directing the programme activities in accordance with the national needs.

The Finnish National Agency has described the division of tasks to be clear. The decision-making was described as centralised in the Commission. When it comes to Key Action 3 projects, which are usually managed by the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency), the exchange of information between the National Agencies is insuffi-

cient. The National Agencies are unaware of the subjects and participants of Key Action 3 projects, similarly to the KA2 Knowledge and Sector Skills Alliances projects.

#### 4.1.2 Efficiency gains and losses after the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+

The biggest changes following the integration of several programmes into one have concerned applying for project funds, the programme and project management as well as reporting, all of which have an impact on the efficiency of the programme. Both pros and cons for the programme integration were identified.

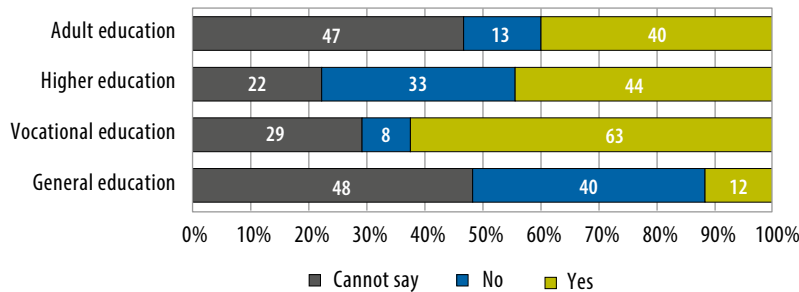
At the National Agency level, the changes have been not been prominent. However, the possibilities of the Finnish National Agency to modify the programme in order to respond to the needs of each sector in the best possible way have diminished. The unification and mainstreaming of programme's rules do not necessarily fully work for all sectors and the integration has complicated the programme and project management.

The efficiency of certain actions of the programme is to a large extent related to the question of how laborious the project management and reporting are. The views on applying for, managing and reporting on the projects are polarised: for some there has been little change in the project management or the changes have been seen as positive. However, for most beneficiaries, the administration of Erasmus+ is too heavy and complicated, according to the e-survey. The majority of project managers and coordinators viewed that the application process and the management of an Erasmus+ funded project is, for the most part, more time-consuming and trickier than earlier. At the same time, the resources of the administration are limited due to the cuts in the financial resources of the education sector in Finland. This affects the effectivity of the programme as a whole. Especially, the application for and management of Key Action 2 projects have become more time-consuming than Key Action 1 projects.

The e-survey showed that there are great differences between the sectors of education in the attitudes towards the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ (see Figures 4 and 5). Especially, the results for the vocational education and training differ from the other sectors. The majority (63%) of the vocational education respondents considered that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has made the work easier. Furthermore, 46% of the vocational education respondents considered that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has made the management of the projects easier. Conversely, 40% of the general education respondents disagreed with the statement that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has made the work easier. Almost half (49%) of the general education respondents disagreed with the statement that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has made the management of the

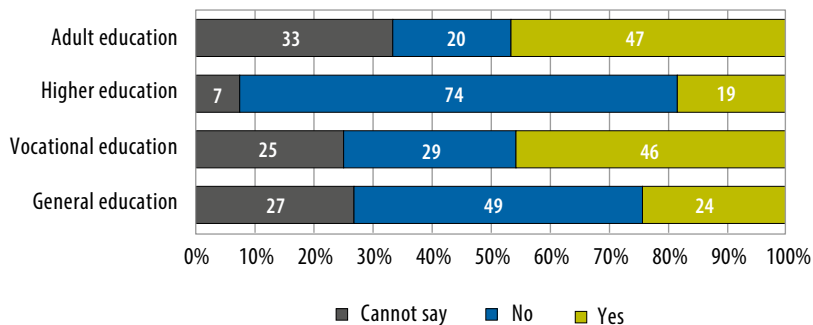
projects easier. Similarly, the majority (74%) of the higher education respondents disagreed that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has made the management of the projects easier. Instead, 44% of the higher education respondents considered that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has made the work easier. In the adult education sector, less than half of the respondents considered that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has made the work and the management of the projects easier (40% and 47%, respectively).

**HAS THE INTEGRATION OF SEVERAL PROGRAMMES INTO ERASMUS+ MADE YOUR WORK EASIER?**



**Figure 5.** Has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ made your work easier? (N = 151)

**IS THE MANAGEMENT OF ERASMUS+ FUNDED PROJECTS EASIER THAN DURING THE PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES?**



**Figure 6.** Is the management of Erasmus+ funded projects easier than during the predecessor programmes? (N = 152)

According to the e-survey respondents and interviewees, the most significant single difficulty in the project management at least in the sector of higher education has been the requirement to calculate the mobility grants based on the exact length of the period. It is difficult, if not impossible, to predict the exact length of a longer mobility period beforehand. This may lead to extra work in the form of adjustments and reimbursements to the

National Agency. The difficulties faced in the project management mean that the staff has less time for guiding and counselling students.

There have also been difficulties to assess whether certain other changes to the programme have influenced the effectiveness in a positive or a negative way in Finland. Currently, there is only one application period per year. Some criticism was presented towards this arrangement. If an organisation misses a deadline, the next opportunity to apply for a project is next year. Also, the new programme structure is favourable to larger organisations. In a small organisation, the application and project management rests on the shoulders of perhaps just one active staff member doing the project work in addition to his or her core tasks. This does not make participation attractive to small organisations that do not have international cooperation teams in the central administration. There is a possibility of forming consortiums also in Key Action 1 mobility projects, but this possibility has not been largely exploited, which might also implicate a lack of communication. Furthermore, the amount of work that is required of an individual student has increased in the form of language tests and reporting, which was seen as unreasonable by some of the e-survey respondents and interviewees.

Although criticism has been directed towards the programme's administrative burden, the system of simplified grants has reduced the administrative workload significantly and released staff resources for other tasks. In Finland, simplified grants were given positive feedback by those who can benefit from the system. All in all, it can be assessed that even though it is easy to justify the integration of the programmes, the changes were too major to be implemented all at once. In most cases, the negative feedback concerned the application and reporting forms, which include several similar questions that are too long and difficult to interpret. The excessive administrative burden of the Erasmus+ should be lightened for example by removing the need to calculate mobility grants on a daily basis and by increasing flexibility regarding the grants, decreasing the number of the forms, and further developing the electronic services, for example the Mobility Tool. The digitalisation of the application and reporting materials was highly expected among the e-survey respondents.

As stated above, the institutional approach, i.e. sending the project applications on behalf of the entire organisation, has its pros and cons, but from the perspective of administrative burden it is an undue burden when a single person has to prepare the project applications alone in addition to his or her core duties and other people, who have not contributed to the application process, can benefit from this. The same person is often also responsible for the project management, again alongside with his or her main tasks. Although part of the dilemma can be dealt with within the organisations, for example by providing the applicants with resources for project applications and management, a lighter project application and managing process is required in Finland. This is especially a problem in small organisations where there are no separate teams or coordinators for international cooperation.

### 4.1.3 Efficiency of different actions of the programme

The implementation of education policy is more efficient when mobility is tied to a project applied by the whole organisation. When a mobility project concerns the whole organisation, there is a pursuit to develop it based on the strategy of the organisation. In Finland, Key Action 1 projects were seen as an effective way to promote international cooperation as well as the goals of the organisation, the national policies, and the objectives of the programme.

The impacts of Key Action 2 were viewed limited in comparison to Key Action 1. The effects of strategic projects may stay within the organisation and may not be broadly disseminated. Moreover, many of the Finnish Key Action 2 projects are product-oriented. Another difficulty concerning Key Action 2 projects is that it is not easy for the Commission to know the contents of the projects. There are likely similar projects in different countries that are unaware of each other. The National Agencies do not have an efficient way to find out which national organisations are partners in projects managed by organisations outside their countries. There is a need to develop better tools to identify overlapping projects.

According to the e-survey respondents and interviewees representing the higher education sector, there is a demand for shorter intensive mobility projects that were implemented in the previous programme cycles in the higher education sector. The intensive mobility projects were perceived as an effective form of action since the application process and project management are light, the participation is easy and the intensive mobility periods are considered useful and successful. In addition, these projects are especially suitable for small organisations.

Erasmus+ global funding offers also more possibilities to work with non-European partners. The advantage of the Erasmus+ is that networks and research cooperation are fostered at the global level. The global mobility was an aspect of the programme that was highly appreciated by the Finnish project organisations, the National Agency and the Ministry of Education and Culture. There was also a consensus within the Finnish actors that the global mobility is an action that should be kept in the Erasmus+ programme, and the scope of global mobility should be extended in the future to other sectors.

In addition, the policy level cooperation was seen as an essential part of the programme in Finland. Without Erasmus+, the extent of the cooperation at the policy level would be considerably lower. As a whole, there is a need to place more emphasis on the impact assessment of the programme. Even though indicators have been developed to measure the programme, the programme structure is at the moment focused on applying, granting and managing. Not enough emphasis is placed on thinking about the impacts of the entity.

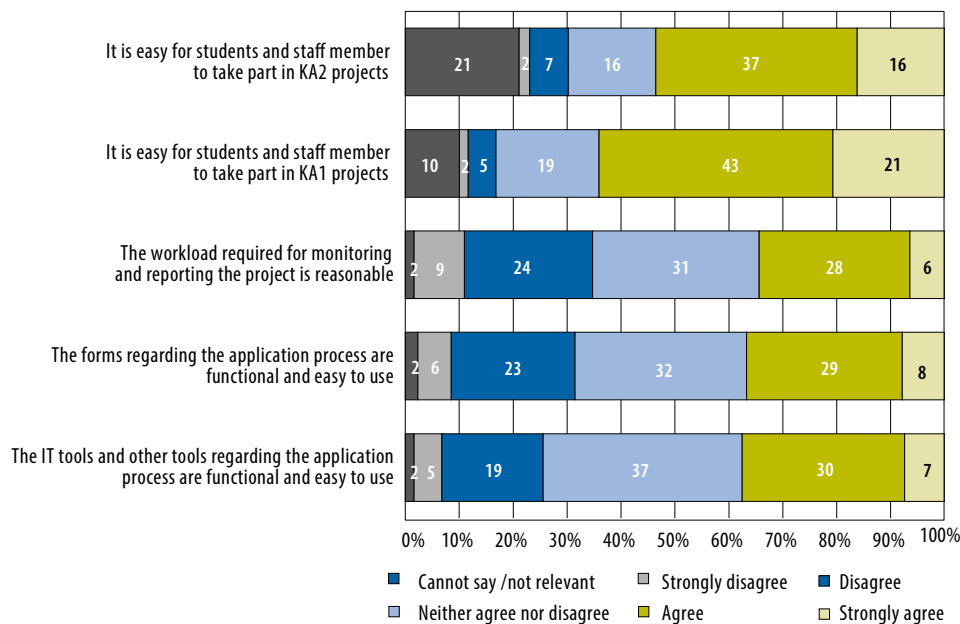
From the Finnish point of view, the Erasmus+ Master Loan instrument has not lived up to its expectations and the input could be used for more effective and influential actions.

#### 4.1.4 Human and financial resources

The financial resources provided by Erasmus+ directed towards international cooperation and mobility are significant in Finland. The impact of Erasmus+ and its predecessors on the internationalisation of Finnish education is remarkable although not easily measurable. There was no doubt among the interviewees that Finland would be able to absorb the increase in the programme budget. At the same time, national funding for education and international cooperation of education has been decreased. Obviously, if the educational organisations had more funds, they could provide more opportunities for mobility outside the Erasmus+ programme. However, this is not a likely prospect in Finland. The cuts made within the educational organisations have led to decreased financial and human resources. The recent staff reductions in many universities have made it more difficult to invest in increasing international cooperation and mobility. There is even a stronger need to develop the project application and management so that they would be as light as possible. The shortage of national resources enhances the significance of the Erasmus+ programme for the internationalisation of Finnish education.

#### 4.1.5 IT tools

The IT tools received contradictory feedback. For the most part, the IT tools developed for the new programme structure have not, at least in the early stages of the Erasmus+ programme, been adequate for the efficient management and implementation of the programme. Instead, the IT tools may have hindered the efficient management of the projects. To some extent it can be expected that there are some difficulties in the introduction of new systems and tools. In the beginning, the difficulties related to the programme's IT tools significantly affected the effective implementation of the programme's key actions. However, the biggest problems concerning the IT tools have most likely been tackled and the Finnish users are slowly adopting the tools. The negative feedback was partly directed to the fact that the programme's IT tools do not discuss with each other, for example Mobility Tool and Online Linguistics Support, or with the organisation's own IT systems. This may lead to extra work, if the tools are not user-friendly or coordinate the operations.



**Figure 7. Views on the administrative burden and IT tools of the programme.**

## 4.2 Youth and sports

10. When it comes to the current system of cooperation and division of tasks, the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport is not criticised in Finland. The structure of the Finnish central government is favourable from the perspective of the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme as a whole. Education, youth affairs and sport are all matters that fall within the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

From the perspective of the sport chapter, the central level of implementation of the sport chapter does not provide a sector-specific platform for discussion. Currently, sport-related questions are primarily discussed in the Erasmus+ Committee, which serves the entire Erasmus+ programme and is a decision-making body. Thus, there is usually only little time left for sport-specific discussion. The situation with the youth chapter is a little better, as discussion also occurs between the National Agencies.

Two principles of good administration in the EU, subsidiarity and transparency, are duly realised in the Erasmus+ programme, especially in the field of youth work. The projects funded by the programme can be easily found on CIMO's website, and guidance on reapplying is provided to the rejected applicants. A third principle, the bottom-up approach, is also duly implemented. The approach emphasises customer orientation and the de-

velopment of the grassroots-level activities. The qualitative interviews conducted for this evaluation in different parts of Finland showed that the participants were content with the implementation of the programme in this respect.

There is need for development in the centralised application process. It is difficult for small grassroots-level organisations to succeed in the process due to their scarce economic and organisational resources. Furthermore, the principle of transparency is not implemented in the decision-making as effectively as in the decentralised programmes.

Time management is one of the efficiency-related problems that the programme management faces: projects are launched slowly in the beginning of the programme period, period after another, and end in a rush at the end of the programme period. During the autumn period of 2016, for example, the number of ongoing projects was similar to that of the Youth in Action programme in 2011. The numbers have decreased from the busiest period of the Youth in Action programme, 2012-2013, during the first two years of the Erasmus+ programme. The situation is partly caused by the problems in launching the programme period and partly by the lack of funding at the beginning of the programme period.

Time management problems do not only relate to the beginning and the end of the programme period, but problems are also caused by the fact that information about the annual themes during the programme period is provided too late. This complicates the long-term planning of the projects. In addition to the information, the forms for each application period are also made available with delay or at the last minute. Time management is one of the key challenges related to the programme management that were brought up in the qualitative interviews with the actors at the operative level of the programme implementation in the field of youth work.

From the point of view of decision-making concerning the programme, it is problematic that the Erasmus+ Committee as the decision-making body is not involved in the preparation of initiatives for political decisions contrary to the National Agencies. On the other hand, the Committee also receives technical questions that should be prepared in the meetings of the National Agencies.

11. At this point, it is challenging to evaluate the efficiency of the integrated programme model. Increased efficiency has been reached through the new legal act to be applied: instead of the decisions that governed the predecessor programmes, the current programme is governed by a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council. The application of the Regulation has brought more flexibility to the project level which was previously governed by much more detailed instructions. This was seen as a positive development in the qualitative interviews conducted among the actors at the project level.



The application of the Regulation has also increased uniformity in the implementation of the programme in the different Member States, because EU regulations are directly applicable in the Member States while decisions are not.

The integrated programme model has increased the need for coordination, which may at first appear to increase bureaucracy and the number of meetings. These are, however, typical problems in situations where multidisciplinary cooperation is being launched.

The programme model that extends to different socio-political sectors has to combine different kinds of organisational cultures in its activities. Education, youth work and sport as social institutions are very different in many respects, which calls for diversity management in the programme's management. Especially at the initial stage, organisational cultures may clash. However, these kinds of problems were not brought up in the course of the data gathering nor in the discussions with the national authorities and the National Agency.

The Erasmus+ sport chapter has received positive feedback in Finland. Finnish beneficiaries administer four projects which all have very different themes. The themes vary from the relation between sport and health to the importance of sport for immigrants, sport in rural communities and sport for the disabled. Furthermore, Finland is a partner in as many as 50 projects. In other words, Finland is one of the top countries in Europe when countries are compared in relation to the number of projects and partnerships.

12. When the efficiency of the different actions was compared, the participants of the group interview at CIMO (National Agency) were the most critical about the operations of the youth information network Eurodesk. According to the group, the organisation and functionality of the network should be reassessed. Earlier, Eurodesk had an important role as it complemented the national-level youth information that was either non-existent or under development in most of the Member States. Currently, there are overlaps in the information and communications in the field of youth policy within the European Union, and these overlaps should be removed to rationalise the operations. Dismantling the entire network that is separate from the programme administration should also be considered. Information and communication would in this case become a part of the administrative structure that implements the programme. In the future, the National Agencies would thus have the overall responsibility for the information and communication as part of the implementation of the programme.

13. In the qualitative interviews and the structured questionnaire conducted for this evaluation, the most crucial factor causing inefficiency was assessed to be bureaucracy, the most visible manifestation of which are the forms for both application and reporting. The forms and the related programme jargon create obstacles especially for organisations ap-

plying for the first time. Those youth workers who had been trained by the National Agency and thus were experienced applicants felt challenging to inspire new employees to deal with Erasmus+ programme. The most important professional skill of a youth worker is the ability to encounter young persons in their current life situations. Understanding of administrative processes supports this work, but it also requires special training. The service design concept, for example, could be used in analysing how the pleasantness of the first service experience could be enhanced.

The transition to the system of simplified grants has facilitated and brought about flexibility to the budgeting process of projects, which was considered a positive development in the inter-views.

14. In the project interviews and questionnaires, the new IT tool, Mobility Tool+, was regarded as useful after some complications experiences at the beginning. In some inter-views, the tool was considered a product that is still under development. Entering the names of project participants one by one into the form was seen as a problem, as entering for example 60 names takes a considerable amount of time.

15. According to the evaluation of the preceding programme periods, the programmes have been implemented with low hierarchy and a sufficient number of employees at the National Agency. The total number of employees has not been increased during the new programme period. The considerable increase in funding at the end part of the current programme period will require more staff resources in both the marketing of the programme and the launching and management of the projects.

## 5 RELEVANCE (QUESTIONS 16–17)

### 5.1 Education

From the Finnish perspective, the relevance of Erasmus+ and the previous programmes builds on two important aspects. First, the long-term internationalisation of the Finnish education system has benefitted from the programme funding. Erasmus+ has helped to build European connections at different levels of education. The international cooperation is most visible in the sector of higher education. Simultaneously, Erasmus+ has helped to distribute the idea and identity of being European in all fields of education. Erasmus+ and the preceding programmes bring the idea of European Union closer to ordinary citizens in Finland. Some interviewees also said that by providing a structure for European cooperation, the programmes have helped Finland strengthen its position as a member of the European community. Without the common framework, the number of connections would have probably been smaller and the pool of possible partners would have been narrower.

Secondly, the Erasmus+ programmes have provided an opportunity for numerous individuals to gain meaningful experiences that have helped them to train skills relevant in the labour market or allowed them to develop their own working methods more effectively in the education sector. These two core aspects of the programme are still extremely valid from the Finnish perspective. Both in general education and adult education, the e-survey respondents stated that Erasmus+ has played a role in taking new working methods into use. Another advantage is that teachers' skills have been diversified. In adult education, the e-survey respondents brought up the relevance of increasingly positive attitudes towards internationalisation and immigrants. The operational environment in the sector of adult education is ever more international.

The Erasmus+ programme is an integral part of the Finnish higher education sector and an important part of the other sectors of education. Without the Erasmus+ funding, the volume and scope of international cooperation would drop significantly. The education sector has recently faced significant budget cuts in Finland. In this situation, the Erasmus+ funding ensures equal possibilities for different organisations and municipalities to partici-

pate in and/or to develop their activities. The e-survey respondents from all sectors of education expressed a concern for complementary funding for international activities.

Interviewees mentioned a few areas which could be important in the future. Digitalisation is an important developmental theme in the Finnish education sector. Projects developing and disseminating good practices for using digital tools could enhance the development in Finland and in other countries. For example, the EU Commission has suggested that the EMREX<sup>17</sup> project, which is funded by Erasmus+ Key Action 3 and coordinated by Finland, should be used as an Erasmus+ funding instrument. Opportunities for traineeships and learning skills that enhance employability would be important in Finland.

Overall, the possibilities of the Erasmus+ programme are well-known in Finland and the pro-gramme receives plenty of applications for funding. According to stakeholders, the number of applicants could be further increased through marketing efforts. The Finnish National Agency has reported that applications are geographically quite evenly spread out and there are no signs of unhealthy concentration. Early childhood education and care is a sector that uses very little Erasmus funding. There are plans to increase marketing efforts towards this sector, which traditionally has been viewed more as a social service rather than an educational service.

## 5.2 Youth and sports

16. The problems and challenges that both the general and the specific objectives of the Erasmus+ programme were meant to address have become more prominent in Finland especially when it comes to the placement of young people in the labour market and education. During the ten-year period from 2005 to 2015, the number of young men (20–24 years old) who belong to the so-called NEET group (Not in Employment, Education or Training) has almost doubled. The size of the group has grown from 12.2% to 21.1% of the entire age group. As for women, growth has been more moderate: from 13.9% to 15.4%. At the same time, the employment rate of young men has declined from 56% to 52%, whereas the employment rate for women has remained approximately the same: about 58%. As far as special groups are concerned, it should be noted that five to six people under 30 years of age retire from work life every day due to depression or other mental health issues. In the light of these numbers, the relevance of the Erasmus+ programme is very high.

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17 <http://emrex.eu/>

The qualitative interview material and the quantitative questionnaire material collected for this evaluation show that actors at both the operative level of projects and the strategic level within the public administration and organisations think that the programme is of great relevance.

Effective and efficient cooperation for the promotion of sport and physical activity among the youth should occur between the educational institutions, youth services and sport organisations, and the municipalities should participate in the coordination of the system as a whole.<sup>18</sup> The programme for sport and physical activity should be a true grassroots programme, in which young people are able to participate as developers. A programme based on the centralised model does not reach this goal, but it can model the activities. There are plenty of good elements in the current centralised sport programme and it strives to model the work conducted in order to improve the inclusion of the youth, but it is impossible to evaluate this at this point of the implementation. As far as the funding priorities are concerned, the programme and its funding decisions are relevant.

17. The actions and working methods of the Erasmus+ programme in the youth field have proven to be successful in reaching diverse target groups. The programme is able to reach different young people in the highly heterogenic field of youth work in many different ways. Two ends of a spectrum can be distinguished: on one end, there are groups that consist of hard-core, multi-problem young people who work, for example, with mental healthcare professionals. On the other end, there are groups of EU-oriented young people, for example in youth councils, who dream of a future as EU professionals and of having political and social power. It is interesting to notice that even the EVS, which can be regarded as a very demanding form of activity, is able to attract young people with very challenging backgrounds. To quote one youth worker: there are many young people who arrive at their destination mentally desperate and completely lost. It should, however, be noted that a whole range of more or less 'average young people' fit in between the two extremities presented above. The programme has plenty to give to these young people, too.

Furthermore, the age range of the young people that form the programme's target group has significance from the perspective of relevance. When working with young school-children, the programme may prevent social problems and thus have preventive effects, whereas with young adults the measures may have reactive effects. In preventive work, the improvement of the social skills of young people is emphasised, whereas in reactive work, the projects have therapeutic effects. The preventive dimension of the programme should also be highlighted from the perspective of the current political discussion in Eu-

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<sup>18</sup> This activity has been modelled in Finland in the Liikkuva koulu ("Finnish Schools on the Move") programme, which is currently one of the key projects of the Finnish Government.

rope. The alarming populist ideas in today's political discussion can only be addressed by increasing the dialogue between different countries and cultures.

The acute international political situation enhances the importance of Erasmus+ programme. With the help of the programme, it is possible to establish cooperation with young people belonging to several different religious communities. It is also possible to cooperate with countries outside the EU, such as Russia, and with those post-socialist countries that are developing their democratic systems in challenging conditions.

Finally, an observation concerning the manner in which the improvement suggestions were made in the interviews and in the answers to open-ended questions also illustrates the high relevance of the programme. A majority of the development recommendations were related to the efficiency of the implementation and, especially, to technical matters. Hardly any suggestions concerning the relevance of the programme were made.

## 6 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COHERENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY (QUESTIONS 18–19)

### 6.1 Education

From the perspective of the Finnish education system, the Erasmus+ programme is coherent and it has a clear structure. The National Agency has worked with the previous programmes and it has organised the operations in accordance with the levels of education, which in Finland corresponds well with the programme structure.

Furthermore, no overlaps of the programme actions with other programmes have been observed in Finland. On the other hand, no clear synergies that would translate to effectiveness in the project level were mentioned either. There are some examples of creative use of Erasmus+ actions. For example, incoming Erasmus+ exchange students in some regions have been offered a possibility to visit comprehensive schools and give country and culture presentations. This is one way to leverage Erasmus+ funding with the help of national funding.

The Erasmus+ programme is the most important programme supporting mobility and international cooperation in Finland. The National Agency is also responsible for other forms of international cooperation, for example the Nordic Nordplus programme. In addition to these programmes, organisations have built their own networks for international cooperation. Interviewees also stated that Erasmus cooperation is a good starting point for building deeper bilateral relationships.

In Finland, Erasmus+ has been adopted as the most important way of organising international cooperation and mobility. For example, institutions of higher education use their own funding to boost the mobility numbers through the Erasmus system. There has been no mention of major overlaps between the different funding instruments. According to the survey, organisations at all levels of education would be forced to cut down international cooperation without the Erasmus+ funding. Building similar national funding capac-

ity would take time and would be difficult, if not impossible, in the current financial situation. The added value produced by the Erasmus+ programme for the Finnish education system is clear.

## 6.2 Youth and sports

18. No critical comments were presented in the gathered material (qualitative interviews) concerning the internal and external coherence of the Erasmus+ programme.

19. Other corresponding programmes were not brought up in the interviews conducted at the operative level of projects.



## 7 EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE AND SUSTAINABILITY (QUESTIONS 20–21)

### 7.1 Education

Erasmus+ and the predecessor programmes have had a clear impact on the Finnish education system by facilitating a level of mobility and international cooperation that would be unlikely with mere national funding. The programme is an integral part of the Finnish education system. It has been running for many years, it is well-known, and the implementation of the programme is well organised. People working with the programme in Finland have long experience, which translates into efficiency. Stakeholders can utilise the possibilities of the programme. There has been no mention of a need to build separate national solutions.

In Finland, the effectiveness of the programme seems to be based on the mobility of individuals and the number of projects. It is important that as many as possible can have a meaningful experience enriching their studies or professional development. The added value produced by the Erasmus+ programme is the structure that can facilitate mobility and cooperation with several partners from all over Europe. It is hard to imagine that any national solutions could maintain an equally versatile pool of possible participants at all levels of the education system. The possibility to share experiences and project results from all over Europe are also important, even if these opportunities are not fully utilised at the moment.

The common European framework may also ensure more equal possibilities for organisations in different parts of Finland in comparison to a situation where such possibilities would be more directly linked to organisational or regional resources. This helps to build a more equal school system.

The positive effects of the programme are built through mobility and projects. These effects can be boosted by adding funding and making sure that the administrative workload

is not too heavy. The increased administrative burden may lead to a situation where some potential applicants do not have the resources to participate. This is especially true as the education sector is currently facing budget cuts. This also emphasises the importance of the Erasmus+ funding in Finland.

Based on the interviews and the e-survey conducted during the evaluation, it can be said that Finnish stakeholders can utilise the increase in the Erasmus+ budget. At the moment, projects funded in Finland are of high quality and many good projects are left without funding in all sectors of education. Stakeholders believe that the number of applicants can be increased by concentrating marketing efforts. The budget for partnership projects has been very small in Finland – especially in the sector of higher education. Institutions of higher education also boost mobility numbers with their own funding, which is another indication of demand for increased international cooperation.

The statement on the Finnish stakeholders' ability to make use of the funding is also largely based on the notion of a well-experienced and organised programme structure that is able to implement the programme in Finland without any major concerns. Both the National Agency and the key personnel, particularly in higher education institutions, are able to adapt to changing situations and to support students and personnel.

## 7.2 Youth and sports

20. Assessed from the geographical perspective, two directions would bring added value: the Mediterranean region, which was highlighted by the NA staff in the group interview, and the Northern Dimension, which was brought up in the projects that work in close cooperation with Russia. Both areas are important and topical considering the world politics. Cooperation with the Mediterranean is important for the successful management of the refugee crisis, and cooperation with the Northern Dimension is important from the perspective of the dialogue with Russia. More resources could be allocated to both of these areas, and they could be included in the European discussion on the topical problems in international politics.

From the perspective of the Sport chapter, European added value is connected to the development of the activities. There has been plenty of international cooperation within the field of sport, but the cooperation has revolved around competitive activities. It possible for countries to learn from one another also in competitive situations, but there is potential to develop the activities more systematically, more diversely and with a longer time perspective within the Erasmus+ Sport.

21. According to the Finnish estimate, the Erasmus+ /Youth in Action chapter will be capable of using the increased funding to be allocated to the programme very effectively if the number of employees in the youth sector is increased. Until now, the problem with marketing, for example, has been that had the programme been marketed more intensively, the number of applications would have been significantly higher than the number of projects that could have been funded. Problems, such as the growing NEET group and the refugee crisis, will increase the need for international, high-quality youth work and the related multidisciplinary cooperation between youth work, educational institutions, social services and the labour administration. The cooperative structures have improved in Finland during the past couple of years, which is why increased resources would quickly lead to increased effectiveness.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 Education

#### Conclusions

- Erasmus+ has played the most significant role in the internationalisation of the Finnish education sector. Erasmus+ and mobility have become an integral part of Finnish education. There are differences between the sectors of education. Especially in the higher education sector, mobility is widely embedded in the operations and studies. In contrast, the budget of KA2 Strategic Partnerships is the highest in the sector of general education.
- Now that the project involves the whole organisation, mobility and mobility projects have become even more strategically important and are tied to the strategies of organisations also in the sectors of general education and adult education.
- All in all, the programme functions well and effectively in Finland. The increased programme funding is efficiently used in Finland. This is mostly due to experienced project operators and the well-functioning National Agency which was given a lot of positive feedback by the interviewees and e-survey respondents.
- It is apparent that the programme has wide effects on the professional skills, teaching methods, intercultural skills and mindsets of staff. These effects are further transferred to teaching. The impacts of partnership projects at the institutional level are long-lasting.
- The adjustment to the new programme structure has been partly rocky. The difficulties have mostly been related to the heavy and inflexible administrative responsibilities during the application process and reporting. For example, it has been especially cumbersome to estimate the amounts of grants based on the number of days that each mobility period lasts. The mobility periods are usually lengthy and it is difficult to estimate the exact duration in days. This has resulted in situations where the organisations have had to pay back funds to the National Agency although they could have been used in

the project. In particular, the management of Erasmus+ projects is challenging for small organisations, which are characteristic in the sectors of general education and adult education. Organisations in these sectors are lacking resources, for example international coordinators.

## Recommendations

- The policy level cooperation that has been conducted within Erasmus+ should be enhanced in the future. The increased cooperation between policy makers is an example of the added value produced by Erasmus+.
- The administrative workload should be lightened, for example through simplifying the application process and reporting. Moreover, the regulations concerning the administration of projects should be clarified to ensure equal processing of applications in different countries and to diminish internal difficulties in multinational projects.
- To improve the administrative routines and to make it easier for students to plan and complete mobility periods, digital routines should be integrated into the programme in a larger scale. The results from the project EMREX (Enable smooth Mobility and Recognition of External qualifications) show that electronic transfer of student records between educational institutions should be the norm. The biggest benefit drawn from these projects is the increased availability, quality and reliability of student achievement records.
- The implementation of the system of simplified grants should be further developed. Also, short intensive mobility projects which are easily manageable but effective are needed in the higher education sector.
- With regard to the increase in the programme funding, the possibilities to increase vocational mobility, mobility of staff and global mobility should be taken into account. At the same time, it is recommended that the use of the resources within Erasmus+ Master Loan be reconsidered.
- Pupil mobility, which was not included when the new Erasmus + programme was established, should be reconsidered. From an equality point of view, the exclusion of pupil/student mobility in Erasmus + makes the programme only accessible to a certain group of students/pupils in Finland.

## 8.2 Youth and sports

### Conclusions

- The beneficiaries, youth workers and youth organisations are satisfied with Erasmus+ Youth in Action chapter as a whole, especially concerning the effectiveness, relevance and European added value.
- The sport chapter brings European added value enhancing the understanding and knowledge of the significance of sports and physical activity in everyday life as well as fostering cross-border cooperation between grassroots-level actors.
- Youth in Action is able to work with diverse groups of young people and youth workers, so there is a lot of potential to further develop the international youth work in the future.
- Efficiency is the most criticised aspect of the implementation of the chapter.

### Recommendations

- Education of youth workers in Europe is very diverse. Erasmus+/Youth in Action Chapter is an important instrument to contribute to the internationalisation and quality of youth work in Europe and beyond. The possibilities to support youth workers' mobility, long-term development projects and the Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA) by the National Agencies (NAs) should be ensured and further promoted.
- The formats and approaches of the youth chapter should also in the future promote the inclusion of all young people and enable the participation of those with fewer opportunities, including newly-arrived immigrants, young people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- The youth chapter should promote equal opportunities for and equal access to international mobility regardless of one's place of residence and/or economic or social situation, for example.
- The National Authorities should ensure sustainable financial and administrative support to the implementation of the programme at the national level.
- In order to establish closer links between policy and practice also at the European level, the cooperation and exchange of information in the youth field between the European Commission, the National Authorities and the National Agencies should be intensified.
- The formats of youth exchanges could be developed to better correspond to the current practices and needs in the field. First, there should be the traditional youth exchange process where groups of young people are involved in from the planning phase to the follow-up of the project, and secondly, there should be another process where the youth exchange would

be offered to young people mainly by youth workers. In the latter case, the young people could be recruited to a ready-made youth exchange. This would lower the threshold for some young people who, for one reason or another, have difficulties in committing themselves to long-term processes. Still, priority should be given to the traditional youth exchanges where young people themselves actively contribute to the process.

- The existing structures within the youth chapter should be critically assessed. The information and international opportunities provided by the programme are now communicated by both the National Agency and the national Eurodesk. In order to further streamline the administrative structures of the programme, the tasks and resources currently allocated to Eurodesk could be managed by the National Agency.
- The requirements concerning the administrative procedure, including the revision of the application and reporting forms, should be reviewed in order to apply the proportionality principle with regard to the grant amounts and 'paper work' required in average youth projects.

## Annex 1.

### List of standard questions

#### Effectiveness

1. To what extent have Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ specific objectives in your country? Are there differences across fields? Please provide, where relevant, your assessment for each of the specific objectives and provide evidence and examples where possible.
2. To what extent has the progress on the realisation of the specific objectives contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ general objectives (as listed in point B.2 in Annex 3) in your country?
3. To what extent have Erasmus+ actions influenced policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport in your country? Which actions were most effective in doing so? Are there marked differences between different fields?
4. What specific approaches (such as co-financing, promotion or others) have you taken in order to try to enhance the effects of Erasmus+ in your country? To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified?
5. Do you consider that certain actions of the programme are more effective than others? Are there differences across fields? What are the determining factors for making these actions of the programme more effective?
6. To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ made the programme more effective in your country? Do you see scope for changes to the structure of Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase effectiveness?
7. Is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what Erasmus+ is set out to achieve? Is the distribution of funds across the programme's fields and actions appropriate in relation to their level of effectiveness and utility?
8. What challenges and difficulties do you encounter while implementing the various actions of Erasmus+? What changes would need to be introduced in Erasmus+ or its successor programme to remedy these?



9. To what extent are the approaches and tools that are used for disseminating and exploiting the results of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes in your country effective? Where can you see the possibilities for improvements?

## Efficiency

10. To what extent is the system of cooperation and division of tasks between the Commission, Executive Agency, National Agencies, National Authorities, Independent Audit Bodies, and Erasmus+ Committee efficient and well-functioning from the point of view of your country? What are the areas for possible improvement or simplification in the implementation of Erasmus+ or a successor programme?
11. To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in your country, both at the level of the National Agency/ies and on the beneficiaries' and participants' level? Do you see scope for changes to the structure of Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase efficiency?
12. Do you consider that the implementation of certain actions of the programme is more efficient than others? Are there differences across fields? What good practices of these more efficient actions of the programme could be transferred to others?
13. To what extent has the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies and programme beneficiaries and participants? Are there differences across actions or fields? What elements of the programme could be changed to further reduce the administrative burden, without unduly compromising its results and impact?
14. To what extent are the IT tools provided by the Commission adequate for the efficient management and implementation of the programme in your country? Do they answer your needs? Give specific examples where they can be improved. Is the set of IT tools appropriate or should it cover more/less elements of the programme implementation?
15. To what extent is the level of human and financial resources that is available for the implementation of the programme in your country adequate? What steps did you take to optimise the efficiency of the resources deployed for the Erasmus+ implementation in your country? What kind of rationalisation effort did you make in this respect?

## **Relevance**

16. To what extent do the Erasmus+ objectives continue to address the needs or problems they are meant to solve? Are these needs or problems (still) relevant in the context of your country? Have the needs or problems evolved in such a way that the objectives of Erasmus+ or its successor programme need to be adjusted?
17. To what extent are needs of different stakeholders and sectors addressed by the Erasmus+ objectives? How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope? Is the Erasmus+ programme well known to the education and training, youth and sport communities? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?

## **Internal and external coherence and complementarity**

18. To what extent are the various actions that have been brought together in Erasmus+ coherent? Can you identify any existing or potential synergies between actions within Erasmus+? Can you identify any tensions, inconsistencies or overlaps between actions within Erasmus+?
19. To what extent does Erasmus+ complement other national and international programmes available in your country? Can you identify any tensions, inconsistencies or overlaps with other programmes?

## **European added value and sustainability**

20. To what extent Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes produce effects that are additional to the effects that would have resulted from similar actions initiated only at regional or national levels in your country? What possibilities do you see to adjust Erasmus+ or its successor programme in order to increase its European value added?
21. To what extent Erasmus+ will be able to absorb in an effective way the sharp increase in the budget that is foreseen in the coming years up to 2020 in your country? Could the programme use even higher budgets in an effective way? Do you see challenges to effectively use more money for particular actions or fields of the programme?

## Annex 2.

### List of interviews (education)

- Anne Siltala, National Agency CIMO, Higher education cooperation
- Anni Karttunen, National Agency CIMO, General and adult education
- Mika Saarinen, National Agency CIMO, Vocational education and training
- Nina Rekola, National Agency CIMO, General and adult education
- Tiina Vihma-Purovaara, Ministry of Education and Culture, Department for Higher Education and Science Policy
- Minna Polvinen, Ministry of Education and Culture, Department for General Education and Early Childhood Education
- Johanna Moisio, Ministry of Education and Culture, Department for Higher Education and Science Policy
- Minna Koutaniemi, University of Helsinki
- Susanna Velama, City of Hyvinkää (early childhood education)
- Auli Haapajärvi, Kouvola Region Vocational College
- Katriina Korhonen, Karelia University of Applied Sciences
- Sami Niemelä, Oulu University of Applied Sciences
- Risto Virkkunen, Kainuu Region Vocational College
- Solja Ryhänen, University of Jyväskylä
- Tarja Virta, University of Turku
- Tapani Lakaniemi, Iisalmi Community College
- Laura Kinnunen, Nousiainen High School

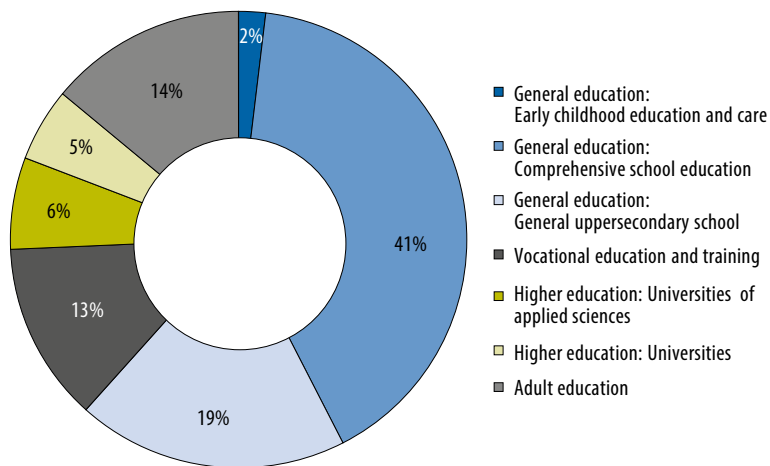
## Annex 3.

### List of interviews (youth & sports)

- Habib, Hasan, Executive director, Turku Youth Services
- Hämäläinen, Timo, Special Adviser, Regional Sports Federations, Seinäjoki
- Jaakola, Anitta, Coordinator of youth, sport and culture works in Ranua municipality
- Juntunen, Anni, Executive Manager, Konnevesi 4H Association, Konnevesi.
- Juntunen, Riikka, Director, Finnish Sports Association of Persons with Disabilities
- Jyrkkä, Heidi, Officer for youth work and international activities, Peace Education Institute
- Kolkka, Jonna & Mattila, Satu & Kononow-Bracker, Salla, EVS-coordinators in Kurki Eco-village association, Vesilahti.
- Korhonen, Antti, Coordinator of International affairs, Youth Centre Hyvärilä
- Koskelo, Jukka, Project coordinator, Dobinglinkki, A-Clinic Foundation
- Kuitu Janne, Community educator, The Youth Services of the City of Kuopio
- Lehtipuu, Evianna, Leader of the Union of Youth Circuses in Finland, project leader in Erasmus+ youth
- Liintola, Terhi, Programme Manager, Finnish National Erasmus+ Agency (Sports) / Finnish National Agency for Education
- Mattila, Marita, Project leader in South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences
- Nybjörk, Lina, Youthworker, Kvevlax församling
- Ojuva, Hanne, Youth co-ordinator, Youth service department, City of Rovaniemi
- Pekkola, Heidi, Policy Director, ENGSO
- Saarikettu, Ritva, Coordinator of International affairs, Youth Centre Villa Elba, Finnish Youth Centers Association
- Salasuo, Mikko, Youth researcher, Youth Research Association Finland, special topic in sports and doping
- Sulander, Heidi, Counselor of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture
- Ulmanen, Leena, director of youth activitycenter Verstas, Sopimusvuori association
- Uusilehto, Mauri, Programme Manager, Finnish National Erasmus+ Agency (Youth in Action) / Finnish National Agency for Education
- Witting, Sonja, Youth secretary at Helsinki City, Western Department of Youth Work

## Annex 4.

### E-survey results (education)



**Figure 1. Sector of education of the respondents (N = 312)**

It shall be noted that even though the proportion of respondents representing higher education is relatively small (11% of all respondents), the higher education institutions were well represented in the survey: there are 38 institutions of higher education in Finland of which 27 responded to the survey.

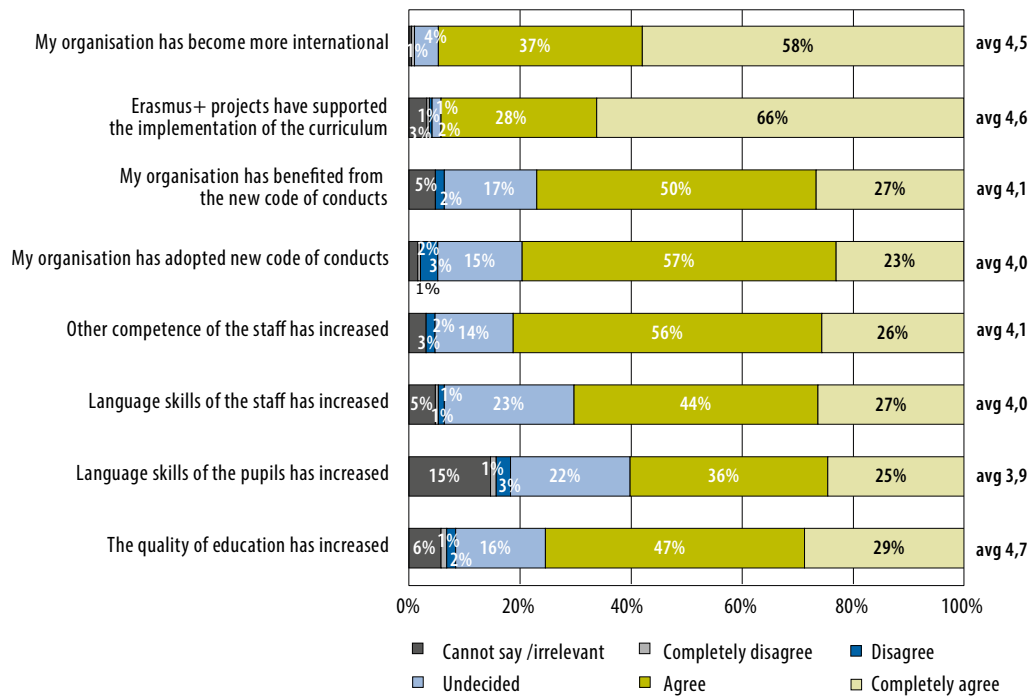


Figure 2. Views on the effects of the Erasmus+ programme on general education (N=189)

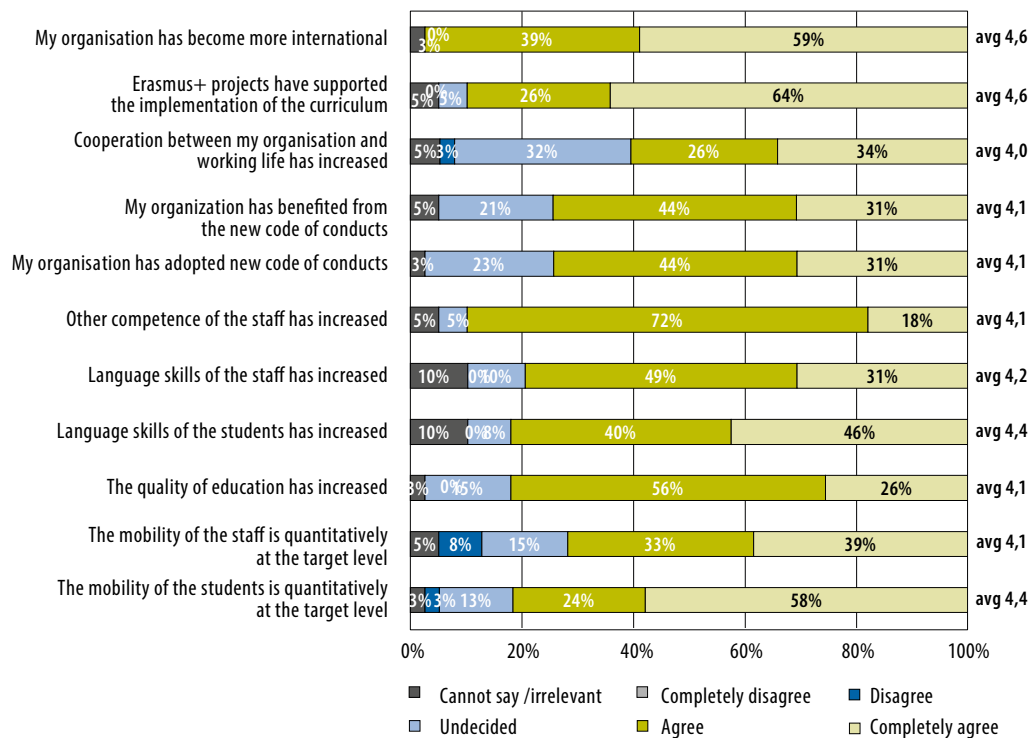


Figure 3. Views on the effects of the Erasmus+ programme on vocational education and training (N=39)

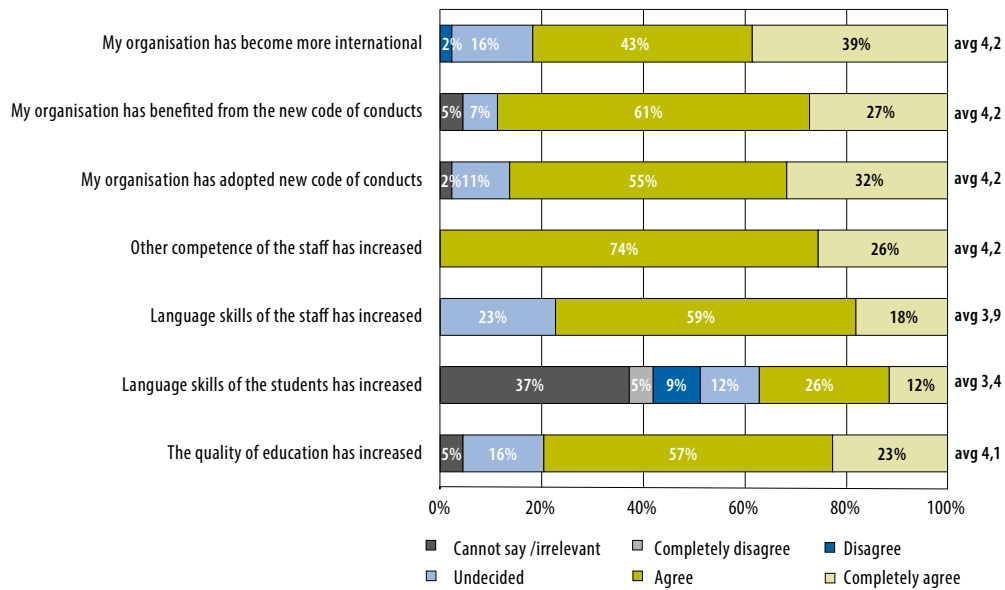


Figure 4. Views on the effects of the Erasmus+ programme on adult education (N=43)

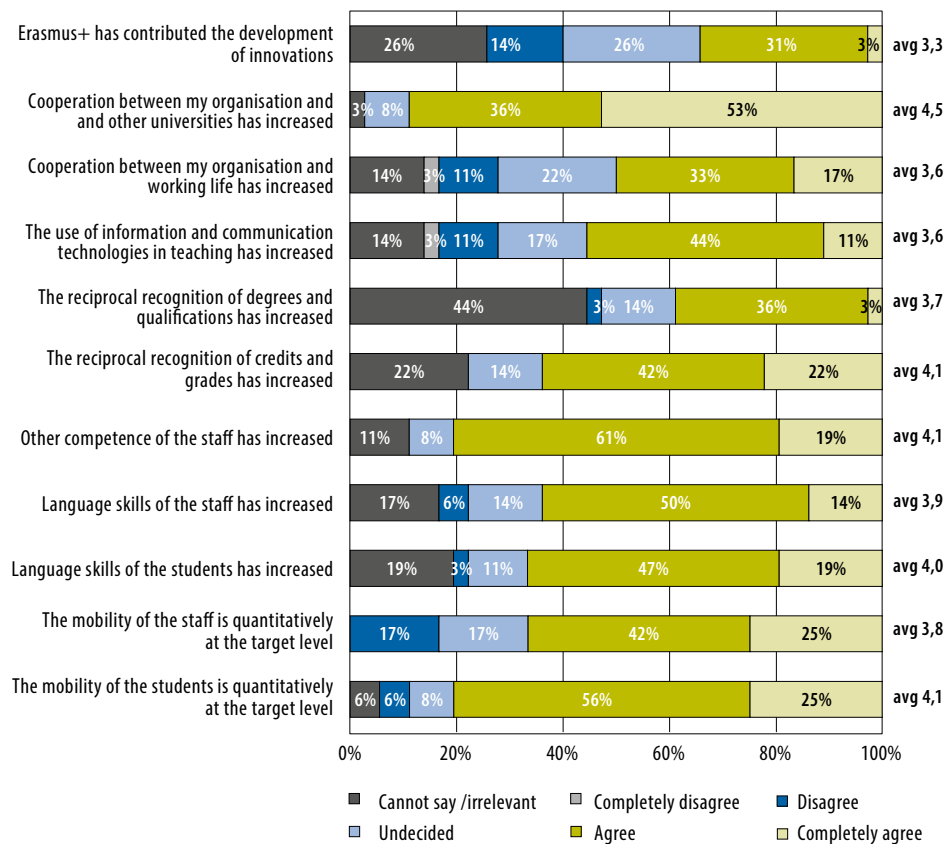


Figure 5. Views on the effects of the Erasmus+ programme on higher education (N=36)

## Views on Erasmus+ administration

THE RULES OF ERASMUS+ ARE CLEAR AND EASY TO UNDERSTAND. N = 303

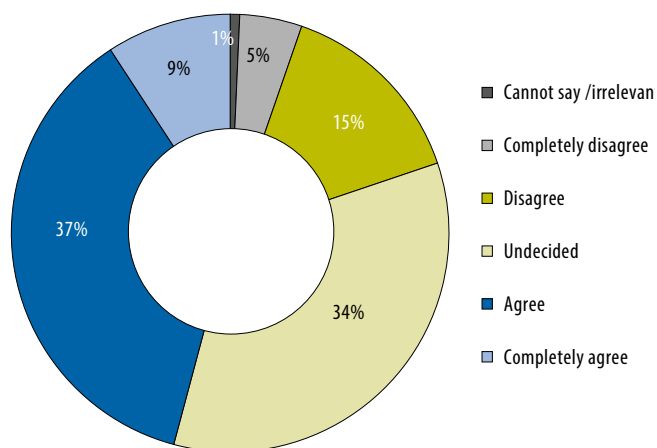


Figure 6. Erasmus+ rules

HAS THE INTEGRATION OF SEVERAL PROGRAMMES INTO ERASMUS+ MADE YOUR WORK EASIER?

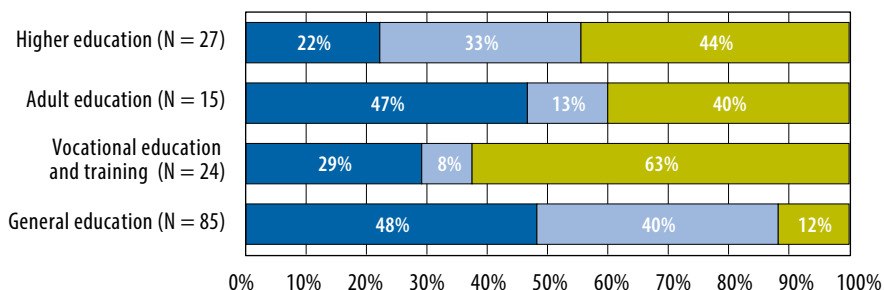


Figure 7. Integration of several programmes into Erasmus+

IS THE MANAGEMENT OF ERASMUS+ FUNDED PROJECTS MORE FLUENT THAN DURING THE PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES?

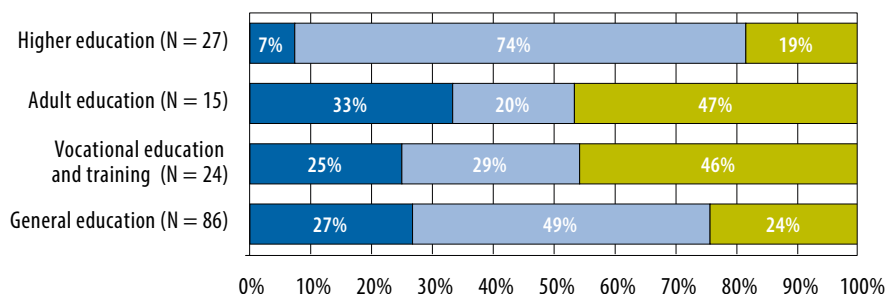


Figure 8. Management of Erasmus+ programme



THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR FUNDING IN KA1 IS CLEAR. N = 294

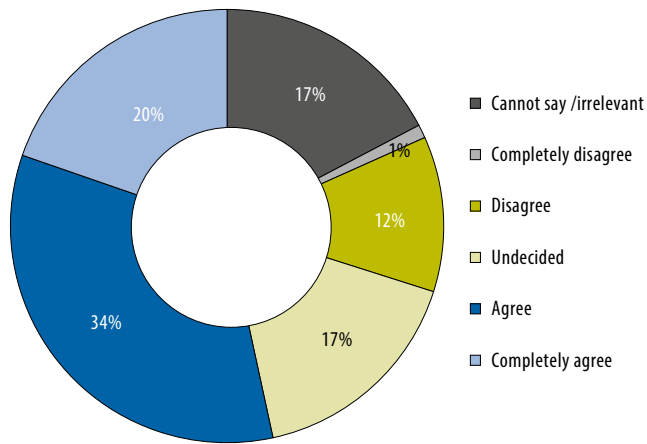


Figure 9. Application process

THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR FUNDING IN KA2 IS CLEAR. N = 299

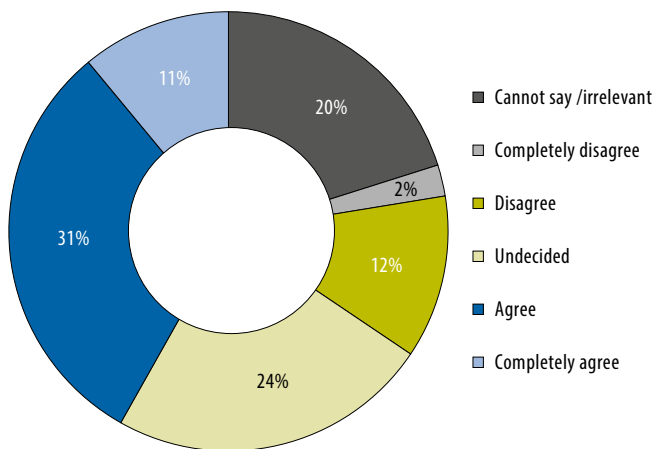


Figure 10. Application process

THE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE COMMISSION REGARDING THE APPLICATION PROCESS IS CLEAR AND USEFUL. N = 302

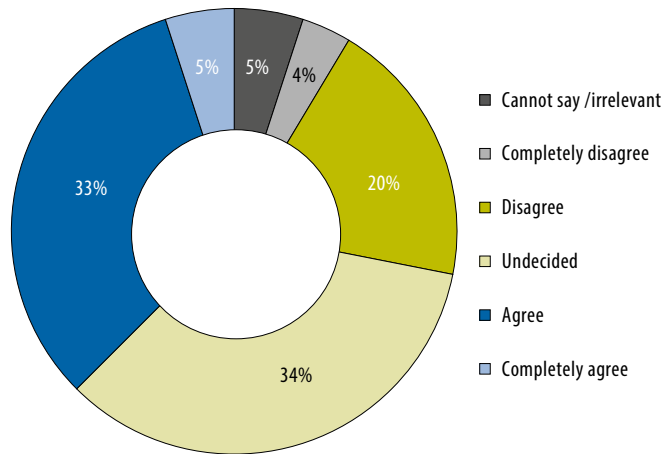


Figure 11. Commission's guidance and support

THE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL AGENCY CIMO REGARDING THE APPLICATION PROCESS IS CLEAR AND USEFUL. N = 304

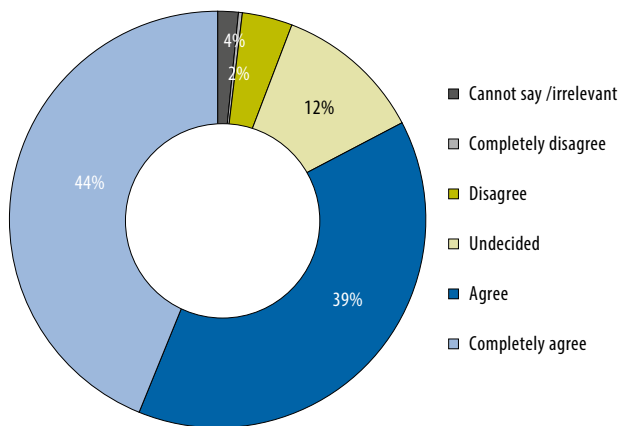


Figure 12. NA's guidance and support

HAS YOUR ORGANISATION UTILISED REPORTS, EXPERIENCES OR OTHER MATERIAL PRODUCED BY OTHER ERASMUS+ PROJECTS? (N = 311)

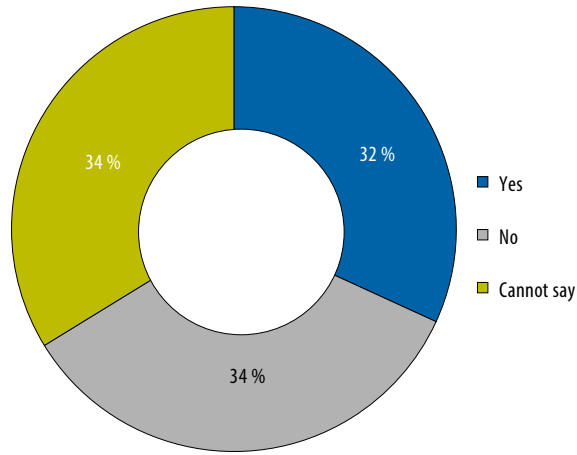


Figure 13. Utilisation of other projects

MY ORGANISATION AIMS TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND MOBILITY

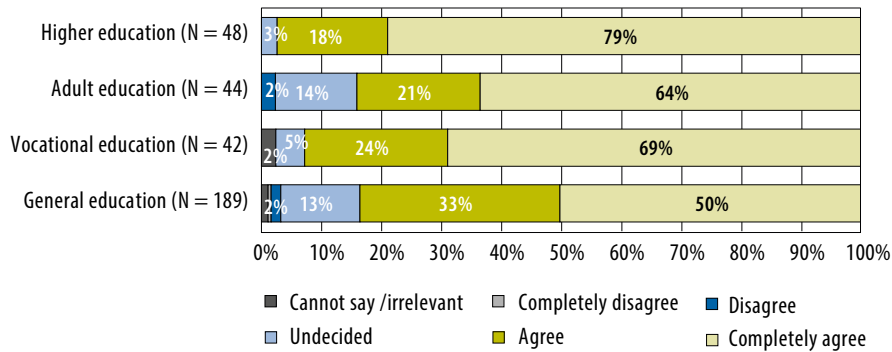
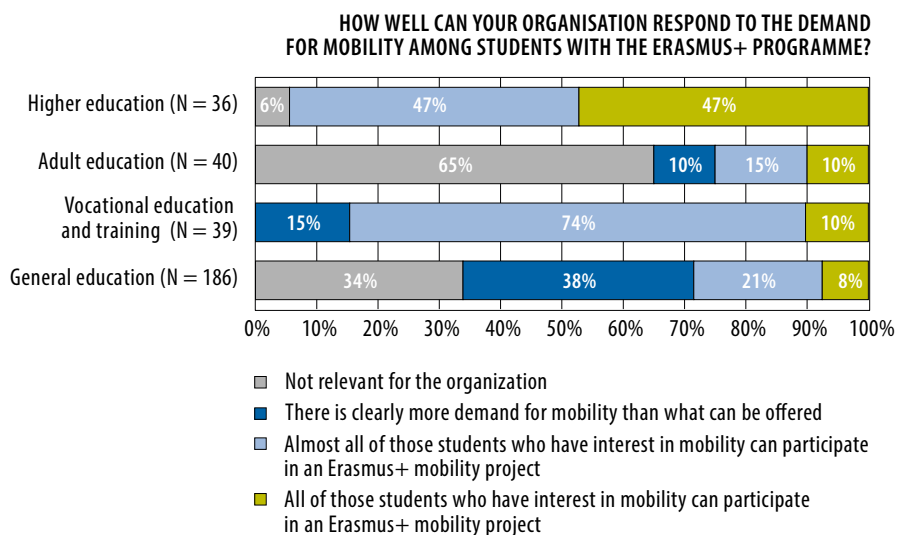
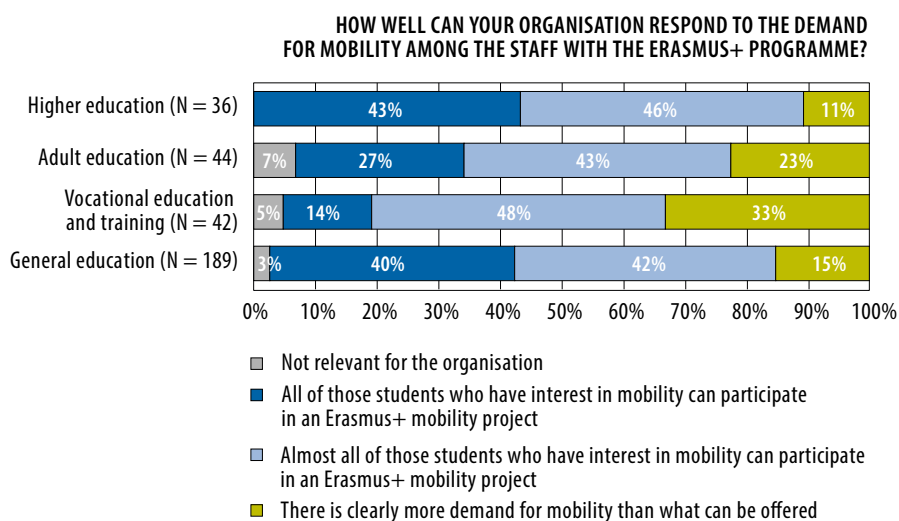


Figure 14. Most Finnish educational organisations aim to promote international cooperation and mobility.



**Figure 15. Ability to respond to the demand for mobility**



**Figure 16. Ability to respond to the demand for mobility**

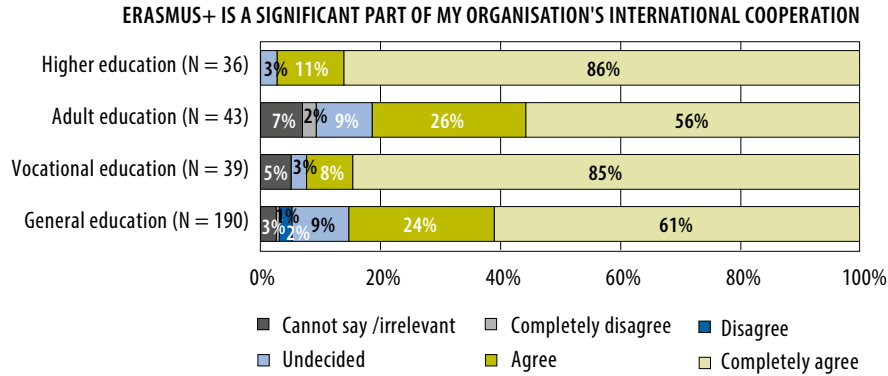


Figure 17. Significance of the Erasmus+ programme

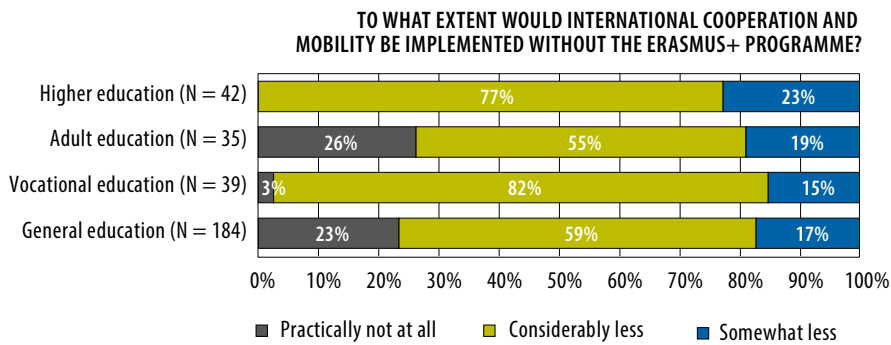


Figure 18. Significance of the Erasmus+ programme

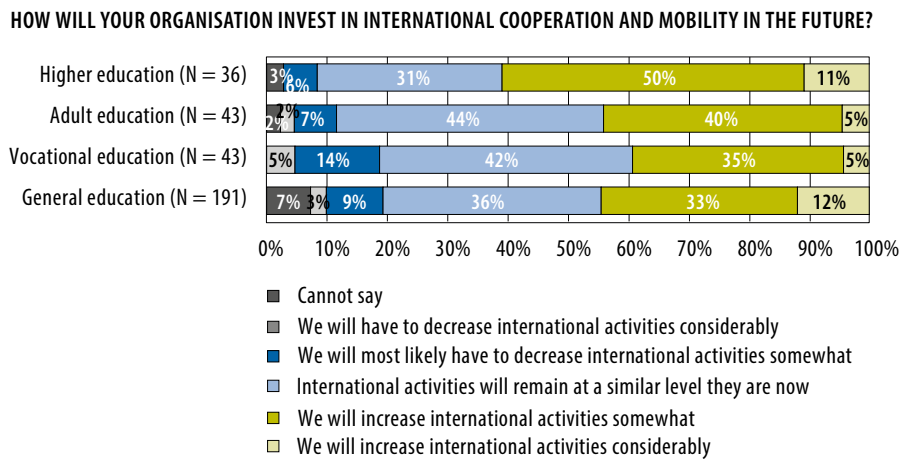
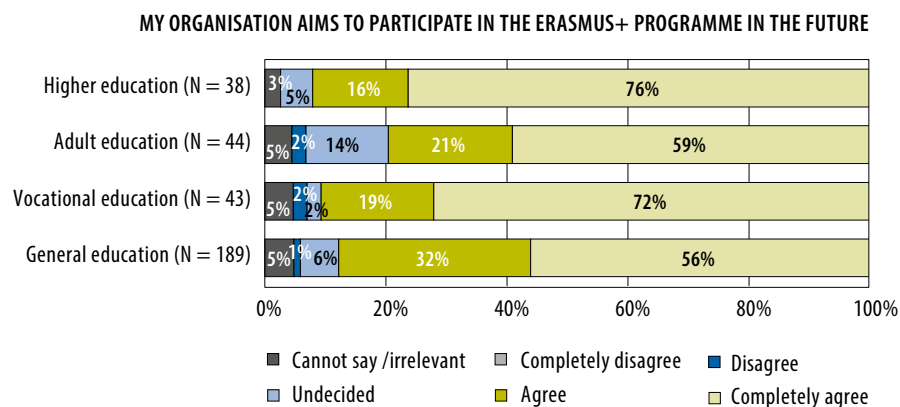
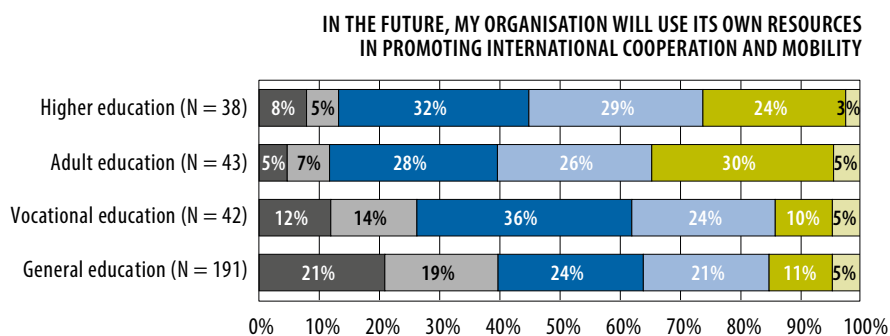
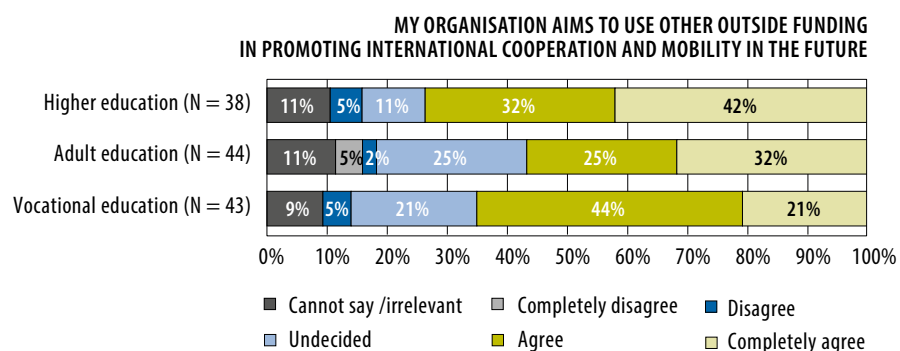


Figure 19. Investing in international cooperation in the future



**Figure 20.** The vast majority of the Finnish educational institutions participating in Erasmus+ activities are planning on doing so also in the future.



**Figure 21.** Other outside funding besides Erasmus+





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