Erasmus+ Midterm Evaluation

National Report, Denmark

Erasmus+ Midterm Evaluation

1 Executive summary and conclusions

The Erasmus+ programme is in its second programme period (2021-2027). The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) has prepared this national midterm evaluation of Erasmus+ in Denmark, covering mainly the current, but also some of the previous programme period (2014-2020), by order of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science (UFM).

Effectiveness

The two Key Actions (KAs) are perceived as effective regarding their different levels of funding – Key Action 1 (KA1: individual mobility) has a greater number of participants and a larger budget than Key Action 2 (KA2: organisational partnerships) – and their specific objectives. At an individual level, both KAs are perceived to increase the professional and personal development of staff and students/pupils – generating an international outlook, educational inspiration, reflections on own practice, intercultural dialogue and international network. Especially KA1 improves language skills, whereas KA2 supports developing teaching methods and materials. At an institutional level, the evaluation shows that both key actions contribute to internationalisation of the institutions.

The evaluation shows that there are some challenges to fulfilling the objectives of the four horizontal priorities. It is particularly difficult to achieve the green agenda of changing travel behaviour towards increased green transportation, since green transportation is relatively time consuming, especially for longer distances, and is not compensated well enough in the programme. Also, the beneficiaries do not think digital transformation is currently supported enough by Erasmus+, especially due to administrative burdens and IT-problems. The one horizontal priority that has best been achieved is inclusion, since hard-to-reach groups are reported to participate in mobility to a higher degree in the new programme period. However, there is a tendency that the institutions and organisations which already have people with fewer opportunities as their target group are the ones most focused on increasing the mobility of hard-to-reach groups.

Efficiency

The evaluation shows that, overall, the assigned funds are being used by most of the institutions and organisations, although with lower usage of funds by the fields of youth (YO). Accreditation is thought to have reduced the administrative burden for both beneficiaries and the National Agency (NA) – at least with regard to applications. Since the new programme period is only half-way

through, there is less experience with reporting. Accreditation also makes it more flexible for institutions and organisations to use the funds, e.g. they can move funds from one activity type to another. The beneficiaries praise the NA for providing good support that is very accessible, quick and helpful. According to the NA, the control mechanisms have become more efficient in the new programme period, since the NA is no longer obliged to carry out a minimum number of controls for each action but can use its resources for control of beneficiaries based on a risk assessment.

The most important challenges include the IT systems, which have not worked properly during the first years of the programme period, where especially the Project Management Module (PMM) and the Beneficiary Module (BM) have had major teething problems making them unstable and slow. The challenges with BM have been especially difficult for the larger institutions with many participants. Also, some administrative procedures are seen as a waste of time by the project managers, e.g. having to obtain analogue signatures on some of the documentation. The lump sum model is thought to be a flexible tool for using and moving allocated resources within KA2 projects, although this is also perceived as requiring deep prior knowledge and the capability to calculate expenses in advance. Additionally, beneficiaries do not find that the programme guide is clear enough.

The NA suggests not upholding the field of youth as a separate header but instead integrating this field on equal terms with the different fields of education and training. This would allow for a more efficient use of resources and increase flexibility for the reallocation of funds across all fields and actions depending on needs and priorities.

Relevance

The Erasmus+ objectives are still relevant for the institutions and organisations. Mobility among students/pupils/learners/young people (hereafter students/pupils) and staff and the internationalisation of cooperation projects are of high priority among the institutions and organisations. However, according to the NA it is important not to add more objectives to Erasmus+, as there are already many objectives, and adding more would generate an administrative burden.

The green agenda is seen as very important, but the focus in Erasmus+ on green transportation is seen by some beneficiaries as an obstacle to mobility, since an increased focus on green transportation can clash with inclusion (hard-to-reach groups will face the barrier of time consuming journeys) and the intention of supporting mobility all over Europe.

The NA uses social media to attract new target groups and has created videos and case material to establish a better understanding of Erasmus+. Beneficiaries who have recently joined the programme express that it can be difficult to grasp whether their institution and projects will fit with the programme, since Erasmus+ has very general objectives.

Coherence

In the current programme period there is a firm and clear distinction between mobility and cooperation projects, based on the difference between KA1 and KA2. There is also good continuity between the objectives of the programme periods, which makes it easier for institutions to plan and think ahead. The NA highlights that there is an overlap between the European Solidarity Corps and YO in Erasmus+, and the NA recommends that the European Solidarity Corps shall be integrated into Erasmus+ in future programmes.

European added value

From the survey, between 42 - 81% of the beneficiaries in each sector state that participants have an increased European feeling after the mobility. However, the qualitative interviews indicate that it is not so much a feeling of European identity, but more an international outlook, inspiration and network.

COVID-19

Some institutions have struggled under COVID-19, but the activity levels for mobility and cooperation are for most institutions back on track and even higher than before COVID-19.

2 Introduction

2.1 Objectives of the Erasmus+ programme

The general objectives of the Erasmus+ programme are to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in the fields of education and training, youth and sport, in Europe and beyond. Thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation and the strengthening European identity and active citizenship. Also, to be a key instrument for building a European Education Area, supporting the implementation of European strategic cooperation in the field of education and training, including its underlying sectoral agenda, advancing youth policy cooperation under the 2019-2027 European Youth Strategy and developing the European dimension in sport.

2.2 Erasmus+ in Denmark

In Denmark, the Erasmus+ programme is administered by the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science (UFS), supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science (UFM). UFS is thus the National Agency (NA) in Denmark. Erasmus+ offers support through three key actions (KAs):

- **KA1** supports mobility for individuals in the education, training, youth and sports sectors and aims to bring long lasting benefits to participants and their organisations.

- **KA2** enables organisations from different countries to develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth through partnerships for cooperation.

- **KA3** provides grants for a wide variety of actions aimed at stimulating innovative policy development, policy dialogue and implementation.

The decentralised actions within KA1 and KA2 are covered in the midterm evaluation. Thus, the midterm evaluation only deals with the implementation and effect of the mobility programme (KA1) and the cooperation between organisations and institutions (KA2). Regarding KA1, only outgoing mobility is covered, and sports are not covered. KA3 is not covered in the midterm evaluation.

2.3   Purpose of the evaluation

With its main focus on the current programme period running from 2021 to 2027, but also including the previous programme period (2014-2020), the purpose of this midterm evaluation is:

- To assess the effectiveness and continued relevance of the Erasmus+ actions in achieving their objectives as well as to evaluate the efficiency of the programme, scope for simplification and its European added value.

- Overall, the midterm evaluation will cover five evaluation themes: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, European added value. Additionally, the evaluation will also cover diversity, potentials and barriers in relation to forms of green transportation, reflecting the four horizontal priorities[1].

- Lastly, the evaluation will briefly touch upon the consequences of COVID-19.

Thus, the midterm covers the period 2014-2023. The midterm evaluation can help form the basis for the design of a prospective new programme period following the current programme, which ends in 2027. The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), with Epinion collecting the survey data, has carried out this present midterm evaluation.

2.4   Methodology

In order to cover the relevant actions and ensure that the evaluation accommodates the perspectives of the beneficiaries as well as the NA, a mixed methodological design has been applied. The coherence between the different evaluation themes, the standard evaluation questions and the data sources can be found in Appendix B. As agreed with UFM, standard evaluation question number 13 is not covered in the evaluation.

2.4.1   Survey among beneficiaries (KA1)

Institutional surveys among institution representatives of beneficiaries from higher education (HE), vocational education and training (VET), school education (SE), and adult education (AE) sectors in relation to KA1 were conducted. The Youth sector (YO) was not covered in the survey. The overall response rate, which was quite high (71%), can be found in the breakdown in Table 2.1.

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1   The four horizontal priorities are: 1) Inclusion and diversity, 2) Digital transformation, 3) Environment and fight against climate change, and 4) Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement.

Table 2.1

Overview of sector responses

	Frequency (percentage of total responses)	Response rate
Higher Education (HE)	29 (17%)	81%
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	35 (20%)	69%
School Education (SE)	93 (54%)	69%
Adult Education (AE)	16 (9%)	76%
Total	173 (100%)	71%

Source: Survey among institutions and organisations, Danish Evaluation Institute

Note: The survey was sent out to 242 unique representatives of beneficiaries in the years 2021-23, although many also received funding before 2021. N = 173. The number of full responses is 173. There are 4 partial responses (N = 177), which have been included in the respective figures.

2.4.2 Interviews with beneficiaries (KA1 and KA2)

31 online interviews were conducted with beneficiaries of both KA1 and KA2. The interviewees were only selected if their institution/organisation had received funding between the years 2021–2023. Furthermore, the interviewees were also selected based on diversity in grant sizes, so that both small and large-scale projects were represented.

Qualitative interviews with KA1 beneficiaries

19 interviews were conducted with KA1 beneficiaries: 5 within HE, 4 within VET, 6 within SE, 2 within AE, and 2 within YO.

Qualitative interviews with KA2 beneficiaries

12 interviews were conducted with project managers under KA2: 3 within HE, 3 within VET, 3 within SE, 1 within AE and 2 within YO.

2.4.3 Self-evaluation

The NA was requested to complete a self-evaluation report based on a selection of the standard evaluation questions. The purpose of the self-evaluation report was to gain insights into their role in the administration and operation of Erasmus+.

3 Main findings

3.1 Effectiveness

In this section, the extent to which the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme have been achieved is considered. This part of the analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 1-12 (see Appendix B, which also contains an overview of the data sources used to cover each question). Q1 in the headline below refers to standard question 1, etc.

3.1.1 Many expected outputs, results and impacts of KA1 and KA2 are delivered (Q1)

The respondents in the survey report that several of the expected outputs for KA1-participants have been delivered. Figure 3.1 shows that a vast majority of respondents across sectors to a high or very high extent agree that their institution's participation in the mobility programme has given participants personal and professional competences. Almost all (90 – 100%) agree that participation has strengthened participants' international competences. Fewer agree that participation has contributed with expertise within new subject areas. Only 34% of VET-respondents agree with this statement.

Figure 3.1

To what extent do you assess that participation in Erasmus+...
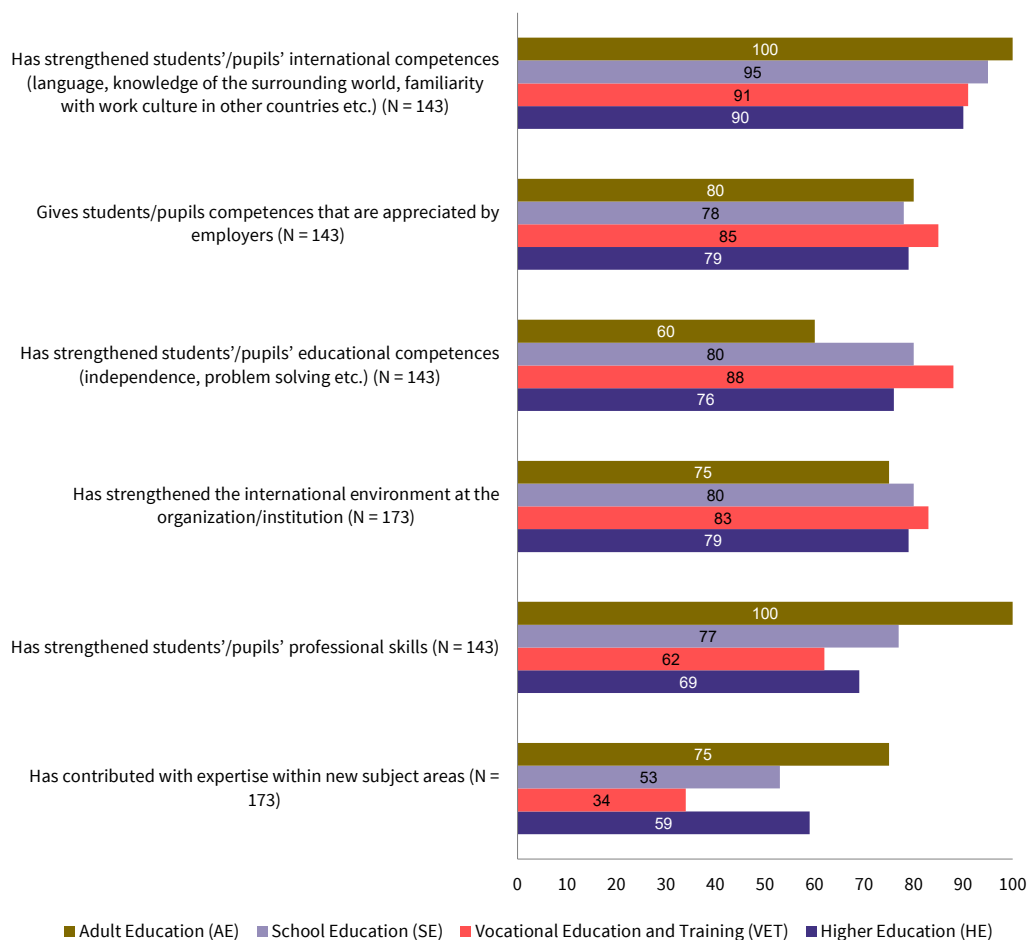
Source: Survey among institutions and organisations, Danish Evaluation Institute

Note: The combined proportion of respondents who have answered "To a very high extent" and "To a high extent" are depicted. N = 173.

In the interviews, the beneficiaries agree that several of the objectives of Erasmus+ have been met, since the programme develops people at both professional and personal levels. The outcome of mobility and cooperation projects is, for example, described as generating international outlook, educational inspiration, intercultural dialogue, international networks, improved language skills (for KA1) and developing new teaching methods/materials (for KA2).

> ❞ Erasmus projects have an outcome on a professional development level. And the projects provide a lot on a personal level in relation to seeing one's own practice in a larger perspective. They can push participants' boundaries in a different way than they have been able to before (…). It gives them greater self-motivation, greater independence and greater initiative.

BENEFICIARY, SE, KA2

A key outcome for staff is to experience new ways of doing things, which can be inspiring, and it can also contribute to reflecting on what you normally do at home and take for granted.

People with fewer opportunities are said to gain a lot from Erasmus+ by being away from their comfort zone – gaining new experiences and finding out that they can cope in new settings, provided they are taken care of. This has a self-empowering potential.

❞ We had a mother; I think she had four children. She had never travelled, and she didn't dare to travel. And she was not allowed to travel by her husband. She ended up leaving anyway.

BENEFICIARY, AE, KA1

❞ Provided they don't break down feeling homesick, they come back and say this was the first time I have spoken English in front of other people, and they say it was an amazing experience, unlike anything else in my life. Parents say, "What have you done with my child? They are much more talkative and positive now after returning home." They also start to see people from countries such as Turkey as humans instead of untrustworthy migrants or enemies.

BENEFICIARY, YO, KA1

The beneficiaries do not by themselves mention as an outcome that Erasmus+ contributes to an increased feeling of democratic awareness, or that the programme contributes to digital transformation (see objectives of Erasmus+ programme and purpose of evaluation section 2.2 and 2.3).

At an institutional level beneficiaries highlight that the programme leads to increased internationalisation (see also section 3.1.4 and 3.1.11).

A very positive factor to influence the impacts is the accreditation system in the new programme period. The accreditation system eases the administrative burden and generates more flexibility for the institutions (see also section 3.2.1 and 3.2.5).

A negative factor has been problems with IT systems, especially the Beneficiary Module, which has taken up a lot of administrative time and has made budgeting and planning much harder for some institutions (see also section 3.2.7).

3.1.2 Erasmus+ strengthens development of personal competences as well as international environments at institutions and organisations (Q2)

For all sectors, the NA considers that the mobility participants obtain professional as well as person-al competences through their Erasmus+ mobility stay abroad, and that the applications, generally, are of good and adequate quality. Furthermore, the NA considers that the international environment at institutions or in organisations is strengthened when individuals participate in mobility stays or when the organisation/institution hosts foreign participants.

Accreditation has become a new option for VET, SE, AE and YO sectors in the 2021-2027 pro-gramme period. The possibility of accreditation in all educational sectors also contributes to heightened quality of the completed mobility stays, as the organisations and institutions are ac-credited for longer periods of time, which ensures they can allocate the necessary resources and strategically include the international dimension in their work.

For KA2 projects, the current programme period has enabled smaller partnerships to be included in the programme for all sectors (in the previous period smaller partnerships supporting exchanges of good practises were only included for YO under the format of transnational youth initiatives). Therefore, the strategic collaborations have been divided into two different types: cooperation partnerships and small-scale partnerships of maximum €60,000 in grants.

From 2024 and onwards, limitations have been implemented, so that an organisation may only ap-ply and participate in ten projects per application-round, and an organisation must have been reg-istered for two years prior to the application deadline. These limitations have been implemented to avoid organisations being established solely for the purpose of applying for grants from Eras-mus+. From a Danish perspective, it is further recommended that only organisations and institu-tions active in a specific field may become applicants, i.e. only VET providers may apply for a pro-ject within the field of Vocational Education and Training. The NA further recommends that the possibility of being accredited is limited to public bodies, local authorities responsible for the fields in question and umbrella organisations representing several organisations or associations that are active within the field. Companies and NGOs may only enter as collaborative partners to increase the impact of the project results among the fields involved in implemented projects.

Lastly, the NA emphasises the importance of the flexibility of being able to allocate resources be-tween the different actions and sectors, so that the assigned budget can be utilised where needed. This has been particularly relevant for the YO sector, where it has been a challenge to spend the full subsidy between the years 2019-2023.

3.1.3   Several examples of spill-over effects (Q3)

Overall, the NA considers several examples of spill-over effects between the different activities in Erasmus+. However, it is not possible to quantify the spill-over effect. An example is the spill-over effect between The European Solidarity Corps (Det Europæiske Solidaritetskorps) and Erasmus+ Youth (Erasmus+ Ungdom), where organisations that have been involved in voluntary projects have subsequently applied for mobility stays for youth workers. Other examples are that the insti-tutions and organisations involved in mobility projects further develop their international engage-ment in cooperation projects as an applicant or partner. Through the network established in these projects, some of the larger institutions also increase their involvement in the capacity building projects or other centralised actions of the programme.

3.1.4 Transformative effect could be higher for several of the four horizontal priorities (Q4)

Erasmus+ does not appear to greatly support the digital transformation of educational programmes in Denmark

In the survey, only a minority of respondents agree or strongly agree that participation in Erasmus+ mobility activities supports the digital transformation of our educations (38% SE, 26% AE, 20% VET, and 17% HE). The most predominant response to the question is neither agree nor disagree, but some respondents also disagree with the statement (cf. Figure 1.8 in Appendix A).

Only few beneficiaries participating in the interviews have experiences with blended learning. It is worth noting that several beneficiaries expect to carry out an increasing number of projects involving digitalisation in the future. Some see a significant potential in blended learning under Erasmus+, particularly for the purpose of inclusion. From the perspective of the beneficiaries, the primary potential of blended learning does not lie in digital learning itself, but rather in reaching individuals with limited opportunities, e.g. by shortening stays abroad.

International outlook after returning

A majority of respondents from most sectors in the survey agree or strongly agree that students/pupils sent out from their institution to an Erasmus+ destination perceive themselves as more European after returning. The proportion varies from 81% among SE-respondents to 42% among HE-respondents (cf. figure 1.9 in Appendix A). However, from the qualitative interviews it becomes clear that it is not so much a feeling of European identity that Erasmus+ actions generate, but more an international outlook, inspiration and network. Also, both students/pupils and staff return with a renewed perspective on their own practice and Danish culture after seeing alternative ways of doing things. This can strengthen their employability, as a beneficiary explains:

> ❞ The pupils also get to strengthen their employability and 21st century skills. Mobility enhances their skills, equipping them to be citizens in the times we live in and to thrive in the labour market they are entering. They also gain an understanding of the citizens they have to work with.
> BENEFICIARY, VET, KA1

In that sense, while Erasmus+ may increase democratic development as such, it is important to say that this is not directly the way that the beneficiaries in the interviews describe it. It is most of all the value of achieving an international outlook.

### Transformative significance of green travel is relatively low

The transformative significance of green transport is also perceived as being relatively low. (See section 3.1.6)

3.1.5 A national and institutional focus on hard-to-reach groups is reported to have partial success (Q5)

In the survey, a substantial proportion of beneficiaries sending students/pupils on mobility stays report that the proportion of hard-to-reach groups sent out through Erasmus+ is increasing. Figure 3.2 shows that this proportion varies between 60% in AE to 24% in HE. Only 4%, and only in SE, claim that the percentage is decreasing. However, substantial proportions also answer "not relevant" in three out of four sectors, meaning that they do not send out any students/pupils from hard-to-reach groups yet.

Figure 3.2

What is the development in the proportion of hard-to-reach students/pupils that you have managed to send out through Erasmus+?
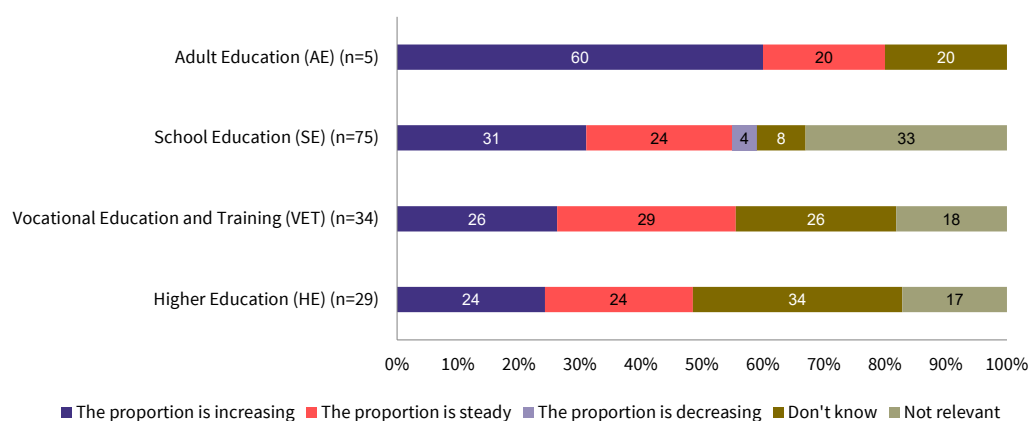
Source: Survey among institutions and organisations, Danish Evaluation Institute
Note: N = 143. This question has only been asked to respondents who have previously answered that their institution/organisation has had students/pupils on Erasmus+ mobility stays.
Note: There are response categories that are not in the figure as there are no responses in the relevant category.

There are a five other questions in the survey dealing with the issue of hard-to-reach groups among beneficiaries sending students/pupils on Erasmus+ mobility stays:

1. Most respondents from AE, SE, VET and HE report that one or several hard-to-reach groups of students/pupils are underrepresented at their institution. Students/pupils with children as well as certain fields of study prevail.

2. 75% of respondents from AE say that their hard-to-reach groups match the groups for whom they can receive "inclusion support". The proportions are lower in the other three sectors[2] .

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2   Respondents from VET and HE were asked about both "inclusion support" and "fewer opportunities top up".

3. 80% of the respondents in AE have special actions in place to get hard-to-reach groups sent out through Erasmus+. The proportions in the other three sectors vary between 41% to 50%.

4. The special actions are targeted towards various hard-to-reach groups at the institutions. Students/pupils with psychological impairments are most predominant.

5. 80% of the AE-respondents agree or strongly agree that there has been an increased national focus on sending hard-to-reach groups of students/pupils on mobility stays through Erasmus+. The proportions vary between 38% to 59% in the other three sectors. (cf. Figure 1.10-1.15 in Appendix A).

The qualitative data indicates that inclusion support for participants can contribute to institutions making an extra effort to reach individuals with fewer opportunities. However, the data also reveals that institutions who already have a pronounced focus on hard-to-reach groups are in general prone to implementing specific measures aimed at this group. Consequently, these beneficiaries more efficiently utilise the full potential of the inclusion support available from Erasmus+. They particularly highlight the prospect of offering mobility activities to the group of students/pupils with fewer opportunities.

> Typically, it is students with children and students with diagnoses who seek 'fewer opportunities'. The student counsellor works closely with the students and points out that there is a huge potential in reaching the group of students with fewer opportunities. However, it is a more resource-intensive task, both in getting these students from A to Z, but also in terms of the counselling task. This group requires extra guidance, and it is incredibly difficult when only a limited number of hours are allocated for international counselling by central management.

BENEFICIARY, HE, KA1

In addition to necessitating additional focus and resources for facilitating the participation of students/pupils with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+, there is also a need for increased attention to the logistical framework for these students/pupils' travels and stays. For instance, choosing green transportation may result in longer travel times and necessitate greater coordination, which can be a challenge for students/pupils who already encounter other obstacles in travelling abroad. However, the beneficiaries maintain that the inclusion support can help address the needs of groups with fewer opportunities, e.g. by offering a different type of accommodation or making an extra teacher available (see also section 3.3.3).

3.1.6 Green transportation is perceived as very time consuming (Q6)

Figure 3.3 from the survey shows that there are substantial differences between sectors in the proportion of students/pupils using green forms of transportation to their Erasmus+-destinations. As an example, in AE and SE, 20% of the respondents report that 76% -100% of their travelling pupils use predominantly green forms of transport, while the same proportion is 3% in VET and HE.

Figure 3.3

Approximately what proportion of your students/pupils sent out through Erasmus+ would you estimate exclusively or mainly use green forms of transportation (such as trains, buses or carpooling) to get to and from their Erasmus+ destination?
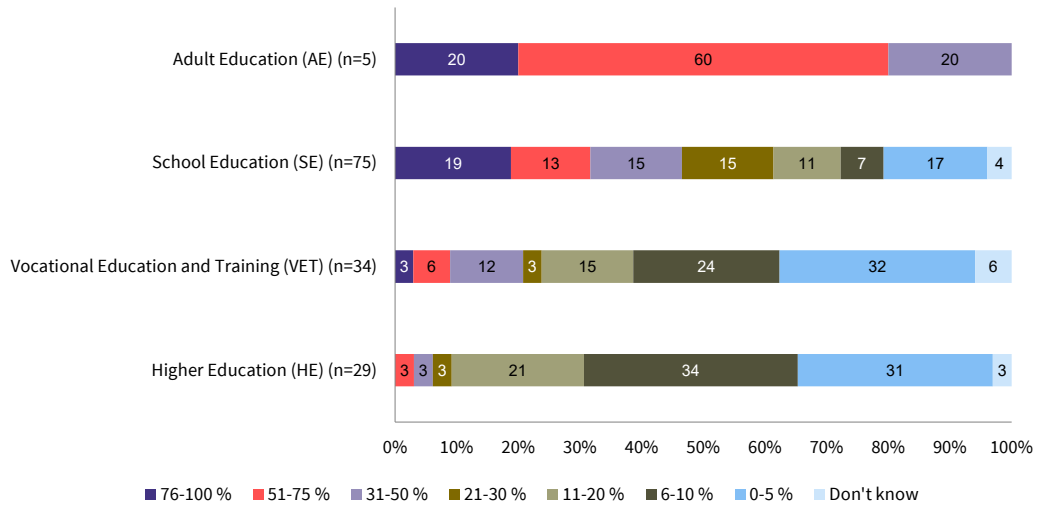
Source: Survey among institutions and organisations, Danish Evaluation Institute

Note: N = 143. This question has only been asked to respondents who have previously answered that their institution/organisation has had students/pupils on Erasmus+ mobility stays.

Note: There are response categories that are not in the figure as there are no responses in the relevant category.

Figure 3.4 shows that a large proportion of respondents across sectors assess that the time it takes to travel green, the many changes in means of transportation, the travel costs, and the high economic costs constitute barriers to getting more students/pupils to use green forms of transportation when travelling to their Erasmus+ destinations. It is likely that these barriers are more severe the longer the travel distance, which helps explain why relatively fewer from HE use green transportation.

Figure 3.4

To what extent do you assess that the following scenarios constitute barriers to having more students/pupils use green forms of transportation when travelling to their Erasmus+ destination?

Source: Survey among institutions and organisations, Danish Evaluation Institute
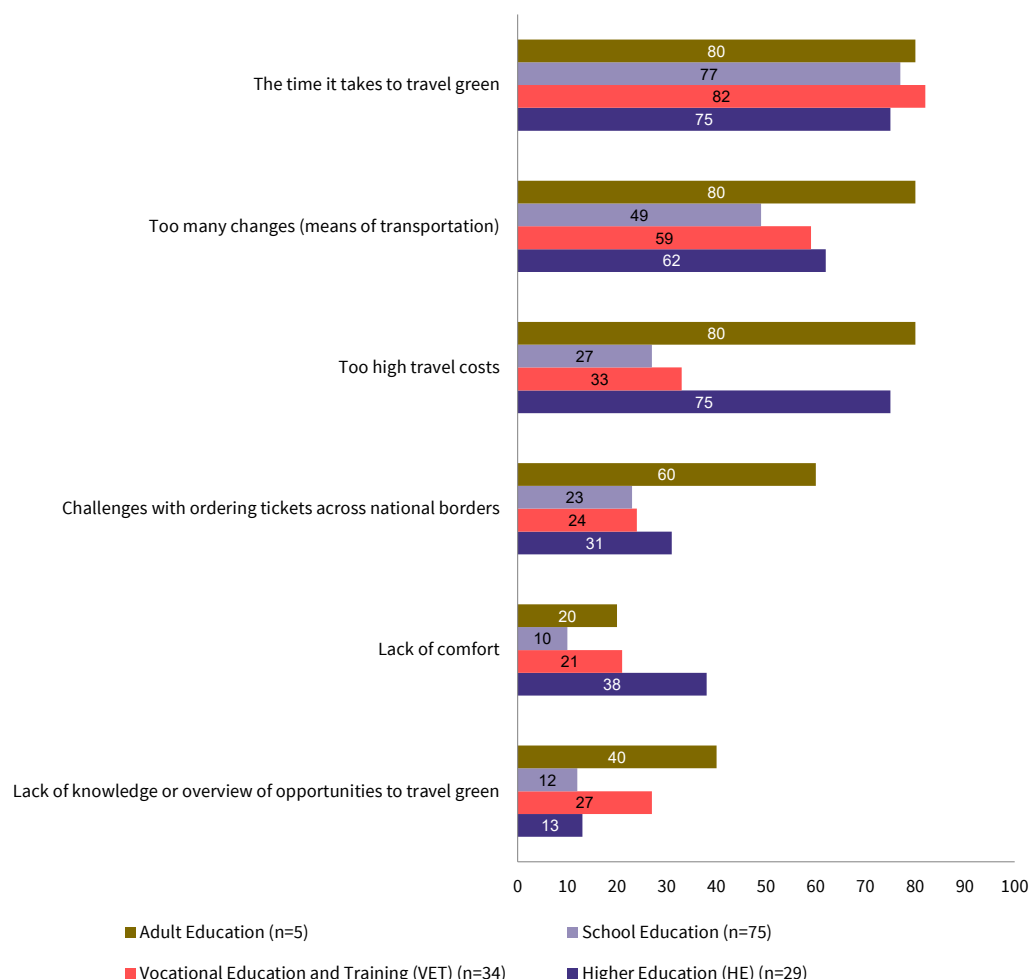
Note: N = 143. This question has only been asked to respondents who have previously answered that their institution/organisation has had students/pupils on Erasmus+ mobility stays. Only respondents who have answered "Agree" and "Strongly agree" are depicted.

The interviews with beneficiaries highlight that even though the climate agenda is central among staff and students/pupils, it is very difficult to increase the actual usage of green transportation, such as trains and buses, instead of planes for the Erasmus+ programme. This is especially true for journeys of longer distance. The most dominant barrier towards green transportation is the travel time needed compared to taking a flight. Using a lot of time on transport is not only inconvenient, but it also has the consequence of increasing salary costs for staff, and it is also a serious barrier for some of the hard-to-reach groups who don't have the mental resources for a long journey. Also, especially VET pupils are challenged by the fact that they are only at school for a short period of time during their education, and it is not seen as valuable to use a large proportion of their school time on transport. In the same way, this is also a problem for VET teachers, as they want to avoid being away from school for too long, since they only have their pupils at school for a limited time.

Some of the beneficiaries say that they can see a small change in habits in discussions about travel destinations. People wanting to be more climate friendly are advocating choosing destinations closer to Denmark, where it is possible to travel by train or bus without using too much time, and they are looking for destinations in Northern Germany and Scandinavia. Even though beneficiaries can see the benefits of this for climate reasons, they also point to the reduced cultural value compared to experiencing more distant parts of Europe.

Incentives in the Erasmus+ programme for green transportation are considered too small for making a real difference, i.e. not compensating enough for the extra time necessary or the more expensive train or bus tickets compared to airline tickets (see also section 3.3.4).

> After all, I myself have tried to take train journeys in Europe, and it just doesn't work. No. And it is 100 times easier to buy a plane ticket, because you have these sites, Momondo etc., which search all flights.

BENEFICIARY, HE, KA1

3.1.7 Limited national influence on policy developments (Q7)

The NA assesses that, in the long term, Erasmus+ and its predecessors have contributed positively to internationalisation of the Danish educational system and youth sector. Furthermore, Erasmus+ has created partnerships and opportunities for exchanging experiences at different levels within the respective sectors. Despite the positive impact at international level, Erasmus+ has only had a minor impact on the national political development in Denmark in the field of education and youth. Examples of national political impact include the introduction of blended programmes/virtual mobility in higher education and the European Universities initiative.

3.1.8 Continuous adjustments to enhance the effect of Erasmus+ (Q8)

The NA in Denmark has promoted the programme to relevant stakeholders. The NA uses websites, information meetings, newsletters and social media to promote the programme. The communication strategy reflects the diverse target audience, and social media is perceived as being particularly helpful in relation to campaigns towards new potential applicants. User surveys have been conducted to adjust the content as required.

3.1.9 Conference and video material to disseminate results (Q9)

The NA hosts a yearly conference to disseminate the programme results. In relation to the conference, the NA prepares a publication with examples of good practice within the respective sectors and in relation to the theme of the conference. In recent years, the publication has been replaced by short videos as part of adjustments to match the interests of the target audience. These videos, as well as the previous publications, serve as a source of inspiration for potential applicants as well as stakeholders interested in Erasmus+ or other international activities.

3.1.10 Effects are most likely to last for educational mobility stays (Q10)

The NA assesses that the effects are, to some extent, likely to last, and that mobility activities and cooperation projects contribute to the development of an internationalisation strategy within the institution/organisation in the field of education, particularly when it comes to staff and student/pupil/youth mobility. The NA assesses that it is less so expected to last in the youth sector, as a large part of the grants are given to smaller organisations or informal groups, which tend to exist for a shorter period or have fewer resources for administration. Similarly, the effect of each individual grant is to a lesser extent likely to last, as the individual grants usually only have an effect on those directly involved in the project.

3.1.11 The absence of Erasmus+ would result in a more enclosed Denmark (Q11)

In the interviews, beneficiaries point out that they would expect to have a significantly lower level of international activity if they did not have the opportunity to get financial support from Erasmus+. According to the institutions, student/pupil mobilities would require a considerably higher payment contribution from the students/pupils participating in international activities. This could create the risk of a negative impact on inclusion efforts. Increased financial burdens for students/pupils in relation to their foreign educational activities may discourage participation among specific groups.

According to the beneficiaries, staff mobilities would be limited to within the borders of the country if there were no possibilities for co-financing. A lack of economic support from Erasmus+ could result in a more enclosed Denmark, where both students/pupils and staff would have a more restricted view and understanding of the outside world. Based on the interviews, certain institutions might explore alternative sources of funding mechanisms to support their international activities, but overall there would be a substantial reduction of activities.

> ❞ Erasmus is a good tool for integration of international elements into a strategy. If it is well organised at the schools and if the vocational school sector continues to be guaranteed large amounts of grants, there is a potential for incorporating internationalisation into the DNA of the schools. This accomplishment would not have been possible without the availability of Erasmus+.
>
> BENEFICIARY, VET, KA1

Several beneficiaries point out that some degree of predictability in the grants is necessary as a foundation for including an international perspective in the DNA or strategy of the institution.

3.1.12 Institutions tend to have recovered after COVID-19, but with some exceptions (Q12)

The survey shows that 20% to 45% of the respondents report that they now send out more students/pupils than before COVID-19. Conversely, 9% to 37% report they now send less. Concerning

staff, the corresponding figures are that 8% to 50% report that more are sent out now, whereas 0% to 14% report sending out fewer staff members (cf. Figures 1.24-1.25 in Appendix A).

The survey also shows that, excluding AE, where most did not send out any pupils or staff members before COVID-19, 6% to 30% report they agree or strongly agree that they had to start all over again with building their Erasmus+ network to send out students/pupils or staff members. In each case, however, large proportions disagree or strongly disagree (cf. Figures 1.26–1.27 in Appendix A).

The general impression from the interviews is that the activity levels of KA1 and KA2 are back on track after COVID-19 and have not suffered long term blows. Of course, almost all activities were influenced by the lockdowns, and many activities had to be paused or postponed for a while, followed by an intense period in order to utilise the grants within the budget year.

One beneficiary from a university mentions that she has the impression that the students have become more aware of the benefits of exchanging within Europe instead of travelling beyond the EU, and that this may have been influenced by COVID-19:

> **❞** It may be that the students have become more aware that if you travel far out in the world, it can be difficult to get home again. So they instead choose the closer and slightly more familiar destination. I don't know, I can just see that at least some are responding this in their report.

BENEFICIARY, HE, KA1

It is also mentioned that some families seem to be less eager to host students on an exchange after COVID-19.

3.2 Efficiency

In this section, the efficiency of the current Erasmus+ programme is considered. Thus, the relationship between resources used and changes generated is considered. This part of the analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 14-21 (see Appendix B, which also contains an overview of which data sources have been used to cover each question). Q14 in the headline below refers to standard question 14, etc.

3.2.1 Accreditation contributes to more professional and less resource-demanding administration (Q14)

According to the NA, it is administratively less resource-demanding to distribute grants to VET and HE, as these sectors have institutions with well-established units able to manage the administration of Erasmus+ grants, leading to a more professional and less resource-demanding administration. With the accreditation within SE, international activities at larger units or municipalities as co-ordinators of a consortium of the smaller schools contribute to the sector becoming more "professional", so that it is not the individual that is responsible for the administration.

There are a great number of small and non-public organisations within AE and YO. These require more resources from the NA in the application process, as the operational and financial capacity of the organisation must be checked more closely. Hence, from a cost-effectiveness point of view, it requires far more resources to administer grants allocated to non-governmental organisations within the YO and AE sectors.

In the survey 89% of the SE-respondents report that they have been accredited, whereas the proportion is 69% among AE-respondents. 80% of SE-respondents and 45% of AE-respondents agree or strongly agree that accreditation has significantly decreased their time spent in the application process, and only 3% and 9% disagree. Many respondents have not yet tried the final reporting process after being accredited, but among those who have, a majority also agree that their time usage in the final report process has significantly decreased (cf. Figures 2.1-2.3 in Appendix A).

3.2.2 Only a minority report that unit cost rates are sufficient, and many from SE report having used more than allotted funds (Q15)

Figure 3.5 from the survey shows that only a minority in each sector report that they agree that the set unit cost rates cover various expenses such as living costs for students/pupils and staff members as well as travel expenses for staff members. As an example, only 15% of the HE-respondents report that the set unit cost rates cover the living costs of staff members.

Figure 3.5
To what extent do you assess that the set unit cost rates cover...
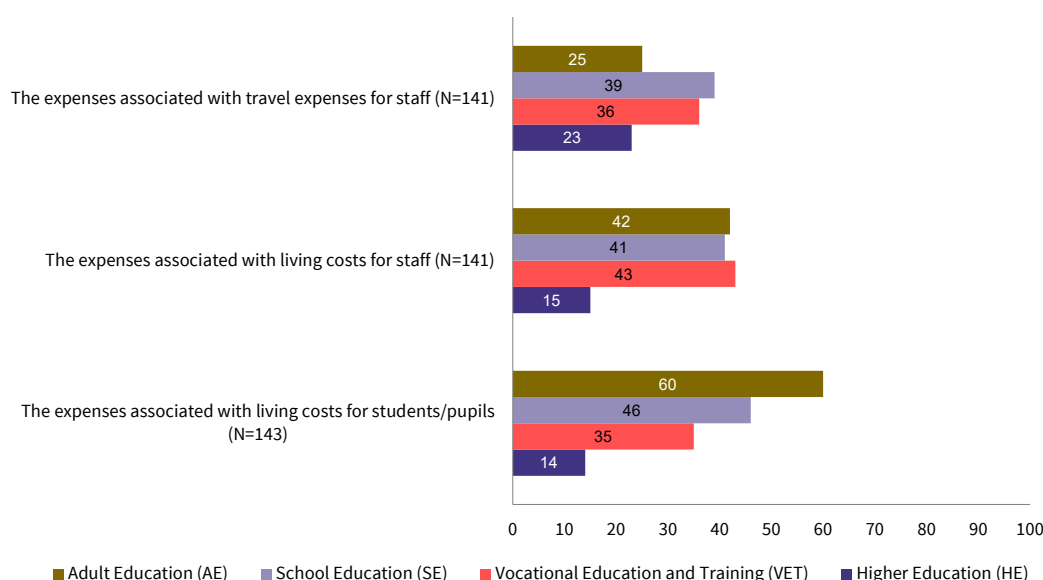
Source: Survey among institutions and organisations, Danish Evaluation Institute
Note: N = 141. The combined proportions of respondents who have answered "To a very high extent" and "To a high extent" are depicted. These questions have only been asked to respondents who have previously answered that their institution/organisation has had staff members or students/pupils on Erasmus+ mobility stays.

49% of respondents from SE report that they have used more than the allotted funds, while 13% report they have used less. In AE, those proportions are reversed, and 19% report they have used more than the allotted funds, while 37% report they have used less (Figure 2.8 in Appendix A).

Flexibility to transfer funds increases efficiency

In the current programme period (2021-2027), all the NAs have been given increased flexibility to move funds between actions and sectors, leading to better opportunities to fully utilise the grants. However, the NA would appreciate even more flexibility in the future. Specifically, the NA recommends that YO should be put on a par with the educational sector, so that it does not have its own ringfenced budget line, and that funds can be moved to/from this sector, as is the case with the other sectors. The NA assesses that this would contribute to greater flexibility and better utilisation of funds across all sectors and actions. Despite the NA's wish for increased flexibility, they consider the size of the budget as appropriate and proportionate to what Erasmus+ 2021-2027 has set out to achieve.

3.2.3 Adequate cooperation between the NA and the European Commission (Q16)

According to the NA, the cooperation between the NA and the European Commission (EC) is adequate. The NA assesses that the EC is very responsive to proposals made by the national offices and that the EC guides the national offices as much as possible before changes are implemented through dialogue and a series of meetings.

Despite the above mentioned, there are opportunities for improvement. According to the NA, the transition from the annual work programme to implementation in the Executive Agency has sometimes led to over-implementation of requirements not otherwise specified. In particular, this has been the case for Erasmus Mundus. In addition, the EC can also take further measures to increase the transparency of enclosed materials prior to programme committee meetings.

3.2.4 The NA organises kick-off meetings and webinars for beneficiaries (Q17)

The NA organises kick-off meetings in which the beneficiaries of KA2 projects are informed of contractual commitments. In addition, the NA also arranges several monitoring activities, including webinars and thematic meetings as well as visiting beneficiaries in order to support their development of international activities.

Regarding the current programme period (2021-2027), there is no longer a requirement for checks of a certain number of beneficiaries within the respective actions, which means that the NA selects beneficiaries for checks on the basis of a risk assessment as well as whether the beneficiary is a "top receiver". The number of controls is thus reduced, which enables more strategic monitoring of beneficiaries. In the current programme period, the NA has streamlined its monitoring efforts by looking across actions and sectors, meaning that more activities across sectors are conducted.

3.2.5 Simplification measures, such as accreditation, have reduced the administrative burden (Q18)

The NA assesses that actions for which accreditation is possible have led to simplification in rela-tion to the yearly application rounds, as applicants now only have to state the number of mobilties they are applying for. The final report template for accredited institutions/organisations is also ex-ceedingly simple. Overall, accreditation has simplified both application procedure and final report process for both the NA and beneficiaries. However, in relation to that, it is worth noting that some consortiums have become quite large, which results in the certification of each consort member being relatively time consuming.

The above is confirmed by some of the interviewed beneficiaries who have also been working with Erasmus+ before accreditation was possible. They are very positive towards accreditation in the current programme period. Firstly, due to the reduced administrative burden and, secondly, as it is seen as a benefit that accreditation generates flexibility. It is now relatively easy to move funds from one activity to another, e.g. if a mobility must be cancelled or turns out to be less promising than expected. Thirdly, it is possible to be more spontaneous, e.g. if a new inspirational oppor-tunity shows up. Fourthly, it becomes easier to involve staff in planning their own mobility, which is a motivating factor for them (see also section 3.3.5).

❞ Accreditation gives us the opportunity to say 'wow' if all of a sudden we hear something. For example, I was in Iceland at a conference on educational re-search in November, and I get this contact, which then means that others can travel up there; and I would not have been able to do that in the old programme. So there is a completely different flexibility now.

BENEFICIARY, SE, KA1

More destinations to choose from outside Erasmus+-countries and more flexibility in length of stays might get more students/pupils and staff to use KA1

In the survey, many believe better opportunities for travelling abroad for shorter periods of time will get more students/pupils to use the mobility programme (64% VET, 52% HE, 40% AE, and 31% SE). Similarly with flexibility in mobility for staff (34% AE, and 29% SE). Also, many in the survey agree that more destinations to choose from outside the Erasmus+-countries could help (80% AE, 45% HE, 41% VET, and 21% SE). Similarly for staff (50% AE, and 34% SE) (cf. Figures 2.9 – 2.18 in Ap-pendix A). However, in the qualitative interviews many of the beneficiaries express that there is so much value in mobility and cooperation within Erasmus+ countries and that there are still so many possibilities to explore within this geographical area, that they do not feel the need to open more up towards non-Erasmus+ countries than is already possible. They also say that an openness to-wards travelling more beyond Erasmus+ countries would be counterproductive to the green trans-portation agenda. In contrast to this, a few institutions that have worked very closely together with institutions in the UK before Brexit would value that it became less restrictive towards travel out-side Erasmus+ countries.

In the survey, only a minority have experienced challenges with identifying partners that can offer teaching with relevant content, teaching of high quality regarding content, teaching based on relevant teaching methods and an inspiring professional environment for staff (cf. Figures 2.19 – 2.23 in Appendix A).

3.2.6 Identified indicators only partially used in a Danish context (Q19)

According to the NA, the identified indicators are only partially used in a Danish context, as it is considered far more valuable to measure the number of realised mobilities and budget absorption.

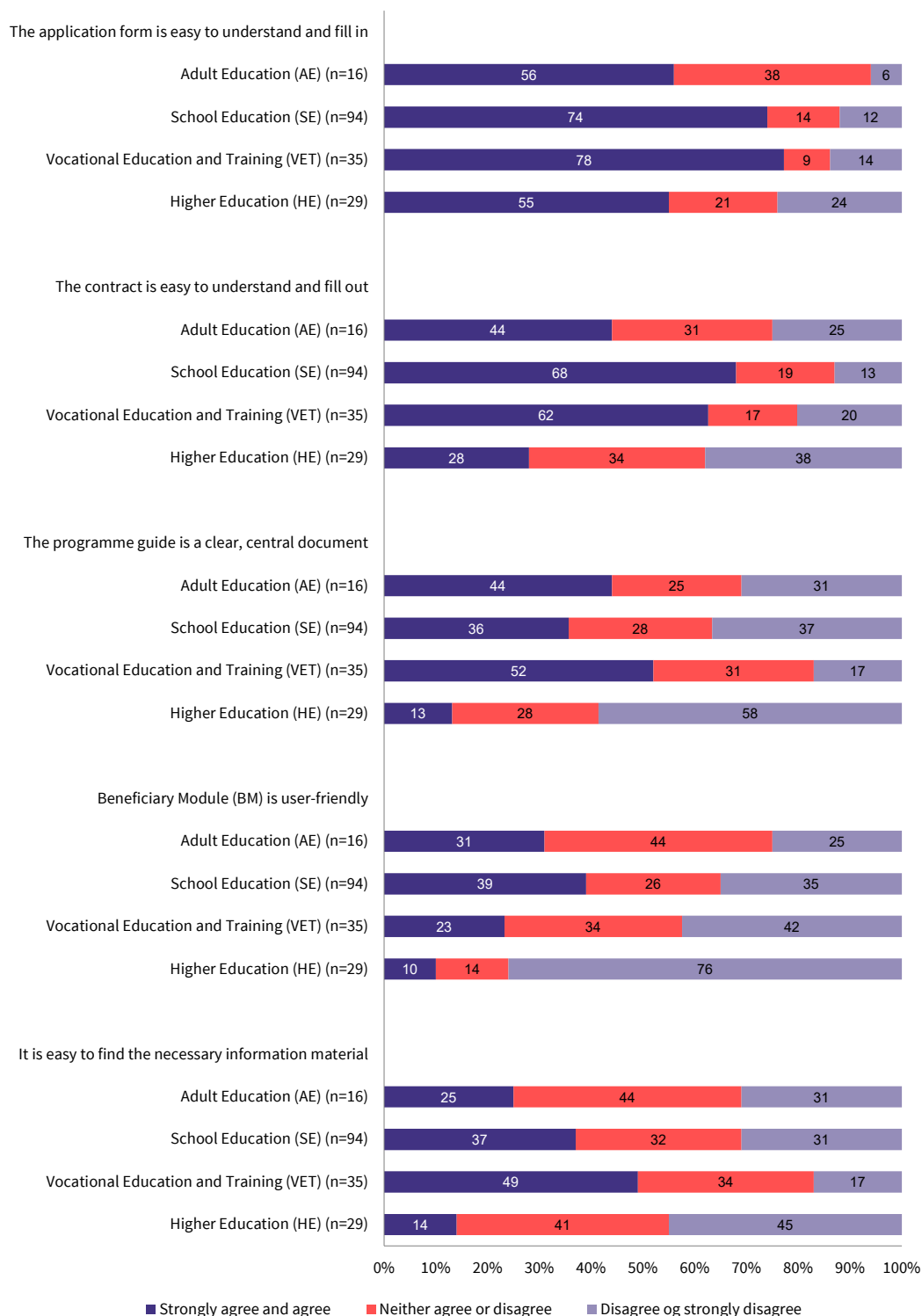## 3.2.7 Challenges with the EU Commission's IT systems (Q20)

According to the NA there have been numerous challenges with the EC's IT systems, and the systems are yet to become fully stable (as of 2024). This also means that the NA's dashboards for monitoring programme development have not functioned adequately and that it has been challenging to ex-tract background data. The NA deems it desirable that the next programme period (2028-2034) is built on existing IT systems. It is emphasised that simplification of programme rules is desirable in future programme periods, as this will also make the IT systems simpler to construct.

Room for improvement of the programme guide, guidelines and Beneficiary Module
Figure 3.6 shows that, when asked in the survey about various key documents, guidelines and interfaces in Erasmus+, the respondents are both satisfied with certain elements and express dissatisfaction with other elements. A majority of especially SE- and VET-respondents agree or strongly agree that both the application form and the contract are easy to understand and fill in based on the material provided by the EC and NA. When asked about whether the programme guide is a clear central document, whether Beneficiary Module is user friendly, or whether it is easy to find necessary information material such as guidelines, only a minority agree to the statements. HE-respondents express widespread dissatisfaction with especially Beneficiary Module.

Figure 3.6
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements…

The application form is easy to understand and fill in

	Strongly agree and agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree og strongly disagree
Adult Education (AE) (n=16)	56	38	6
School Education (SE) (n=94)	74	14	12
Vocational Education and Training (VET) (n=35)	78	9	14
Higher Education (HE) (n=29)	55	21	24

The contract is easy to understand and fill out

	Strongly agree and agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree og strongly disagree
Adult Education (AE) (n=16)	44	31	25
School Education (SE) (n=94)	68	19	13
Vocational Education and Training (VET) (n=35)	62	17	20
Higher Education (HE) (n=29)	28	34	38

The programme guide is a clear, central document

	Strongly agree and agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree og strongly disagree
Adult Education (AE) (n=16)	44	25	31
School Education (SE) (n=94)	36	28	37
Vocational Education and Training (VET) (n=35)	52	31	17
Higher Education (HE) (n=29)	13	28	58

Beneficiary Module (BM) is user-friendly

	Strongly agree and agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree og strongly disagree
Adult Education (AE) (n=16)	31	44	25
School Education (SE) (n=94)	39	26	35
Vocational Education and Training (VET) (n=35)	23	34	42
Higher Education (HE) (n=29)	10	14	76

It is easy to find the necessary information material

	Strongly agree and agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree og strongly disagree
Adult Education (AE) (n=16)	25	44	31
School Education (SE) (n=94)	37	32	31
Vocational Education and Training (VET) (n=35)	49	34	17
Higher Education (HE) (n=29)	14	41	45

■ Strongly agree and agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree og strongly disagree

Source: Survey among institutions and organisations, Danish Evaluation Institute

Note: N = 174. Only respondents who have answered "Agree" and "Strongly agree" are depicted.

Regarding the interviews, the beneficiaries affirm that, in general, there exist numerous challenges associated with Beneficiary Module. Several beneficiaries highlight significant implementation challenges, including the impact of numerous teething problems with the IT system. Consequently, this has imposed an additional administrative burden on certain institutions. Three predominant challenges stand out:

1. **System stability**. Beneficiary Module frequently crashes, operates very slowly or freezes, compelling beneficiaries to shut down and restart the programme. The unpredictability of system performance hampers the planning of administrative IT tasks and time management.

2. **Group entry limitations**. Currently the system lacks the capability to insert group data, resulting in a slow practice of processing each individual. Moreover, large institutions struggle with the inability to upload extensive data sets, which poses a hindrance to their effective use of the Beneficiary Module. This becomes especially problematic when specific administrative deadlines still need to be met.

3. **Placement of functions**. Functions in Beneficiary Module are not logically located, requiring beneficiaries to have in-depth knowledge of the system for optimal operation.

The qualitative data indicates that there is an apparent variation in rule implementation across the Erasmus+ countries. Consequently, partners have devoted extra attention to ensuring a consistent approach to administration and documentation. Beneficiaries have highlighted the impropriety of requiring paper-based signatures followed by scanning. This process necessitates additional administrative effort and reveals differences in how applications are handled across different countries. At the same time, Beneficiary Module has not effectively supported different requirements, e.g. documentation.

> ❞ With the introduction of the new programme period, there was doubt as to how the rules were to be implemented in practice. There was a bit of laying the tracks while the train was rolling. There have been some requirements with retrospective effect, and in the beginning, Beneficiary Module was not completed and ready. For instance, certain forms were not prepared from the outset.
>
> BENEFICIARY, SE, KA1

As the NA highlights, the beneficiaries agree that it is of high priority to continue using Beneficiary Module throughout the next programme periods. According to the beneficiaries, the change of an IT administrative programme has already resulted in an extraordinary workload, and they wish to avoid major changes in software in the future.

Great level of satisfaction with the support from the NA
In the survey, a vast majority of the respondents across sectors express a high degree of satisfaction with the help and support from the NA. Almost all agree that the NA can help them with the problems they encounter, that it is easy to contact relevant people at the agency and that the courses/webinars for beneficiaries held by the NA are a great help. Although the proportions are somewhat lower, there is also widespread satisfaction with the guidance material from the NA.

Only around half of the respondents think the start-up meetings for beneficiaries are a great help, though (cf. Figures 2.30 – 2.35 in Appendix A).

The qualitative data confirms the high satisfaction with support from the NA, which is described as accessible and helpful. The NA facilitates continuous network events to incite experience sharing and keep beneficiaries informed about any changes or new directions within the Erasmus+ programme. It is described as a positive initiative that supports the development of the administrative aspects of Erasmus+ and contributes to collaboration with other beneficiaries facing similar challenges.

Insurance requirements present a dilemma that gives additional work for beneficiaries and uncertainty for students/pupils

As introduced with the former programme period in 2014, the beneficiaries are to ensure that the students involved in international activities via Erasmus+ are covered by professional liability insurance. Provided the students are in Denmark, such insurance is usually attached to the site of the internship. But some of the beneficiaries in the interviews point to the problem that when students travel to other countries, they are not covered by the institutions or the site of the foreign internship. There is, therefore, an association of additional work for the beneficiaries connected with the responsibility of furnishing documentation and guiding the students through insurance requirements. However, there is also a major dilemma associated with the insurance issue, as no Danish insurance companies offer insurance that provides cover to the extent required to meet the insurance requirements of the programme. This leads to the need for specialised knowledge from the beneficiaries to help students/pupils in sourcing foreign insurance that fulfils the criteria of the legal advice to the Danish government. Exceptionally, a few trade unions provide insurance through memberships, but for those students/pupils who do not have this opportunity, insurance is associated with extra work and uncertainty.

3.2.8 Need for more definitive rules and sanctions regarding irregularities and antifraud (Q21)

According to the NA, there is a need for legal documents to be made more precise and less ambiguous. There is also a need for more severe sanctions, for example in relation to the exclusion of applicants submitting the same application to several of the NAs. From a Danish perspective, the NA assesses that there is a lack of enforcement measures in several areas.

3.3 Relevance

In this section, the relevance of the Erasmus+ programme is considered. Relevance considers the relationship between the needs and problems in Denmark and the objectives of the programme. This part of the analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 22-26 (see Appendix B, which also contains an overview of the data sources used to cover each question). Q22 in the headline below refers to standard question 22, etc.

3.3.1   The current objectives are considered sufficient and relevant (Q22)

According to the NA, the overall objectives with an emphasis on quality, inclusion, collaboration, creativity and innovation through mobility are considered highly relevant in a national context. However, it is considered undesirable to add more objectives to the programmes. This would inappropriately increase the administrative burden for users, but without clear added value.

3.3.2   Needs are addressed by the objectives of the programme (Q23)

For the general objectives of the Erasmus+ programme, please refer to section 2.1.

Outbound mobility is highly prioritised among all sectors in Denmark
Figure 3.7 from the survey shows that outbound mobility is highly prioritised among all sectors. In each sector, between 59% - 80% say that outbound mobility to a great or a very great extent is prioritised at their institution. Erasmus+ is perceived to fill a crucial role in enabling this outbound mobility.

Figure 3.7

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Outbound mobility (that you send students/pupils and/or staff/teachers on stays abroad) is highly prioritised in your organisation/institution?
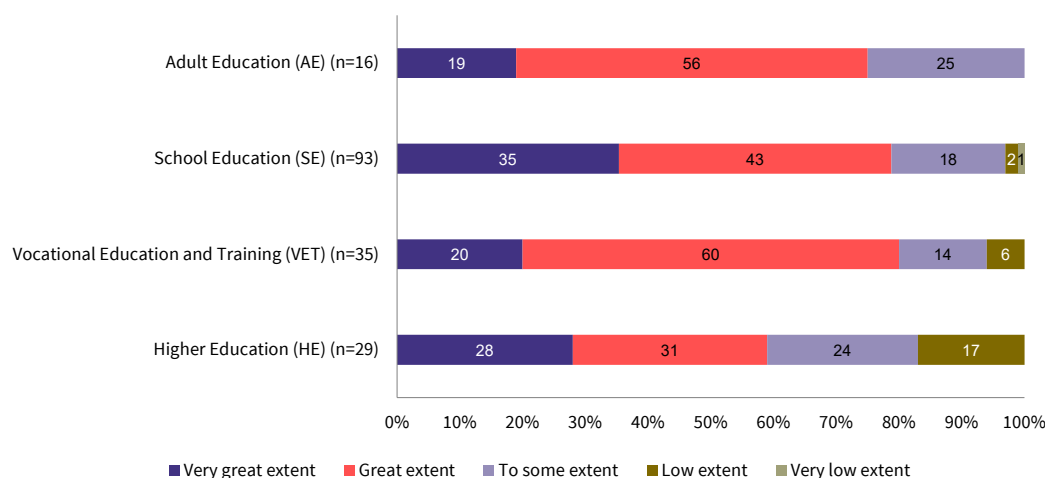
Source: Survey among institutions and organisations, Danish Evaluation Institute
Note: N = 173.
Note: There are response categories that are not in the figure as there are no responses in the relevant category.

As in the survey, beneficiaries in the interviews express that mobility is very valuable. They find it relevant that staff and students/pupils can develop personal and professional skills and say that international mobility is an essential factor here.

It can be unclear for new applicants whether they are relevant for Erasmus+

The survey and the interviews have only been conducted with institutions who are already using Erasmus+ and therefore have knowledge of the programme. Based on this evaluation, it is thus not possible to conclude how well the programme is known and how well it attracts target audiences. From the interviews, we hear from some beneficiaries who are relatively new to Erasmus+ that, in the beginning, it can be difficult to grasp whether the Erasmus+ programme is relevant for them and if it is possible for them to apply. A reason for this is that the objectives of Erasmus+ are very general and abstract, so it can be unclear for new applicants whether they fit in. Here it has been helpful for them to be able to engage in a good dialogue with the NA, while other potential applicants might not contact the NA and get such support.

It can also be a negative factor for new beneficiaries that it can be difficult for their organisation to fully understand the possibilities and the value of Erasmus+. Initially, this can lead to a prolonged process of application for accreditation due to low prioritisation by the organisation's management.

3.3.3 Additional support for hard-to-reach groups is desirable (Q24)

Some beneficiaries emphasise that they in general have a large group of students/pupils with disadvantages. According to the interviewees, there is a need to provide additional support for participation by these groups in international activities. These groups include a wide range of individuals, ranging from staff with children to students/pupils with physical or psychological diagnoses. Various groups with fewer opportunities can be reached through targeted efforts. For example, staff can be assisted in participating in international activities by allowing them to schedule their own job shadowing. Another example could be helping an LGBTQ+ individual travelling to a country with a more gender normative culture with in-depth information, cultural understanding and societal discussions with the student or the whole class. In the context of Erasmus+, the duration of school courses poses a challenge for VET. VET-pupils attend school for only 20 weeks at a time, which complicates efforts to support hard-to-reach groups in a manner that truly meets their needs. In general, beneficiaries point out that short stays have a potential for including vulnerable groups in Erasmus+ activities. Blended learning is in the same way considered as a good tool for supporting these groups, since blended learning can be a way of shortening the stay.

Many institutions have an extraordinary focus on transportation, which may be crucial to whether hard-to-reach groups can participate in international activities. In the following section, this issue will be further discussed in relation to green transportation.

3.3.4 Incentives for green travel are not seen as significant at present (Q25)

In the interviews, beneficiaries say they believe that the incentives for green transport do not have enough significance to change travel habits. Green transport is thought to be too time consuming, and the incentives are not at all high enough to compensate for this.

❞ It is the students, at least I imagine, who already want to travel sustainably, who accept the scholarship [with subsidies for green transport, ed.]. There is no one who thinks, hey, I could have flown to Paris, but now I get 50 euros, so I want to take the train. We have provided an extra 200 euros to each of our own students in 2022 and 2023 from our own funds.

BENEFICIARY, HE, KA1

Some of the beneficiaries state that it would be more valuable for Erasmus+ to focus on other kinds of sustainable transitions than on green transport, since it is very difficult to succeed in influencing the demand for green transport when this way of transport is so time consuming. Instead they recommend that the Erasmus+ programme should try to increase sustainable transitions in other ways, e.g. increasing support for sustainability projects. They also say that a green transition will only be successful if we keep on cooperating across borders, and that we should not place too many obstacles for this to happen.

The approach of rewarding green transport is basically seen as inefficient in its present form, and beneficiaries at the same time want to point out the challenge that prioritising green transport can lead to drawbacks on inclusion (since hard-to-reach groups often have fewer mental resources for time consuming and expensive travel) and on European added value (since it can decrease travel to distant parts of Europe).

Beneficiaries point to several ways of increasing green transport by adjusting the incentives structure, e.g. the Erasmus+ programme could prioritise giving incentives only for the shorter, more realistic journeys within a specific radius, and in these situations increase significantly the level of incentives. Alternatively, green transport and its incentives could be defined on a spectrum (instead of either/or), so that you could also get incentives for travelling, say, 20% green. It also seems peculiar that travel by ferry does not count as green transport.

There are also other suggestions from the beneficiaries that go beyond mere incentive structures. For example, the EU could support the creation of a digital platform for green transportation – similar to Momondo for flights – and in general facilitate that train connections across borders are seamless, well-coordinated, accessible and effectively communicated. Erasmus+ could also provide a database for carpooling for participating institutions.

Digital transition is a natural part of the Danish institutions

Danish educational institutions are very digitalised. Some beneficiaries are frustrated when operational elements in the Erasmus+ setup are thought to be counterproductive towards efficiency and digitalisation, e.g. Danish institutions have been asked to collect analogue signatures as proof of attendances.

❝ The current programme, that is Erasmus Without Paper, has been quite a challenge. For example, since 2018 we have had the possibility to make Online Learning Agreements or OLA. In spite of this, I have just received a Learning Agreement in paper from a Spanish university. The huge difference in digitalisation procedures between countries and institutions is quite frustrating and leads to bureaucratic double work. Instead of having a top-down approach, where the EC would say, "No, we all go digital and this is the only way," a bottom-up approach has been followed where organisations such as EUF and ESN debate endlessly, and change happens extremely slowly.

BENEFICIARY, HE, KA1

3.3.5 New initiatives have increased the relevance of the current programme period (2021-2027) (Q26)

In the current programme period, several new initiatives have been introduced. According to the NA, these have targeted needs expressed by both students/pupils and institutions and have contributed to strengthening the relevance of the programme. Examples include more flexible forms of mobility and mobility-stays outside the European Union. During COVID-19, the relevance of the new programme was demonstrated, as it exemplified how it was possible to move funds around at a time when classic mobility was challenged. Despite this, it is still considered important to continue strengthening the relevance of the programme in the future.

The interviews show that the new possibility of accreditation in the current programme period is seen as a solid base for long-term planning and integration of internationalisation into the strategy and DNA of organisations. At the same time, accreditation is seen as a prerequisite to minimising the administrative burden related to Erasmus+ and enhancing flexibility within the current budget year. This flexibility allows institutions to take up emerging opportunities more effectively (see also section 3.2.1). Additionally, the lump sum model is viewed favourably due to its increased flexibility in relation to usage of the allocated funds. However, some institutions struggle with this model, as it requires a deep understanding of Erasmus+ and demands the ability to anticipate and calculate potential cost variables, such as transportation expenses.

Also, beneficiaries are generally positive towards the current programme having more focus on climate and inclusion agendas, e.g. the questions asked in the application, which also encourage the applicant to formulate the value and intention of the project.

❝ EWP, The current programme has a much broader view of climate and environmental improvements. There are also more relevant questions being asked in the application. Inquiries that enhance your project's clarity and focus. The focus lies less on bureaucracy and more on our school's genuine intentions for this partnership or mobility, and the overall purpose of the project. Being forced to argue why we need this project is very interesting.

BENEFICIARY, SE, KA2

3.4 Coherence

In this section, the coherence of the Erasmus+ programme is considered. Coherence considers the interplay between the Erasmus+ programme and other programmes in Denmark. This part of the analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 27-30 (see Appendix B, which also contains an overview of the data sources used to cover each question).

3.4.1 Objectives are generally considered mutually supportive (Q27)

According to the NA, the objectives of the mobility stays and collaborative projects are considered to be clear. The stability in the overall objectives over a long period of years is considered positive, allowing applicants to plan ahead. The horizontal priorities have enabled the NA to plan areas of action strategically as well as to promote towards target groups.

Compared to the previous programme period (2014-2020), there is now a clear division between mobility projects and collaboration projects in the current programme period. The NA assesses that there is an overlap between youth participation activities and solidarity projects within the European Solidarity Corps. The NA suggests merging the European Solidarity Corps with Erasmus+ in a future programme period (2028-2034) to streamline, optimise and simplify the management of the programmes. The same goes for supporting schemes such as Europass, Euroguidance, eTwinning, EPALE, etc., as this would support the implementation of Erasmus+ in each individual country.

3.4.2 Coherence with other national programmes (Q28)

According to the NA, several schemes complement Erasmus+ in the VET sector. These include OPU (Oplæring i Udlandet / Work Placements Abroad) and GLOBUS (Globalt engagement, Uddannelse og Samarbejde / Global Engagement, Education and Cooperation). Furthermore, the DK-USA programme establishes partnerships between VET schools in which 20% of grants awarded can be utilised in third countries such as the USA as part of the current programme period. Another example is the Nordplus programme between Nordic and Baltic countries. Overall, the NA assesses that no inconsistencies are experienced and that there is coherence between national programmes.

3.4.3 National programmes continuously complement Erasmus+ (Q29)

There are synergies between several national and Nordic programmes within VET and Erasmus+ programmes, as mentioned in the section above (OPU, GLOBUS, DK-USA programme and Nordplus). The national programmes have been adapted so they complement Erasmus+. Overall, there are no changes in relation to the synergy between national programmes and Erasmus+. Furthermore, the NA assesses that there are no inconsistencies or problems between the programmes. National programmes are continuously adapted as Erasmus+ develops, so that the programmes continue to complement each other.

3.4.4 Improved coherence in the current programme period (Q30)

According to the NA, the coherence in the current programme period (2021-2027) has clearly improved, as activity opportunities are clearly defined. For example, all forms of mobility stays are now placed in KA1, while all forms of cooperation projects are placed in KA2. The clear division between actions provides better coherence in the programme.

3.5 European added value

In this section, the European added value of the Erasmus+ programme is considered. The European added value considers the national benefits of the Erasmus+ programme existing in Denmark and the consequences of discontinuation. This part of the analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 31-36 (see Appendix B, which also contains an overview of the data sources used to cover each question).

3.5.1 Erasmus+ activities ensure a European added value (Q31)

According to the NA, learning about other cultures is an inherent part of all types of projects, as all EU activities must include international elements. The minimum quality requirements for mobility stays and the exchanging of ideas as part of the cooperation projects ensure the international focus and, thus, a European added value.

3.5.2 An increased focus on shared values within the European Union (Q32)

From 2023 and onwards, there will be an increased focus on shared values within the European Union. Consequently, there is now a section in grant agreements stating that EU values must be complied with. From 2024 and onwards, all applicants must confirm at the time of application that the applied-for project lives up to EU values. Thus, a condition for receiving the grant is that EU values are complied with when the project is carried out.

3.5.3 Cooperation opportunities with third countries is well used (Q33)

According to the NA, opportunities for cooperation with third countries in relation to KA1 (HE, VET and YO-sectors) are good. For KA2 cooperation projects, partners from third countries can be included provided they can bring about relevant knowledge to increase the quality of the project. Thus, there are good opportunities for collaboration with third countries in the current programme period (2021-2027), and the opportunity is fully used by beneficiaries.

3.5.4 There is added value for individuals and organisations taking part in the programme (Q34)

According to the NA, individuals taking part in the programme gain both professional and personal competences through their stay abroad while also strengthening their international outlook. The opportunity to exchange good practice and knowledge as part of cooperation projects is also considered a benefit. Furthermore, a mobility stay through Erasmus+ is recognised by companies.

3.5.5   Acquiring lasting competences and knowledge (Q35)

The NA assesses that teaching methods and modules developed as part of a cooperation project are sustainable beyond the duration of the project. For mobility stays, it is considered that the individual participant also acquires lasting skills and competences.

3.5.6   Discontinuation of Erasmus+ would affect sectors differently (Q36)

The NA would expect that a discontinuation of Erasmus+ would affect sectors differently. In YO sector, neither mobility stays nor cooperation projects would be expected to be carried out. In SE and AE sectors, stays abroad would not be expected to be carried out, but collaborative projects would be to a limited extent. In HE and VET sectors, mobility opportunities would remain, albeit to a lesser extent and with lower quality. Additionally, cooperation projects would only be expected to be carried out to a limited extent.

The Danish Evaluation Institute, EVA, explores and develops the quality of day care centres, schools and educational programmes. We provide usable knowledge at all levels - from day care centres and schools to local governments and ministries.