

# ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME EVALUATION FOR THE PERIOD 2014–2023

## NATIONAL REPORT

### REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

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## 1. SUMMARY

The Erasmus+ National Report presents a comprehensive overview of the Erasmus+ programme's performance, efficiency and impact on education and training in the Republic of Slovenia over the 2014–2023 period. It covers several areas of education, including school education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education and the field of youth. It is based on a methodological framework that shapes and justifies the data collection, which includes surveys, interviews, focus groups and analysis of documentation by sectors, and provides the basis for a comprehensive evaluation of the programme's impact at national level.

The report sets out in detail the key findings relating to the analysis of the horizontal priorities and the assessment of the different aspects of the programme – efficiency, performance, relevance, coherence and EU added value. The implementation of the programme is examined in terms of its impact on individuals, organisations and the system as a whole, while allowing an assessment of short-term impacts and setting out the potential for long-term impacts. The 2021–2023 impact assessments serve as a basis for future improvements of the Erasmus+ programme.

The programme evaluation highlights the positive impact of Erasmus+ on enhancing intercultural understanding, improving language and digital skills, increasing self-confidence and developing social skills. The programme supports an inclusive approach and equality in education, and its impact is visible on learners and school pupils, education and academic staff, practitioners, adults and youth. The programme not only promotes international cooperation and partnerships, but also innovation and improvement in terms of quality in educational processes, and enhances the international visibility of the institutions involved.

It underlines the importance of the long-lasting effects of the Erasmus+ programme, which go beyond the individual projects completed and shape the educational institutions on a daily basis. The evaluation found the programme to be successful on most evaluation criteria, including efficiency, performance, relevance, coherence and EU added value. However, it is in the field of efficiency that the most room for improvement has been identified, opening up opportunities for further improvements by both the European Commission and the national agencies.

The most frequently mentioned and recommended actions in the report are the urgent simplification of the European Commission's IT tool, the methodological modernisation of the questionnaire to enable data processing and analysis, the reduction of administrative burdens, support for project preparation and implementation, the improvement of the promotion and dissemination processes, and the integration and upgrading of digital tools. It is proposed to continue supporting applicants, to improve recognition processes and to provide additional funding to strengthen organisational capacity and to keep funding in line with inflation. The report also repeatedly points to the lack of definition of vulnerable groups and the lack of systemic impact of the Erasmus+ programme. The report also touches on the “brain drain”, which raises questions about talent retention within the country. In addition, the report highlights national specificities, also common in other European countries, within the context of understanding post-secondary education as part of higher education. Despite its important role in ensuring graduates' employability, higher education is often caught

between secondary and tertiary education. This unclear position makes it difficult to enter into partnership agreements and to engage in teaching at international level.

Higher education institutions express a desire for equal treatment and inclusion in the higher education system, but often face rejection from various stakeholders. They stress that the specificities of higher vocational education should be taken into account when evaluating applications for projects and individual mobility, and they want to be involved on an equal footing in strategic and collaborative partnerships. They also see an opportunity to enhance their role and identity in the internationalisation process, for example by including international project offices in the legislation on higher vocational education, integrating into the Study in Slovenia initiative and joining the Bologna Report – Student Card. Incorporating these recommendations would have a significant impact on vocational colleges, leading to increased international mobility and wider internationalisation, with a wider impact on the development of institutions and the education system in general.

The report also recommends that National Agencies regularly and systematically analyse and process data and monitor the impact and effects of the Erasmus+ programme at individual, organisational and systemic levels and adapt their support and services based on the findings.

In its final part, the report makes recommendations for various stakeholders, such as the European Commission, schools, the CMEPIUS National Agency, post-secondary and higher educational institutions, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, adult education organisations, the MOVIT National Agency and others that are called upon to further improve the design, monitoring and reporting of the impact of Erasmus+, with a view to enhancing the understanding and usefulness of the programme.

The Erasmus+ National Report is a valuable resource for policy-making at EU and national level, providing insights into the specificities, needs and challenges, and showcasing successful practices that can build on future cycles of the programme. The report is therefore crucial for tracking progress and assessing the impact of the programme, providing a basis for strategic decision-making and implementing improvements at all levels of the education system.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The Erasmus+ 2014–2023 national evaluation was comprehensive and systematic and took place in two key phases from April 2023 to March 2024. It started with the preparation of methodological guidelines for the evaluators appointed for each sector (school education, vocational education and training, higher education and adult education) by the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (hereinafter referred to as: CMEPIUS) and the Institute for the Development of Youth Mobility (hereinafter referred to as: MOVIT) for the field of youth. The instructions included specific guidelines for data collection and analysis, a schedule and the necessary contacts to support them throughout the process.

The first phase of the evaluation involved an in-depth collection and analysis of sectoral data covering the timeframe from 2014 to 2023. This process aimed at identifying both the immediate and long-term impacts of the Erasmus+ programme, with particular attention to EU strategic objectives such as the horizontal priorities, and assessing the programme's efficiency, performance, relevance, coherence and EU added value. The analysis addressed in detail the implementation of the programme and its impact on individuals, organisations and at system level, providing a comprehensive assessment of the short-term and potential long-term impacts over the 2014–2020 period. For the current 2021–2023 period, an interim assessment concerning the impact has also been carried out and recommendations formulated which will serve as a basis for further improvements to the programme. Although a common methodology for structuring sector reports has been developed, it has been ensured that each sector has the freedom to adapt the methods and choose the samples best suited to their specific contexts and needs. The following is a brief overview of the methodological approach and sample selection.

**School education:** In the evaluation process for the school education sector, the evaluators used a quantitative approach based on a survey questionnaire, to which they added in-depth qualitative approach involving a scale for analysing school documentation at the level of institutions and structured written interviews. The survey was completed by 759 practitioners from a wide range of educational institutions in the Republic of Slovenia, providing valuable insight into the implementation of the programme. For the analysis of the documentation, the researchers selected a representative sample of 15 randomly selected educational institutions active in the Erasmus+ programme in the 2021–2027 period. In addition, a set of semi-structured written interviews was conducted with nine Heads of Schools and nine coordinators from eight primary schools and one vocational and technical secondary school, which allowed better understanding and interpretation of first-hand data.

**Vocational education and training:** In the vocational education and training evaluation process, evaluators examined feedback received from 8683 learners via a standardised questionnaire during the 2014–2020 period. The insights of 1377 practitioners were also included in the analysis. In the follow-up to the 2021–2023 period, a thorough analysis of the data was carried out, covering mobilities and projects within the KA1 and KA2 Actions, strategic priorities, topics, financial frameworks and participating organisations. For the specific purposes of the evaluation, the evaluators collected responses from 120 project coordinators, 104 of whom represented the vocational, technical schools and colleges, and

the remaining 16 were from companies and various organisations. In order to gain an even deeper insight, 6 focus groups with 35 participants were also organised, which helped to add further dimension to the data obtained.

**Higher education:** The Erasmus+ Higher Education Programme evaluation process analysed the responses to a questionnaire completed by 19,666 mobility participants who took part in international mobility during the 2014–2020 programme period. Qualitative data was obtained through a series of focus groups with 118 participants, including post-secondary and higher educational institutions management, Erasmus+ coordinators, post-secondary and higher education teachers, learners and professional staff. In addition to the focus groups, a review of secondary sources, including surveys and analyses prepared by CMEPIUS, was also carried out. An analysis of the legislative and policy documents on higher education adopted by different stakeholders was also part of the evaluation. Validation meetings with representatives of ministries and the National Agency further contributed to the verification of findings and recommendations.

**Adult education:** The evaluation process for the field of adult education involved the development of a questionnaire, which was part of a broader international survey being carried out within the framework of The Research-based Impact Analysis of Erasmus+ Adult Education Programme Network (RIA-AE). 51 organisations responded to the invitation to take part in the survey, giving a response rate of 70.8%. The results of the quantitative research were complemented by qualitative research. To this end, 5 focus groups were held with adult education organisations involved in KA1 and KA2 projects, including a total of 23 participants. In addition to the focus groups with adult education organisations, 3 focus groups with participants (adult learners) were held, in which participated 12 adults with recent mobility experience. Furthermore, 4 interviews with experts and 3 interviews with Erasmus+ coordinators who organised the mobility of adult learners were also carried out.

**Youth:** The evaluation process of the Erasmus+ Youth Programme selected a design based on a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods. This plan included an in-depth review of the literature and other sources on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ youth programmes in the Republic of Slovenia, a statistical analysis of the database on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ youth programmes in the Republic of Slovenia (data obtained in the RAY MON survey of the RAY partnership), a statistical analysis of the data collected by means of the survey questionnaire, statistical analysis of the data obtained by MOVIT by means of a survey questionnaire specially designed for the purpose of this evaluation and distributed among the applicant organisations (both successful and unsuccessful), two focus groups with the applicants and interviews with the programme staff of the National Agency and the representative of the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth.

The second phase of the Erasmus+ evaluation drew key findings from the sectoral reports, which served as a critical basis for the development of the single national report. This approach has achieved a high degree of coherence and synchronisation, whereby individual sectors were left with sufficient room to adapt their methodological approaches to their own characteristics and needs. As a result, the final national report presents a comprehensive overview of the activities implemented and their impact in the Republic of Slovenia, providing

insights that will have a key impact on shaping the direction and strategies for the future development of the Erasmus+ programme.



### 3. ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME NATIONAL EVALUATION (2014–2023)

The National Report summarises the key findings of the 2014–2023 Erasmus+ programme evaluation. The results are categorised according to criteria such as performance, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value, and are presented by individual sectors: school education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education and youth. The report also highlights the strengths and weaknesses extracted from the analysis of effective practices, summarises the lessons learned and makes recommendations that will serve as guidelines for further improvements of the programme. Therefore, the report not only provides detailed sector-specific findings, but also a holistic view of the programme that will contribute to the formulation of strategies for its future development.

#### 3.1. PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

##### 3.1.1. School Education

The Erasmus+ programme brings a variety of positive impacts to the education sector in the 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 periods. As the analysis of the collected data shows, these are most often linked to raising the profile and strengthening the cooperation of nursery schools and schools in local, national and international contexts. Taking part in the programme enables or encourages participating institutions to develop new approaches and share good practices in education and to introduce new teaching approaches, which, according to those involved in the evaluation, ensures sustainability of impact at the level of practitioners and learners. The programme's contribution to upgrading digital equipment and developing digital literacy has been recognised. At the level of learners and school pupils, participation contributes to the development of intercultural understanding, improves knowledge of foreign languages and digital competences, boosts self-confidence and social skills, and increases awareness of European values. The positive impact is also reflected, albeit to a lesser extent, in the increasing involvement and accessibility for different stakeholder groups, both practitioners, as well as learners and school pupils.

Despite the positive impact, the data analysis shows that the institutions face various obstacles, which they cite as reasons for the failure to prepare projects, namely **lack of knowledge in writing applications, lack of knowledge of the terminology and objectives of the programme, lack of time, and mismatch between the objectives of the programme and those of the educational institution**. The persons participating in the evaluation who have never applied for an Erasmus+ programme project cite as reasons for not applying for an Erasmus+ project due to excessive administrative work and extra work, lack of partners abroad, not speaking a foreign language, and international cooperation not being part of the educational institution's development plans. However, the number of applicants with no (or very little) international experience who have successfully obtained funding is gradually increasing, which is positive. The latter can probably be attributed to the many promotions and activities of CMEPIUS (e.g. tailor-made workshops, seminars, networking with other relevant institutions within the Slovenian school system).

Based on the analysis and review of the data, it is concluded that the Erasmus+ programme is having a transformative impact on the education system, by promoting horizontal and

sectoral priorities such as digital transformation, inclusion and diversity, and environmental awareness. The most long-term positive impact at system level is in the field of professional development of practitioners. **In supporting and building on national policies, the Erasmus+ programme has a more short-term impact.**

The programme also has a positive and long-term impact on the dissemination of good practices within the Republic of Slovenia and in Europe. At the same time, the evidence suggests that these **results are still not being disseminated effectively enough**. An additional focus on disseminating good practices could strengthen their impact and allow for more knowledge exchange between institutions, particularly those that are taking part in projects more frequently and those that are new to projects and are working on them for the first time. It would be worthwhile to consider additional actions in this field, including in cooperation with various national institutions and associations (e.g. the Ministry of Education, public institutions, associations of head teachers, etc.).

The programme undoubtedly represents an important opportunity to promote and implement internationalisation at home and abroad, and to contribute to improving the quality of education, while increasingly successfully supporting the mobility of professional staff, learners and school pupils, facilitating the European-wide exchange of examples of traineeship mobility, and fostering new cross-border partnerships that also contribute to the development of shared values and intercultural understanding.

### 3.1.2. Vocational education and training

The 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 programmes also bring a range of positive impacts for vocational education and training. The main findings on the success of the vocational education and training programme are as follows: cooperation with partner institutions has deepened, teachers and mentors have acquired new pedagogical and professional skills, and their English language skills have improved. Competences in the use of ICT technologies have also increased. Cooperation between schools and enterprises has also improved through more effective communication between mentors in enterprises and practitioners in schools, exchanges of good practices and the development of professional modules within the open curricula of vocational and technical schools, which allow the specific needs of the local economy and the target audience to be taken into account.

Participation in Erasmus+ projects has boosted learners' motivation to learn and increased their participation in various school activities (e.g. participation in Erasmus+ days, presentations on their mobility, involvement in follow-up projects, etc.). Participants improved their communication skills and acquired digital skills. Some learners are also considering further education or working abroad. This reflects the broadening of their horizons and ambitions, which have been strengthened through an international educational experience.

In the context of vocational education and training, differences have been identified between Key Action 1 (KA1) and Key Action 2 (KA2) under Erasmus+ programme. KA1 activities implemented by schools are characterised by regular contact with the National Agency, recurrent training and awareness of the importance of sustainable results. Despite the

development of tangible results in KA2 projects, in some cases these remain untapped, unless the schools actually implement the results. At the same time, it is also true that the bulk of the funding is allocated for KA1 activities, therefore, given the rather limited budget, many KA2 project applications are rejected because of the high competition. Ongoing KA1 activities, such as job shadowing abroad and teaching activity conducted abroad, are considered more effective.

In the field of KA2 projects, CMEPIUS notes that the quality of applications is poorer, often driven by the desire to obtain funding without properly linking it with identified needs; and the objectives are too general. For projects where the applicant is a school, the quality of the projects submitted is higher because they are education-related. The suggested quality improvement actions include the continuation of various forms of training and advice to applicants, in-depth and consistent evaluation of applications to maintain the credibility of the Erasmus+ programme, training of evaluators and the provision of very good feedback to applicants. Opportunities for improvement in the field of vocational education and training include even closer cooperation with industry, which would allow the dissemination of good practices by economic operators.

In the vocational education and training sector, the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ programme is showing positive results with regard to the four horizontal priorities of the programme: inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, green transition and participation in democratic life. Based on the past experience of 2014–2020 Erasmus+ programme participants, these objectives are expected to achieve a high level of success in the new period.

An important element of the previous programme was the development of intercultural competences. The continuation of the programme will further increase the diversity of the learners involved, the equal participation of all and promote tolerance of the values of other cultures. Developing digital competences among learners and teachers is a key field identified by all as important and useful within the context of the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ programme. They strengthened their digital competences in the field of social media, where they created content to present and promote the school and projects. Individual institutions also reported successful use of digital tools.

Promoting sustainable practices and awareness of environmental responsibility is one of the horizontal priorities actively pursued by the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ programme. One vocational school designed a project to refurbish old bicycles, based on their experience in mobility. The project brings together learners from different programmes and highlights the importance of sustainable values, awareness and innovation. Given the considerably low numbers of learners from less advantaged backgrounds and learners with special needs, **clearer criteria for identifying learners from disadvantaged backgrounds need to be established**, or special attention needs to be paid to them and to learners with special needs when engaging in projects and providing mobility experiences.

From discussions with teachers, coordinators and learners about the inclusion of these target groups in the new 2021–2027 programme period, it was felt that their inclusion in mobility projects is a priority. Almost 80% of schools in the new programme period consider that their involvement in Erasmus+ projects has helped to improve their cooperation with organisations

supporting participants with fewer opportunities. In particular, they point out that Erasmus+ projects have made it possible for learners with fewer opportunities, who could otherwise hardly afford self-funded activities, to have an experience abroad.

Concerning the impact of participation in Erasmus+ programme since 2018 on the development of sustainable competences inside and outside the institution, the majority (out of 120) of Erasmus+ programme coordinators agree that this impact has been significant. Almost 80% of them consider that their involvement in Erasmus+ projects has helped them to pay more attention to climate change issues and to acquire competences in the field of sustainable development. More than 90% of them also consider that their institution's commitment to the environment and the fight against climate change has improved in the new programming environment.

However, the Erasmus+ programme in the field of vocational education and training has not been found **to have had a significant impact on the development of education policies**, as it is primarily designed to provide a rapid response to specific challenges that cannot be addressed quickly in a systemic way. But they can be solved at micro level through a project and its implementation. Such projects can be seen as pilot projects with the potential to lead to systemic change.

Among the specific approaches to enhance the success of the Erasmus+ programme in the field of vocational education and training, at CMEPIUS, they in particular highlight the cooperation with contracting organisations at micro level and the development of the Impact+ tool in cooperation with the English National Agency, which helped applicants to understand the concept of impact and to define specific objectives and measurable results at an early stage of each project. At national level, an impact scale has been developed for KA1 and KA2 projects, which is divided into levels. Increased impact was also achieved through the promotion of the programme, the organisation of annual conferences and regular social media posts.

In the longer term, the impact of the Erasmus+ programme is reflected in systemic changes such as the introduction of new vocational modules in the field of educational programme in vocational education and training, the introduction of new vocational modules in the open curricula of vocational and technical schools, the establishment of a new National Vocational Qualification (e.g. NVQ, field of VET), and the introduction of new forms of assessment in the practical part of the vocational matura (in the veterinary technician programme).

Without the Erasmus+ programme, learners would lose the opportunity to undertake traineeship mobility abroad in such large numbers, as would teachers, who would have limited access to training abroad. As a result, this could impoverish the educational process in vocational and technical programmes, especially in terms of internationalisation.

The pandemic has had a wide-ranging impact on the implementation of mobility programmes, especially in the field of KA1 projects. The implementation of mobility was interrupted, forcing schools to make adaptations such as virtual preparation for mobility and getting to know the host organisations through virtual tools. Even after the borders of countries were opened, the impact of the pandemic was reflected in a number of

cancellations by employers who faced financial difficulties, reduced profits, loss of work force and other challenges to survival. These challenges have extended the projects into 2021 and 2022, when mobilities have returned to normal.

In contrast, KA2 projects experienced only limited problems due to cancellations of live meetings. However, in response to the constraints of the pandemic, they have significantly improved their virtual collaboration, which has become a regular practice. This shift shows the flexibility and development of new ways of international cooperation in educational projects that go beyond physical constraints.

### 3.1.3. Tertiary education

Analysis of several data sources reveals significant impacts of the programme on those who have benefited from international mobility opportunities. The reports of 13,502 learners for the period 2014–2020 show that Erasmus+ has made a significant contribution to their adaptability, self-confidence, open-mindedness and ability to face new challenges, which is particularly important in the light of globalisation and the international working environment. Learners who took part in international mobility for the purpose of their studies, whether in programme or partner countries, reported an improved ability to adapt to new situations and greater confidence in their abilities. There was also a greater openness and curiosity for new challenges and an improved understanding of one's own strengths and weaknesses. These responses echo the deep personal transformations that learners associate with their mobility – from overcoming fears to discovering their own identity and aspirations. The practical mobilities have particularly highlighted the learners' readiness to take on responsible work tasks, which demonstrates the direct value of the programme for their professional preparedness.

One of the key issues raised by learners concerns the **recognition of courses taken abroad, which has a significant impact on their perception of the efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme**. Although much has been done in the field of recognition of Erasmus+ programme in the last 20 years, learner reports show that between 21.05% and 33.33% of learners believe that their courses will only be partially recognised by their home institution. More worrying still, in 2019, around 11.05% of learners reported that their studies abroad will not be fully recognised. This issue can significantly reduce learners' motivation to participate in international mobility and negatively affect the perception of the Erasmus+ programme.

Furthermore, the focus groups revealed an interesting phenomenon: a significant number of Slovenian learners who took advantage of the Erasmus+ opportunity decided to stay abroad to continue their studies, for employment or family reasons. Many have found partners during their time abroad, and have gone on to build a life together. This phenomenon represents a twofold dynamic of the impact of the Erasmus+ programme: on the one hand, **the programme brings promising new opportunities and encourages personal and professional growth, while on the other hand it can lead to what is known in the national talent context as a brain drain**. Although the concept of brain circulation is still widespread and has certain advantages, the current demographic trends facing Slovenia and other European countries call into question the sustainability of this model. At a time when talent

and skills are crucial, the debate on talent retention is increasingly becoming a pressing issue. This trend raises a number of new questions and calls for a thoughtful approach to policies that encourage learners to return and contribute to their home country after having finished the Erasmus+ programme.

However, it can be concluded that Erasmus+ programme has had a wide-ranging impact on learners participating in international mobility in the 2014–2023 period. Through international mobility for study and traineeship mobility, learners have gained valuable skills and experience that have transformed their academic path, personal and professional development.

The Erasmus+ programme also contributes to the professional and personal development of post-secondary and higher education professors and assistants, as confirmed by both quantitative data from staff reports and qualitative feedback from focus groups. For international mobility for the purpose of teaching in the programme countries, most staff reported positive impacts such as creating spin-off effects, improving the quality and number of learner and academic mobility, developing new teaching practices or methods, and improving job and career prospects. A high percentage of staff also expressed the need to strengthen their professional network and to work with a partner institution. In the case of international mobility for the purpose of teaching in partner countries, the majority of staff (39.00% to 85.43%) also reported similar effects, such as strengthening cooperation with partner institutions, sharing knowledge and skills with learners, and improving social, linguistic and cultural competences. Analysis of staff responses thus shows that the Erasmus+ programme is highly effective in generating spin-off effects, such as the development of joint courses or modules, academic networks, and research collaborations. Most participants reported an improvement in the quality and number of learner and academic staff mobilities, and in the development of new teaching practices or methods, which contributed to their professional development.

Combining quantitative and qualitative findings, it can be argued that Erasmus+ provides a rich and multidimensional experience that has a significant impact on the individual level of post-secondary and higher education professors and assistants. This leads to the conclusion that the programme not only delivers on its promises to promote mobility and cooperation, but also actively contributes to building a more connected and educated European society.

At the organisational level (at the level of post-secondary and higher educational institutions), the programme has been found to provide a more modern approach to working with learners, improve the education system, promote reverse mentoring where not only staff mentor learners, but learners also mentor teachers, and offer more opportunities for further education and entry into the labour market. The programme has been praised as a “window on the world”, which has helped to develop joint study programmes, lead to joint degrees and trigger the following: the writing of joint scientific papers, the organisation of international conferences, summer schools and conducting of international PhD degree programmes. Thus, Erasmus+ is proving to be an indispensable part of the strategy for international cooperation and development of post-secondary and higher educational institutions, not only enriching the educational environment but also contributing to wider socio-economic development.

To make the Erasmus+ programme even more successful in the future, the recommendations highlight the **importance of improving support mechanisms for learners before, during and after the exchange**. The focus is on holistic preparation, including cultural and linguistic preparation and evaluation of the experience after return. It is also recommended to increase learner involvement in the promotion of the programme and to develop systematic mentoring support. The **European Commission's administrative procedures and tools** are also identified as a **major obstacle to mobility** and it is proposed to simplify them, including by streamlining the processes for obtaining a visa. In addition, the recommendations mention the need to adjust Erasmus+ financial support, in particular scholarships, to take account of economic changes and differences in the costs of living. The need to develop a reliable learner accommodation platform that ensures security and reduces the risk of fraud is underlined.

It also encourages the setting up of systems to facilitate the search for practical experience, which would help to improve the quality of training. Finally, it is recommended that the **feedback questionnaires** be redesigned and **shortened by the European Commission** to allow learners to express their experiences more clearly and consistently.

#### 3.1.4. Adult Education

In the adult education sector, the Erasmus+ programme has been most successful in being recognised as a means to develop and upgrade the work of adult education organisations; to provide rapid solutions in responding to current challenges and needs of organisations; to establish international cooperation, learning good practices from abroad and reflecting on own work through international experience; to strengthen intercultural competence; and to enhance the personal and professional development of staff.

A key weakness in the performance of the programme is that it does not have a **lasting impact at system level**, as lessons learned from projects are rarely transferred to the adult education system.

Another challenge is the wide gap in the **quality of applications received** in the adult education sector. Applications from those organisations involved in non-vocational adult education are very good. On the other hand, applicants also include organisations that are not fundamentally involved in adult education and have a misunderstanding of this field in the context of the Erasmus+ programme, resulting in applications that are substantively inaccurate. In recent years, we have noticed that about half of the applicants could be classified as such.

CMEPIUS is also implementing specific approaches to increase the impact of the programme, namely: strengthening communication with applicants – targeting different organisations, e.g. organisations that already have good experience with the programme, targeting the accreditation scheme, working extensively with libraries and museums identified as important organisations offering general adult education – and providers. They are regularly followed up every six months and are provided a range of training courses and seminars (e.g. on project management, impact measurement, dissemination and promotion, project financial management for accountants) and arrange networking events for them.

As far as the dissemination of the results of the programme is concerned, this depends to a large extent on the performance of the organisations themselves. Certain organisations do an excellent job of always disseminating the results of their international cooperation, while other organisations only disseminate the visits they have made via social networks (e.g. Facebook). The key problem in disseminating the results is not the use of the results at the implementing organisation itself, but the use of the project results by organisations that did not participate in the (KA2) project. In practice, this transfer between organisations occurs less frequently.

The impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of the programme has resulted in no mobility under the programme for the duration of restrictions. Virtual exchanges have not been successful in adult education. Once the actions for maintaining appropriate distance were relaxed and travel was allowed again, mobility was resumed. The action to extend the duration of projects was also welcome, allowing all projects to be implemented largely as planned.

### 3.1.1. Youth

The positive impacts of the Erasmus+ programme are also evident in the field of youth. The data show that through the activities of the 2014–2023 projects, participants have mostly learned to express ideas creatively, but also improved their ability to communicate with others in a foreign language, improved their ability to negotiate common solutions when there are different points of view, better empathise with others, improved their ability to participate in policy and decision-making, and to engage in solving socio-political challenges. In terms of impact on organisations, it was found that organisations are now better able to foster diversity, are more able to strengthen the international dimension in their work related to young people, have learnt more through the project about promoting non-formal learning in the youth sector, have learnt more about strengthening work related to young people led by young people, and that participation in the project has had an impact on their network.

As regards the impact of participation in the programme on the organisations themselves, there is a largely positive impact, particularly in terms of improved networking with other organisations and in terms of leveraging other resources, while **the negative aspect at the level of the organisations is that in pursuit of priorities (especially “digital” and “green”), organisations feel compelled to abandon their own priorities or missions**, which are rooted in the needs of their users; it concerns a problem of survival for the youth sector, which is largely financially dependent on project resources, and therefore has to continuously adapt in a meaningful way to the available resources, without abandoning its primary mission.

As far as young people as end-users of the programme are concerned, it appears that **youth are less familiar with the Erasmus+ programme than youth organisations** and other organisations. This is an expected situation, but not yet adequately addressed by the National Agency (MOVIT) or by the programme. The involvement of youth in projects (in particular the recruitment of participants) also appears to be a major obstacle to the successful achievement of the programme's objectives and the horizontal priorities, again showing that the programme is not sufficiently visible among young people and that it does not bring



enough benefits that are interesting to them or are not communicated to them in an appropriate manner. The programme does not address youth directly enough, as it mostly reaches them only through organisations.

As regards the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, the programme achieves a high inclusion rate, but the definition of this group in the programme is context-driven. There is a tendency towards an increasing percentage of young people with fewer opportunities being included, but it is not clear whether the Erasmus+ programme aims mainly (in most cases) to address the population of young people with fewer opportunities, or just to ensure that the same percentage of young people with fewer opportunities as in the population as a whole are included in the programme.

Furthermore, some of the obstacles to a higher performance rate of the programme stem from technical (platform) and administrative problems (unclear reporting instructions, excessive duplication in application forms), and some of the obstacles are also related to the eligibility conditions (e.g. non-transparent criteria on geographical distribution, which seem to be present but without explicit criteria in the calls for proposals; there is also a lack of incentive for newcomer organisations).

Another important finding is that project **promoters themselves face major organisational constraints to achieving programme performance, as youth organisations are often under-resourced in terms of funding and staffing**, while the Erasmus+ programme does not fund this part of the “cold start” of organisations.

The horizontal priorities are most successfully addressed under “promoting inclusion and diversity”, followed by “promoting and participating in democratic life, shared values and civic engagement”, while the other two horizontal priorities “protecting the environment and combating climate change” and “digital transition” are less successfully addressed. Furthermore, among the general objectives of the programme, the most successful is the objective “promoting non-formal and informal learning mobility and active participation among young people and cooperation, quality, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of youth organisations and policies”, while the lowest is the general objective “influence on the development of public policies”. In this context, the overemphasis on the “green” and “digital” priorities is identified as a factor in reducing the creativity of applicants in terms of content and diverting content from the real needs of participants, as the horizontal priorities do not seem to be clearly presented as “horizontal”, i.e. as priorities that are cutting across all activities, but are not key in terms of content. It is also significant that the **strategic objectives at policy level are the least well addressed**, probably linked to the discontinuation of the call for proposals under KA3 Action after 2020, while the coverage of these topics through KA154 Action does not fully cover the objectives of KA3, which supports the development of public policies in the field of youth in general, in addition to the participation of young people in the development of public policies.

In terms of impact on the community, almost two thirds of the organisations believe that the project has made the local community more aware of youth's concerns and interests, while almost three quarters of the project managers note that the local community has shown interest in supporting similar activities in the future.

### 3.1.2. Concluding observations on performance of the Erasmus+ programme

An analysis of the different fields of Erasmus+ activities in the 2014–2023 period reveals that the programme as a whole effectively supports the education system in the Republic of Slovenia and contributes to the personal and professional development of participants at different levels of education. In school education, the positive effects of increasing visibility and fostering cooperation between educational institutions at different levels, from local to international, are particularly recognised. Thanks to Erasmus+, many educational institutions have developed innovative pedagogical approaches and improved digital equipment and literacy. The positive impact of the programme also extends to the field of vocational education and training, where there has been an increase in international cooperation and improvements in learning outcomes and staff training. However, challenges such as lack of knowledge in project preparation and administrative complexity have been identified and are gradually being addressed through support and training for applicants. There have also been significant impacts on the dissemination of good practices and the strengthening of international cooperation, which promise a longer-lasting systemic impact on education.

In higher education, Erasmus+ has enabled learners to improve key competences such as adaptability, self-confidence, open-mindedness and the ability to face new challenges. This is particularly important in the context of globalisation and the international working environment. The issue of recognition of learning achievements remains a key challenge that requires further attention and improvement. However, the programme also promotes personal growth and the development of intercultural competences and professional preparedness through international exchanges.

The adult education sector has also measured successes with Erasmus+, particularly in terms of developing and upgrading organisations and promoting intercultural competences and international cooperation. However, it highlights the difficulties of translating the results of projects into the wider-ranging education system and the need to better target programmes to the real needs of participants.

In the field of youth, Erasmus+ has promoted creative expression, communication in foreign languages, negotiation and involvement in societal challenges. At institutional level, the impact has been positive, especially in improving networking and obtaining funding. Concerns were also raised about organisations abandoning their own priorities in favour of following the ones related to the programme.

Overall, the positive impacts of the programme include improved intercultural competence, language skills, digital literacy and the development of social and communication skills among all participants. Erasmus+ promotes inclusiveness and ensures equal opportunities for participation of different stakeholder groups, including people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Positive impacts are being seen, both at the individual and organisational level, for all sectors.

However, the programme also points to existing challenges such as administrative obstacles and European Commission's tools, which requires an urgent overhaul, the need for more support in project preparation and management, improved mechanisms to promote the

programme and disseminate good practices, and more effective integration of digital tools. In addition, there are concerns about the systemic integration of acquired skills and experience into national education frameworks and its impact at systemic level. It is important to continue to develop strategies to increase inclusion and improve access to the programme for all target groups, including young people with fewer opportunities. The need for a definition of vulnerable groups is highlighted, as well as the recognition of study abroad, special care for young academics and the possibility for mobility to be also intended for research and not only for teaching.

Despite the obvious positive impacts of the programme in various fields of education, it is important to understand and address the potential side effects, such as “brain drain”. This requires a balanced approach that not only encourages international mobility, but also strengthens the opportunities and attractiveness for youth to contribute in their home country after finishing their studies.

The report shows that the programme has succeeded in creating an environment in which participants have acquired not only knowledge and skills, but also values and perspectives that transcend national borders. To ensure that Erasmus+ remains effective and relevant, it is crucial that the European Commission continues to improve quality and accessibility, especially in the light of recent challenges, and takes into account the recommendations made by various stakeholders in the final section of this report, to seize opportunities for further growth and improvement of the programme.

## **3.2. PROGRAMME EFFICIENCY**

### **3.2.1. School Education**

In terms of the evaluation of the efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme, the comparison between the approved budgets through agreements and the approved budgets by final report reviews shows that the funds allocated to the Erasmus+ programme have been to a greater extent successfully used, which has contributed to improving the quality of school education in the Republic of Slovenia. Cooperation with educational institutions as primary stakeholders (and with other different actors involved in the implementation and monitoring of the programme) is key to the programme efficiency. CMEPIUS is well aware of this and has implemented very carefully and very successfully in both programme periods a number of activities to strengthen direct cooperation with educational institutions (e.g. workshops, seminars, counselling at individual institutions and by phone, e-mail, project administrators) and with some other actors that are important in supporting the National Agency in strengthening the Erasmus+ programme (e.g. the National Education Institute of The Republic of Slovenia/School for Head Teachers). There is certainly room for improvement in terms of making (non-)indirect access to school sector institutions even more effective, with a focus on those who have not yet been involved or have been unsuccessful in applying.

At the same time, the efficiency of cooperation with the European Commission has varied between the two programme periods, with some improvements, notably the accreditation scheme mechanism, which allows easy and constant access to funding for applicants (only a financial application is submitted each year), and the lump sums for KA210 and KA220 actions.

However, there are still fields where procedures could be improved and simplified for applicants and CMEPIUS. **In this context, particular emphasis is placed on the field of (non)functioning of the support tools for the application and implementation of Erasmus+, the establishment of a system of “quality control” of training programmes and a system of a more effective “monitoring” over the so-called professional application writers, copying of applications.**

### 3.2.2. Vocational education and training

For the field of vocational education and training, too, the efficiency of the programme in terms of resources spent can only be inferred indirectly, as there is no data to measure efficiency in terms of the relationship between resources spent and changes in or impacts of KA1 and KA2 actions. A few figures stand out: while the average allocation per mobility project is higher in the new programme period, the average allocation per partner project is much lower, and it is also lower compared to the average allocation per mobility project. This is probably due to the fact that the new scheme is only being initiated and larger partnership projects will be approved in the next calls for proposals.

In the field of vocational education and training in the Republic of Slovenia, cooperation between various actors such as the Ministry, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, the National Education Institute, CMEPIUS, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, the Chamber of Crafts and Small Business of Slovenia still has room for improvement. More concrete support from relevant stakeholders would be crucial to achieve a greater impact of the programme.

In the context of improving cooperation, CMEPIUS has introduced regular meetings with stakeholders, the main purpose of which is to exchange information and seek synergies. A very important part of the National Agency's work assignments focuses on establishing effective communication with applicants and providers under the Programme. CMEPIUS holds an information seminar before the call for proposals is published. The focus is on technical and substantive aspects, with the aim of ensuring that applications are relevant and meaningful. Upon project approval, the party is invited to a kick-off seminar. This is followed by regular monitoring of the project twice a year and organisation of thematic seminars.

The period of the new programme (2021–2027) has seen some simplifications, but also some challenges. Among the simplifications, CMEPIUS highlights the accreditation scheme, but at the same time monitoring has become quite complicated. **Errors in the reporting tools (BM) present an additional issue.**

An additional autumn call for proposals deadline for KA210 was introduced as a novelty, but proved to be an additional burden for national agencies with no noticeable positive impact. The administrative work has increased, but the quality of applications is lower, as most of the applied projects are those that were unsuccessful in the first round. Despite the large number of applied projects (13 in 2023), only one or two were eventually approved due to limited funds in the second call for proposals.

### 3.2.3. Tertiary education

From the perspective of higher education, the cost-efficiency of the various actions of the programme is reflected in the fact that the funds allocated to the programme were generally well used, which contributed to improving the quality and accessibility of higher education in the Republic of Slovenia. Compared to the previous programme period, the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 budget will allow for a wider range and depth of actions, although questions are raised as to whether the distribution of resources between the different sections of the programme and the key actions is fully appropriate given their level of efficiency and usefulness. In the light of economic changes and differences in the cost of living, it is recommended that the European Commission adjusts the Erasmus+ scholarships to better reflect the financial needs of learners and to make international mobility more affordable.

Cooperation between the different actors involved in the implementation and monitoring of the programme is key to its success. The efficiency of this cooperation and the European Commission's leading role in it have varied between the two programme periods, with some improvements, but there are still fields where procedures could be improved and simplified, in particular in terms of IT and certain actions such as KA171. In order to improve the user experience and reduce the technical problems that hamper the Erasmus+ processes, it is urgent that the **European Commission carries out a comprehensive upgrade or replacement of the existing Erasmus+ Dashboard IT system with a more advanced and reliable solution.** The current infrastructure has a negative impact on the efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme. **It is also proposed to simplify procedures and to combine KA171 and KA131 Actions to reduce administrative burdens and promote greater efficiency.** Furthermore, to promote efficiency and reduce uncertainty in the implementation of short intensive programmes, increased financial and organisational support and more flexibility in limiting the number of participants are recommended.

The simplification actions introduced, such as the simplified subsidy system and the accreditation scheme system, have contributed to reducing the administrative burden for national agencies, programme beneficiaries and participants. However, there are differences between actions and fields where the programme could be further simplified to reduce the administrative burden without compromising the proper governance, results and impact of the programme.

The indicators set out for the programme in the Regulation are key to monitoring and evaluating its efficiency at national level. **There is great potential to improve the overall governance and monitoring system (Erasmus+ Dashboard), in particular through the development of additional governance support tools that would be more in line with the needs and design of the Erasmus+ programme.** Furthermore, one of the key obstacles to effective monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the Erasmus+ programme at national level is a questionnaire that is not methodologically robust. Its excessive length and lack of adherence to universal methodological principles, together with its changing content over the different programme periods, make it difficult to access and analyse data that could be extremely useful at national level. This also has an impact on the overall efficiency of the programme.

### 3.2.4. Adult Education

The adult education sector concludes that the cost-efficiency of the various actions in the programme is satisfactory and adequate according to the documentation received by CMEPIUS (costs are spent for the intended purposes). However, in terms of cost-effectiveness, adult education institutions report that there is a lack of funding, especially in KA2 projects, as well as in mobility projects for adult learners. The Erasmus+ 2021–2027 budget has slightly increased for the adult education sector compared to the Erasmus+ 2014–2020 programme, with a significant increase in mobility projects (KA1), where sufficient funding is available, while KA2 projects are significantly underfunded. The adult education sector receives the smallest share of funding in the overall Erasmus+ programme for education and training (5.0% in the previous programme and 5.8% in the current programme), which is clearly insufficient for the target group of adults.

As regards the efficiency of cooperation between the different actors involved in the implementation and monitoring of the programme (between the European Commission and CMEPIUS), it can be noted that this type of cooperation is improving, a working group was set up in 2019 and representatives of the European Commission, together with representatives of the national agencies, are discussing and sharing their experiences. However, there is still a certain gap between the wishes of the national agencies and the European Commission. As regards the Commission's leading role in this process, it is certain that the Commission steers the programme in terms of content (through strategies and priorities), sets the agenda for the actions themselves (currently the vast majority of money is directed towards mobility) and the level of funding.

The **recommendations** to the Commission are in the direction of **greater flexibility** in financial adjustment. Providers have not been covering their travel costs for the last two years due to the cost of living, therefore more flexibility in the use of funds would be needed here. Equal individual support for all learners (school children, school pupils, students, adults) is also problematic, as adults need a different type of accommodation abroad than other target groups.

It is also inappropriate that an organisation receives twice as much funding for the mobility of an employee as for an adult learner, whereby the funds to cover the costs of the mobility of the adult learner in relation to the actual costs incurred are insufficient. Therefore, individual support for adult learners needs to be coordinated with individual support for professional staff.

The actions to monitor and support applicants, beneficiaries and participants are largely effective and proportionate. CMEPIUS is responsive and prepared to help organisations facing different challenges. When CMEPIUS identifies problems in several organisations during the semi-annual monitoring of projects, they organise an event for all organisations to address the identified problems.

The Commission's actions that were implemented to simplify the administrative burden for beneficiaries and participants have not had a significant impact, as the administrative burden remains the same.

The new tools to support programme governance have varying degrees of efficiency: the new actions work well, but the new ICT tools do not always work optimally in practice, making the work of providers and national agencies difficult to a certain extent.

### 3.2.1. Youth

As far as the distribution of resources across the individual youth actions is concerned, this has varied considerably over the years; these changes in the reallocation of resources between actions have no strategic basis (except in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid epidemic), which undermines the efficiency of the programme, particularly in terms of the objectives of each action, as reflected, for example, in the weak achievement of the objectives of strategic influencing on youth policies. Although overall funding has increased significantly since 2020, it is difficult to assess at this stage whether this increase in funding is actually having a commensurate impact, as the expected outcome of a significant increase in resources are not known; while the quantitative indicators of the number of youth involved and the increased funding for projects are being successfully achieved, it is not yet clear whether there will be a commensurate increase in the impact on individuals, organisations and the community.

As for the number of accredited organisations, it is relatively low, 11 in total in 2017 or 15 in 2023, but it should be clarified that before 2020 this concerned organisations with a “Quality Label”, while after 2021 the accreditation scheme has become a status that makes a difference in the call for proposals process itself. Within the context of the status of applicants, the percentage of new applicants and participating organisations (newcomers), which remains low, is also important. Another **obstacle to efficiency is the fact that calls for proposals always require new/innovative content**, therefore applicants are forced to develop new programmes and **consequently ignore old programmes** that are of high quality and could be developed and sustained in the long run.

Furthermore, the **efficiency of the programme is somewhat hindered by the problem of insufficient resources and lack of focus on mentoring of youth**, who have increasing needs for monitoring and mentoring, mental health problems and psychological and personal distress of young people are on the rise, and the category of funding for an accompanying person does not cover all these aspects; in this respect, there are insufficient resources for beneficiaries and for mentors in the organisations, as well as for external professional providers who could e.g. provide professional psychological and other assistance. Last but not least, the **digital platform is still an obstacle, as it is still not working optimally, interruptions are frequent and the input is time-consuming**.

The obvious obstacle is the **inflation of the past two years, which has made travel, accommodation and food costs much more expensive**. As regards the work of the MOVIT national agency, this is mostly considered good, but the weakness is often highlighted in terms of unavailability over the telephone, as most advice is redirected to e-mail (via the general info e-mail address) and office hours are very niche. Applicants and beneficiaries perceive the impact of staff shortages at the MOVIT National Agency. The number of audit field visits has been decreasing over the years (which is understandable in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid epidemic). The fact that MOVIT has some freedom in interpreting the programme's content guidelines is a strong factor, and thus a significant influence on the

implementation of the programme, which could have been better guided by the Youth Office, particularly in terms of national priorities for youth.

### 3.2.2. Concluding observations on the efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme

The report on the efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme in Slovenia shows that the funds earmarked for improving the quality of education are well used in the education sector. This underlines the importance of the cooperation of educational institutions as key actors for the performance of the programme. Efficiency has also been achieved through the involvement of different actors and a focus on continuously improving communication channels and support tools. In vocational education and training, resources are equally well used, although there is no direct data to measure efficiency. In higher education, resources are also well spent, contributing to improving access to and quality of education. However, the report also notes the need to adjust funding to consider economic changes and differences in the cost of living. The adult education sector reports sufficient cost-efficiency by proper use of funds. However, there is a perceived need for more resources in the sector, in particular in the Cooperation Partnerships (KA2) projects and adult learner mobilities. Cooperation between different stakeholders such as the European Commission, CMEPIUS and others is improving, which is positive for the overall efficiency of the programme. In the field of youth, efficiency varies due to the different allocation of resources between the different actions. Despite the increase in funding in the new programme period, there is a need for greater targeting of resources based on strategic objectives. There is also a perceived need for better support and mentoring for youth, given the prevalence of mental health problems and the need for psychological support.

The report highlights the need for further improvements, including adjusting of financial support in line with inflation, simplifying administrative procedures and improving monitoring and support tools for applicants and participants. It was concluded that the efficiency of the programme could be enhanced through better coordination between all stakeholders and a clearer focus of the programme objectives, which would increase its impact and benefits for all stakeholders. All sectors point to the malfunctioning of the digital platform offered by the European Commission and the European Commission is therefore urged to urgently undertake a comprehensive upgrade or replacement of the existing IT system with a more advanced and reliable solution in order to increase the performance and efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme. The current infrastructure has a negative impact on the efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme. It also highlights the need for flexibility in times of economic change, such as inflation and fluctuations in the costs of living, particularly in the awarding of scholarships and the coverage of mobility costs. All these findings reflect the need to continuously adapt the Erasmus+ programme to ensure that it makes the best use of resources and achieves its objectives, benefiting both individuals and the wider education community.



### 3.3. RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAMME

#### 3.3.1. School Education

In terms of programme relevance, the evaluation found that the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 objectives are consolidated or address the challenges of the education sector found in various national policies and documents, such as the Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), the Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027, the Guidelines of education for sustainable development from pre-school to pre-university Education 2007, etc. They also address general themes such as digital education and competences, updating didactic approaches, professional and career development of managers and practitioners, leadership in schools, etc., which are also identified in recent national documents such as the draft National Education Programme for the period 2023–2033.

The programme is relevant for different stakeholder groups in nursery schools, primary and secondary schools. At the same time, it was found that nursery schools are less represented in the programme and that there is a certain share of institutions that are intensively involved in the programme, meaning that they either continue with their projects or are involved in several different projects at the same time. However, there are also institutions that have not yet been included in the Erasmus+ programme and that could usefully be targeted and encouraged to be included in the future, also in line with the suggestions made by the survey respondents. Similarly, it would make sense to better target individual groups regionally, as a comparison of the data shows that certain regions are under-represented among applicants (e.g. the Posavje statistical region).

Erasmus+ 2021–2027 focuses on the inclusion of harder-to-reach groups, and analysis of the collected data shows that while there are opportunities for inclusion for participants with fewer opportunities (both practitioners as well as learners and school pupils), these are not being fully, or at least to a greater extent, exploited. Thus, survey respondents repeatedly cite the direct impact that nursery schools and schools in particular are achieving in this field or for these groups. At the same time, it was noted that the inclusion of hard-to-reach groups is consistently encouraged and promoted by CMEPIUS. **There are therefore challenges in the field of greater inclusion of nursery schools, and it is proposed to place even more emphasis on the integration of novice practitioners.**

While the programme adequately and prominently addresses the response to green and digital transitions, the review of projects shows that the digital transition tends to be better and more frequently addressed than the green transition. **In this context, further targeting and awareness raising of potential applicants is needed to integrate the topics into projects and to plan activities accordingly.**

The relevance of Erasmus+ 2021–2027 compared to Erasmus+ 2014–2020 shows that the programme consistently maintains key aspects, but builds on, improves and prioritises them in a meaningful way, in line with developments and changing needs.

### 3.3.2. Vocational education and training

In practice, the programme is already contributing to these objectives, particularly in the context of inclusion of learners with fewer opportunities, the development of digital competences, sustainable development, and the promotion of participation in democratic life. What clearly stands out in both programme periods is the high level of satisfaction and competences acquired by learners and practitioners who participated in Erasmus+ during the period from 2014 to 2020 and 2021 to 2023. The Erasmus+ programme has therefore made a significant contribution to the diverse aspects of the personal, professional and intercultural development of learners and practitioners, with participants expressing high satisfaction with the experience and competences acquired.

The Erasmus+ programme among vocational and technical secondary schools is a well-established practice that enables participation of vulnerable participants as well. However, there is a need to **further train those selecting candidates for the programme** to identify specific target groups and give them the opportunity to participate in mobility.

Employers who take learners within the framework of mobility would need additional assistance, as the time they spend with foreign students is extremely high. The **Chamber of Commerce and Industry should be more closely involved in** efforts to attract employers to the programme. This would strengthen the synergies between the Erasmus+ programme and the business sector and improve the exploitation of the programme's potential to integrate learners into the working environment.

It was assessed that in **the previous period**, the Erasmus+ **programme did not achieve the expected objectives for learners from less advantaged backgrounds**. In the new 2021–2027 period, schools have made the inclusion of these target groups a priority, which has improved support for the less privileged. Learners who have opted for mobility in companies (in the form of apprenticeships) in the new programme period (2021–2023) describe their experience of working abroad as very positive.

In the segment of invited experts for companies, it would also be worth increasing the proportion of experts (e.g. mentors) who go to companies abroad and bring new professional and didactic knowledge to their working and educational environment. Enterprise mentors are a key link between school and enterprise. The mentors' statements express their belief that the presence of foreign learners enriches the work environment and contributes to the development of employees' communication skills in a foreign language. Nevertheless, mentors as a group express some reluctance to decide on their own mobility abroad, as they are aware that their absence from their domestic company poses a challenge in covering their absence. It is crucial that the company's management recognises and appreciates the benefits of such exchanges and learning experiences.

The new programme period focuses on specific target groups. There is a greater emphasis on social inclusion, which increases the social relevance of the programme. Erasmus+ 2021–2027 will further promote the broader involvement of different stakeholders, including industry, NGOs, local communities, etc.

### 3.3.3. Tertiary education

In the field of higher education, it is noted that some improvements have been made since the previous programme period, but there are fields where the programme could continue to progress and adapt to changing needs. These recommendations relate in particular to attracting and reaching target groups, raising awareness of the programme, reaching and engaging hard-to-reach groups, integration with green and digital gateways.

The recommendations for increasing staff involvement and information in the Erasmus+ programme focus on the development of comprehensive strategies by post-secondary and higher educational institutions to encourage and support all staff, regardless of the type of agreement or the amount of working time, to participate in international mobility. It highlights the need for equal access to information and resources to prepare for mobility, and to identify and remove structural obstacles that prevent the **participation of fixed-term and part-time employees**.

It is also proposed to extend Erasmus+ mobility by **introducing a new category for academic staff to attend international conferences and meetings**. It would promote the visibility of research institutions and foster international academic cooperation.

For **young academics in the early stages of their career, it is recommended to develop flexible programmes** that take into account their unique needs and circumstances. The focus is on clearly communication and promotion of these programmes and on creating specific conditions to directly address their needs, including subsidising costs such as childcare or partner support.

Finally, post-secondary and higher educational institutions express the need for a **clearer definition of vulnerable groups and more specific guidance on their identification and verification** to facilitate their inclusion in the Erasmus+ programme. They suggest that CMEPIUS and the European Commission provide clear guidance to support these efforts. This is a field that has already been highlighted in previous sections, by all education sectors.

The final conclusion is that the Erasmus+ programme continues to play a key role in supporting higher education, but that the programme needs to continuously adapt and evolve to address changing needs and challenges.

### 3.3.4. Adult Education

The adult education sector notes that, in the context of the increasing war conflicts in the world, it would be worth considering some complementarity to the objectives of the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programme or its successor, in particular **by increasing the focus on education for peace**, which was the mission of adult education under the auspices of various UNESCO initiatives after the Second World War.

Although strengthening skills for participation in democratic life, shared values and active citizenship is an important objective of the adult learning sector within the Erasmus+ programme, it is in **this field of relevance that the programme has the weakest impact**. It

would therefore be worthwhile to step up efforts and supporting project initiatives that strengthen adults' skills for participation in democratic life and active citizenship.

The challenges related to Europe's green and digital transition are very much reflected in the actions of the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programme. The relevance of the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programme compared to the one from the 2014–2020 period in the adult education sector remains the same, as the priorities are more or less the same (with the exception of the additional focus on refugees from Ukraine).

The relevance of the programme is also reflected in attracting and reaching the target groups. Most of the organisations participating in the programme since 2014 have been involved in five or more projects. Given that their main target groups are adult learners with fewer opportunities, the inclusion rate in the Erasmus+ programme in the Republic of Slovenia is good. In addition, there is a high share of organisations that have participated in only one Erasmus+ project since 2014, indicating that the programme is also attractive to organisations that have not previously benefited from the programme. This means that the Erasmus+ programme maintains its accessibility for the involvement of new organisations active in the field of adult learning.

The programme design is also targeted and tailored to adult learners with fewer opportunities (e.g. older, unemployed, young adults, migrants) who traditionally do not participate in international activities. Adults with physical disabilities pose a particular challenge to the mobility of adult learners.

The programme is the **least relevant for achieving system-level impacts**, as Erasmus+ is not part of the adult education policy at national (system) level, the funding of the programme is not included in the annual adult education programmes, the **impact of Erasmus+ on adult education at national level** (system, policy, reform) **is not recognised by decision-makers**, nor does the programme contribute to a better understanding of key EU tools and policies in the adult education sector.

### 3.3.1. Youth

In the field of youth, in terms of programme relevance, the challenge of the programme was identified as reaching and encouraging the active participation of young people who are not or are hardly involved in activities outside formal education, where the challenge of reaching the desired number of participants is linked to the (lack of) motivation of young people on the one hand, and the diversity of the offer on the other. So far, the programme has only minor overlaps with the National Youth Programme, which is due to the diversity of the national authorities involved in the National Youth Programme (and their diversity in their capacity to cooperate with the Youth Office), and the staffing and financial weaknesses of the Youth Office.

In terms of relevance, the **forementioned problem of criteria and definition of the group of young people with fewer opportunities** is also evident, as the assessment is made by the project managers (organisers/implementers), who make their assessment solely on the basis of their own judgement or the self-assessment of the young participant. The category “young

people with fewer opportunities” is a contextual variable and generates a set of questions on who is entitled to be considered as young people with fewer opportunities, how to prevent the judgement of project managers/coordinators/implementers from being based on subjective impressions and prejudices, how the label “young people with fewer opportunities” affects the youth who may identify themselves as being treated differently from their peers; how the (currently) highly contextualised category of “young people with fewer opportunities” affects the treatment, rights and well-being of those young people who are more obviously or explicitly disadvantaged; and how the label of young people as “young people with fewer opportunities” affects their self-perception as victims and whether it has a positive or negative impact on their empowerment.

### 3.3.2. Concluding observations on the relevance of the Erasmus+ programme

The programme is demonstrated as a relevant programme, aligned in its design with the current needs and challenges in education and the youth sector. The programme successfully responds to key topics such as digitisation and sustainable development, and emphasises the involvement of different stakeholder groups, contributing to making education more accessible and democratic.

The programme seeks the participation of hard-to-reach groups and encourages the involvement of participants and practitioners from different regions and types of educational institutions. However, the focus of the programme and the level of involvement of the different stakeholder groups is in a state of dynamic change, requiring constant adaptation and targeting. In particular, a clearer definition of vulnerable groups is recommended, as already outlined in previous sections. The need for concrete guidance on the identification of individuals belonging to vulnerable groups and on the methods for verifying these criteria was expressed, which would greatly facilitate their work. It is also recommended to enhance attracting of participants from less advantaged backgrounds and place more emphasis on participation in practical learning and training.

Although the programme reflects relevance in the context of green and digital transitions, awareness of the importance of these topics should be further raised and their integration into educational projects should be promoted. While the programme helps to address broader societal challenges, including war and conflict, it could play an even greater role in the future in education for peace and social cohesion.

## 3.4. PROGRAMME COHERENCE

### 3.4.1. School Education

The programme coherence assessment highlights how the programme's objectives are consistent with each other and how they complement other national, regional and international programmes. There is no directly comparable national Erasmus+ programme (currently there is a draft National Education Programme for the period 2023–2033 in the Republic of Slovenia), but other European programmes are available in the field of training and education, such as Horizon Europe, Europe for Citizens, the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Interreg programme, the EURES programme, the UNESCO programme. These programmes cover different fields and objectives, including the fields (priorities) covered by the Erasmus+ programme. In the education sector, at national level, it is worth highlighting the integration of the objectives of programmes and projects following topics similar to the Erasmus+ programme and which are funded by:

- The Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), e.g. Raising Digital Competence, Digital and Sustainable Teacher;
- the national budget allocations for projects and specific tasks of institutions (and consortia) under Article 28 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOVFI), e.g. Climate goals and content and education, Continuing education for head teachers to introduce inclusive education for children with special needs, Ensuring integrity in the school environment, Active EU Citizenship
- the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (EEG), e.g. Blended Education in Vocational Education and Training (BlendVET);
- other Erasmus+ projects in which public institutions participate with partners under Article 28 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOVFI), e.g. Empowering Headteachers for Inclusive Education (HEAD project),
- other Erasmus+ projects involving (pedagogical and other) faculties, e.g. Empowering Teachers for Lifelong Development through Innovative Collegiate Induction Programmes (LOOP project)

At the level of the institutions, the participating applicants report that the Erasmus+ actions/projects are interlinked in terms of content and, which is particularly encouraging, that the objectives of the institution are supplementary and complementary to the objectives of the Erasmus+ international cooperation projects. The school documentation also shows the involvement in various Erasmus+ projects and other international activities with similar objectives (e.g. twin municipalities, UNESCO) in terms of quantification (e.g. number of projects, number of people involved), but it is not clear how the objectives of the institutions are linked to the objectives of Erasmus+ in a qualitative sense, or in terms of planning, monitoring and reporting on the impact of Erasmus+, which suggests room for improvement.

At the same time, in terms of coherence, it is worth pointing out that the field of school education is often linked to the field of vocational education and training; applicants in the field of vocational education and training are often also applicants in the field of school education (especially in the KA1 action/measure), with a focus on the mobility of practitioners teaching general education subjects. However, in KA2 in the field of school education,

individual applicants can also be found in the field of adult education (e.g. People's Universities) and higher education, e.g. faculties of education in cooperation with partner educational institutions, which also shows the need for linking different objectives and priorities between sectors that interact and impact on different stakeholders, which represents a great added value.

The impact evaluation and the data obtained from other available documents clearly show that Erasmus+ actions/measures, as well as other EU programmes/projects and national projects/specific actions, complement each other, foster synergies and interactions, thus enhancing the coherence of the Erasmus+ programme approach to the development of the education sector.

### 3.4.2. Vocational education and training

In the field of vocational education and training, the Erasmus+ strategic partnerships and mobility projects are found to be complementary, contributing to the broader objective of the programme and having interlinked impacts. For example, a school that first participates in a strategic partnership can then organise learner or teacher mobility, as our interviewees in the focus group interviews also pointed out. Mobility and strategic partnerships increase the visibility of institutions at both national and international level.

Erasmus+ projects can also be linked to other EU or national projects, an example of which is a school whose “participation in Erasmus+ projects has led to cooperation with various institutions that invite our school to partner on different projects. In recent years, we have been partners in several projects run by the Municipality of Sežana (Tourism Incubator, KONStrukturIST) and projects of other NGOs in the environment (The Lore of the Karst and Brkini Regions)”.

There is no directly comparable national Erasmus+ programme, but other European programmes are available in the field of education, including Horizon Europe, Europe for Citizens, the European Social Fund (ESF), the Interreg and EURES programmes. These programmes cover a variety of fields and objectives, including research and innovation, civic participation, social inclusion, and employment and mobility in the European labour market.

In the Erasmus+ 2014–2020 programme, the priorities for vocational education and training have focused on increasing access to training and qualifications for all, supporting the introduction of innovative approaches and digital technologies for teaching and learning, the professional development of vocational education and training teachers and mentors in both school and work environments, and improving the labour market relevance of vocational education and training.

In the period 2021–2027, the Erasmus+ programme continues to focus on adapting vocational education and training to labour market needs, contributing to innovation, increasing the flexibility of vocational education and training opportunities, enhancing the attractiveness of vocational education and training, improving quality assurance and creating and implementing internationalisation strategies for providers of vocational education and

training. This reflects the continuous adaptation of the programme and its response to current needs in education and the labour market.

### 3.4.3. Tertiary education

The evaluation of the coherence of the higher education programme highlights that efforts to ensure coherence within the different components of the Erasmus+ programme have been successful, although some opportunities for improvement have been identified.

The objectives of the programme were coherent and mutually supportive, and concrete examples of cross-sectoral cooperation were identified. The different actions worked in a coordinated manner, although some overlaps and inconsistencies were noted, especially **in terms of KA131 and KA171**. The programme is also in line with national and regional programmes, other forms of EU cooperation and international programmes with similar objectives. No inconsistencies or overlaps were identified in this section. The programme has also proven to be complementary to other national and international programmes, fostering synergies and interactions that strengthen the whole education ecosystem. The coherence of Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programme has improved compared to Erasmus+ 2014–2020, reflecting an adaptation and modernisation of the objectives in line with evolving sectoral needs and challenges.

However, the national specificities stand out here, which are also common in other European countries, within the context of understanding post-secondary education as part of higher education. It has been established that despite its important role in ensuring graduates' employability, higher education is often caught between secondary and higher education. This unclear position makes it difficult to enter into partnership agreements and to engage in teaching at international level.

Higher education institutions express a desire for equal treatment and inclusion in the higher education system, but often face rejection from various stakeholders. They stress that the specificities of higher vocational education should be taken into account when evaluating applications for projects and individual mobility, and they want to be involved on an equal footing in strategic and collaborative partnerships. They also see an opportunity to enhance their role and identity in the internationalisation process, for example by including international project offices in the legislation on higher vocational education, integrating into the Study in Slovenia initiative and joining the Bologna Report – Student Card. Quality assurance authorities also believe that international cooperation of vocational colleges could be more explicitly included in the quality standards to encourage more international mobility and internationalisation of institutions.

At a systemic level, identifying the specific impacts of the Erasmus+ programme is challenging because, as one labour market representative pointed out, many EU programmes work towards the same objectives, which makes it difficult to disentangle the contribution of each programme to achieving these objectives. Nevertheless, we were able to extract some important findings from the interviews regarding the impact of the programme at system level that we would like to highlight.



Particularly outstanding here are the national specificities, which are also common in other European countries, within the context of understanding post-secondary education as part of higher education. It has been established that despite its important role in ensuring graduates' employability, higher education is often caught between secondary and higher education. This unclear position makes it difficult to enter into partnership agreements and to engage in teaching at international level.

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#### 3.4.4. Adult Education

Coherence is also established in the field of adult education. The objectives of the different programme fields under Erasmus+ 2021-2027 are largely coherent and mutually supportive; this is ensured by the four cross-cutting priorities, which are the same for the whole Erasmus+ programme. The objectives of the different programme fields both overlap (e.g. tolerance, working with migrants) and differ according to the specific needs of the field, which is also expected and desirable.

Evidence of cooperation between different programme fields within CMEPIUS includes: cooperation between adult education organisations and nursery schools (linking adult education with general school education).

In terms of its priorities in the adult education sector, the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programme is also in line with the objectives of the national adult education policy, i.e. the Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia for 2022–2030 (e.g. need to increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning, improve digital and green skills of adults, increase social inclusion, increase the quality of adult education) and to a certain extent (e.g. digitisation, green transition) also with other EU programmes, such as the European Social Fund (ESF), which is the most important funding scheme for financing activities in the field of adult education in the Republic of Slovenia.

The coherence of the new (2021–2027) Erasmus+ programme has improved compared to the old (2014–2020) programme in the adult education sector, for example in terms of thematic priorities, opportunities for substantive project implementation, opportunities for adult learners eligible for mobility.

At EU level, the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programme for the adult education sector also creates effective synergies or interactions with other programmes with complementary objectives, as it is an integral part of: The European Education Area 2021–2030, which identifies adult learning as an indispensable part of the European Education Area; the European agenda for skills and jobs, which sets ambitious targets for the inclusion of (vulnerable) adults in lifelong learning; the Council Resolution on a new European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021–2030, which aims to improve opportunities for adult participation in formal and informal education and informal learning for all.

However, compliance in the adult education sector could also be improved by slightly limiting and more **precisely defining the criteria for which organisations can apply for and implement an Erasmus+ project in the field of adult education**, as experience so far shows that broader openness also has several negative consequences for the adult education sector (e.g. lower quality, flood of substantively inaccurate applications to the National Agency).

#### 3.4.1. Youth

Coherence must first be understood in the context of the relationship between the resources managed by the Youth Office and the Erasmus+ resources managed by MOVIT, which is clearly disproportionately in favour of Erasmus+ resources, therefore **the Erasmus+ programme expressly determines public policies in the youth field rather than complementing them**. In this respect, and as MOVIT has a certain degree of freedom in interpreting the programme guidelines, the influence of the National Agency on public policies in the field of youth is (too) strong, given the mandate of the National Agency, which is the implementing organisation selected in the call for proposals and not a national authority with a mandate to develop public policies. The programme allows a certain degree of freedom in the interpretation of the substantive guidance due to the introduction of national priorities, but the National Agency is not adequately guided by the Youth Office and the strategic documents on the use of this freedom in the implementation of the programme.

In the context of coherence, it is also important to note that some institutions develop their core activity through Erasmus+ projects, while organisations are rarely sufficiently independent on the basis of other resources to develop an additional activity through Erasmus+, or to build on their regular activity.

It is also manifested that **national priorities are not adequately reflected in the eligibility conditions**, even though the Erasmus+ programme allows them, thus losing a certain pool of new organisations that could apply (newcomers) and losing content that is relevant in local and national contexts. Nor do national priorities calibrate increases in funding over the years or the allocation of funds between actions. The problem appears to be linked to the fact that the Youth Office does not have the operational capacity to properly position the national priorities and implement the national priorities in the programme through the implementing organisation (National Agency).

Regarding coherence in the context of applicants, it is also important that organisations often feel constrained or pressured by the priorities and objectives of the programme, as they do not have sufficient resources to maintain their ongoing activities and are forced to constantly

adapt to new call for proposals conditions (e.g. changing priorities across programme periods); this is a manner of survival for youth organisations, which, due to unstable sources of funding, are forced to be flexible in their financial planning, without ceasing to pursue their primary mission.

### 3.4.2. Concluding observations on the Erasmus+ programme coherence

The Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programme is manifested as a consistent and coherent continuation of the previous period, successfully complementing national and international initiatives. The objectives of the programme are successfully intertwined with current educational and social priorities such as digitisation, sustainable development and inclusion of vulnerable groups. The findings show that the programme is effectively anchored in broader educational frameworks and integrates well with other European initiatives and funding mechanisms such as Horizon Europe, the European Social Fund and others, and provides strong links with national strategies and policies. At the same time, the programme promotes further synergies and cross-sectoral cooperation that are improving the whole education ecosystem and increase the visibility of the participating institutions at national and international level.

However, there are challenges in qualitatively linking the objectives of the programmes to the actual needs and objectives of the educational institutions and in including specific target groups such as less privileged participants or newcomers to the programme. The recommendations point to the need for a better definition of vulnerable groups, a clearer focus on the inclusion of such groups and further improvements in the feedback and monitoring mechanisms at national level, as has been highlighted several times in the context of this report. In addition, the need to treat higher education on an equal footing with higher education was also highlighted, and specific recommendations were made in this regard. It also highlights the potential for improvement, such as raising awareness of the programme, ensuring wider and more equal participation and using Erasmus+ as a platform to stimulate further educational and social innovation.

## 3.5. EU ADDED VALUE OF THE PROGRAMME

### 3.5.1. School Education

In terms of EU added value, the Erasmus+ programme is seen to go beyond local and national contexts and to bring recognised benefits at international level. EU activities through the Erasmus+ programme bring a number of benefits, which are also cited by respondents to the impact analysis and which go beyond national initiatives. This includes, in particular, raising the international visibility of the institutions involved and strengthening cross-border cooperation, exchanging good practices and modernising educational approaches.

The added value of the programme is also reflected in its contribution to European integration, as shown by the number of projects addressing the different horizontal priorities and the number of institutions involved. Reporting on the impacts includes both visibility and awareness, and strengthening EU values and intercultural understanding, and above all visibility in the international environment. The programme actively and effectively promotes

and encourages, at European and national level, international cooperation between Member States and associated third countries, as well as cooperation between associated and non-associated third countries.

The programme brings significant benefits to the individuals and organisations participating in the programme, such as strengthening mutual cooperation and teamwork, gaining international experience, improving competences in project participation and management, strengthening professional development and professional networks in the national and European area.

The results and impacts of the Erasmus+ programme are often lasting. The sustainability of the institutions' involvement in the programmes, their participation in partnership networks beyond the project activities, including the maintenance of contacts and links between learners and school pupils from different countries, the dissemination of the acquired knowledge and traineeship mobilities across institutions and between institutions in the national and international environment, is recognised. In particular, sustainable impacts are identified or expressed more frequently in institutions that are more likely to engage in and also combine different actions.

CMEPIUS also makes a positive contribution to promoting the sustainability of results and their implementation in regular practice in the school environment. We highlight the various ways of promotion and encouragement at national level, such as national conferences, the online Slovenian educational network (SIO), the Apple of Quality initiative, the national Golden Cable Award, etc. Since 2018, CMEPIUS has also been regularly analysing the sustainability of project results in Erasmus+ projects using a specific tool to measure impacts at different levels.

**It is recommended that in the future, there should be a greater focus on incentives, promotion and support.** At the same time, it was noted that there is still **a lack of systemic synergy** and targeted implementation or use of the Erasmus+ programme as a lever to achieve both organisational and national objectives (e.g. in the field of improving literacy, etc.).

### 3.5.2. Vocational education and training

At national level, there is no programme with mobility as its primary objective, but projects are carried out at international level, under various schemes, as already mentioned in the previous section. At national level, the Erasmus+ programme is a major contributor to the development of knowledge on issues relating to European integration. It also has an important impact in highlighting the common values of the EU and fostering a European sense of belonging among participants.

Participants in mobility projects have visited almost all EU countries, and learners and professional staff have come from them to the Republic of Slovenia. Among the third countries, the highest number of mobilities was to the United Kingdom, Serbia, the Republic of North Macedonia and Norway.

It is not possible to directly compare the benefits of the Erasmus+ programme for participants compared to non-participants, as there is no comparable data, but the replies obtained suggest that they have gained a lot from their participation in different fields of life and work/education.

Many of the cases described above show that the results of projects have had an impact on the functioning of institutions even after their completion. Schools reported renovated educational resources, the introduction of new content or new professional modules in the open section of the curriculum, an upgraded digital library, etc., and the integration into Erasmus+ has started a process of international integration (internationalisation) in many schools.

In the absence of a programme at national level in the Republic of Slovenia comparable to the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme, it is reasonable to conclude that the abolition of this programme would impoverish the field of vocational education and training, and deprive secondary students in the education process and professional staff of the prospects and experience offered by participation in these projects.

### 3.5.3. Tertiary education

As has been highlighted several times in the context of this report, the programme brings a number of benefits that go beyond national and regional initiatives. This includes strengthening cross-border cooperation, exchanging good practices and standardising educational approaches. Opportunities to further improve the programme include better targeted funding and greater flexibility within existing structures.

The programme has made a significant contribution to the development of knowledge on European issues in higher education, but learner reports suggest that it has not fostered a greater awareness of shared European values and a stronger sense of belonging to Europe among the participants of higher education institutions. Here again, better targeted funding is recommended according to the European identity objective.

The programme actively promotes cooperation between Member States and associated third countries, and between associated and non-associated third countries, underlining its impact on international cooperation. It also brings significant advantages to individuals and organisations participating in the programme compared to non-participants. These benefits include gaining international experience, improving job prospects, developing personal and professional skills, and access to a wide network of contact points and resources.

The results of Erasmus+ are often lasting, as participants continue to participate in international networks and disseminate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in their home communities and organisations, contributing to a sustainable impact on the tertiary sector.

#### 3.5.4. Adult Education

A key EU added value that Erasmus+ provides, unlike related actions at national level in the field of adult learning, is the international cooperation of organisations, which brings new and different contextual insights and perspectives, as well as reflection on the work of organisations in their local environment. Participation in the programme also fosters European identity and a sense of belonging, as well as a greater awareness of the shared values of freedom and tolerance among practitioners and adult learners. However, based on the results obtained, it could be argued with a lesser degree of certainty that participation in the programme provides a deeper knowledge of the EU and its policies among professional staff and adult learners, as well as fostering a more active participation in democratic life and civil society among them.

The Erasmus+ 2021–2027 programme also promotes cooperation between Member States and third countries. In the field of adult learning, this applies to collaborative partnership projects, but the added value of third-country participation in such projects must be very clearly expressed.

The added value of Erasmus+ 2021–2027 and Erasmus+ 2014–2020 programmes for participating institutions compared to non-participating institutions in the field of adult education in the Republic of Slovenia is that it enables institutions that are active in the field of adult education, in particular public adult education organisations, to grow, develop professionally and respond quickly to the needs and challenges they face in their local environment. Given that national funding for the adult education sector in the Republic of Slovenia is insufficient and very limited, the funding of the Erasmus+ programme is key to the self-development of organisations that are active in the field of adult education.

The results of the programme in the adult education sector are largely sustainable beyond the lifetime of the projects, as the institutions continue to use the results of their projects in their work. However, there is room for improvement in strengthening sustainability. In particular, there is a need for **greater encouragement in the dissemination and sharing of results between related institutions**, so that the results of the programme can also be used by organisations that have not participated in the programme (or project). On this basis, it is recommended that the results, solutions and innovations of Erasmus+ projects are exchanged annually between institutions that are active in the field of adult education in meetings within their respective associations.

If the Erasmus+ programme were to be discontinued, this would mean that the opportunities of growth, professional development and response to the needs and challenges they face in their local environment would reduce significantly for most adult education institutions, as they would miss out on opportunities for international cooperation, exchange of good practices and the development of innovative solutions in the field of adult education. Lack of financial support would also make it more difficult for institutions to run their informal education programmes.

### 3.5.5. Youth

Erasmus+ projects appear to **contribute to a sense of connectedness with people from other countries and to a sense of European identity**, and have a positive impact on strengthening participants' sense of closeness to Europe. In general, project participants do not feel that the project has taught them much about Europe or how the EU functions. Project managers also state that such topics have not been prioritised throughout the project. In this context, it is important to point out that the review of the data and the interviews carried out – in comparison with the national programmes and national authorities responsible for young people (Youth Office) – shows **a strong influence of the Erasmus+ programme on the youth field in the Republic of Slovenia**, and consequently also a strong influence of the MOVIT National Agency on the formulation and implementation of public policies. This is particularly true for the vertical youth policy field and goes beyond the narrower field of youth mobility, which can be understood as a consequence of the absence of comparable national and local youth programmes and the comparative human and financial weakness of the national authority (Youth Office), especially when compared to MOVIT.

### 3.5.6. Concluding observations in the field of EU added value of Erasmus+

The programme is designed to go beyond local and national contexts and bring a wide range of international benefits. These benefits include improving the international visibility of educational institutions, strengthening cross-border cooperation, exchanging good practices, modernising educational methods and contributing to European integration and intercultural understanding. The programme also promotes active cooperation between EU Member States and third countries, reinforcing shared values and a sense of European identity. This not only improves participants' competences for international cooperation and project management, but also consolidates professional development and broadens professional networks within a European and global context. However, it was found that EU identity building is less emphasised in higher education compared to other education sectors. The sustainable effects of the programme are visible in the long-term cooperation of the institutions and in the further dissemination of the knowledge acquired. CMEPIUS for the Erasmus+ programme further contributes to this by promoting and supporting national and international activities such as conferences and quality awards. The programme is not limited to the exchange of experiences or resources, but creates significant value for individuals and organisations, which would be a significant loss for the education and training sector if it were to be discontinued. The EU added value of the Erasmus+ programme is reflected in the promotion of active participation and greater awareness of the EU among all participants, which is particularly important for fostering a European sense of belonging and improving job prospects.

Erasmus+ is therefore a key initiative to improve the quality and scope of education and training at European level, leading to better individual and institutional outcomes in a wider social and economic context.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation of Erasmus+ and the final findings, the final section of the national report focuses on the future development and improvement of the programme. This segment brings together specific guidelines for all levels of education and the youth sector, which have the potential to further strengthen the performance and efficiency of the programme. The guidelines are aimed at various stakeholders, including the European Commission, national agencies, relevant ministries, project applicants and other relevant actors. The aim of these recommendations is to provide constructive feedback that will serve as a basis for strategic decisions and improvements that will not only contribute to improved programme implementation, but also support the organisations and individuals involved in their efforts for continuous development and innovation.

### 4.1. School education

#### 4.1.1. Schools

1. All three analyses (questionnaire, school documentation, interviews) show that there are impacts of Erasmus+ at the level of educational institutions, practitioners and children/learners. On average, participants consider that Erasmus+ is very well integrated into the individual elements of their institutions' activities (e.g. project objectives are included in annual workplans, quality teams are established to link Erasmus+ to the institution's activities) and that their institutions monitor the results and impacts of Erasmus+ in a very good and effective way (e.g. collecting regular feedback, using data for planning, measuring impacts after Erasmus+ projects have ended). At the same time, an analysis of school documentation shows that these impacts are less highlighted in school documentation. Notwithstanding the fact that the current legislative provisions dictate that Erasmus+ applicants structure their annual workplans in a manner that does not include and prescribe the setting of contextual and measurable long-term and short-term objectives, but only the content and scope, Erasmus+ applicants are advised to take into account, in addition to the legislative guidelines, the professional guidelines and recommendations for the planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of educational work, which follow modern approaches. Applicants should be aware that Erasmus+ is not only or primarily about strengthening international cooperation, but should be based on the specific needs of the institution, which should be linked to long-term/developmental and short-term/annual objectives. At the same time, we would like to point out that the analysis of the documentation and the written interviews shows that the applicants do not fully understand the impacts at two levels (i.e. the level of results – the achievement of the objectives, and the level of realisation – the process), but mainly highlight the results at the level of realisation. We suggest that they attend future training courses on this topic to improve their understanding and knowledge.

#### 4.1.2. CMEPIUS

1. CMEPIUS is aware of the importance of quality planning (linking the objectives and needs of the institution to the Erasmus+ objectives), monitoring and reporting, and



continuously draws attention to this, particularly during the numerous training sessions and training events. With the same motives, the European Commission has introduced one of the major changes between the previous Lifelong Learning Programme, where an individual submitted an individual application, and the Erasmus+ programme, where an application is required at institution level. Šrajeva's research (2021) reveals that while progress is evident in school documentation, it is still on a relatively small scale. The same can be confirmed in this part of the analysis and evaluation of Erasmus+. We suggest that CMEPIUS continues to empower the preparers of the plans and reports of the educational institutions to ensure the quality of the Erasmus+ in terms of content in both long-term/developmental (development programme, education plan) and short-term/annual planning (annual workplan). Quality planning is importantly linked to quality evaluation and reporting, and it is therefore necessary to reinforce training and education of Erasmus+ applicants, based not only on legal provisions (following the structure of the annual workplans) but also on the professional basic premises of targeted (development) planning, linked to the approach to quality identification and assurance through self-evaluation (e.g. improvement circle, Deming circle, action research circle). We would like to point out that the integration of projects with planning, monitoring and evaluation and reporting at the level of the institution applies not only to Erasmus+ actions/projects, but to all (supra-)national projects in which Slovenian educational institutions are involved. In addition, we suggest that the findings of the Erasmus+ national report for the school sector be specifically presented and shared with other public institutions in this section (Article 28 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act – ZOFVI) and that they be invited to more actively empower head teachers and practitioners in planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (e.g. joint training, workshops).

2. The questionnaire in the impact analysis shows that 11% of the respondents who answered the questionnaire were unsuccessful in applying for Erasmus+ and 2% did not apply for Erasmus+ at all. Among the reasons for failure or non-application, the respondents point out lack of knowledge in writing applications, lack of knowledge of terminology, lack of knowledge of Erasmus+ objectives, lack of time, inconsistency of objectives between Erasmus+ and the educational establishment, too much extra work, lack of partners abroad and lack of knowledge of how to find them, lack of knowledge of a foreign language, international cooperation is not part of the educational establishment's development plans. Similar conclusions were reached when analysing the reflections of applicants who are not yet engaged in international cooperation. Among the open-ended answers to the question on what the Agency can do, respondents suggest "personal advisors", "mentoring with successful applicants", "increased exchange of experience between institutions at national level", "more concrete help and guidance", "more available dates for information sessions", "written recommendations". Despite the many efforts already made and invested by CMEPIUS in the promotion of Erasmus+ through various actions (e.g. Apple of Quality, numerous training courses), in the light of the above, we suggest that CMEPIUS should address head teachers and practitioners in a more targeted and on-the-ground manner and promote Erasmus+ in a way that makes better use of the already established meetings of head teachers and practitioners (e.g. regional headteachers' teams, study groups of practitioners) and consider how it can further engage with

other professional public institutions and the competent ministry to promote and support Erasmus+ and place Erasmus+ in regular educational work.

#### 4.1.3. Ministry of Education

1. At the national level, it is necessary to rethink and harmonise the legal provisions governing planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting at the level of the institution with the modern scientific and professional basic premises related to the approach to quality assessment and assurance through self-evaluation chosen by the Republic of Slovenia (Article 49 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act – ZOFVI). The focus of current planning at the level of the institution is, from a normative point of view, on the WHAT (content) and the HOW MUCH (scope), not on the WHY (needs, objectives) and the HOW (methods, strategies), which is why the reports do not include and contain analyses to determine why the results were as they were, and there is a noticeable absence of proposals, actions, improvements. We assume that this is also the reason for the findings related to the placement of Erasmus+ in the school documentation. From the point of view of a systematic and structured approach to quality identification and assurance through self-evaluation at the level of the institution, such an approach is insufficient and flawed. We would also like to point out that at the level of the Slovenian education system and at the Erasmus+ level, there are no clearly defined national priority objectives that would better guide applicants to coordinate national objectives with the context and development goals of the educational institution. As a consequence, this also makes the work of application assessors and programme evaluators more difficult. In this context, it is worth linking up with the drafters and implementers of the draft National Programme for Education 2023–2033, as it also contains actions linked to the system of quality assessment and quality assurance through self-evaluation, as well as actions linked to the priority fields (e.g. inclusion, digital education, etc.).

#### 4.1.4. CMEPIUS and Ministry of Education

1. An overview of the themes addressed by each Erasmus+ project in 2014–2023 shows that certain themes/content are more frequently represented than others. At the same time, the questionnaire responses show that Erasmus+ has the greatest impact on the system in the element of professional development of practitioners, which is in line with the findings of some previous studies (see e.g. Zavašnik et al. 2020). In relation to the strengthening of professional and career development of practitioners at system level, we suggest that CMEPIUS and MVI (Human Resources Development Division) carry out a comparative analysis of professional development topics/content for practitioners at home (e.g. KATIS application, projects) and abroad (Erasmus+). The comparison could show which themes/topics are more frequently represented in Erasmus+ mobility abroad and, with further analysis, why this is the case (reasons for training/job shadowing/learning abroad) and thus plan more comprehensively the professional and career development of practitioners in the Republic of Slovenia. Such an action would also be a concrete response to the assessments of the questionnaire respondents who, among the various items of Erasmus+'s impact on the system, rate

the impact of support to national policies and the upgrading of national policies the lowest.

2. All the impact evaluations carried out so far (both LLP and Erasmus+) show that significant impacts do occur, and it seems unwise to continue to examine this in the same way in the future. We suggest that CMEPIUS focuses its evaluation efforts on the study of impact dissemination strategies, i.e. how impact actually occurs and to which target audiences (e.g. to what extent and in what ways impact is visible among (directly)indirectly involved practitioners and children/learners in Erasmus+; in what ways or through what strategies impact is disseminated in educational institutions and in the system). For example, in-depth external evaluations or case studies of institutions and/or teacher/parent councils, as well as data gathering from the learners involved, are more appropriate to achieve this purpose. Research along these lines would also give greater importance to internationalisation at home, and support educational institutions in finding successful forms of dissemination of impacts and indirectly strengthen cooperation between educational practitioners through the examples of good practices identified. This would also bring us closer to the findings of empirical research that shows that the greatest influences on children's/learners' achievement are within institutions and that more of the differences in school pupils' and learners' achievement can be attributed to differences within institutions than between institutions. The excessive focus on "measuring" and "proving" impact in an institution (as opposed to a more concrete search for possibilities, opportunities and strategies for impact) can have a negative impact due to its complexity, especially in the light of the fact that the current situation and the analyses and studies carried out in Slovenian education point to a significant shortage of staff, unclear guidelines at national level and an unclear system of quality identification and assurance through self-evaluation. In the current circumstances, it is therefore necessary to be even more aware of the balancing that an educational institution must and can do.

3. Based on the data collected, we can conclude that respondents feel that Erasmus+ has a strong impact on different fields of work in the institution, on the work of practitioners and children/learners, and also on the system. The data are broadly in line with the data obtained from the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation questionnaire (see Klemenčič 2017). Despite the high average Erasmus+ impact values obtained across the entire questionnaire (for all items), it is important to highlight here the limitation that a growing body of empirical research shows that questionnaires measuring attitudes and beliefs are not among the best instruments for evaluating impact, as respondents tend to give socially desirable answers (see e.g. Fadder et al. 2018). At the same time, it should be noted that the questionnaire asks about impacts (on the system, the institution, practitioners, children/learners) in general, not specifically. Therefore, the questionnaire does not fully provide information on the impact on practitioners and/or school pupils/learners who have been involved in Erasmus+ directly (e.g. mobility abroad) or indirectly (e.g. through the dissemination of Erasmus+ results in the institution). We assume that respondents' answers would differ in estimating the magnitude of impacts in this case. At the same time, in our correspondence with a number of beneficiaries who were invited to be involved in the Erasmus+ final programme evaluation, there is a perception of dissatisfaction with (in their view) unnecessary additional administrative work (e.g. answering a questionnaire, sending additional documentation,

responding to a written interview), despite the fact that they have already worked intensively for Erasmus+ during and after the implementation of their individual Erasmus+ projects (e.g. submitting their on-going and final Erasmus+ project reports). In the light of the above, and given the fact that CMEPIUS has various data and documentation related to Erasmus+, we propose that CMEPIUS should carry out targeted ongoing monitoring and evaluation of impacts based also on the documentation already submitted by beneficiaries (e.g. the on-going and final reports, analyses of topics) and on-going annual analyses creating a database of data and reports, which can be used more efficiently and effectively to produce a high quality programme closure evaluation at the end of the programme period, based on the evaluation of the reports and secondary analyses.

#### 4.1.5. European Commission, CMEPIUS, Ministry of Education

1. The analysis and data show that the efficiency of cooperation with the European Commission in terms of removing administrative burdens has improved between the two programming periods (e.g. accreditation scheme mechanism, lump sums for KA210 and KA220 actions). At the same time, the data shows that applicants and CMEPIUS are confronted with a lack of functioning of the programme's support tools, which needs more attention. The introduction of the accreditation scheme and the flat-rate system may indeed have simplified the application system, but the information obtained also suggests a trend of increasing “copying” of applications or a strengthening of the “professional application writers market”, and we therefore suggest that the European Commission and CMEPIUS consider a set of actions to ensure greater and/or more effective quality control over applications.

## 4.2. Vocational education and training

### 4.2.1. European Commission

1. Develop actions to promote inward and outward mobility to Central and Eastern European countries and partner countries.
2. Develop actions to promote language learning in host countries.
3. Address the problem of commercialisation of projects: applicants hire private companies to develop projects.
4. Financial support for learners should better match the standard in the country where the exchange takes place.
5. Documentation related to reporting should all be available electronically.
6. Improve the objectives and support of the EC in KA2 projects, facilitate training and communication with the National Agency in this field.
7. Improve the clarity of criteria for identifying learners from less advantaged backgrounds and improve financial incentives.

#### **Methodological recommendations:**

1. Clearer definition of the “field of education” in the questionnaire for learners and practitioners, which would allow more precise information on fields of expertise.
2. Broaden the range of institutions from which participants come in the questionnaire, as the most frequently selected answer is “other”.

3. The questionnaires for learners and practitioners need to be shortened, as such long questionnaires have a lower validity.
4. The databases are very large, often containing similar if not identical data, but the numbers vary widely, sometimes by up to 1000, calling into question the validity of the parts of the evaluation reports that are linked to these data. The suggestion is that CMEPIUS collects data through its own platform (if it does not have one, it would be a good idea to set one up), which would be permanently checked against the data on the EU platform, and that it would be able to identify and address the reasons for the discrepancies on an ongoing basis.
5. Address the problem of AI and consider how to identify and evaluate projects that will be developed with AI programmes.

#### 4.2.2. CMEPIUS, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation and schools

1. Encourage male practitioners to join mobility programmes.
2. In schools, professionals (not just project office staff) should also be involved in project applications, as they are in touch with traineeship mobility and needs.
3. Schools should only apply for projects that are directly linked to the school's annual workplan or development plan. Too many projects reduce teachers' motivation.
4. Strengthen cooperation with industry, in particular through greater involvement of the Slovenian Chamber of Crafts and Small Business and the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce.
5. Paying more attention to learners from less advantaged backgrounds, with special needs, etc., and facilitating their access to mobility.
6. Use mobility projects and other forms of cooperation resulting from them as pilot projects to support the development of systemic changes later on.
7. Strengthen opportunities for exchanges of experts and mentors within companies.

### 4.3. Tertiary education

#### 4.3.1. European Commission

1. In order to improve the user experience and reduce the technical problems that hamper the Erasmus+ processes, it is urgent that the European Commission carries out a comprehensive upgrade or replacement of the existing Erasmus+ Dashboard IT system with a more advanced and reliable solution. The current infrastructure has a negative impact on the efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme.
2. To improve the quality and usability of the collected data, it is proposed to shorten the post-mobility questionnaires and focus on key information that better reflects the learner experience, thus facilitating their analysis and use for monitoring the impact of the Erasmus+ programme.
3. In the light of economic changes and differences in the cost of living, it is recommended that the European Commission adjusts the Erasmus+ scholarships to

better reflect the financial needs of learners and to make international mobility more affordable.

4. It is advisable to adjust the organisational costs according to the size and nature of the mobility, whereby flexibility is increased and the use of resources is optimised.
5. It is proposed to simplify procedures and to combine actions KA171 and KA131 to reduce administrative burdens and promote greater efficiency.
6. The introduction of a specific mobility window would facilitate the recognition of international mobility experiences, making it easier for learners to integrate these experiences into their academic careers.
7. To promote efficiency and reduce uncertainty in the implementation of short intensive programmes, increased financial and organisational support is recommended, as well as more flexibility in the limitation of the number of participants.
8. To promote academic excellence, it is proposed to extend the duration of fellowships for habilitation processes, which would help to increase the time and resources available to carry out quality research.
9. To increase the visibility and involvement of colleges in an international context, it is recommended that these institutions are duly integrated into the Bologna Report and the Student Card system.
10. To improve international research opportunities, it is advisable to introduce specific programmes supporting participation in international conferences and research projects, which would contribute to enriching academic dialogue and cooperation. Particular attention should also be paid to young academics.

#### 4.3.2. Ministry of Education

1. To strengthen the internationalisation of the vocational colleges, it is proposed to set up an international project office within the Association of Vocational Education Colleges. Such an office would act as a focal point for the support and development of international projects, promote cooperation and knowledge exchange, and provide assistance in obtaining and managing international funding and partnerships.
2. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education ensure that vocational colleges are appropriately involved in the Bologna Report – Student Card system. This would increase their visibility and presence at international level, and allow learners and staff of vocational colleges easier access to international educational opportunities and programmes.

#### 4.3.3. CMEPIUS

1. It highlights the need to define vulnerable groups more clearly and to provide more precise guidelines on how to identify and support them. It is suggested that the National Agency develop more detailed guidance and present best practice examples to facilitate the inclusion and support of vulnerable groups by educational institutions.
2. It is recommended that the National Agency gives more attention to vocational colleges in the framework of the Study in Slovenia initiative to encourage their involvement in international mobility and partnerships.
3. It is recommended that the National Agency develops and implements tools and a methodology to systematically monitor the quality and impact of the Erasmus+ programme on a biennial basis.

#### 4.3.4. European Commission, CMEPIUS, post-secondary and higher educational institutions

1. Complex application processes and a lot of paperwork are a major obstacle for learners considering international mobility. It is recommended that post-secondary and higher educational institutions, together with the National Agency and the European Commission, review and streamline administrative procedures to facilitate access to mobility programmes and thus encourage more learners to participate.
2. Administrative obstacles are not hinder only learners, but also staff wishing to participate in international mobility programmes. It is also important to simplify procedures for staff, which means shortening and facilitating application procedures. This would increase motivation and encourage international mobility of staff, contributing to the exchange of knowledge and experience and enriching the academic environment.
3. In the age of digitisation, it is essential that processes and systems are modernised using digital technologies. This includes a move to electronic documentation and the use of digital signatures, which would simplify administrative processes and make them less time consuming. Post-secondary and higher educational institutions and the European Commission are advised to accelerate the digitisation of their processes to ensure faster and more efficient exchange of information, thus facilitating and promoting international mobility.

#### 4.3.5. Post-secondary and higher educational institutions

1. It is important that post-secondary and higher educational institutions provide learners with comprehensive information and support, not only during the preparation phase of the exchange, but also after their return. This support should also include administrative, cultural, linguistic and psychological support. Emphasis should also be placed on reintegrating international experiences into learners' academic and personal development, as well as their CVs, with the aim of enriching

their overall experience. Strengthening cooperation between international offices and career centres is also important.

2. Institutions are advised to develop clear and consistent rules for the recognition of study commitments when studying abroad, which will provide learners with greater security and confidence in mobility programmes.
3. Encouraging the active involvement of the Erasmus+ alumni community in promotional and information activities to improve the visibility of the programme and support future participants.
4. Introducing the possibility to participate in Erasmus+ programmes also during the official study pause, which would increase the accessibility of the programme to a wider range of learners.
5. All forms of employment should be equally involved in information and education processes concerning Erasmus+ programmes, ensuring equal participation and exploitation of international opportunities.
6. The development of clear internal policies on substitutes for international staff mobility is crucial for the smooth running of academic programmes and the promotion of international exchanges.
7. Institutions are recommended to create mechanisms for sharing experiences and knowledge gained during mobility, which would directly contribute to the improvement of academic programmes and institutional practices.
8. Mobility of academic staff should be formally recognised and properly evaluated in their annual workplans and performance assessments.
9. Introducing trial periods before partnerships are formally concluded could help to prevent inactive or inefficient cooperation.
10. Post-secondary and higher educational institutions are advised to be active in organising and implementing Short Intensive Programmes (SIPs), which provide valuable opportunities for international experience for learners and serve as a prelude to a longer period of mobility.
11. Post-secondary and higher educational institutions are recommended to develop tools and a system to systematically monitor and evaluate the performance and efficiency of the implementation of Erasmus+ programmes to ensure continuous improvement and adaptation of the programmes to the needs of learners and academic staff and to actively address the strategic objectives set at organisational level.



#### 4.4. Adult education

##### 4.4.1. European Commission

1. The general cost increase, which is also reflected in the low prices of airline tickets and accommodation, calls for increased funding for the mobility of both staff (professional staff) and adult learners.
2. There is a need to balance the funding between practitioners and adult learners that both receive for mobility. Individual support for adult learners needs to be tailored to the target group and not all learners (school children, school pupils, students and adult learners) should be treated equally.
3. Need to increase funding for KA2 applicants [Lots of interest but not enough money to implement projects]
4. The criteria for which organisations can apply for and implement an Erasmus+ project in the adult education sector need to be limited and better defined. [Currently, anyone can be an applicant, as long as they are a legal entity]
5. To implement reforms and to achieve longer-lasting effects of Erasmus+ in the field of education at system level (KA3 projects), it is essential to involve the relevant competent ministries in such projects.
6. The Commission should organise a joint event at EU level to present the results of KA3 projects in the field of adult learning.

##### 4.4.2. Ministry of Education

1. When preparing the Mid-term evaluation of the ReNPIO impact, the Ministry of Education should follow the Erasmus+ evaluation methodological basic premises and carry out the evaluation at three levels: at the individual level, addressing professional staff and adult learners; at the organisational level, addressing the impact at the level of the organisations involved in the implementation of the ReNPIO; and at the system level, examining the achievement of impacts among decision-makers. Such evaluation should take a blended approach, including both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The evaluation could also focus on the achievement of performance, efficiency, relevance, coherence and sustainability of the ReNPIO's impacts.

##### 4.4.3. CMEPIUS

2. When recruiting and encouraging new organisations to apply for Erasmus+ projects, CMEPIUS should first inspire them with examples of good practice.
3. CMEPIUS staff should increasingly participate in the various events implemented in the framework of KA2 projects in the Republic of Slovenia.

4. CMEPIUS should, on the basis of a set of results from several projects, prepare a synthesis of key trends and lessons that should be introduced into the system and communicate them to decision-makers (Ministry of Education). On this basis, decision-makers can then discuss systemic improvements based on the lessons learned from Erasmus+ projects.

#### 4.4.4. Organisation of adult education

1. The results, solutions and innovations of Erasmus+ projects should be exchanged annually between organisations active in the field of adult education in meetings within their respective professional associations.
2. The tools and solutions developed in Erasmus+ projects should be used by as many organisations active in the field of adult education as possible, even if they have not developed them in their own organisation.

#### 4.5. Youth

1. As the total allocated funds have been significantly increased in 2022, it is necessary to increase the funding per project (due to inflationary trends) and to align it according to actions in the coming period, e.g. the KA3 action is not implemented at all during the years 2021 and 2023, and to address the priorities and objectives of the programme, this lack of the content in the KA3 action has to be compensated in the coming period, as the support under KA154 action does not cover all the objectives of KA3 action, but only a part of these objectives that are related to participation of young people.
2. The balance between KA1, KA2 and KA3 programmes needs to be adjusted, as the balance has inclined towards KA2 over the years, which is a action with less active and direct involvement of young people, suggesting that more funding is gradually going into the support ecosystem rather than directly to the end users (young people). Also, more resources need to be allocated to KA3 so that the impact of the programme can be translated into public policies. It is not entirely clear why KA3 is not being implemented at national level (except partly through KA154), although it is foreseen at EU level in the 2021–2027 programme.
3. Given the high level of interest in applying for KA2, it makes sense to stimulate more interest in applying for KA1 and KA3, or to focus the National Agency's information and support activities more strongly on these actions, or on the less relevant sub-actions in these two actions (e.g. KA155 integration in DiscoverEU initiatives, which needs to be administratively adapted as it is currently perceived by stakeholders as difficult to implement). It is also necessary to stimulate the interest of so-called “newcomers”.
4. Given the weak representation of written material on the Erasmus+ programme covering the youth field outside the youth sector, strategic efforts to raise the profile of programmes outside the youth sector in relation to the visibility of the contribution

of youth work are recommended. This is also highlighted by studies on the visibility of different youth programmes (e.g. Youth 2020) that are offered.

5. There should be a more systematic detection of impacts, as well as more visible awareness-raising with all relevant stakeholders, including more in-depth and systematic research on the impact on organisations and in particular on the community. Organisations should be involved in a more systematic and in-depth manner from the preparation phase of projects, making use of the knowledge available outside the youth sector. This is particularly true when it comes to developing methodologies for measuring impact and the associated burden on beneficiaries or end-users, which is reasonable and not excessive. Although MOVIT runs workshops on this topic, beneficiaries feel confused and unsure about measuring the impact of their projects. In addition, the measurement of the programme's impact is not uniform among the different stakeholders (programme, Youth Office, national strategy, MOVIT, beneficiaries, RAY, researchers in the field). The study of community impacts should also involve the various stakeholders in the community on whom the projects are intended to have an impact or with whom the organisations are working in implementing the projects.
6. Participants (youth) demonstrate the acquisition of generic competences through their participation in Erasmus+ activities, which is also one of the core missions of youth work, whereby we propose a less instrumental or more explicit conditionality of applications on the basis of each horizontal priority (digitisation, sustainability, etc.), also because organisations for young people, youth organisations and also youth work organisations cannot be expected to have expertise in each priority field (e.g. in the 2014–2020 programme period, youth workers or group leaders were forced to develop their expertise as HR consultants, and after 2021 as environmentalists or digital development experts). Instead, it should be adapted to the needs of young people (in national and international contexts), which is also the case for existing national measurements, which are also funded by the Youth Office (e.g. Youth 2010, Youth 2020) or ARIS (e.g. Substantive Youth Representation, etc.). However, if more direct targeting of themes on the basis of horizontal priorities is maintained in the future, expert support to and from national agencies would be needed, including in the form of the establishment of an international or national pool of experts to assist applicants in aligning their missions with the horizontal priorities and objectives of the programme.
7. As the general objective “impact on public policy development” is neglected and poorly addressed, there is a need to increase the resources and number of calls for proposals and to strengthen NA's outreach activities for actions towards this objective in the future, in particular the KA3 action.
8. The assessment for actions KA1 Integration in DiscoverEU initiatives and KA3 is that they contribute the least to the achievement of the objectives and should therefore either be restructured accordingly (Integration in DiscoverEU initiatives) or not be issued at all (KA3 in the 2021–2027 period) to ensure continuity of the content leading to the achievement of the objectives through these actions.

9. More information activities should be devoted to explaining how the general objectives and horizontal priorities guide the content of the projects submitted in a manner that allows projects to be rich in content, in relation to local and national priorities, and at the same time consistent with the programme's orientations, without unduly simplifying (narrowing) the understanding of the conceptual breadth of the four horizontal priorities.
10. The programme drafters should reflect on the relevance of the “digital” and “green” priorities (or the relevance of their appropriation in the sector), which seem too restrictive for the development of work for young people; these are horizontal priorities that are already part of strategic planning at all levels and are taken for granted (such as gender equality or equality of opportunity), while the priorities of young people should be more linked to the population of young people itself and their behaviour patterns.
11. The programme and calls for proposals should define more clearly the objectives of inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, i.e. set a target for inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in terms of the percentage of young people included, and require applicants to propose the context and the way in which young people with fewer opportunities are defined and counted in their projects. The eligibility conditions should not create a sense of conditionality for the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, as this encourages the self-definition and self-victimisation of these groups and the emergence of criteria that are irrelevant to the programme to achieve the related objectives and priorities. At the same time, those who do not have the personnel and other infrastructural capacities to deal adequately with young people with fewer opportunities are also being pushed too far into the treatment of young people with fewer opportunities.
12. The programme's success in influencing the organisations themselves can be improved in part through supporting applicants in understanding the links between their fields of activity and missions, which are derived from the needs of their immediate users, and the programme's broader priorities and objectives, which requires a broader strategic thinking of the organisations. In order for organisations to adapt to the programme in a way that does not adversely affect the needs of users, they need expert help in strategic planning in the long run, throughout the programme period, not just for the purposes of individual calls for proposals. This substantive strategic support can be provided in a variety of ways and is not necessarily linked to the work of the National Agency, as it also involves tasks that go beyond the remit of the National Agency and its powers.
13. In addition to good information and support provided to youth organisations and other applicants, MOVIT should develop and implement activities to provide comprehensive information to young people as end-users (as individuals), i.e. to establish more direct access to the wider population of young people in order to inform them about Erasmus+ programmes. To this end, it can also devote more energy to their website and other information channels, which, according to available

measurements, do not reach a wider population of young people, and also cause considerable dissatisfaction among applicants or at a later point beneficiaries.

14. As young people as end-users and beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ programme are sometimes left out in the logic of the call for proposals processes (they are not informed, they are unstable in their involvement, they are not able to carry out the applications themselves, their specific needs are overlooked, etc.), all stakeholders in this process (both MOVIT and applicants and beneficiaries) should continuously develop and implement participatory ways of programming and project development, where young people are involved to the greatest extent possible from the planning and application phases of the projects. In this light, measuring the success of such efforts (e.g. level of outreach, number of people involved, number of initiatives, level of success, etc.) would also help to develop the field.
15. There is a need to identify strategically at national level which objectives and priorities (including local and national, not just European) are or will be targeted for allocating resources between individual actions and for increasing resources significantly. It must also be based on data that is derived from a robust methodology and in their collection and analysis does not involve actors with a vested interest in the (re-)allocation itself.
16. It is necessary to stimulate interest in obtaining accreditation scheme and to provide professional support to organisations in the process of obtaining accreditation scheme. Organisations that carried the “Quality Label” before 2021 could be encouraged to obtain accreditation scheme as defined after 2021.
17. The application of new organisations (i.e. newcomers) should be encouraged through the eligibility conditions (e.g. the requirement that the partnership must include an organisation that has not participated in the Erasmus+ programme) or through the quota system.
18. The notion of “innovation” should be clearly defined to include not only new content but also qualitative upgrading and/or permanent “enrichment” of old programmes that have proven to be of high quality and successful. This would prevent the concept from forcing applicants to abandon their successful programmes because of a (too) narrow understanding of the requirements of the calls for proposals.
19. Particular emphasis and additional funding should be given to systematic and quality mentoring and professional counselling for the young people involved, especially those with mental health problems and personal and psychological difficulties, as this is not covered by the category of funding for accompanying person.
20. The digital platform needs to be improved to work seamlessly and to be optimised so that data entry is no longer time-consuming and allows data to be transferred between different databases.

21. The level of funding should be regularly adjusted to inflationary trends, as the situation in the last two years reminds us.
22. The National Agency should ensure a higher volume of permanent office hours during which administrators can be reached by telephone, as beneficiaries do not perceive that availability will return to normal after the Covid-19 epidemic in 2020 and 2021. They also consider working hours too “niche”. The nature and low professionalisation of the sector, which is also to a large extent based on volunteering, must also be taken into account.
23. The application form should be cleaned up so that it does not require repetitive entering of content; samples of all necessary annexes should be attached to the application form. While the reporting form is considered to be sufficiently simplified, the reporting instructions should be clearer, more unambiguous and detailed with a list of necessary annexes and supporting documents.
24. The indicative guidelines for the geographical distribution of accepted applications should be more transparently defined and meaningfully communicated, including in relation to the strategic rationale. At the moment, applicants feel that they are being evaluated on the basis of a geographical condition that is not specified in the eligibility conditions, and evaluators feel that this tendency is not sufficiently clear.
25. Even if there is a strategy for the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, which includes a definition of this group – it is still a contextually conditioned definition – it is also not clear from the programme's strategy how many young people with fewer opportunities the programme wants to include (e.g. as many as there are in the population; a certain proportion defined by different strategy documents, etc.). It is also necessary to be clear about what is utopia and what is dystopia (e.g. is 100% the ideal situation or is it too much?), and to justify this in a professional manner, presenting the positive and negative sides of this logic (e.g. greater inclusiveness; potential “stigmatisation” of the programme; absence of a critical mass of individual groups to achieve the goals of tolerance, acceptance, integration, etc.). Above all, it would be a good idea to bring this debate closer to programme staff, whose role has a significant impact on the implementation of the programme on the “ground”.
26. The capacity of organisations should be promoted to address the growing need of youth for professional support in different fields, especially currently in relation to young people's mental health.
27. The programme should give more space to national priorities, which can be linked to the national programme for young people in a meaningful way, and in order to steer this process, the Office for Youth, as the national authority with competences in this field, should be strengthened in terms of staffing and funding. The Youth Office should embed the programme more closely in the national strategic priorities through the programme implementation contract, rather than the other way around, as many stakeholders currently see it. The new national programme must therefore contain

concrete national priorities, which the Erasmus+ programme will complement in an appropriate manner, to develop actions that are directly driven by the needs of the end-users, always in line with the principles of coherence and complementarity.

28. It is important that in the future, the volume and continuity of funding for the regular activities of youth organisations is increased and improved, so that organisations can develop their core activities independently of the Erasmus+ programme, and then build on and complement them through Erasmus+ projects, in line with European priorities and objectives. With increased or differently distributed local and national funding, more organisations will be able to successfully draw on Erasmus+ funds to build on their activities.
29. The programme should to a greater extent consider the national context and, in the absence of strong national programmes in a given field, take due account of this absence, especially when it comes to allowing the promotion of content that may not be (any longer) so central to the programme itself at European level.