
MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME:

Integrated national report for Slovenia

EVALUATION EXPERTS:

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METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

In the evaluation study, which has resulted in the Interim national report on the implementation and impact of Erasmus +, we used a combined quantitative and qualitative approach. Based on the theoretical basis and initial qualitative analysis, we have identified indicators and variables that were examined in the empirical part of the research.

In the "Education" part of the evaluation exercise, we have created the following instruments:

a) The quantitative part of the evaluation study: questionnaires for preschool education, elementary school education (primary and lower secondary),¹ upper secondary schools (general and vocational education and training), higher education, and adult learning, national agency CMEPIUS (NA) employees (expert workers), and questionnaire for external experts (national evaluators) of Erasmus+ (LLP) project applications for decentralized actions. In all questionnaires, conditional options were added – when respondents assessed that they do not have sufficient knowledge on something, in the following questions those constructs (statements) were not included.

b) The qualitative part of the evaluation study: qualitative content analysis of national and European documents, semi-structured interviews, consensual group, other sources (financial analysis of the NA expenditures/reports, analysis of final reports from the LLP, qualitative content analysis national calls for European structural and investments funds in the financial perspective 2014-2020).

The units in our sample were identified from the publicly available databases of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (for the fields of general, vocational and higher education), in the case of adult education; the database was retrieved from the public institution named Institute for Adult Education of Slovenia. Additionally, in the empirical part of the evaluation study we have also included external experts, for which a database was provided from the NA. We investigated the implementation and impacts of the Erasmus + (and LLP) at the institutional and systemic level. Additionally, we focus on the issues recommended by the document "National Reports on the Implementation and Impact of Erasmus + Guidance Note" and "Evaluation Roadmap". Due to the difficulties in examining the concrete impact LLP and / or Erasmus + have on the development of the school system, which is often impossible to isolate from other impacts that also contributed to the development of the system, we have to determine that the latter rely on the views of the respondents (respondents from the questionnaires and interviewees). The combined approach was also taken into account in the data analysis. Additionally, we used the description of the individual statements when it was not possible and/or reasonable to present data by indicators.

The 'youth' segment of this report aimed at identifying the national idiosyncrasies, with a closer look at the beneficiaries of the program and program participants as well as assess the process of implementation as the bulk of program activities are implemented in a decentralised manner. We conducted a holistic Youth in action/E+ Youth in Action national report that is structured according to the EC guidelines (cover page, table of contents, executive summary, methodology, answers to standard questions, conclusions and suggestions for improvements, annexes) and will serve as the best possible input to compile a single integrated Erasmus + national report. As a result, the E+ Youth in Action was developed as a standalone national report, which was easily transformed into an E+ integrated report.

¹ In Slovenia this is unified.

As the EC (E+/0402015) does not foresee a predetermined methodological research design, we implemented a mixed-methods methodological research design that rests on triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to capture the implementation of E+ program as accurately as possible. To be precise, we utilised a diachronous method triangulation, which initially allowed us to detect the main patterns in evaluation of the E+/YiA program and consequently enabled us to conduct an in-depth analysis of these initially identified patterns. As a result, the following research design was applied:

1. In-depth literature review on the implementation and impact of the E+ Youth in Action in Slovenia (inventory of existing knowledge)
2. Exploratory interviews with the main stakeholders on the implementation and impact of the E+ Youth in Action in Slovenia
3. Survey questionnaire with E+ Youth in Action project participants
4. Survey questionnaire with E+ Youth in Action project leaders
5. Survey questionnaire on the on the implementation and impact of the E+ Youth in Action in Slovenia conducted on beneficiaries of the programme
6. Survey questionnaire on the on the implementation and impact of the E+ Youth in Action in Slovenia conducted on non-beneficiaries of the programme (control group compiled of youth sector organizations not benefiting from the E+ Youth in Action program)
7. A series of in-depth interviews with key beneficiaries and key stakeholders in the field of youth
8. Two validation workshops (with key beneficiaries and key stakeholders) with the purpose of validation of acquired results and deliberation on the recommendations for future design of the program

(A) EFFECTIVENESS

1. TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE ERASMUS+ AND ITS PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES CONTRIBUTED TO THE REALIZATION OF THE ERASMUS+ SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES? ARE THERE DIFFERENCES ACROSS FIELDS?

At the level of Slovenia, certain milestones resulting from the specific objectives of the Erasmus + in the field of education and training have been achieved (e.g. the share of early school leavers, percentage of pupils / students with low achievements in science, the tertiary education attainment (age 30-34)) or we are at least approaching to achieve them. The external experts view (who are also the evaluators of LLP / Erasmus+ decentralized actions) is as follows, 56% believe that the LLP and Erasmus + contributed to the realization of the specific objectives of the Erasmus+ at large and 41% that had contributed somewhat. The view that LLP and Erasmus+ has contributed very little to the realization of the specific objectives is presented as very low, only 3% of respondents expressed this view, none of the respondents believed that the LLP and Erasmus+ did not contributed at all to the realization of these specific objectives.

E+ Youth in Action and its predecessor programme contributed significantly to the realization of the E+ Youth in Action specific objectives in the field of youth. However, the impact of the programmes varies across objectives. In terms of realization of specific objectives in the field of youth, the objective that is perceived to be the most effectively met is the enhancement of the international dimension of youth activities and enhancement of the capacity of youth workers and organisations in their support for young people. The objectives of (1) fostering quality improvements in youth work, in particular through enhanced cooperation between organisations in the youth field and/or other stakeholders and (2) the ability to complement policy reforms at local, regional and national level and to support the development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy as well as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, in particular through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of EU transparency and recognition tools and the dissemination of good practices are according to the main stakeholders as well as survey respondents still visibly pursued, but faced some obstacles due to national idiosyncrasies or international agendas we are going to explain in the below. On the other hand, the specific objective of improving the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, as well as to promote participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, in particular through increased learning mobility opportunities for young people, those active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders, and through strengthened links between the youth field and the labour market appeared to be less visibly met by survey participants and key stakeholders as they perceived it to be too over-encompassing as well as excessively focused on the labour market performance. The difference in perception of the impact the programme had in the youth field originates from the actual origins of individual objectives and coherence with the epistemology of youth work. To be precise, certain objectives did not originate in the youth field and are sometimes considered to be an invasion of either formal education or the labour market/employability mentality into the underprivileged field that nurtures non-formal education, volunteering, lessons for life and not transition to the labour market. There is a prevailing belief among the stakeholders in the youth field that youth is forced to cope with formal educational goals and employability agenda even though these are not inherent to the youth field. Practitioners in the field hence perceive that their modality of work, pedagogical paradigms, terminology, prevailing concepts, methodologies of youth work and primarily core mission is simply not appropriately appreciated. Rather than focusing on the labour

market they feel they should progressively focus on social responsibility and social cohesion. As a result of this trend, the impact of those specific objectives with a tendency to address abovementioned agendas tends to be weaker.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROGRESS OF THE REALIZATION OF THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES CONTRIBUTED TO THE REALIZATION OF THE ERASMUS+ GENERAL OBJECTIVES?

The expert's view is that progress in the realization of the specific objectives has contributed to the realization of the general objectives, 50% of respondents believe that progress in the realization of the specific objectives contributed at large to the realization of the general objectives, and 41% of them that contributed somewhat.

LLP / Erasmus+ in Slovenia contribute to the (answers at large exposed only):

a) Improve the level of key competencies and skills: most respondents (89%) answered that Erasmus+ contribute to improvement key competencies and skills with increased opportunities for learning mobility, the second most common answer was that it contributed through strengthened cooperation between the world of education and training and the world of work (but at least by contribution to a cohesive society, only 23% of respondents answers).

b) Promotion - fostering: most of the respondents view is that Erasmus+ has contributed to a large extent on internationalization of educational institutions, through enhanced transnational cooperation between education and training providers and other stakeholders, followed by quality improvements (80%, 74%, and 71% of respondents), and at least 37% of the respondents thought that the programme is fostering excellence in innovation. In individual semi-structured interviews, innovations were mentioned as an opportunity of Erasmus+, also in a much higher agreement when investigating the programme's impacts on innovations when they were exposed via questionnaires for other stakeholders (educational institutions).

c) The creation of a European lifelong learning area: most respondents answered that the Erasmus+ contributes to a large extent to the creation of a European lifelong learning area through the dissemination of good practices (71%) and the better use of EU transparency and recognition tools (37%), the respondents view is that the programme contributes to a large extent to complement policy reforms at national levels (20%) and through enhanced policy cooperation (11% of respondents).

d) Foreign languages: the respondents view on Erasmus+ contribution at large is as follows; the promotion of EU's broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness (77%), improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages (69% respondents).

e) International dimension: a) Vocational education and training (VET): 38% of respondents agreed that Erasmus+ is contributing at large extent to enhance the international dimension of education and training, in particular through the cooperation between Programme and Partner-country institutions in the field of VET; b) Higher education (HE): through the promotion of mobility (100% respondents), cooperation between Programme and Partner-country institutions in the field of HE (82%), and by increasing the attractiveness of European higher education institutions (55%).

The assessments of external experts (programme project evaluators for decentralized actions) regarding the general and specific objectives of the Erasmus+ are:

a) General objectives:

- the minimum impact of decentralized actions: dropouts;
- the maximum impact: respondents indicated different general objectives.

b) Specific objectives:

- minimum and maximum impact: respondents indicated different specific objectives.

From which it follows that it is impossible to identify the general objective to which the LLP / Erasmus+ had maximum impact, the same applies to the identification of the specific objective, on which, according to respondents, LLP / Erasmus+ had maximum or minimum impact.

In the youth field the surveys conducted on project participants, project leaders as well as youth organizations point out to the fact that Erasmus + general objectives are differently met. When youth is concerned, the most visible progress is considered to be in terms of achieving one of the goals of the overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). This goal is to encourage young people to actively participate in society. On the other hand, the strategy's goal to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market is perceived to be mostly pursued in terms of creating more opportunities to young people with less opportunities and less in terms of making young people more competitive in the labour market. That being said, the surveyed individuals as well as stakeholders hold a strong belief that the efficiency of the cooperation and actions already put in place is improved and that the programme does provide increased benefits to young people in the EU. As far as the general objective of the promotion of European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (i.e. values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities) is concerned, there is a general understanding that E+ and its predecessors support(ed) these values that are increasingly under stress in contemporary Europe. They actually believe that the programme is one of the rare opportunities to defend and promote these values as well as presents one of the main sources where young people could actually learn and experience these values from first hand. The only reservation about achieving this goal stakeholders put forward is the fact that the value dimension tends to be instrumentalized in various projects and activities. As a result, the mechanisms of assessment, review and control have to be in place to separate between window-dressing and true commitment to these values. This consequently demands additional effort from the side of the National Agency. Other E+ general objectives tend to be less visibly met and are mostly perceived to be implicitly addressed and achieved as the nature of youth work is about the process and not the explicit goals as well as about the lessons for life and not for immediate transition to the labour market. There is also a general belief that E+ general objectives are simply too broad and that unrealistic expectations have been set for this programme due to underperformance of other programmes that were/are more appropriate to address contagious issues of contemporary Europe.

3. TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE ERASMUS+ ACTIONS INFLUENCED POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DOMAIN OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING? WHICH ACTIONS WERE MOST EFFECTIVE IN DOING SO? ARE THERE MARKED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIFFERENT FIELDS?

The link between the LLP / Erasmus+ and national policies (or policy development) can be identified, for the latter we collected the data through questionnaires. Most of the beneficiaries and potential

beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ actions on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement (where 1 is strongly disagree, 6 strongly agree) in the majority responded that they agree that the objectives of the LLP / Erasmus+ are consistent with national objectives in the field of education (no differences between different fields of education were found). Also, the majority of respondents agreed that the LLP / Erasmus+ is complementary to and an upgrade of the national focuses and policies of education. In both questions, the dominant response by the respondents' in preschool education, elementary (primary and lower secondary), and adult learning was that they agree with those two statements (consistency of national and European objectives, and complementarity and upgrading of national objectives by the European one). In all groups of respondents and in both two statements, we found a relatively large group of undecided (category neither agree nor disagree; from 4 to 30%). The link between the latter was also examined by semi-structured interviews, which showed that respondents (different stakeholders in the field of education) in most cases can not decide what are the national priorities.

In addition, semi-structured interviews exposed that Erasmus+ actions are more effective at the institutional and individual levels than in the field of educational policy development. Qualitative document analysis showed that for some of the Erasmus+ actions impact on policy development is unexpected (KA1) and, due to the specificity of the action the potential of this impact is smaller – in KA2 the impact on the national level could be bigger by using more structured dissemination. For the KA3 action policy impact is expected by design, but semi-structured interviews showed that this impact on the national level is smaller than expected – the potential of this action is not fully exploited. The identified challenge with this action is also the duration of the projects (the proposal was to increase the duration to four years; this could strengthen the impact on policy development). One of the important finding is that the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS) does not strengthen the system and systematic level in the formulation of educational priorities sufficiently (this view was prevalent between different groups of stakeholders). However, the MESS participates in some KA3 projects, but does not monitor what is going on in the KA2 projects (although to monitor all of those projects is impossible and not realistic to expect). A possible proposal for resolving the current situation in KA3 is to identify the person "pioneer" who would be in charge at the MESS to solve these challenges (better policy implementation based on the projects findings etc.). For the VET level, the CMEPIUS opinion is that through the project in KA2, it is possible to determine the trends of development (the finding is based on their long-year monitoring on applications and project implementations). A consensual group with various experts (representatives of professional support institutions in the field of education) and policy officials raised a certain discrepancy between the expectations of the MESS and the Ministry of Finance (MF) regarding regulations, for which the consensual group found out that this discrepancy could hinder the effective integration and coordination of the actions KA3 at the MESS. Similar barriers were highlighted by other direct budget users' representatives. The solution would make sense to align before the new Public Finance Act.

Nevertheless, a structured transfer to the level of policy development is a challenge for the future, it is possible to see the impact in two different ways: a direct and indirect effect. For the latter, it is certainly possible to identify the potential impacts - already that different stakeholders in the field of education cooperate with each other, share experiences, views, results, etc. it may have a later impact on the design of some policies. However, the practical effect of this is impossible to measure.

The argument of the weak impact of Erasmus+ on policy development in education is reinforced by the results of a questionnaire for external experts – project application evaluators for decentralized actions (54% of respondents think that there is no impact or very little impact of Erasmus+ on national policy development in education).

On content areas (taking into consideration Erasmus+ objectives), the impact of the Erasmus+ on internationalization (on all fields of education should be exposed, even despite the statutory language of instruction, which to some extent constitutes an obstacle to greater internationalization), as well as with the areas and focuses on quality, professional development of teachers and other professionals in educational institutions, and civic and social skills. Those three areas are well covered with specific actions from the Erasmus+ programme (centralized and decentralized actions). Of those three areas, it is possible to find compliance with national policies (in terms of content), which is (obeying the restrictions of double financing) largely financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds (especially from the European Social Funds).

In the youth field, there are visible traces E+ Youth in Action left in terms of policy developments at the national or local level. The programme importantly influenced developments in the way youth policy is understood, by solidifying the horizontal youth policy approach, as well as triggered initiatives pursuing professionalization of youth work, recognition of youth worker as an occupational qualification, promotion and comprehension of learning mobility etc. In many ways the programme has become the tool for development of new policy mechanisms approaches, for testing new ideas in this policy field as well as a fountain of new and innovative approaches that are discussed about and frequently also placed on the policy agenda due to the programme. The programme, according to the main stakeholders, hence has a significant systemic impact and acts as an important driver of the policy making process, although, to many, proves to be less pivotal and influential than the previous one, also due to integration of youth under the common E+ hat. Nevertheless, the programme achieves clear synergetic effects with the national call for activities in the field of youth work. The programme is also perceived to have major influence in terms of improving the capacity of the sector as well as organizations acting in it. This is primarily true for the National Agency MOVIT, which became an influential policy agenda setter due to its elevated influence (it is perceived that MOVIT very efficiently utilizes its TCA resources to influence (trans)national policy developments that contribute to the realization of E+ objectives as well as supports youth sector by addressing its most problematic issues), but also other organizations that managed to professionalize to a higher degree even though they report severe lack of resources for their basic operations. As the E+ Youth in Action programme is frequently perceived to be the pivotal and the main programme in the field of youth, and not supplemental to the national one, this puts organizations under severe stress when they implement E+ Youth in Action projects as they simply lack resources for their everyday operations. Stakeholders also believe that the programme contributed to the 'literacy' of organizations active in the youth sector as well as set a clear array of operating principles that improved the efficiency of organizations as well as improved capacity of the entire sector. It is widely believed that, when the key actions are concerned, that the KA2 (strategic partnerships) and the KA3 (structured dialogue) have the most potential. KA2 is especially favoured by organizations themselves as it allows them to test the limits of their organizations in terms of innovation, development and the impact on the entire sector. However, the impact of KA2 is still to be seen as the main results of this action are still to come. KA3, on the other hand, proved very important in terms of putting some key issues on the policy agenda that actually resulted in policy shifts. The drawback of KA3 is the fact that it eventually rests also on the commitment of politicians even though this is only one of anticipated impacts of the action. Participants, projects leaders and youth organizations see it as one of the most important ones, though. That being said, KA1, primarily mobility of youth workers, contributed a lot to the process of professionalization of youth work as it allows youth workers to improve in terms of capacity and agency.

4. WHAT SPECIFIC APPROACHES (SUCH AS CO-FINANCING, PROMOTION OR OTHERS) HAVE YOU TAKEN IN ORDER TO TRY TO ENHANCE THE EFFECTS OF ERASMUS+? TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THESE APPROACHES BEEN EFFECTIVE? CAN ANY PARTICULAR POINTS FOR IMPROVEMENT BE IDENTIFIED?

The approach is as follows; focusing on the promotion of the Erasmus +: Apples of Quality (NA),² Programme for future headmasters, Thematic trainings for principals (National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE) and NA), in-service training programs for professionals in the field of education applied in national database Katis (project management, leadership, internationalization, learning outcomes, intercultural competences) (NA), cooperation in the cultural bazaar (NA), the presence of NA in the annual national professional conferences for different areas of education (NSLE, MESS, annual professional national conferences), attendance at national meetings for principals (organized by NSLE). At those meetings Erasmus+ with its objectives and practical arrangements is directly promoted. In addition to the above, the successful approach related to the objectives of the Erasmus+ (in particular to the introduction of innovations in the educational work) can be considered for the award of Blaž Kumerdej (National Education Institute).

The results from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews show a good presence of Erasmus+. The familiarity on the new programme is better than (it was) for its successor programme (LLP) – which is evident from the Erasmus+ beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries respondents who are familiar good or very good, the Erasmus+ (the same respondents were simultaneously assessing their familiarity on the LLP). However there are differences between different educational levels when testing statistical significance between those groups of respondents. The LLP results showed that LLP are at least familiar within kindergartens and elementary schools, but are significantly more familiar in upper secondary schools and at the level of higher education. Whereas the comparison between familiarity on LLP and Erasmus+ showed that the Erasmus + (as LLP) are significantly more familiar within elementary and upper secondary schools, at other levels statistically significant differences within the groups of respondents were not found. The results from the external expert questionnaire showed a statistical significant difference in their opinion on how well Erasmus+ is known in their respective fields – experts in VET and the adult learning field believe more that Erasmus+ is well known in those two fields than experts from general education and higher education. Comparing all the fields of experts from the HE field, there is a belief that Erasmus+ is well known in this field (however, 55% of them think that Erasmus+ is well known in HE field).

The 'youth' part of the programme introduces several practices in order to enhance the effects of the programme. It is difficult to assess them in terms of their impact on the eventual attainment of the set objectives; however, these activities recorded positive feedback and were perceived to be a step into the direction in the eyes of stakeholders, organizations and project leaders. One such measure is a close monitoring of the implementation of confirmed projects in order to assess the actual consumption of the allocated budget. This allows the National Agency to have more reliable prediction of the actual budget consumed as well as improved capacity to absorb the budget allocated to it. This measure of increased monitoring/forecasting in combination with 'over commitment' – measure also assisted by the contractual relation of the National Agency with the National Authority – improved the level of absorption by several per cents and provided additional resources to already underfinanced sector that would otherwise be lost. Other important activities also aimed at enhancement of the effects of the programme were series of workshops for various actors within the sector to learn about

² Apples of Quality award are one of the criteria for measuring project quality of Erasmus+. In those project impact on individuals and institutions is visible (individual experiences and knowledge, professional knowledge etc.), but is not sufficient base for identification of national priorities.

the programme and its opportunities as well as workshops, mandatory for new applicants and voluntary for experienced organizations, to improve their capacity in terms of preparing, managing, implementing projects and reporting about them. In this sense, increased attention is also put on the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform that offers a comprehensive overview of projects funded under the new Erasmus+. The National Agency has in fact taken a step further and started with a series of activities, including specially designed workshops, to promote the 'DEOR' (dissemination and exploitation of results) dimension of projects. In this sense, also international trainings within the mobility of youth workers have been organized and promoted. When talking about measures with which the National Agency supported applicants, we need to stress: providing advice over phone, via e-mail (from 500 to 800 for both modes per year) and in-person (around 30 per year), general Youth in Action information workshops (from 10 to 20 per year), financial workshops for beneficiaries (about several per year), workshops for applicants (from 8 to 12 per year). Additional actions to improve the effects of the programme were also production of various brochures, journals, newsletters, improved assessments/monitoring of projects in terms of quality checks and increased presence of the National Agency's staff 'on the ground'. As the recognition of the programme is high in the youth sector, the National Agency also moved from universal promotion activities to targeting activities that include more effort put into DEOR by the agency itself, checks in terms of appropriateness of individuals attending trainings, productions of information with the intention of influencing policies and policy-making processes as well as improving the capacity of youth work, the essence of youth sector. The National Agency also put significant attention to promoting the evidence-based youth policy making by utilizing research results deriving from the E+ Youth in Action monitoring activities conducted by the RAY research network.

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?

The effectiveness of the actions needs to be examined only in conjunction with specific purposes that specific actions have. Indeed, actions KA1 (and KA2) are intended more for individual institutions, and KA3 is more encouraging the participation of ministries. For the individual and institutional level, based on semi-structured interviews, respondents exposed that the more effective action is KA1 (that its effect on learners is the greatest – especially in the case of their mobility, as well as the effect on teachers in cases of their mobility). Experience also shows that the results of KA2 remain more at the level of individual institutions participating in the project. Due to gaps in the transfer of KA3 results in the national educational policies, it could be highlighted that the results of these actions also remains more on the level of involved institutions (this was also the exposed opinion of the consensual group, as can be seen from semi-structured interviews with those participants that were or are involved in the KA3 projects). A challenge for the future is how to identify and transfer quality results between the various stakeholders in the field of education (together with their usage) as well as in the transfer to the actual educational policy on the national level.

For KA3 interest for more intensive participation of the MESS in this action was indicated, as well as a few challenges for direct budget user institutions: the allocation of financial resources obtained via European funding into integrated budget, a reduction of national resources for direct budget user institutions due to the successful performance in European calls, employment restrictions for new staff (although Erasmus+ actions allow that) etc.. The transfer of all activities on public institutions is also

not an optimal solution (especially for the action KA3). The challenge for the future can only be solved by constructive cooperation between MESS and MF.

The impacts on participants and institutions directly involved in the actions are the determining factors that make certain actions more effective. Considering promoting the mobility of the so-called "silent partners" (those not receiving financial sources from the budget, but still play an important role in the success of the project) in the centralized actions (KA3) – on the international and national level, on international level - the enlargement of the eligible institutions for KA1 (professional educational /supporting institutions staff, besides the educational staff and learners - that they can independently apply for mobility projects).On the national level, the challenge is to eliminate the barriers to bring about a more intensive cooperation of MESS in the KA3 actions.

As expressed in the 'education' part, different actions of the programme have different purposes. In terms of KA1, it is clear that the focus is on individual and less on the systemic effects. However, to date, the project leaders as well as most of the main stakeholders expressed the belief that this action is still producing the most tangible results. To be precise, it offers first-hand mobility experience to a 'regular' young person, to many young persons with fewer opportunities as well as enables youth workers to improve their agency. In addition, the monitoring survey also indicates that with long-term mobility experience it also improves capacity of organizations, significantly impacts individuals in the mobility programme as well as can significantly impact hosting communities, particularly in smaller communities offering less intercultural contacts and experience. At the same time, we have to point out that majority of stakeholders expressed a concern that the new programme offers less opportunities to individuals, primarily more vulnerable ones, as some actions ceased to exist. This is primarily the case with former local youth initiatives that allowed many young individuals with less opportunities to enter the programme and are now not in a position to do so due to various obstacles (e.g. young Roma people that experience language barriers due to their lower educational attainment and knowledge of foreign languages). In addition, the new programme proves to be less friendly to informal groups of young people that tended to apply heavily under the previous programme. This is particularly important in localities where there is simply a lack of youth organizations or organizations acting in the field of youth or where existing organizations lack capacity. In terms of the systemic effects majority of surveyed respondents, organizations as well as stakeholders believe KA2 to be the action offering innovation to the sector as well as impact on the sector and policy-making in general. The latter is also an aspect highly cherished in terms of KA3 as it 'spilled-over' in structured dialogues beyond what is foreseen by the programme and importantly influenced the way policy-making is seen and performed in the youth field. It also contributed to some tangible policy outputs that improved the position of youth as well as increased the agency of young people and their representatives.

6. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE INTEGRATION OF SEVERAL PROGRAMMES INTO ERASMUS+ MADE THE PROGRAMME MORE EFFECTIVE? DO YOU SEE SCOPE FOR CHANGES TO THE STRUCTURE OF ERASMUS+ OR ITS SUCCESSOR PROGRAMME THAT COULD INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS?

The opinions of the majority of respondents of semi-structured interviews are divided, but the majority of those who have their own opinion on that responded that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ made the latter more transparent, although the largest contribution is in the promotion of the programme. The opinions of external experts – evaluators of proposal for decentralized actions are similar, most of them have the opinion that the integration of several

programmes into a single programme made Erasmus+ more effective, most of them also agreed that this made the programme more effective (somewhat or much more effective) on a level of beneficiaries and participants, with the exception of VET experts where the most non-decided respondents were (whereas there is no significant difference between experts of different fields in education on that statements). The respondents of semi-structured interviews also pointed out that the increased flexibility of the rules, which apply to decentralized actions - less administration due to financial simplification (in terms of cost - at the application stage and later in proving the cost), but that the application is more complex. However, decentralized action contractors warn that a contribution to the cost per unit is often not sufficient to cover the real costs. Institutions that have centralized and decentralized actions have pointed out that financial simplification in KA3 has not yet been implemented. They are confronted with different rules in the financial (administrative) management of projects - in centralized and decentralized actions (although some of them cannot decide if this is good or not). The success of the program would increase more transversal and overall operation of the European Commission. It is obvious that cooperation is mostly still a sector one (e.g. meetings by sector, not by key activities), which is exposed in the opinion of the NA. The results of semi-structured interviews (mainly with representatives of the NA) also pointed out that in the national context, it should be taken into account the power to participate in working groups and committees at the EU level and the establishment of a systematic mutual information sharing, at least between the NA and MESS (which was exposed and agreed upon also at the consensual group). The additional possibility would be more a systematic transfer of information between Sectorial Erasmus+ Commission and the representatives of the sectors that could systematically transmit information within each sector of MESS.

The integration of several programmes into Erasmus + had several effects. In the youth field, there are positive and negative effects that marked the inclusion of Youth in Action programme under the Erasmus + umbrella. To start with the positive ones, the integration of different programmes presented also an opportunity to promote cooperation and transfer of good practices across sectors. There were some bright examples of cross-sectorial cooperation, primarily the initiative called 'Key to inclusion' promoted by both E+ National agencies, but in general this aspect of the programmes still needs to be heavily improved as it failed to reach its potential. One of the proposed practices to increase such integration and transfer of practices is to organize national as well as EU level event to promote sharing of best practices as well as networking with the success stories in the field. Trainings and workshops to transfer knowledge across sectors are also something majority of stakeholders argue for. The other positive side of the integration of the programme is also perceived to be the increased attention of state bodies to youth. It seems that the elevated importance of the programme, also due to its size, also created conditions in which the voice of youth is heard more easily. The third and most important main impact of programme integration is perceived to be the symbolic recognition of youth work and its position being side-by-side with formal education; as two equal partners addressing the main issues concerned.

At the same time, key stakeholders believe the youth sector suffered several negative consequences due to programme integration. Firstly, they expressed concern that youth sector lost its identity under the big Erasmus + framework. Many believe that Erasmus + failed as a method of promotion of youth, youth issues and the position of youth as it juggles with too many priorities and goals that are simply too broad. They believe the objectives should be more precise, more focused on youth, and also reflecting a clear move from the current priorities that promoted the issues related to the position of youth at the labour market too aggressively. Stakeholders believe that as such, the Erasmus + programme offers too little room to address national idiosyncrasies and simply uses approaches to address and reach youth that are too lined-up with the mentality of formal education. This translated into introduction of concepts, terminologies, working methodologies and standards that are not

implicitly present in the youth sector and were perceived to be an invasion into the core identity of youth sector, youth work and non-formal education. This created a clear and omnipresent perception that the youth sector is being secondary, an 'addition' to the formal education. Primarily youth organizations believe that these attributes of the Erasmus + created a situation where the sector is no longer about 'the youth for youth' approach, but rather returned to the traditional 'patronizing' model of work being done for youth, primarily by highly professionalised organizations that sometimes have no genuine link to the youth sector/youth field. As a result, the tools used within the programme proved to be very challenging for newcomers to the programme who do not have appropriate project management capacity to apply, manage and report about the activities they implement. A step towards de-bureaucratization and de-professionalization of program when project management (and not youth work as such!) is concerned is therefore seen as imperative since a step forward for big organizations in terms of applying, reporting and managing projects, by providing them with new IT tools etc., can as easily – and so it is – be seen as a step backwards for organizations and groups youth sector is traditionally trying to include and activate. This resulted in a general criticism of programme integration, i.e. that the integration itself led to the introduction of organizations into the youth field that reflect clear comparative advantages compared to the traditional organizations in the youth sector. As the stakeholders perceive these organizations have no demonstrated track record of being committed to youth work, they uniformly believe this creates a situation of having 'a pack of wolves in the sheep's territory' who will leave immediately when the food (resources) will be gone. On the other hand, the ones needing an extra hand (i.e. informal groups of young people) appear to be left aside. A widely expressed view is therefore that the new programme should have (1) a standalone budget line devoted specifically for youth, (2) should have specific objectives for youth that are coherent with the new youth strategy that is currently being drafted, (3) that the programme and its infrastructure (tools, methodologies) is adapted to the needs and idiosyncrasies of the youth sector, and (4) that the new programme recognizes different national realities and allows them to be appropriately addressed.

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?

So far, it seems that there is enough interest in Slovenia, therefore it is possible to count on the full absorption of the budget (for education). This is implied also in the analysis of annual reports and is supported with data from external experts' questionnaire that evaluated the proportion of grant applications in their expert fields. However, in certain fields most of the eligible institutions are already included in the programme (e.g. VET - vocational secondary schools, in addition also in HE the proportion of eligible institutions is height), which was raised by the interviewees at the NA. Otherwise, as shown in the annual reports, there were little transfers between fields and actions with regards to the approved budget of Erasmus+. The system for school partnerships is assessed as inadequate (described below).

When it comes to the beneficiaries of the programme, a big number of them (42 per cent) believe that the budget is not of the appropriate size compared to the goals that have to be met. The rationale behind their continued activity under the programme is the fact, that the budget available to youth under the Erasmus + programme is one of the rare sources of funding for youth organizations and organizations active in the youth sector. As the government funding of youth sector fails to address the needs of the organizations active in the sector, this programme acts as a lifeline to these organizations

to survive and evolve. This is very evident already from project acceptance rates the National Agency since, according to the national agency's records, on average the rate is around 25 per cent and gets even down to 16 per cent when projects under the KA2 are concerned. At the same time, a clear assurance of the quality are also very high point thresholds for successful projects as it is clear that the general level of quality of submissions is high. However, these records are also a consequence of intensive and targeted efforts of the National Agency not only to improve visibility of the programme, but mainly improving the quality of projects by running a series of preparatory, reporting, finalizing, DEOR etc. workshops for beneficiaries and applicants. The Agency also invests a lot of effort by being present at the ground and also by performing ground-checks in order to ensure appropriate level of quality assurance. However, such quality assurance also comes at a price as the Agency's human resources are limited and understaffing could become an issue as well as there is not enough resources for the staff to be properly trained and educated to run these support activities that contribute to the high level of quality. As a result, there is a clear need for additional management fee that would allow the National Agency to be properly staffed to maintain the level of quality it is currently holding as well as to allow the staff to be properly trained. This is going to become even more relevant with the anticipated increase of the budget. In addition, another important change would be a greater level of flexibility in deciding the distribution of resources across key actions as the structure of the sector varies from country to country, which in effect also means that the needs of the sectors are different. In this sense, maintain a high level of quality is disproportionately harder under the KA1 than in KA2 as it is clear that the resources are very scarce under the KA2 and that only proposals with extremely high level of quality fall through.

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?

According to NA they assess the system for school partnerships as inappropriate (school - school), both from a financial and an organizational point of view: one application, approved by the entire consortium; a coordinator does not have a real coordinating role - financially each runs its part of the project, including reports, each national agency has its own rules. Problems have arisen in completing these projects - the final reports (schools until final stage did not know to who or what will be reported), during the implementation these problems could not be identified. This part of the program is not as efficient as it was in the LLP. It would be better if coordination would be placed in other projects. Some school principals have expressed this opinion also. The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (NAKVIS) during the consensual group meeting warned that they support the mobility of students and professors, while also warning of the the high level of administration in exchange for the quality of projects (some HE exposed this on a semi-structured interviews too).

As mentioned in the previous point, when it comes to youth, the greatest challenge appears to be the lack of flexibility in deciding the distribution of resources across key actions. As the sector has its specific structural idiosyncrasies, the National Agency has to invest unanticipated amount of effort to address and fulfil the quotas set for individual key actions and maintain the quality of projects. At the same time, other key actions have more than a critical mass of high-quality submissions, but there simply is not enough resources to address these needs. At the same time, the management fee has to reflect the extra input invested in the project quality, particularly when having in mind the anticipated increase of the budget for youth and a set of intensive and targeted support activities focused on

DEOR and similar agendas that need to become rooted in the sector. When it comes to organizations, on the other hand, 45 per cent of them express a concern because they face difficulties while implementing project activities. These difficulties mainly relate to visa issuing problems, unreliable partners, lack of motivated project participants and the burden of excessive bureaucracy. Among the most frequent recommendations the organizations expressed were a revision of a system of travel expenses as they feel that the cost of travelling are not always entirely covered as well as more opportunities to share good practices among projects, nationally and internationally, as this would create an opportunity for them to get the state-of-the-art developments in the field as well as give them the ability to network and access individuals and organizations where these practices originate from.

9. TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE APPROACHES AND TOOLS THAT ARE USED FOR DISSEMINATING AND EXPLOITING THE RESULTS OF ERASMUS+ AND ITS PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES EFFECTIVE? WHERE CAN YOU SEE POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVEMENTS?

The effective dissemination and use of results already in the application stage is for applicants the most difficult to justify, in the opinion of external experts – evaluators of the LLP / Erasmus+ decentralized actions projects applications. This group of respondents also evaluated how successful approaches and tools used for the dissemination and exploitation of results are. The majority of them expressed that they are somewhat successful (72% of respondents). Also, respondents from semi-structured interviews identified deficiencies in the system of dissemination and exploitation of results. Especially after the completion of a particular project, more institutions do not monitor the effects after the project ends (this relates to different educational levels), as shown in the questionnaires. These groups of respondents are also not very familiar with the approaches and tools used for the dissemination and exploitation of results (e.g. Erasmus+ platform for project results – which is required, but is not a transparent enough platform, would need a more detailed search options, as shown in some semi-structured interviews); School Education Gateway). We asked about the familiarity with of other tools, namely eTwinning (school education), which is known or well known in 68% of relevant respondents (20% had heard about eTwinning, but they did not know what it is for) and EPAL (adult education) which is known or well known in 41% of relevant respondents (18% had heard about EPAL, but did not know what it is for).

The organizations implementing projects in the field of youth believe that approaches and tools that are used for disseminating and exploiting the results of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes are fairly effective. To be precise, 39 per cent of organizations perceive them as effective and 41 per cent as neither effective nor ineffective. On the other hand, the National Agency continuously perceived this aspect of financed and proposed projects to be their Achilles heel. As a result, the National Agency has in fact taken a proactive position about this dimension of projects and started with a series of activities, including specially designed workshops, to promote the 'DEOR' (dissemination and exploitation of results). Apart from investing into the DEOR component of applicants and beneficiaries, the Agency also invested into its own comprehension and skills related to DEOR as it became one of the main issues on their agenda. As the Agency recognises its potential for organizations – providing it becomes useful for applicants and other users – it put increased attention to the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform that offers a comprehensive overview of projects funded under the new Erasmus+. As a result, various support activities continuing along these lines could prove important when deciding whether or not such an agenda should be maintained and at what input. On the other hand, the

organizations believe the tool has to become recognised by the broader public as well as perceive workshops and trainings on DEOR aimed at improving their capacity as a very important and necessary measure.

(B) EFFICIENCY

10. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE SYSTEM OF COOPERATION AND DIVISION OF TASKS BETWEEN THE COMMISSION, EXECUTIVE AGENCY, NATIONAL AGENCIES, EUROPEAN INVESTMENT FUND, NATIONAL AUTHORITIES, INDEPENDENT AUDIT BODIES, AND ERASMUS+ COMMITTEE EFFICIENT AND WELL-FUNCTIONING? WHAT ARE THE AREAS FOR POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT OR SIMPLIFICATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ERASMUS+ OR A SUCCESSOR PROGRAMME?

Cooperation with the European Investment Fund is irrelevant for Slovenia for Erasmus+. Otherwise, the system of cooperation and the division of tasks is well structured (in the opinion of all stakeholders involved), challenges sometimes arise during concrete cooperation (challenges of feedback loop). In short, the improvements are possible mainly on the operational level. The representative of Slovenia in the Committee of the Erasmus+ evaluated the cooperation between different institutions as exemplary. Considering that the Erasmus+ combines two programmes (education, youth) and added also sport, the teething problems at programme introduction were reasonable (e.g. poorly functioning information system), but unfortunately, they were a little bit too much prolonged. On European level the representative wants to a certain degree of inconsistency (e.g. short deadlines for the NAs, while the European Commission often takes a lot of time to answer), refractory (in particular EACEA as NA is reporting a lot of times "falls asleep"). It is also estimated that the cooperation between the various bodies (Erasmus+ Committee, European Commission, etc.) are often very weak, that certain actions and solutions are vague even at the presentations stage. As a consequence, it transferred on a work of NA, indeed their level of load is twofold: they are committed to good execution of the tasks, informing the users even if themselves do not have enough information or often they kept changing. We recommend increasing communication between the different institutions at EU level and the possibility that in the event of ambiguity NA in accordance with their national situation, make their own decisions. We also believe that IT solutions are too rigid, because it is impossible to cover all the life situations in a computer application. We also believe that the Erasmus+ is used for too many actions that are gradually added, with this it will slowly reached the point where it can undermine the basic purpose of Erasmus+. At the national level, the representative estimated cooperation with the NA as very well, as the system of communication on an everyday base is established, enabling real-time overview of the implementation of the Erasmus+. Areas of possible improvements could be seen primarily in the greater use of representatives at the EU level (e.g. Erasmus+ Programme Committee) in the implementation of possible solutions for a better implementation of the Erasmus+.

The NA draws attention to the following:

- Committee of the Erasmus+: for smaller countries is more difficult to achieve an effect;
- the European Commission, EACEA: the system level is not the most efficient, while two aspects remain, namely: 1. From both institutions getting information, according to the national calendar of activities, is very late; 2. The amount of information from the EACEA, on centralized actions, is very meagre. The desire for greater cooperation was identified (e.g. the provision of summaries of

individual projects, evaluations, feedbacks). At the operational level, they exposed the observation that the European Commission (mainly DG EAC) are susceptible to high staff turnovers, therefore they employ newcomers, without the knowledge or experience from the programme (only desk officers remains constant), also at the sectoral level leaders often change. The feedback received is therefore often only information contained in the Guide for Applicants.

- MESS: at the system level more structured cooperation is missing, at the operational level this means that cooperation often depends only on the individual, therefore feedback is at times weak. The NA expects better cooperation in priority discussions and more widespread promotion of Erasmus+ by the MESS, indeed with some sectors, they cooperate better (as an example of good practices they listed HE) than with others. The same applies for the cooperation with different public expert institutions (supportive institutions in different fields of education) – the system level here has not been established, but at the operational level, there is well-established cooperation with some of the institutions.

The independent audit body: underlines the good cooperation with various stakeholders at both the systemic and operational level. MESS: during the meeting of the consensual group, stakeholders identified key activities in which they wish to continue to cooperate closely (especially MESS and NA), namely the identification of national priorities for decentralized actions, which could be covered by calls of Erasmus+ and the identification and dissemination of high-quality results from Erasmus+ projects.

On the youth side of the programme several positive as well as negative aspects of cooperation within the youth field have to be pointed out. Firstly, the National Agency feels the European Commission conceives the role of national agencies as mere fund operators when in fact they are also important policy stakeholders in many countries. As a result, there is a perception that the European Commission only informs the National Agencies, without prior consultations and/or discussions on the issue. This is also the reason why some stakeholders believe the Commission lacks direct contact with issues/actors on the ground. There is a widespread belief that the inclusion of national agencies in the process of drafting of measures would improve their effectiveness and efficiency, as these measures would then fit better to different national environments. The National Agency perceives that the lack of information then also continues to other areas, for example, they lack information about centralised calls even though they promote them. Hence, as in the case with the Commission itself, the National Agency believes communication with the executive agency needs to improve. One step into the right direction would be to include back the national agencies into the programme committee of the Erasmus +, as it has been in the past, since there is a strong conviction that this facilitates the flow of vital information.

When it comes to the relationship with the national authority, the same issue of information deprivation is exposed. To be precise, the National Authority is convinced that the process of informing the national authorities by the Commission needs to be improved, primarily by allowing them to have more on-site informing and contacts, more intensive briefing about what is happening in the field. In the same vein, the National Authority as well as the National Agency believe that the European Commission should trust them more and define clear and non-overlapping roles for them as this provides fertile grounds for addressing various youth issues across sectors and countries (e.g. when it comes to monitoring, it has to be clear what is the role of the National Authority and what of the Commission since there is otherwise a big overlap, which creates the feeling of distrust). On the other hand, when it comes to the national level, there is a general belief that the established monitoring group for the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme works well, although it could be more (pro)active. In addition the relationship between the National Authority and the National Agency for

youth proves to be exemplary in terms of information sharing as well as implementation of certain activities.

11. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE INTEGRATION OF SEVERAL PROGRAMMES INTO ERASMUS+ RESULTED IN EFFICIENCY GAINS AND LOSSES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME, BOTH AT THE LEVEL OF THE NATIONAL AGENCY/IES AND ON THE BENEFICIARIES' AND PARTICIPANTS' LEVELS? DO YOU SEE SCOPE FOR CHANGES TO THE STRUCTURE OF ERASMUS+ OR ITS SUCCESSOR PROGRAMME THAT COULD INCREASE EFFICIENCY?

Erasmus+ is more efficient in the implementation for participating institutions in the program and NA. The differences are perceived between those beneficiaries who have more experience with the Erasmus+ (the implementation is as a rule more efficient), than to those beneficiaries that are less familiar with the programme who do not have direct experience with it (or very little), being unable to detect those changes (which was also evident from interviews conducted).

For the NA, the implementation of the Erasmus+ program is more efficient compared to previous years and especially compared to its successor programme. For KA1 and KA2 the same logic applies- this is also reflected in the support of NA employees' feedbacks on specific issues those beneficiaries have. This is especially true for countries (including Slovenia), where the NA operates as an integrated agency (all fields in education are covered within one agency). The EU could restrict dispersion and increased efficiency in the countries in a way that in all countries either a single (integrated) agency or an agency organized around the field would exist – currently the system in each country is running separately.

Increased efficiency could be envisaged, while ensuring greater programme stability and reducing the constant changes within the programme.

The integration of various programmes into Erasmus + did unify the 'language' within the youth sector appears to be more successful at including youth with less opportunities, however, the programme also allowed countries to have separate National Agencies for youth. As this was one of the main demands of youth sector at the time, we shall put forward a reflection on the impact of such arrangement. There is a widespread belief across the youth sector that the decision to keep a separate national agency also heavily safeguarded the youth field in general. To be precise, stakeholders believe that the separation retained the relevance of the target group and enabled the actors in the youth sector to pursue sectoral goals more easily, to – at least to a degree – retain specific features of the sector as well as retained a very fragile and already diminishing (also due to the features of the Erasmus +) identity of the youth field. Besides safeguarding the identity and certain specificities of the youth field, the separation also allowed the National Agency to solidify its status as one of the key structures in the youth field, one of the most influential actors shaping the policy and the development of youth work. A separation also meant that the National Agency better corresponds to the logic of the national programmes in the field of youth and safeguards its autonomy also from this point of view.

When we discuss specific measures that allowed more efficient use of resources, one such measure is a close monitoring of the implementation of confirmed projects in order to assess the actual consumption of the allocated budget. This allows the National Agency to have more reliable prediction of the actual budget consumed as well as improved capacity to absorb the budget allocated to it. This

measure of increased monitoring/forecasting in combination with 'over commitment' – measure also assisted by the contractual relation of the National Agency with the National Authority – improved the level of absorption by several per cents and provided additional resources to already underfinanced sector that would otherwise be lost. However, the recommendations that were most frequently voiced in terms of achieving the greatest efficiency in the implementation of the programme is the fact that the programme needs stability and constant changes, revisions and modifications have a very negative impact. Providing stability of the programme, with measures being drafted on the basis of evaluations and evidence, and in close cooperation with the relevant actors involved – including the entire implementation chain –, while at the same time taking into account the goals and ambitions of the new youth strategy, could prove pivotal.

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?

The impact of Erasmus+ and its successor programme is visible, as it is seen via a very high percentage of institutions in the field of education involved in the various activities of the Erasmus + (and predecessor programs).

Implementations of the various actions are effective - depending on the purpose and the specifics of each of the action. From educational institutions (schools) in principle, system thinking cannot be expected, besides that it is expected from them that their applications in the KA1 actions is conducted with the aim of improving practice (which is also defined by law). Therefore it makes sense to increase activities in KA3 actions (when having in mind the national level), with this it would be possible to achieve a pilot implementation of innovations, for those activities that are on a level of innovation.

The same applies to the field. As noted (based on data from questionnaires and some semi-structured interviews) actions are the most efficient for individuals directly involved in the action, and later on at the institutional level. As the transfer of efficient practices would be worthwhile to consider promoting mobility of the so-called "silent partners" in the action KA3 (which are those partners who do not have their finances in the project budget, but are very important for the successful implementation of the project), as determined by other participating organizations in KA3 actions. Also it would be worthwhile to think about the greater involvement of the MESS in KA3 and further strengthening and structuring the dissemination and use of results (valid for all actions), establishing a clear national direction (bottom-up approach to the problems, which would also require a change in culture/paradigms), which was found during consensual group and in each semi-structured interview.

As far the youth part of the programme is concerned, we have to note that different actions have different purposes as well as different traditions within the European programmes. In terms of KA1, it is clear that the focus is on individual and it also has the greatest impact on a young individual. To date, the project leaders as well as most of the main stakeholders expressed the belief that this action is still producing the most tangible results. To be precise, it offers first-hand mobility experience to a 'regular' young person, to many young persons with fewer opportunities as well as enables youth workers to improve their ability to act. In addition, the monitoring survey also indicates that with long-term mobility experience it also improves capacity of organizations, significantly impacts individuals in the mobility programme as well as can significantly impact hosting communities, particularly in smaller communities offering less intercultural contacts and experience. In terms of the systemic effects

majority of surveyed respondents, organizations as well as stakeholders believe KA2 to be the action offering innovation to the sector as well as impact on the sector and policy-making in general. The latter is also an aspect highly cherished in terms of KA3 as it 'spilled-over' in structured dialogues beyond what is foreseen by the programme and importantly influenced the way policy-making is seen and performed in the youth field. It also contributed to some tangible policy outputs that improved the position of youth as well as increased the agency (ability to act) of young people and their representatives. That being said, the general perception in the sector is that it is necessary to maintain the focus on the individual, however, the systemic effects provided by KA2 and KA3 also need to be reinforced, particularly by promotion of inclusion of groups that got left out of the programme due to its innovations (non formal groups of young people, local level initiatives).

13. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE SYSTEM OF SIMPLIFIED GRANTS RESULTED IN A REDUCTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR NAs AND PROGRAMME BENEFICIARIES AND PARTICIPANTS? ARE THERE DIFFERENCES ACROSS ACTIONS AND FIELDS? WHAT ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAMME COULD BE CHANGED TO FURTHER REDUCE THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN, WITHOUT UNDULY COMPRISING ITS RESULTS AND IMPACTS?

For the NA, the system of simplified grants has not resulted in a reduction of administrative burdens due to the fact that the administrative burdens have increased elsewhere. Because of IT tools, even though these tools have been updating and improving, NA still incurs a greater workload. The improvement of the barriers in this segment would help the stability of the IT tools to support greater flexibility, which is typical for the Erasmus +.

The beneficiaries of the program and participants enjoy reduced administrative burden, but this is only visible for decentralized actions, as reported in the semi-structured interviews.

In the field of youth, when asked whether the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for NA and programme beneficiaries and participants, beneficiary organizations recognize the change of simplified grants as a positive change. More than 37 per cent of organizations reported that they perceive this step as a step that reduced their administrative burdens, while 30 per cents perceive the burdens to be the same. Only 4 per cents of organization see this step as a step of creation of additional burdens. In general, the perception is that the system of simplified grants did reduce administrative burdens immensely, however, the national legislation still prevents it to have the full effect (strong elements of doing business on paper). On the other hand, the calculation of travel costs does raise some concerns as there is a general perception that these approximations could be improved. In addition, some organizations complain about the apparent lack of understanding the difference between eligible and ineligible costs. In terms of the National Agency, the workload performed on "paper" shrunk severely with transition to electronic operations, however, in general stayed the same or even increased due to obligation to perform tasks on different tools. This significantly reduced the burdens also on the beneficiaries' side, although smaller organizations with less skilful individuals also tend to experience the negative sides of this step. Organizations also point out the need to link databases in the mobility tools and Youthpass as well as the need to reduce applications and reports in terms of apparently unnecessary details. Many organizations also point out the need of the mobility tool to be more user friendly as well as the need to link it to quality (impact) as it lacks this dimension in the current condition.

14. TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE IT TOOLS PROVIDED BY THE COMMISSION ADEQUATE FOR THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME? 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?

The NA assessed the following IT tools: EPL, Mobility Tool, EU Survey, OEET, BO Reports, E+ DASHBOARD, Erasmus+ Project Results Platform. After initial difficulties, when all the tools worked inadequate and unreliable, the situation in 2016 dramatically improved. Call Erasmus+ KA1 for 2017 took place entirely without problems; we expect the same for KA2.³

Despite the improvement in usability and reliability of the tools, NA highlighted some areas where further improvements would be possible:

- Stability: there are constant changes within the tools themselves. According to some, NA is not even informed in advance respectively or given an explanation as to why something has changed or is missing;
- Instructions for use: for certain steps/procedures user-friendly instructions do not exist (those instructions are missing or they are very professional/technical; the best aids are webinars);
- tools do not allow all the flexibility that is allowed by the rules (certain things NA cannot approve because they cannot be done by using the available tools);
- uniformity: too many different tools exists, NA must specialize to use at least 5 different tools (which in the case of small NA where they do not have a single IT expert, this task is very difficult, hired outside technicians cannot do this work either because the technical work is very much associated with the content).

The IT tools for the effective implementation and monitoring of the program otherwise provide many good and necessary aspects and are welcome, but currently they take a lot of effort and work, sometimes for a minimal result.

When asking youth organizations about the appropriateness of the IT tools, 57 per cent of them expressed the believe that they are appropriate and 7 per cent that they are very appropriate. On the other hand, less that 4 per cent of them perceive the IT tools as inappropriate or completely inappropriate. The National Agency equally appreciates improvements in this field. Initially, in 2014 there were some hiccups with the transition to the electronic system (mobility tool), however, this improved immensely in 2016 and allowed the beneficiaries much cherished one-entry point as well as provided the staff at the National Agency important support with NA connect. Erasmus+ Project Results Platform still needs to be improved in terms of getting recognition by potential users and beneficiaries, however, the infrastructure is there. When talking about the potential improvements of IT tools, organizations believe IT tools could be adapted to be compatible with the open code software and to be able to write applications online without the PDF interface.

15. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE LEVEL OF HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES THAT IS AVAILABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME ADEQUATE?

³ Interview was conducted before the call for KA2.

WHAT STEPS DID YOU TAKE TO OPTIMIZE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE RESOURCES DEPLOYED FOR THE ERASMUS+ IMPLEMENTATION?

The level of human resources in the financial resources available for implementation of the programme in the future is less than appropriate. Due to the lack of financial resources, there is consequently a lack of staff in order to carry out all tasks. The responsibilities for the NA from the European Commission also arrive unexpectedly, even for activities where NA does not have enough professional staff. An additional challenge is that for the new roles, it is not possible to predict the shares or number of employees, due to the fact that it is not possible to predict the responses of those actions within the state. There is concern for the next three consecutive years mainly due to the following: before the predicted increase of tasks/shares on programme management (for which an increase in the budget is already planned) would be necessary to provide an appropriate level of human resources that can be timetabled to acquire the necessary skills and later on could immediately after the start of a new action independently and efficiently start to work. Only with this kind of planning would it be possible to assure the implementation of increased workload. Therefore the proposal is to increase the budget for the management of the programme one year before the increase of the budget for actions.

As in the case of 'education' part of the programme, the National Agency for Erasmus + Youth in Action programme is constantly adapting its organizational logic to better implement the programme with the human and financial resources that they have. As it was already mentioned before, since the staff puts in significant workload in terms of improving the quality of the applications – also due to the current rigid distribution of the budget across key actions – the staff is already under a lot of stress and already at this moment need their support units to cope with the immense bureaucratic workload as well as to maintain the level of engagement at the ground, at the local level, also by promoting the transfer of positive practices and creating thematic groups that serve as networks facilitating peer learning among organizations. Even at the current workload, it is clear that additional management fee is imperative for the National Agency to properly invest into the staff by providing them training and EU-level networking with their peers working on the same issues, but primarily to maintain the level of quality applications reflect at the moment. The anticipated increase of the budget, without the increase of the management fee, will put the National Agency under severe stress making the staff mere administrative and financial officers offering little support to the applicants and beneficiaries as well as having little or no contact with the organizations on the ground.

(C) 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? HAVE THE NEEDS OR PROBLEMS EVOLVED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE OBJECTIVES OF ERASMUS+ OR ITS SUCCESSOR PROGRAMME NEEDS TO BE ADJUSTED?

According to the data from the respondents' questionnaires and semi-structured interviews the objectives of the Erasmus+ address the needs and problems that should be solved to large extent. Those needs and problems are for Slovenia still relevant. In general, the objectives cover all the needs and problems that should be solved. This is so, also because the objectives are very general. For an

even better coverage of the problems and needs, some additional objectives are needed or the existing ones need to be updated: e.g. transversal skills (several models in Europe covering these skills exist), open and safe learning environment. 31% of external experts – evaluators of the proposal in decentralized actions somewhat agree with the statement that the needs/problems have developed in such a way that objectives of the Erasmus+ must be adapted and 16% of respondents strongly agree with this statement. The data collected with the questionnaires showed that the needs of institutions are consistent with national focuses (categories agree and strongly agree are presented, and proportion of respondents who could not decide): preschool education (66%; 29% undecided), elementary and secondary school level (59%; 33% undecided), higher education (50%; 38% undecided), and for adult education (38%; 49% undecided). The data showed that assessing the objectives of VŽU/Erasmus+ and national objectives are even more consistent and also a lower proportion of respondents who could not decide regarding this statement can be seen: preschool education (75%; 24% undecided), elementary and secondary school (67%; 30% undecided), higher education level (77%; 15% undecided), and adult education (71%; 22% undecided). A similar opinion of external experts was indicated. Most of these respondents strongly agree with the statement that the objectives of the Erasmus+ continue to address the needs or problems that would have to be resolved (by strongly agree 55% of respondents), that in Slovenia these needs and problems still existed (strongly agree 59 %). It is also possible to identify the consistency in the analysed documents and from the broad thematic areas covered by European and national calls (especially European Social Funds), with which primarily, it is meant in terms of the following areas: quality, teachers professional development, social and civic / multicultural competences.

When looking at the youth field more than 64 per cent of surveyed organizations active in the youth field believe the Erasmus+ objectives continue to address the needs or problems they are meant to solve. At the same time, only 9 per cent of organizations believe the objectives address the needs to a little or very little extent. However, there is a caveat in this information as it was the objectives of the Erasmus + -- as was previously explained – tend to be too broad and all-inclusive. Hence organization also propose certain new potential objectives that are either more refined or do add an added value to the current selection. Among those are: more active inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities, more intensive participation of juvenile offenders, increased competence of critical and competent use of the internet, inter-local youth cooperation as well as focus on global justice and solidarity. On the other hand, key stakeholders in the youth field pressed for stable objectives that are more defined, in line with the character of the youth sector and youth work and coherent with the new youth strategy. When talking more specifically, they expressed the need to connect more with the local level and be active on the local level, to include more non-formal groups of young people, to have the flexibility to adapt to the national context as well as to systematically and increasingly actively include young people with fewer opportunities and disabilities. An omnipresent recommendation is also to include national youth initiatives and primarily to focus more on social inclusion, participation of youth as well as citizenship education of young people that should be achieved through the integration of formal and non-formal pedagogies.

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 SCOPE? IS THE ERASMUS+ WELL KNOWN TO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND YOUTH 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?

The needs of different stakeholders and sectors addresses by the Erasmus+ objectives are well covered. The programme is also successful in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of education. In the education Erasmus+ is well known. The familiarity on the new programme is better than (it was) for its successor programme (LLP) – which is evident from the Erasmus+ beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries respondents who are familiar good or very good, the Erasmus+ (the same respondents were simultaneously assessing their familiarity on the LLP). However there are differences between different educational levels when testing statistical significance between those groups of respondents. The LLP results showed that LLP are at least familiar within kindergartens and elementary schools, but are significantly more familiar in upper secondary schools and at the level of higher education. Whereas the comparison between familiarity on LLP and Erasmus+ showed that the Erasmus + (as LLP) are significantly more familiar within elementary and upper secondary schools, at other levels statistically significant differences within the groups of respondents were not found. The results from the external expert questionnaire showed a statistical significant difference in their opinion on how well Erasmus+ is known in their respective fields – experts in VET and the adult learning field believe more that Erasmus+ is well known in those two fields than experts from general education and higher education. Comparing all the fields of experts from the HE field, there is a belief that Erasmus+ is well known in this field (however, 55% of them think that Erasmus+ is well known in HE field).

External experts – evaluators of the application for decentralized actions held the following opinions: 47% strongly agree that the needs of various stakeholders are addressed by Erasmus+ objectives and that the Erasmus+ is very successful in attracting various target groups in education (61% of respondents strongly agree with the statement, whereby the categories of agreement are not statistically significant or different when comparing general, vocational, higher education and adult education).

However in this area, an improvement could be made. The continuation of promotional activities can be achieved, especially with adequate dissemination and exploitation of results. As for the greater involvement of the MESS, a more systematic cooperation between MESS and NA and also the elimination of barriers to ensure a greater involvement of MESS in the KA3 action, this could help to achieve an even better implementation and impact of the Erasmus+.

When we are talking about the needs of different stakeholders in the youth sector and the way they continue to be addressed by the Erasmus+ objectives, we may identify the need for the objectives to connect more with the local level, to include more non-formal groups of young people, to have the flexibility to adapt to the national context as well as to systematically and increasingly actively include young people with fewer opportunities and disabilities. An omnipresent recommendation is also to include national youth initiatives and primarily to focus more on social inclusion, participation of youth as well as citizenship education of young people that should be achieved through the integration of formal and non-formal pedagogies. In terms of success of the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within the youth field, primarily youth with fewer opportunities, 44 per cent of the surveyed organizations believe that the programme is either successful or very successful. On the other hand, only 12 per cent of organizations believe the programme is unsuccessful or very unsuccessful. Even though organizations active in the sector positively evaluate the ability of the programme to reach these groups – according to the key stakeholders the current programme is also much more successful in reaching these groups than the previous Youth in action program – there is still some room for improvement. The key stakeholders believe that in order for the programme to

reach different groups of youth with fewer opportunities to a greater degree, the programme would actually need to make a systematic effort to invite/attract organizations working with these groups to the programme and also acknowledge their contribution in terms of scoring. This could happen by offering these organizations more organizational support that could come from the increase of the management fee due to increased support provided to these organizations, the ability to utilize TCA financial resources also for activities at the national level (as this would be a concentrated effort to target certain types of organizations within the country), but also more effort invested into outreach and monitoring of these organizations in the youth field. The programme would also be more attractive to the organizations working with youth with fewer opportunities had the financial compensation within the programme recognise the extra input they have to invest by working with these group of young people. This is also in line with what organizations expressed since they firmly believe that reaching to and working with youth with fewer opportunities demands more resources, but at the same time they also express the need to cut the administrative burden and to redefine/refine the category of young people with fewer opportunities that would also correspond with the extra effort organizations are putting into when working with some groups within this category.

When looking at the degree the youth field is familiarized with the programme, the survey conducted on organizations in the sector reveals that more than 70 per cent of organizations believe that the programme is well known or very well known within the sector. On the other hand, less than 10 per cent of them believe the sector is not well familiarized with the programme. When being more specific and talking about the familiarity of young people with the programme, organizations believe that the programme is less well recognised. Only 21 percent of them believe young people know the programme well or very well. At the same time, more than 45 per cent of them believe young people are unfamiliar or very unfamiliar with the programme. In this sense, it is clear that the programme would need to invest more into its general familiarity and recognition within the young people.

(D) 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+

Actions integrated in the Erasmus+ are coherent (this argument is also supported by the data – external experts agree at large with this statement, namely 56% of them; in addition no statistically significant differences between general, vocational, higher and adult education were found); also no tensions or inconsistencies between actions were found. Potential synergies between actions exist, but some are not sufficiently exploited, e.g. KA3 and incentives for mobility of so-called "silent partners", in this particular action also a recommendation of greater inclusion of the MESS at national level was indicated. The realization of the latter is possible with the elimination of the obstacles described

above, with the establishment of the structural determination of priorities and the monitoring of results (for KA1 and KA2 as well).⁴ The consensual group meeting has developed a concrete proposal:

- a) MESS top managers should decide about the leading of KA3 project at the ministry.
- b) If the decision would be positive, it is necessary to prepare everything necessary for the implementation of the project (the removal of barriers, setting of the possible project leaders, implementation, priorities...).
- c) In case of a negative decision, the activities could be transferred to public institutions with a formal decision of MESS top managers.

Another proposal of this group was on the regular (weekly) presentation of Erasmus+ projects at the MESS. The large gap between national and European policies and knowledge on those was indicated too (different stakeholders, but mainly schools, are often not even aware of this, or they have very limited knowledge about it), semi-structured interviews showed that this particular knowledge increases as you move up the educational levels.

In terms of internal coherence of the programme, the stakeholders in the youth field believe that there is not enough support given to the cross-sectorial cooperation that would actually connect different sectors and allow even more universal way the objectives of the programme are addressed. This lack of systematic support is also combined with the general perception that the youth field is going to enter such cooperation as a 'junior partner' and will get a secondary role in partnership. This is backed up with the perception that the other sectors believe youth field should do the first move in bridging that gap as well as that there is no tangible commitment to cooperate on the 'education' and 'sport' side of the programme. Organizations also frequently express the general attitude of schools and the educational sectors as very paternalistic, as if youth organizations are a 'bunch of kids' that should serve the 'proper' education system whenever there is a need for that. They also express concern that school teachers and the persons they usually work with fail to recognise the value of youth work and non-formal educational pedagogies. This presents a serious obstacle to meaningful cooperation with sectors and avoidance of duplicated efforts to address the same problems. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of fruitful cooperation between organizations as well as sectors themselves. When talking about KA2, formal educational institutions, particularly HE, do provide additional input and an added value to the strategic cooperation in the field of youth. In addition, the two agencies supported cross-sectorial cooperation that also included the state and university to promote social inclusion through a coherent cross-sectorial cooperation model. This initiative called 'Key to inclusion' brought together representatives of various sectors to jointly discuss the issue of social inclusion as well as devise a common approach of how to jointly address it with a coherent set of measures.

19. TO WHAT EXTENT DOES ERASMUS+ COMPLEMENT OTHER NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE? CAN YOU IDENTIFY AND TENSIONS, INCONSISTENCIES OR OVERLAPS WITH OTHER PROGRAMMES?

The data shows that the Erasmus+ complements/upgrades national objectives and policies. In all levels of education when asking this statement, the category of agreement was selected in most of the cases regarding different educational levels: preschool education (51% respondents agreed), elementary education (45%), secondary education (53%), higher education (73%) and adult education (61%). Tensions and inconsistency (also in the semi-structured interviews) were mainly not detected.

⁴ Possible needs for »peer counselling« were expressed by the consensual group.

Teaching in a foreign (English) language at a higher level (at least to a greater extent) showed perceived tensions, which were limited by the national legislation. Erasmus+ complements other national and international programs that were available in Slovenia. Also external experts supported this statement (with no statistical differences between fields in education). Above all, this applies to three areas mainly to which attention was especially paid in the evaluation study, primarily quality, teachers' (and other professionals in education) professional development and social and civic/multicultural competences. Complementarity is to be found primarily through projects financed from the European Structural Fund. In any case, it is necessary at the national level, especially at the level of the MESS to identify priorities, monitor the results of centralized and decentralized actions (in this way the complementarity between Erasmus+ and national projects can be even more strong), and basically to decide whether the goal is or not about increasing MESS leadership participation in the KA3 actions.

In the youth field, when it comes to the coherence of the programme with other national and international programmes available, the general perception of organizations active in the field is that the programme does connect to the other national programmes relevant to the field, primarily the national programme on youth, but this connection could be improved. 40 per cent of organizations believe that the programme connects to a great degree with the national programme on youth, but they mostly express the belief that the two programmes only partially overlap. This also corresponds with the perception of key stakeholders in the field who believe that there are many synergies between the Erasmus + and the national programme on youth and the public call for co-financing of programmes in the field of youth work. However, there is also a general belief that these synergies could be far greater had certain condition been met. Firstly, majority of stakeholders and most organizations are convinced that the government does not support the youth sector to a degree that would allow the Erasmus + programme to be a supplement addressing additional and programmatic rather than basic existential needs of the organizations active in the sector. Hence, support for basic operations has to come from the national and local budgets in order for the synergies to be at a more desirable level. Secondly, there is a perception that the European Commission should allow the programme to be more flexible in addressing the local/national needs and adapt to national idiosyncrasies. On the other hand, thirdly, an important part of stakeholders believe that the national government should adapt the national programme on youth to be more compatible with the Erasmus + programme and actually address its own objectives better and with a greater support provided by the resources available under the Erasmus + programme.

(E) 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 LEVEL? WHAT POSSIBILITIES DO YOU SEE TO ADJUST ERASMUS+ OR ITS SUCCESSOR PROGRAMME IN ORDER TO INCREASE ITS EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE?

Respondents (in semi-structural interviews, questionnaires) are convinced that the LLP / Erasmus+ produce effects that serve to upgrade specific actions which would be limited to the national level only. This is applicable for decentralized and centralized actions. With regards to the statement - the effects of Erasmus+ are additional to the effects that would have resulted from similar actions initiated

at the national (or regional) level – respondents on different education levels agreed as follows: kindergartens (49%), elementary schools (45%), secondary schools (45%), higher education institutions (46%), and adults education institutions (49%). With this statement, external experts somewhat agreed (56%) and strongly agreed (41%). In order to further increase the efficiency and particularly the European added value, the promotion of Erasmus+ project should be strengthened in schools (and other institutions connected with education), at the MESS. Additionally, it should be noted that the Erasmus+ does not just cover the European geographical area (or even the EU); eligible applicants are outside this geographical area too. In this way the enhanced European added value of Erasmus + is strengthened as well.

In the youth field, the European dimension and European added value is one of the most recognised positive impacts of the programme. The stakeholders are unanimous that this dimension is undoubtedly one of the strongest and that the project achieves impact that would be otherwise absent from the field. This is also heavily supported by organizations acting in the field since more than 70 per cent of organizations believe that the programme creates very strong or extremely strong impact that would otherwise not have been achieved with national and local programmes. On the other hand, only 6 per cent of organizations believe that the programme has small or negligent impact in terms of the European added value. When looking at the results of the survey conducted on project participants and project leaders, on the individual level this translates to the ability to communicate in another language, positive relations with individuals from other cultural backgrounds (intercultural dimension) and respect of cultural diversity. On the organizational level this is reflected in intensified partnership with partners from other countries and other cultural environments, with the sense of appreciation towards cultural diversity, to improved capacity of organizations in terms of project management and addressing the intercultural topics as well as in intensified participation in European matters, either in terms of youth policy or policies in general. On the community level the projects particularly introduced the intercultural dimension that resulted in a higher level of openness of local communities to future projects with the European/intercultural dimension as well as in greater concern for the issues youth is concerned about.

21. TO WHAT EXTENT ERASMUS+ WILL BE ABLE TO ABSORB IN AN EFFECTIVE WAY THE SHARP INCREASE IN THE BUDGET THAT IS FORSEEN IN THE COMING YEARS UP TO 2020? 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?

In principle, Erasmus+ in Slovenia is able to absorb the expected increase in the budget. 2017 and 2018 are not problematic, because the energy of the work will focus on increasing the quality of applications. Still there are a lot of projects that are on the reserve list or are unsuccessful. Otherwise, the same recommendations apply as for question 15 (before the increase in the budget for actions, an increase in the budget for the management of the program would be beneficial). As far as allocation, challenges are not expected, but the actual consumption of funds is somewhat questionable, e.g. in the field of higher education, the absorption percentage fell from 98 to 94% (which means that it is necessary to strengthen management at the level of institutions and their reflection and planning at the existing financial provisions).

In general, youth field desperately needs additional resources as the national and local budgets fail to provide enough resources for the organizations in the youth field to function without financial

deprivation. At the same time the quality of the projects proposed and the current acceptance rates clearly indicate that additional resources provided to the programme would be absorbed without difficulties and that the quality of the accepted projects would not decrease. However, there were some concerns expressed by the key stakeholders regarding this budget elevation, since higher budget for projects would have to imply also certain other changes. Firstly, the budget rise would have to be accompanied by the elevation of the management fee for the National Agencies since larger number of administered projects would inherently reduce the support activities to financial controlling and administration if additional resources for staffing are not provided. In addition, secondly, maintaining the current quality of the projects with the rise in budget also demands additional effort for the transfer of good practices within and across the sector as well as putting more attention to dissemination and exploitation of results, which would also have to be additionally supported by the management fee. Thirdly, in order for this transition to be smooth and create desired impact, greater flexibility in terms of distribution of resources across different key action would have to be reached as it is clear that primarily the KA2 is heavily undernourished. To many, this would assure that this change would not only result in quantity but also in quality.

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