

# The Impact of Erasmus+ on Adult Education

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## Summary

### Occasion

To date, there has been limited research into the impact of Erasmus+ on adult education (AE) compared to other educational sectors. The primary objective of this study is to provide the NA Erasmus+ with information on the impact of the Erasmus+ programme (KA1 and KA2) on participating organisations, staff, volunteers, and learners in adult education. More specifically, the research focuses on adult learners who, either individually or collectively, have participated in a KA1 mobility action and the impact of the outcomes thereof on their lives and socio-economic resilience.

### The Study

In order to answer the research question, three sub-studies were conducted. The research comprised: (1) an analysis of existing project documentation, (2), a questionnaire and case studies among participating AE organisations, and (3) interviews with participating and non-participating organisations and adult learners.

### The outcomes

#### **Conclusion 1: Erasmus+ is yet to reach all AE organisations and learners**

The study shows that Erasmus+ supports a wide variety of organisations. The business community (including consultancies) proves to be a prominent applicant, as are welfare and cultural institutions and foundations. Notable, however, is that ROCs (Regional Training Centres), language houses, and libraries show a lower level of participation in Erasmus+, despite their prominent role in the Dutch AE sector. It raises the question whether or not the programme reaches the right organisations that facilitate adult learners. The study also shows that the majority of successful applicants have executed multiple Erasmus+ projects. And the majority of the participating organisations have stated their willingness to submit another application for Erasmus+ in future, which sustains the group of repeat users. This points to a group of programme 'insiders,' which immediately raises the question of how better to reach the group of programme 'outsiders' and how to mitigate the mobility obstacles they experience.

#### **Conclusion 2: Organisational embedding of internationalisation has improved**

The inventory that was made shows that the impact of Erasmus+ is primarily experienced in the internationalisation of their employees, administration of international projects, the vision on internationalisation, and the structural financing of internationalisation. The impact is experienced to a much lesser degree on HR policy for internationalisation within the organisation. A large majority of the participating organisations do state that the organisational embedding of internationalisation has improved, whereas a smaller group of respondents say that the organisational embedding has remained the same or even diminished. Despite the risk that respondents might give a socially desirable answer to this question, half of the respondents state that without Erasmus+ the activities would not have taken place at all, while almost half indicate to implement the project in a slimmed down form, different form/ content, or later in time, which is proof of the important added value of Erasmus+ (while only a small group of 3% indicates that there wouldn't have been any difference).

#### **Conclusion 3: Most developed outputs are mainstreamed in regular offer**

Nearly all respondents say that the developed intellectual outputs have been integrated into their regular offerings, which is a good outcome, considering the programme's wish to further disseminate project outcomes and anchor them in regular policy (mainstreaming). The impact of developed outputs on other organisations and policy is mentioned to a lesser degree as an outcome, but still by half of the respondents. According to the respondents, the diversity of the field of work, the nature of the developed outputs, and the mainstreaming potential of these

outputs do not always allow a translation from results into general policy or other contexts. As a result, the participation of Erasmus+ would appear to be limited to the immediate impact on participating organisations and participants. As dissemination and mainstreaming of the outcomes of Erasmus+ are important elements of the Erasmus+ programme, this remains a point of particular interest.

A large majority of the responding participants also experience a discernible improvement in the quality of their learning pathways as a result of Erasmus+, of whom a small number even see a substantial improvement. A small group, however, say that the quality has remained the same or decreased. In addition, more than half of the respondents state that their organisation now pays more attention to the theme of life-long development, followed by digitalisation, and inclusion after participation, in line with most of the programme's four horizontal priorities.

#### **Conclusion 4: Extensive reach among professionals with impact**

The study shows that over a third of the respondents say that more than half of the professionals in their employ participated in the most recent Erasmus+ project. Additionally, one quarter of the respondents say that more than half of the learners were engaged in the Erasmus+ project. A third of the respondents state that the involvement of adult learners did not apply to them.

After participation in Erasmus+, the majority of the respondents saw improvement in all of the impact dimensions they were questioned about. The most often reported impact on professionals are improved teaching/ supervision, greater attention for inclusion and diversity, and the development of learning pathways. Furthermore, a large majority of the participating organisations report greater attention among professionals for world citizenship. In addition, a large group, although to a lesser extent compared to the dimensions mentioned above, reports an improvement in the pedagogical and didactical skills of professionals, the identification of learning requirements, and differentiation of learning pathways and attention for the socio-emotional development during teaching. In addition to the professionals, Erasmus+ also has impact on the volunteers working for the participating AE organisations. Just as with the professionals, their greatest impact is on the field of attention for inclusion and diversity, attention for world citizenship, and the teaching/ supervision of adult learners. To a lesser degree, respondents experience improvement among volunteers in the guidance of adult learners/participants, the socio-emotional development of learners, and the development of learning pathways for adult learners. Least often reported is the impact of volunteers on identifying the results of learning pathways, differentiation during the teaching/ supervision of learners, and the professionalisation through knowledge sharing/ cooperation.

#### **Conclusion 5: Improved skills of adult Learners and social activation**

The main impact on adult learners as observed by the organisations, is that participation in Erasmus+ expands their living environment, followed by more chances to advance and new contacts outside their learning pathways. To a lesser extent, but still observed by the majority of respondents, learners have better chances on the labour market and other learning pathways of their organisation have become more accessible. The least reported impact, but still observed by more than half the respondents, is that adult learners take part in activities in their own living environment more often and have become more assertive. Several examples are given in the interviews, such as the stimulation of personal growth, development of skills, knowledge of foreign countries, and advancing toward entering the labour market or further education, which is proof of the important added value of Erasmus+.

**Conclusion 6: KA1 mobility for adult learners has a difficult start**

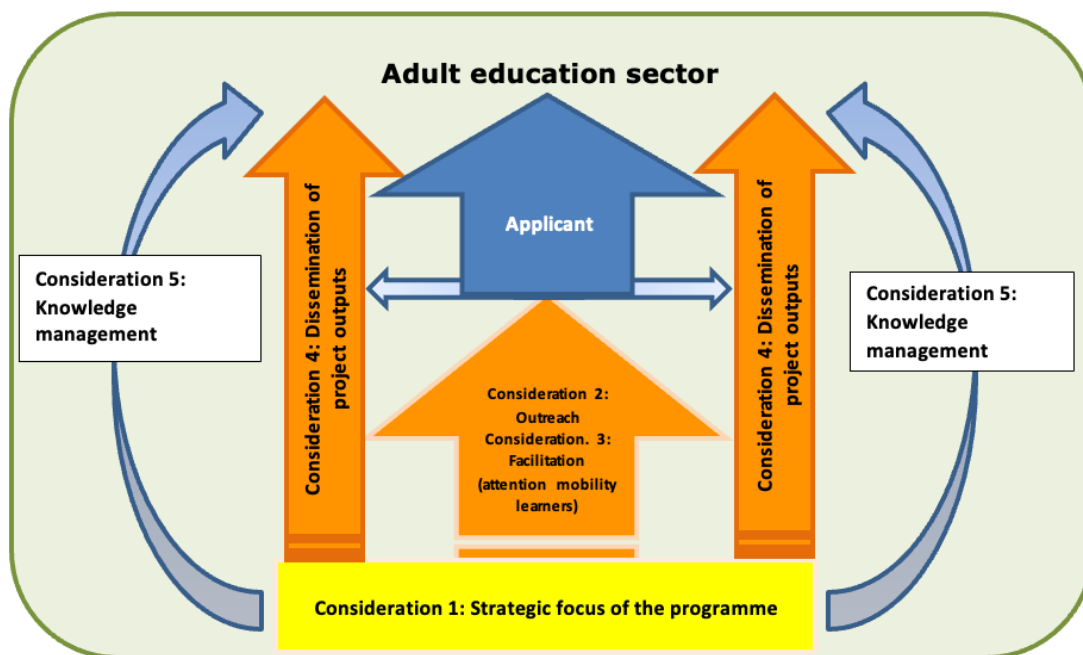
More than a quarter of the responding organisations say they are willing to submit an application for KA1 mobility of adult learners, while nearly a third state they are not considering this. Nearly half of the respondents say they have not yet made a decision.

There are three accredited organisation that intend to organise a mobility for adult learners in 2023. The interviews with two of these organisations show they are still engaged in making preparations. In both cases, no contact with adult learners has been established as yet. It is clear from conversations with these two organisations that the goal and execution of the adult learners mobility will not have been decided yet by the time the budget application is submitted but are to take shape gradually.

**Points of special interest**

Five points of special interest were formulated to make the programme more inclusive and impactful (see figure A below). Here, the applicant takes centre stage. They are recruited on the basis of a possible strategic set-up of the programme through an outreach strategy, in which the NA provides concrete inspiring content to potential applicants and, whenever necessary and possible, facilitates the application. A further elaboration thereof is the facilitation of adult learners' mobilities. This requires extra attention in view of the outcomes of the study. In the course of the project, the NA can contribute to the dissemination of the project outcomes and, in addition, will be able to inspire the adult education sector via active knowledge management on the basis of the realised output and outcome of the Erasmus+ projects. Each of the points of special interest is further elaborated in chapter 7.

**Figure A Overview of the Points of special Interest to make the Programme more inclusive and Impactful**



Source: the authors

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Importance of Internationalisation with impact

**Through Erasmus+, The European Union supports the educational, professional, and personal development of participants both in and outside of Europe.** For this purpose, a number of international action lines have been developed<sup>1</sup>. This study was conducted within the framework of the Key Action 1 (KA1) and Key Action 2 (KA2) of the Erasmus+ programme. The programme provides participants with an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience at home and abroad<sup>2</sup>.

**The National Agency (NA) Erasmus+ states in its objectives the importance of its projects having the greatest possible effect and the highest possible success rate<sup>3</sup>.** This is why the NA puts great emphasis on the programme's impact. More specifically, on the changes achieved by means of the programme for an individual, an organisation and for the society. In order to gain insight in this process, the NA has developed an impact tool to give the project applicants a good start<sup>3</sup>. This tool helps the applicants determine the desired and expected impact and translate it into a concrete project design. This ensures that the project activities and the concomitant project goals better reflect the desired impact.

**The Erasmus+ programme also encompasses adult education (AE).** The AE sector includes all forms of non-vocational education of a formal, non-formal or informal nature for adults. So, every adult, who, after terminating or completing their initial education, follows a form of post-initial or continuous education (formal, non-formal or informational learning<sup>4</sup>. The Dutch AE sector comprises a wide variety of institutions, such as formal educational institutions, private education providers, welfare bodies, art and cultural institutions, libraries, language houses, social enterprises, NGOs, and more.

**AE is geared toward improving the socio-economic resilience of adults in a vulnerable position.** AE (within the goals of Erasmus+) has, among other things, as its objective the optimisation of self-reliance and reducing the distance to the labour market through improved language, numeracy, and digital skills, but also focuses on a broader set of life skills, such as the financial, green, health, and personal skills of adults in a vulnerable position. The NA wants to achieve that there's insight in changes for adult learners, staff, volunteers, and organisations in the AE field as a result of participation in Erasmus+ projects. In this regard, and also in this study, the NA is particularly interested in the outcomes, and in which concrete aspects contributed to either positive or negative and short-term or lasting changes on a personal, organisational, and professional/personal level. Better insight in the impact of Erasmus+ on the AE-sector also contributes to reinforcing the AE infrastructure and the visibility of the outcomes<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> To this end, Erasmus+ works via three action lines: Mobility (KA1), Strategic Partnerships (KA2) and Policy Development (KA3).

<sup>2</sup>All 28 EU member states participate in the Erasmus+ programme, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, and Macedonia. These 33 programme countries differ per action line. For the participating countries, also see: Programme guide | Erasmus+ (europa.eu)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.erasmusplus.nl/en/impacttool-mobility>

<sup>4</sup> Erasmus +\_ programme guide 2022

<sup>5</sup> Maurice de Greef (2019), Importance of adult learning and education serving a future of education for all citizens, Vrije Universiteit Brussel



## 1.2 Earlier research into the impact of Erasmus+ on the AE-Sector

**Compared to the other educational sectors, there has to date only been limited research into the impact of Erasmus+ on the AE sector in addition to the regular Erasmus+ programme evaluations.** The combined evaluation of Erasmus+ 2014-2020 and Erasmus+ 2007- 2013 in 2017 does provide some insight but does not present a detailed image of the impact on the AE sector. As the previous programme did not yet include a possibility for an individual mobility (KA1) for adult learners (only for staff and volunteers), there is little information on the impact of Erasmus+ on this group, with the exception of indirect effects through staff and organisations who introduce new pedagogical and educational approaches. In addition, the evaluation reports on the positive impact at the staff, organisational, and system level.

**There are, however, examples of studies regarding the impact of Erasmus+ on the AE sector in other countries.** In 2020, the German National Agency (NA BIBB) conducted an impact study among KA2 projects in which German partners participated<sup>6</sup>. This study looked at which organisations had participated, which subjects were addressed by the partnerships, and which outputs were realised. In addition, the study examined the impact on participating organisations, target groups, cooperation with other organisations, the organisations' environment, and the success factors for impact<sup>7</sup>. The study shows that participation has led to professionalisation of staff (didactic competencies, subject expertise, knowledge of foreign languages, personal competencies, and management skills). At the same time, the study shows us that the structural impact at the organisational level is lower than at staff level. The participating organisations do, however, see impact on their organisation, such as the introduction of digital teaching and communication policies. In addition, a large majority (88%) say that participation has improved the quality of the offer of their organisation. Case studies, however, show that embedding the developed products and insights is not always easy and strongly dependent on technical possibilities, available means, but also organisational culture.

As stated earlier, there has been **less research into the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners and the extent to which Erasmus+ is inclusive.** De Greef's study (2021)<sup>8</sup>, conducted at the behest of the European Parliament, shows that investing in Erasmus+ projects ensures that, in addition to young people, a wide variety of adult learners are reached. Particularly vulnerable learners, such as participants with limitations, health issues, a lower level of education, but also learners from a different cultural background participate in Erasmus+ projects. It is clear though, that in most countries more steps could be taken where creating policy and interventions for these adult learners are concerned. In the final analysis, the programme reached 277,997 adult learners between 2014 and 2020. There is little information about the impact on the social environment and socio-economic resilience of adult learners. Research conducted in the Netherlands shows that concrete results are being realised with comparable learning pathways for vulnerable adults. Several studies show that in a variety of regions the deployment of education results in 60% to 80% of learners achieving better linguistic competence and 40% to

<sup>6</sup> NA-BIBB (2020). Erasmus+ Adult Education. Impact of Strategic Partnership in Germany.

<sup>7</sup> For this purpose, a desk study was conducted into the final reports of KA2 projects coordinated by a German partner and an online survey among German partner organisations who participated in a KA2 project (and a control group of organisations who submitted an application that was rejected). In addition, in-depth case studies were conducted among a select number of participating organisations.

<sup>8</sup> De Greef, M. (2021). Inclusion measures within the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020 with respect to learning mobility of individuals. Brussels: EPRS.

60% a better place in society (De Greef et al., 2012<sup>9</sup>; De Greef et al., 2014<sup>10</sup>; De Greef and Poppelaars, 2018<sup>11</sup>). In addition to acquiring a better place in society, a person can also gain a better place in the labour market. After participation in a learning pathway, adults can go on an internship, perform better in a paid job (with coaching), look for a job or do volunteer work (as a first step towards a paid job). Research by De Greef (2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d<sup>12</sup>) shows that after participation in the learning process a better labour market development is realised among 20% to 30% of the learners.

### 1.3 Adjustments to the new Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027

A number of innovations were introduced in the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 compared to the previous Erasmus+ programme, such as, for instance, the introduction of small-scale partnerships within KA2, but also the possibility for adult learners from AE target groups to go abroad (within KA1), both individually and as part of a group. As part of the impact study described below, the Dutch NA would like to monitor the extent to which people make use of this possibility and its impact right from the start.

### 1.4 Goal of the Study and Study Questions

The primary objective of the study is to provide the NA Erasmus+ with information about the impact of the Erasmus+ programme (KA1 and KA2) on the participating organisations, staff, volunteers, and in particular adult learners who either individually or in groups participated in a mobility action, and the impacts thereof on their lives and socio-economic resilience.

Above all, the NA is interested in the outcomes of participation and in which concrete aspects contributed to either positive or negative and either short-term or lasting changes in, among other things, the personal, organisational, and professional fields, and especially in the realisation of the priorities set down within this context by the EU (inclusion and diversity; digitalisation; sustainability/climate; participation). On the basis of this information, recommendations can be made for improvements for the programme and the applicants.

In the impact study, particular attention is paid to the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners (from 2021). This includes, in addition to experiences with group and individual mobility, an inventory of what impact participation has had on their lives and socio-economic resilience.

The following research questions were operationalised for the impact study:

#### Participants' characteristics

1. What are the characteristics of the AE organisations taking part in the Erasmus+ programme (KA1 and KA2)?

<sup>9</sup> De Greef, M., Hanekamp, M., Segers, M., Verté, D. en Lupi, C. (2012). *Leren in verschillende contexten*. 's-Hertogenbosch: CINOP.

<sup>10</sup> De Greef, M., Segers, M., Nijhuis, J. & Lam, J.F. (2014). *Impact onderzoek taaltrajecten Taal voor het Leven door Stichting Lezen & Schrijven op het gebied van sociale inclusie en leesvaardigheid Deel A*. Maastricht: Maastricht University.

<sup>11</sup> De Greef, M. & Poppelaars, M. (2018). *Educatietrajecten als maatschappelijke oplossing voor kwetsbare inwoners van Noord-Brabant*. 's-Hertogenbosch: ArtéduC.

<sup>12</sup> De Greef, M. (2012a). *Educatietrajecten van ROC ID College hebben aantoonbaar effect voor inwoners in de regio's Midden-Holland, Zoetermeer en Holland-Rijnland*. 's-Hertogenbosch: ArtéduC.

De Greef, M. (2012b). *Educatietrajecten van het Kellebeek College afdeling Via hebben aantoonbaar effect voor inwoners in de regio West-Brabant*. 's-Hertogenbosch: ArtéduC.

De Greef, M. (2012c). *Educatietrajecten in Den Haag zorgen voor betere taalbeheersing, plek in de samenleving en op de arbeidsmarkt bij inwoners*. 's-Hertogenbosch: ArtéduC.

De Greef, M. (2012d). *Educatietrajecten in Noordoost Twente zorgen voor betere taalbeheersing, plek in de samenleving en op de arbeidsmarkt bij inwoners*. 's-Hertogenbosch: ArtéduC.

2. What are the characteristics of the participants, staff, volunteers, and adult learners who participate or have participated in an Erasmus+ programme project either individually or as a group?
3. What does this information tell us about the accessibility and inclusivity of the internationalisation projects of the Erasmus+ programme in AE?

**Impact on participating AE institutions<sup>13</sup>**

1. Have the Erasmus+ projects led to the introduction of new or adjustments to existing offers/practices (programmes, activities, modules or new/adjusted pedagogical and didactic activities) at the AE institutions? Have AE-institutions implemented innovations in their course offers?
2. Are the (educational) activities/programmes better attuned to the needs of adult learners as a result of participation in Erasmus+ projects?
3. Have the Erasmus+ projects led to an improvement in accessibility for adult learners?
4. Have the Erasmus+ projects made a contribution to the field of digitalisation at AE institutions?
5. Have the Erasmus+ projects contributed to the promotion of the development of international competencies<sup>14</sup> and shared values (inclusion, diversity, tolerance, sustainability, world citizenship, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, etc.) in the offers of AE institutions?
6. How do staff, volunteers, adult learners, and other stakeholders view these changes, and do they act upon them?
7. Have the Erasmus+ projects led to a lasting cooperation between AE institutions, welfare institutions, cultural institutions, labour market stakeholders, and civil society which promotes the self-reliance of adult learners (community strengthening)?
8. What is the role of boards, coordinators, and staff of AE institutions participating in Erasmus+ projects in the dissemination and the exchange of knowledge and experience within their organisations and across other (more or less experienced) AE organisations?
9. Has the administration (design, execution, monitoring, evaluation, and learning) of international projects and instruments (for instance, Erasmus+ projects) been professionalised and at AE institutions been safeguarded and integrated in policy?
10. Have AE institutions, as a result of participation in Erasmus+ projects, built and expanded an international network they can in future fall back on for exchanges?

**Impact on staff and volunteers**

1. What are the experiences of staff and volunteers with regard to participation in mobility activities? How were they recruited for and supported during their mobility?
2. Have staff and volunteers further developed their international, personal, and professional competencies? And if so, which ones?
3. Do staff and volunteers see the added value of gaining international experiences and competencies?
4. Have staff and volunteers involved in Erasmus+ projects acquired greater self-confidence, adaptability, and perseverance?
5. Are staff and volunteers motivated to apply the international experience they gained and share it with other staff who have not, or not yet, been involved in Erasmus+ projects? To what extent have they done so and what impact has it had on the dissemination of knowledge and insights?
6. Have the Erasmus+ projects resulted in staff and volunteers feeling more part of the European society and the accompanying values (inclusion, diversity, tolerance, non-discrimination, etc.)?

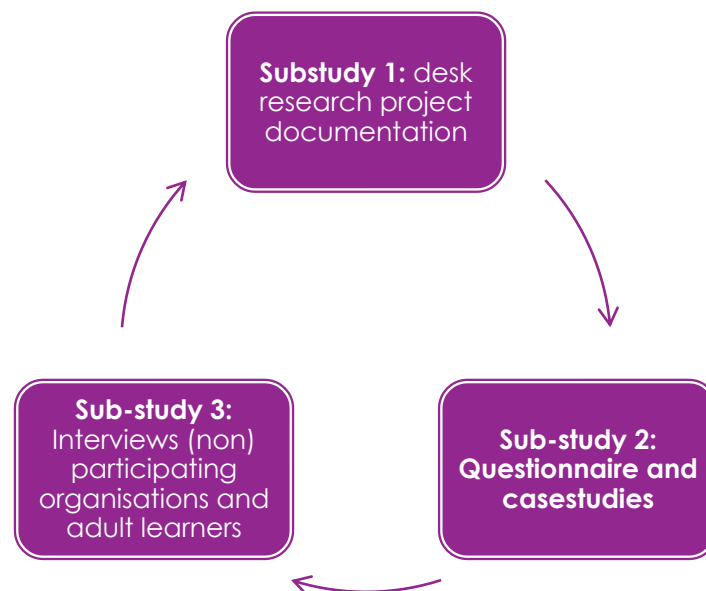
<sup>13</sup> Here we also include the higher goals of Erasmus+ (Erasmus+'s expectations with regard to Erasmus+ projects, improved language and digital skills, and a better understanding of social, linguistic, and cultural diversity) in line with the yet to be set up international study into AE impact (LT TCA).

<sup>14</sup> For international competencies, the model that Nuffic recently developed and published, model-internationale-competencies.pdf, is used as a reference framework.

7. Has participation in Erasmus+ projects left staff and volunteers better equipped to participate in and contribute to an international and intercultural society?
8. What are the conditions for successful mobility of staff and volunteers (organisational culture, infrastructure, financial means, mentoring, technical support, language skills, etc.)?
9. Are there significant differences between AE institutions and staff/volunteers on the abovementioned aspects? And if so, which ones?
<b>Impact on adult learners</b>
1. What are the experiences of adult learners with regard to their participation in mobility activities? How were they recruited and supported in their mobility?
2. How can adult learners be better supported in their mobility? Which obstacles do adult learners experience? How can these obstacles be removed? What does this mean for the support from the programme and NA?
3. What are the outcomes of adult learner mobility activities for the social environment and socio-economic resilience of the adult learners?
<b>Recommendations</b>
1. How can the accessibility of the Erasmus+ programme be enhanced for the AE target group? Which AE organisations (with which organisational characteristics including offer characteristics) are forerunners in this regard and why? What are the opportunities for and threats to participation of target groups? What does the individual or group approach look like and what are the threats and opportunities involved?
2. What annual monitoring information would be required in addition to the participants reports to be able to provide permanent insight into the impact of the E+ programme on the AE target group? Can the researchers provide a framework to permanently enable substantiated improvements of impact?
3. How can the NA even better support AE institutions in creating impact?

## 1.5 The study

Three sub-studies were conducted to answer the study questions (see figure below).



### Sub-study 1: Analysis of existing project documentation

On the basis of existing NA registrations, we can partly answer the study questions regarding the reach of Erasmus+. Existing project information has been studied for all completed KA1 and KA2 projects which have been registered by the programme in a systematic manner (Erasmus+

Project Results Platform). These are characteristics of participating organisations. On the basis of these data, we can draw conclusions about the reach and inclusivity of internationalisation.

**Sub-study 2: Questionnaire and case studies among participating AE organisations**

In order to create a proper image of the impact of Erasmus+ on AE institutions in the Netherlands, all AE institutions who participated in a KA1 and KA2 project as coordinator in the previous programme period were invited to fill in an online questionnaire. The Dutch partners of KA2 projects, submitted by a foreign coordinator in a different partner country, were also invited to participate in the online questionnaire. These Dutch partners were identified via an online search (using the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform and related project websites).

Table 1.5.1 provides an overview of the response to the questionnaire among participating AE organisations. The response among coordinators of KA1 and KA2 projects varies per question with a maximum of 44%, while response among the partners of KA2 projects is 21% at most. This puts the response at a slightly higher level than in a comparable study in the PE and SE sectors conducted in 2021 (with a 25% response)<sup>15</sup>.

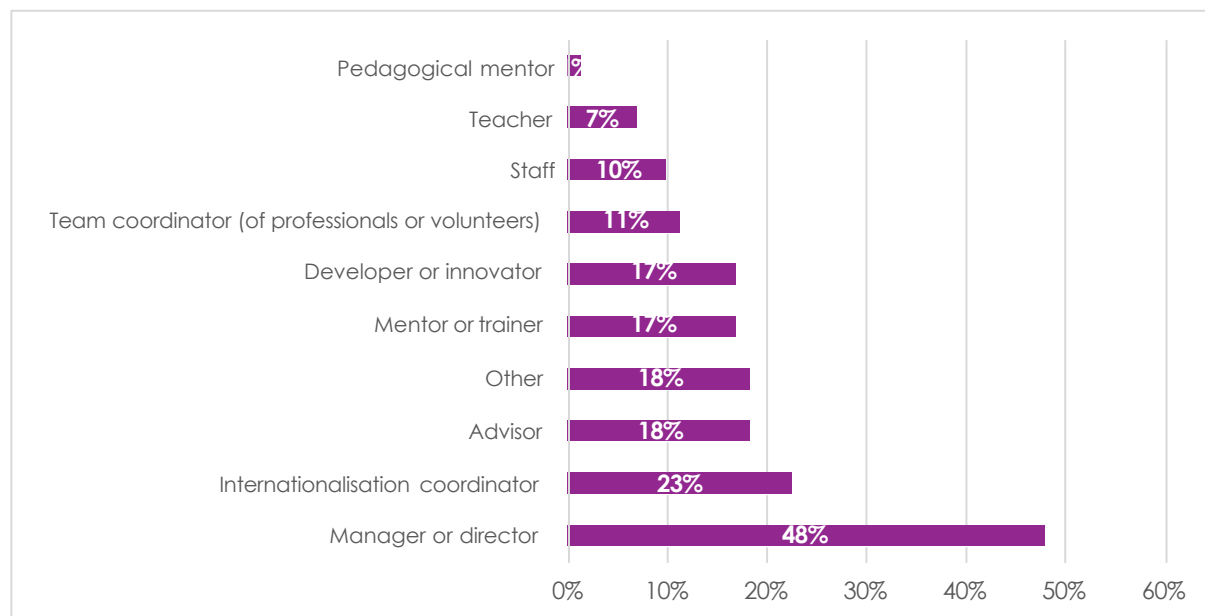
**Table 1.5.1 Response online questionnaire participating AE organisation Erasmus+**

Group	Response (N)	Population (N)	Response percentage (%)
<b>Coordinators KA1 &amp; KA2</b>	37 (Min)-41 (Max)	94	39-44%
<b>Partners KA2 (abroad)</b>	27 (Min)-31 (Max)	147	18-21%
<b>Total</b>	64 (Min)-72 (Max)	241	27-30%

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=70)

The questionnaire was filled in by a diverse group of people, but mostly by managers/ directors and internationalisation coordinators (see figure 1.5.1).

**Fig. 1.5.1. Background characteristics of respondents who participated in the questionnaire.**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=70)

<sup>15</sup> Ockham IPS (2021). Impact of Erasmus+ and eTwinning on schools

In addition to questions about the impact of Erasmus+ on their organisation, staff, volunteers, and adult learners, we also asked questions about the need for international mobility for adult learners and what obstacles might stand in their way.

Supplementary to the analysis of existing information at the NA and of the questionnaire, five case studies were conducted at AE institutions who participated in Erasmus+. Case studies were conducted at (1) the NEMO Science Museum, (2) NetwerkPro, (3) the Nieuwe Veste Library, (4) ITTA and (5) the city of Den Bosch.

### **Sub-study 3: Interviews with participating and non-participating organisations and adult learners (individual and group mobility)**

To gain insight in the level of participation, the experiences, and the impact of mobility on adult learners (new element in the current Erasmus+ programme) we initially intended to interview 12 participants at the three AE institutions that successfully submitted a mobility application for adult learners within KA1 (Partly online and partly on location). However, as the expected learners mobility at these three organisations in practice took longer to get started than hoped for, this component could not be completed within the timeframe of the study. As an alternative, a total of four hands-on experts who had taken part in a mobility were interviewed (KA2 staff mobility). We also spoke with two AE institutions who submitted a successful application for adult learners (out of a total of three successful applicants), four regular applicants for staff mobility, and seven AE institutions who have no experience with Erasmus+ about the reasons why they did not, or not yet, submit an application and the obstacles they experienced for their organisation and target groups.

## 2. The Accessibility and Inclusivity of Erasmus+

### 2.1 Introduction

Inclusion is one of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme, and it is therefore important that the programme is attractive to organisations who have not yet made use of Erasmus+, but also to vulnerable participants who would otherwise be hesitant to participate in internationalisation activities. This chapter discusses the characteristics of AE institutions that participated in Erasmus+ in the previous and current programme period, but also the characteristics of adult learners who benefit from the developed outputs (KA2) and/or mobility (KA1). On the basis thereof, statements can be made about the accessibility and inclusivity of Erasmus+ within the AE sector in the Netherlands.

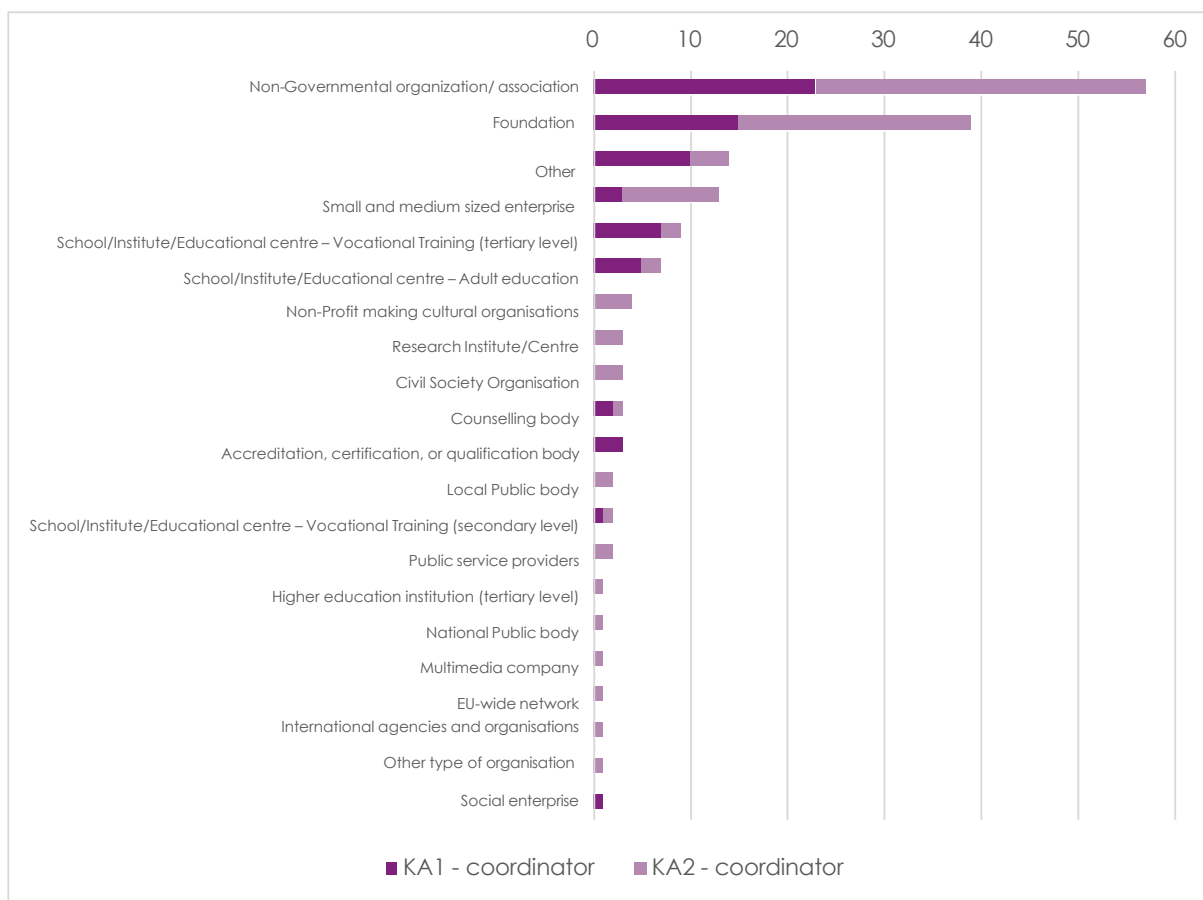
### 2.2 Organisations participating in Erasmus+

To gain a proper understanding of the type of organisation that participates in Erasmus+, we made an analysis of the information available on the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform<sup>16</sup>. This platform holds information about all KA1 And KA2 projects and the coordinators and partners involved therein. The platform also classifies which types of organisations in the Netherlands took part as the coordinator of a KA1 and KA2 project. Notable is that the different categories of the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform do not always exclude each other and partly overlap. And yet it still presents a good image of which types of organisations operate within Erasmus+ and the relative share of these organisations. (see figure 2.2.1).

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<sup>16</sup><https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/?page=1&sort=&domain=eplus2021&view=list&map=false&searchType=projects>

**Fig. 2.2.1. Number and type of AE organisations that took part in a KA1 or KA2 project as coordinator.**



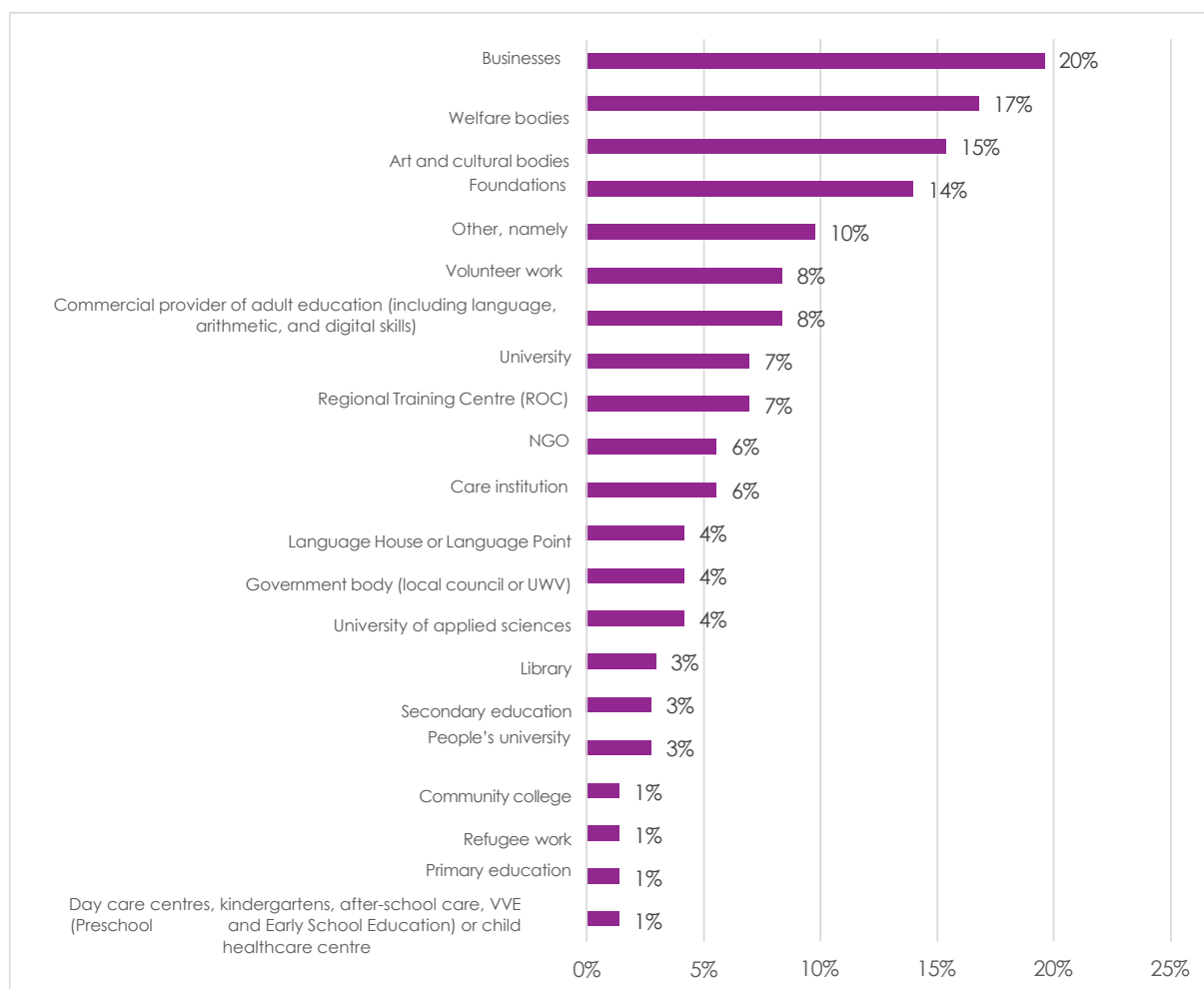
Source: Erasmus+ Project Results Platform

Figure 2.2.1 shows that it's primarily Dutch non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/ associations/foundations that take part in Erasmus+. Also notable is that a relatively large number of SME businesses take part in the programme. Educational institutions (vocational and adult education) have taken part to a lesser extent, while one would expect that particularly these would take part in Erasmus+. A limited number of cultural, research, and government bodies have also found their way to Erasmus+.

The results of the questionnaire among participating institutions present a more detailed image of the type of organisation that participates in Erasmus+ (see figure 2.2.2).



**Fig. 2.2.2. Share of the type of AE organisations that participated in Erasmus+**

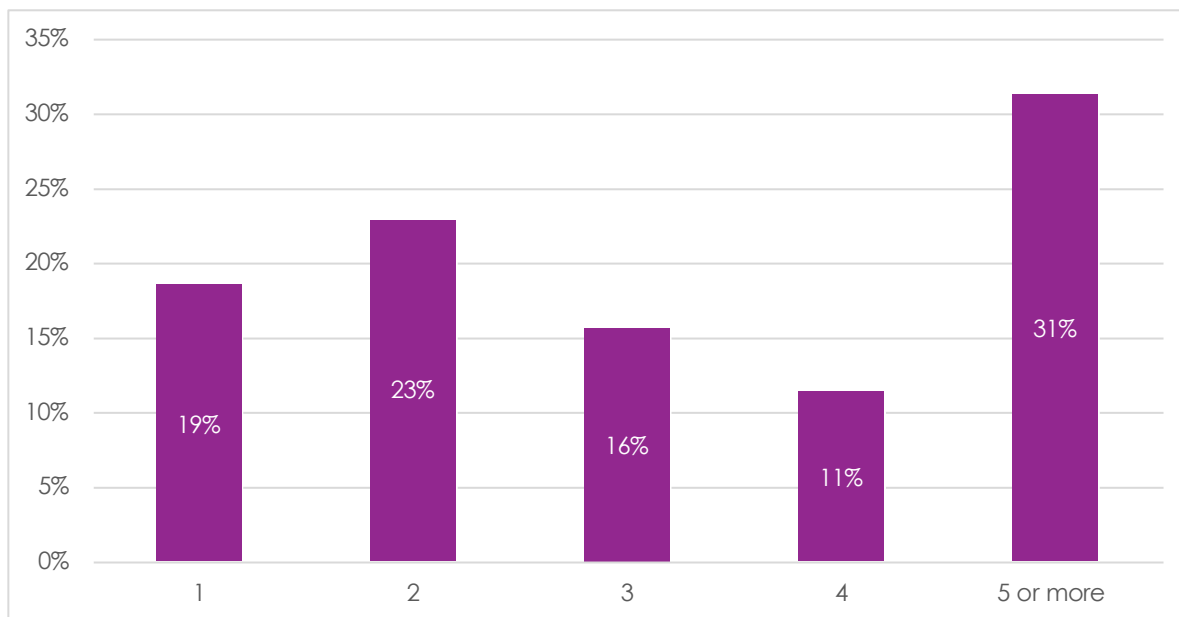


Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=70)

Figure 2.2.2 shows that Erasmus+ supports a wide variety of organisations. Businesses are clearly important applicants, as are welfare and cultural bodies and foundations. Notable is once again that ROCs (regional vocational training centres), language houses, other educational institutions, and libraries participate in Erasmus+ to a lesser extent, despite their prominent role in the Dutch AE sector. Organisations included in the 'other, namely' category are an association, a University Medical Centre, and a research institute. The question arises whether the right AE organisations are being reached. Additional analysis based on applicant name in the project data base shows that just over 20% of the applicants are in direct contact with the adult learners. This means that the majority of applicants have no direct contact with adult learners. These include, among others, many umbrella organisations, foundations, consultancies, and research institutes that find their way to the Erasmus+ programme and submit an application. There are, however, relatively too few ROCs, language houses, local councils, libraries, and welfare bodies involved.

The majority are experienced applicants who have already executed multiple Erasmus+ projects (see figure 2.2.3). Three out of ten AE institutions (31%) who filled in the questionnaire participated in 3 to four projects. A fifth of the AE institutions (19%) participated in just one project, while a fourth (23%) participated in two projects. This calls into question whether Erasmus+ is sufficiently known to or accessible for new applicants within the AE sector, as the majority of the organisations have already participated in Erasmus+ multiple times.

**Fig. 2.2.3. Number of projects in which organisations have participated in the previous and current Erasmus+ programme**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=70)

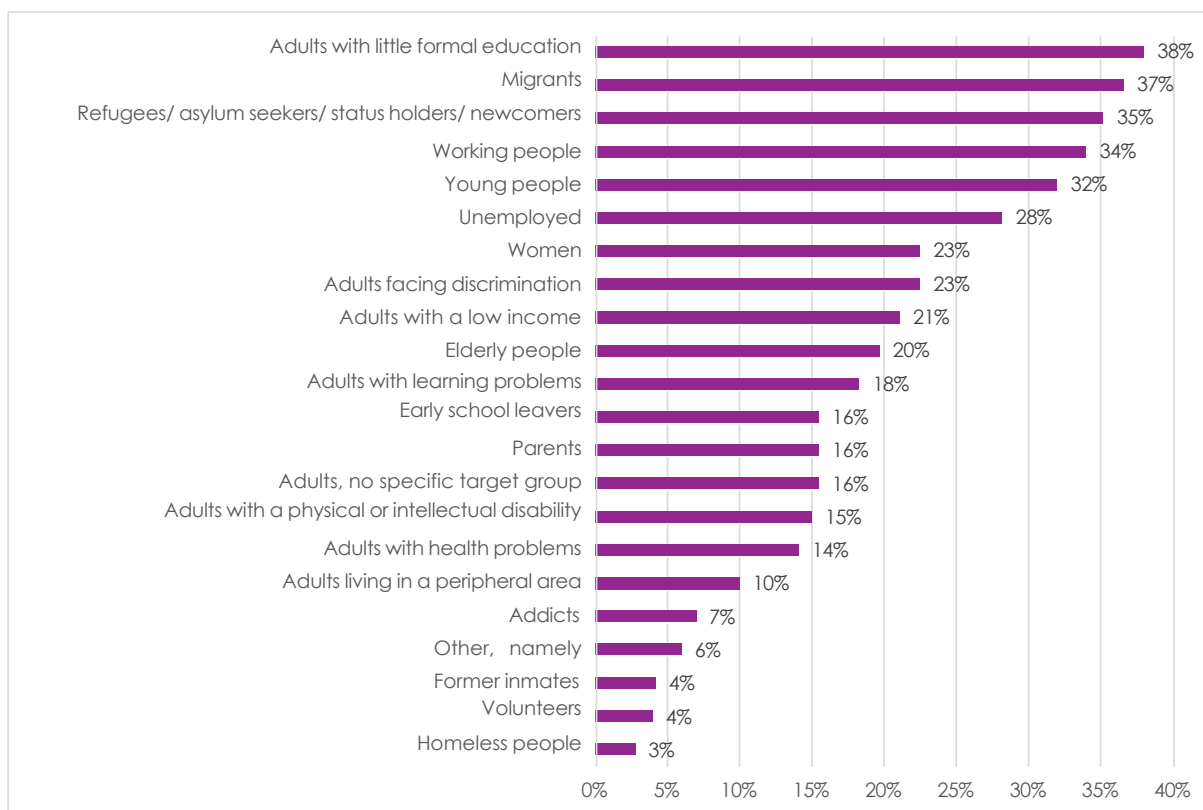
Most of the organisations only participated in a KA2 project (63%), while just over a fifth participated in both a KA1 and a KA2. A smaller group of 16% only participated in a KA1 project. Most of the organisations that submitted applications to the Dutch national agency fulfilled both the role of coordinator and partner in an Erasmus+ project (64%), while 37% participated only as a coordinator. Notable is that a closer examination of the data shows that AE institutions sometimes state that they were the coordinator of an Erasmus+ project while in fact they participated as partners. This shows that many participants are not entirely clear about the distinction between the role of coordinator and partner, or feel that as a partner, they are the coordinator of the Dutch component.

Therefore, future measurements emphatically need to include a clear description of the definitions of the roles of coordinator and partner.

### 2.3 Target Groups of Erasmus+

Within the AE sector, Erasmus+ focuses on all adult learners, but especially on adult learners in a vulnerable position. The programme does not keep a systematic record of which groups of adults are targeted by the KA1 and KA2 projects. To provide a picture of which types of adult learners are served by Erasmus+, a question on this issue was included in the questionnaire under AE institutions (see figure 2.3.1).

**Fig. 2.3.1 Overview of the target groups of Erasmus+ projects**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=70)

Figure 2.3.1 surprisingly shows there is not just one specific target group serviced by a majority of all Erasmus+ projects. This illustrates the variety of projects financed by Erasmus+ within the AE sector. And yet, it is possible to identify a number of target groups that are more frequently mentioned, such as adults with little formal education, migrants, refugees/ asylum seekers/status holders/newcomers, working people, and young people. These are mentioned by a third of the AE institutions as a target group. The unemployed, women and adults facing discrimination are mentioned as a target group by about a quarter of the participating organisations. Specific target groups are mentioned to a lesser extent, such as homeless people, volunteers, former inmates, and addicts. In this regard, the programme seems to accommodate the wide diversity of adult learners and more in particular the vulnerable target groups. In presenting these figures, it is important to note that these target groups do not exclude one another (such as with regard to age, gender, or employment situation).

The case study into the impact of Erasmus+ on the NEMO Science Museum in Amsterdam presents a great example of the extent to which Erasmus+ has contributed to serving the needs of adult learners and strategic cooperations in order to reach the target group.

**NEMO Science Museum – a stronger focus on adults and reaching them outside the museum**

The NEMO Science Museum is a family museum that offers an interactive, informal learning environment where a wide audience gets into contact with science and technology. The museum has 175 employees and 15 volunteers, and works together with a number of national and international partners to develop science capital among different target groups. So far, NEMO, together with project partners, has participated in three Erasmus+ projects, based on the Tinkering method. This is a multidisciplinary method, form of work, and

way of thinking and working, where non-formal learning takes centre stage. The final project of the triptych focuses on the adult target group.

This project was prompted by the internal shift in attention toward the adult target group at the museum and the wish to work together more with neighbourhood organisations. Exhibitions at the NEMO had been primarily focused on giving children an educational experience. Some years ago, the question rose internally whether adults had the same possibilities and freedom to have this experience. Next, a space for experiments was set up and staff looked into a form of work that matches adult needs, also to facilitate dialogue between adults and their children. The Erasmus+ project made it possible to extend the experience gained with the Tinkering method for children to include the adult target group, something which the Education Department up to that point had little experience with. The project has strengthened the interest it takes in adult learners, and the museum now has a permanent focus on the adult group. The Sales and Service Department, for instance, which is responsible for events and rental, has included a Tinkering workshop in their offer as a teambuilding activity (also because the head of hospitality, venue rental, and partnerships has followed a Tinkering training). The lessons learned from the project are now also integrated into the training of visitor assistants so they can better facilitate the adult visitor and work more inclusively (such as offering the possibility of addressing people in their own language). At the same time, NEMO wanted to organise more activities at the local level. Until then, the open-door policy attracted just a limited group of visitors from the neighbourhood. NEMO is eager to be accessible for everyone. This is why NEMO sought to widen their learning ecosystem beyond their own location, to include, for instance, community centres and libraries in order to reach a wider group of people and introduce them to science capital. Erasmus+ has made a successful contribution to this project.

Source: Case studies participating AE organisations

### 3. Impact on the organisational Embedding of Internationalisation

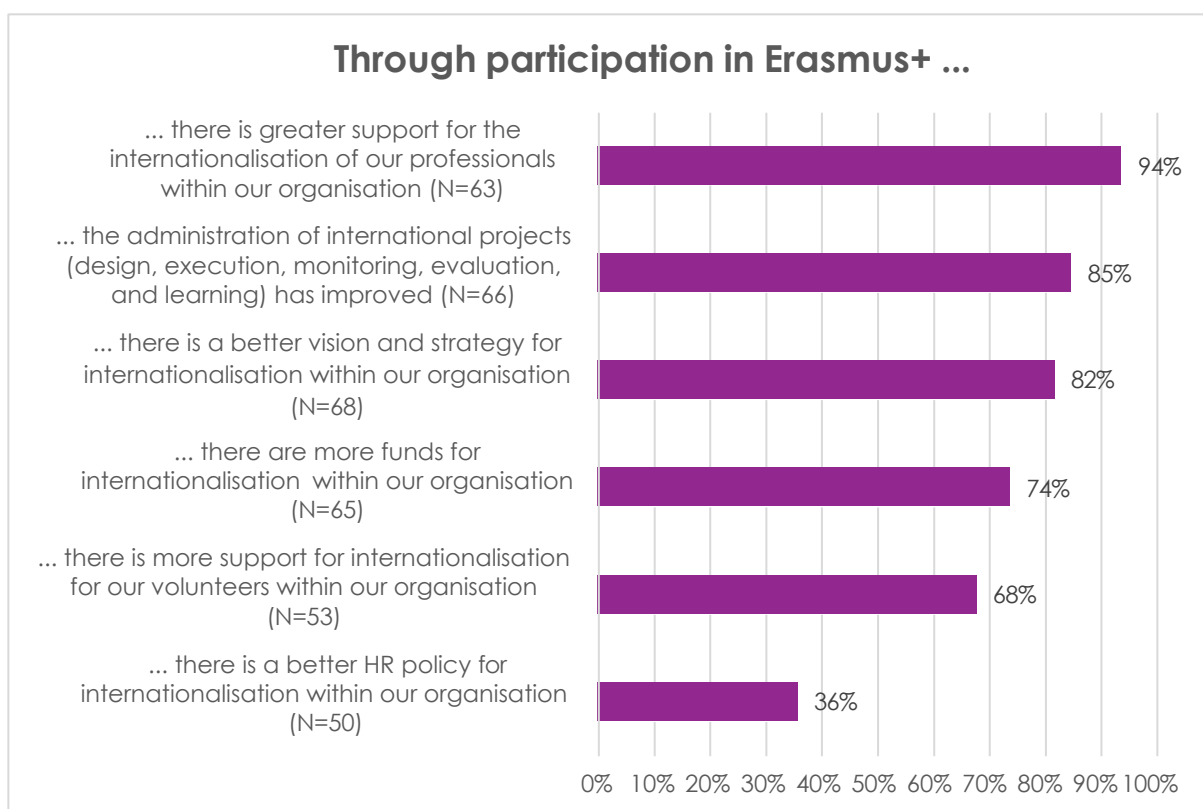
#### 3.1 Introduction

An important precondition for internationalisation within the AE sector is that internationalisation is organisationally embedded in the organisation. This involves, among other things, whether a clear internationalisation vision and strategy is in place, a good support structure for internationalisation activities and a clear financial framework for internationalisation exist, and whether staff are structurally being facilitated in their internationalisation.

#### 3.2 Organisational Embedding of Internationalisation

Figure 3.2.1 below provides an overview of the extent of the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the organisational embedding of internationalisation in participating organisations<sup>17</sup>.

**Fig. 3.2.1. The extent to which institutions agree with the presented propositions on the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the organisational embedding of internationalisation<sup>18</sup>**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=50-68)

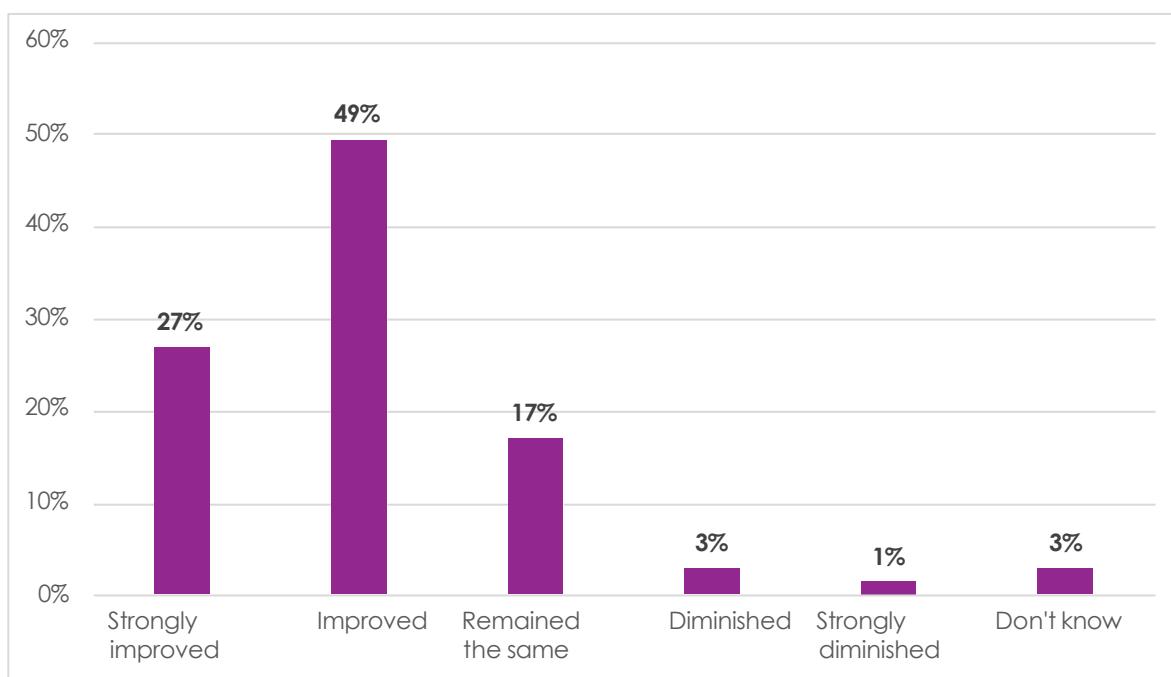
<sup>17</sup> For legibility's sake, only those respondents who either agreed or fully agreed with the proposition were included. This means that the remainder of the shown percentage either disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposition

<sup>18</sup> The group of respondents who said the question was not applicable was not included (defined as 'missing value').

Figure 3.2.1 shows that the impact of Erasmus+ lies primarily in the support for internationalisation of their professionals (94% of the respondents either agrees or fully agrees), the improvement of the administration of international projects (design, monitoring, evaluation, and learning) (85%) and the formulation of a vision on internationalisation in the organisation (82%). Furthermore, a majority say that more funds have become available for internationalisation in the organisation (74%) and there is greater support for internationalisation of volunteers among organisations that work with volunteers (68%). However, least experienced are improvements in HR policy for internationalisation (36%). This shows that the impact lies mostly in the internationalisation of professionals, administration of international projects, and the vision on internationalisation, and to a lesser extent in the structural financing of internationalisation activities and support for internationalisation in HR policy.

In order to provide more context regarding these results, the question was asked whether the organisational embedding of internationalisation had either improved over the past few years, remained the same, or diminished. Figure 3.2.2 below shows that a large majority of participating organisations feel that the organisational embedding has improved, some of them even see a strong improvement (27%). However, a number of the respondents state that the organisational embedding has remained the same (17%) or even diminished (1%). In the questionnaire these respondents provide no further clarification for these experienced results.

**Fig. 3.2.2 The extent to which the organisational embedding of internationalisation in organisations has either improved, remained the same, or diminished in the past years**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=71)

So, a large part of the respondents experiences an improvement in the embedding of internationalisation in their organisation. As indicated, this lies primarily in the increased attention for internationalisation in their activities. One example thereof is the Nieuwe Veste Breda, which further developed their internationalisation strategy as a result of their participation in Erasmus+, but also concluded agreements with the city council (their main subsidy provider) about their continued investment in internationalisation in the coming years

through participation in international projects. Internationalisation has also gained a permanent spot at HVO-Querido and Netwerkpro (see box below).

**Nieuwe Veste – Internationalisation has a place in the policy plan**

Nieuwe Veste is an organisation in the city of Breda that profiles itself with a socially active role in the fields of education, care, and welfare. The organisation, with about 220 staff, comprises the Bibliotheek Breda (Breda Library), the Centrum voor Kunsten (Centre for the Arts) and Cultuurwinkel Breda (Breda Culture Shop). The organisation wants to make a contribution to personal development and social functioning from their experience in the fields of language and creativity development. In two of their three Erasmus+ projects, the Nieuwe Veste cooperated with the provincial support institution Cubiss. The output of the cooperation was an essay and a dissemination event with partner organisations. The positive experiences with Erasmus+ participation have prompted Cubiss to internally train staff for the writing of Erasmus+ applications and the execution of projects. For Nieuwe Veste, this has meant that internationalisation was given a clear place in their policy plan in 2021. This means that in the coming years the Nieuwe Veste will cooperate with the city council to set up international projects.

**HVO-Querido – specific policy for internationalisation including an internationalisation project team**

HVO-Querido helps people regain and retain control over their lives after a period of disruption. They provide shelter, coaching, and day activities. HVO-Querido has around 1,400 employees and is primarily active in Amsterdam and its surrounding. It is one of the founders of the Housing First approach in the Netherlands, but also across Europe. Six years ago, they got into contact with Erasmus+ and since then have participated in multiple Erasmus+ projects. This coincided with the process of building a centre of expertise within the organisation of which the expansion of their European network formed an important aspect. They first submitted a KA1 application for staff mobility, followed by a KA2 application about loneliness among homeless people. They now hold an Erasmus+ accreditation for mobility and the objective is to send 40 staff abroad per year. In order to realise this goal, they now have a project team that works on internationalisation for a number of hours a week. There is increasing support for internationalisation in the organisation, and this year's goal is to draw up a project plan for international learning with dedicated means and activities, and to embed this in the organisation.

The responsible coordinator says that not everybody is engaged in internationalisation yet, but that those who participated in a mobility activity, later always want to contribute to internationalisation or even present their own ideas for an exchange. This year, they launched an internal open call, where staff can present their own ideas for projects. The organisation has stated they want a greater connection with internationalisation. A measuring rod has been created which the projects must comply with, in which the demands of Erasmus+ and the organisation's strategic goals have been integrated. As a result, staff from all levels of the organisation join working visits (directors, team managers, policy staff, coaches, but also clients). This has also contributed to better cooperation within the organisation – between different levels and teams – in an organisation that has seen substantial growth over the past years. Negative perceptions that working visits are actually pleasure trips (especially for directors) which come at the expense of the productivity of the organisation and its staff, are being countered with measuring rod reports on the intranet about the outcomes of the working visits and that these working visits are funded with

external money. The organisation has set to work with the toolbox “Embedding Internationalisation in Adult Education” in order to embed internationalisation in the organisation and strengthen the permanence of the international projects.

#### **Netwerkpro – internationalisation as part of vision**

Netwerkpro is an eight-year-old project organisation, established in Amsterdam. The organisation focuses on vulnerable (migrant) women and develops programmes that strengthen their position. The organisation comprises a permanent core team surrounded by a large network of professional trainers, coordinators, and volunteers. Staff who were interviewed said that the impact of Erasmus+ is mostly seen in the increase in professionalisation that Netwerkpro has realised. The Erasmus+ project ‘Trainers for the Future’ allowed the organisation to add an extra dimension to their methodology and train talents in and outside of the organisation, thereby enhancing the durability of their own and other organisations in an innovative way.

Internationalisation and professionalisation are always part and parcel of Netwerkpro's vision. Successful Erasmus+ projects have allowed Netwerkpro to create an international presence. The organisation is now active in 10 countries and employs international staff. *“Erasmus+ has opened the doors.”*

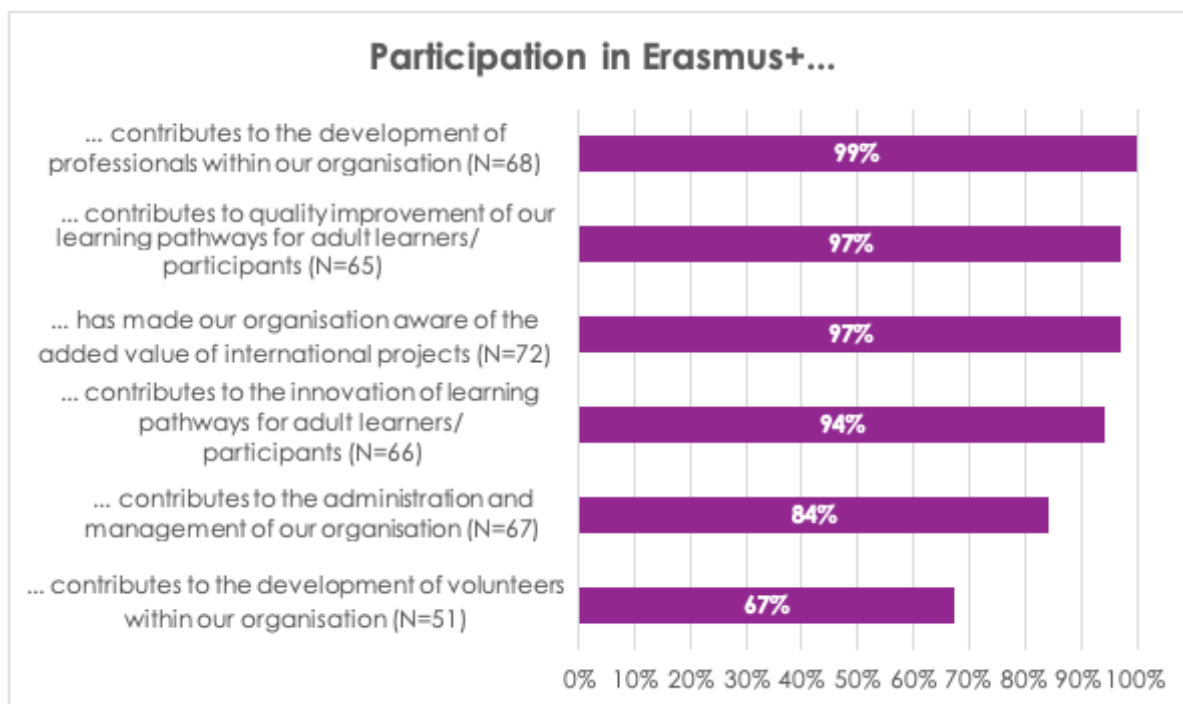
Source: Case Study participating AE organisations

### 3.3 Added value

The added value of Erasmus+ may vary among the AE institutions involved, also depending on the goals they seek to achieve with their Erasmus+ project or projects. Respondents were therefore asked how they view the contribution made by Erasmus+ on the different dimensions of their organisation with regard to people, management, learning pathways, and internationalisation (see figure 3.3.1). In the interest of legibility of the figure, only those respondents who agreed or fully agreed with the proposition were included. This implies that the remainder of the shown percentage did not agree with the proposition or had no opinion either way.



**Fig. 3.3.1 The extent to which the AE organisations experience an added value of their Erasmus+ participation on various dimensions (respondents who agree and fully agree)<sup>19</sup>**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=72)

A large majority of the respondents experience positive contributions to all dimensions as a result of participation in Erasmus+. A vast majority experience a contribution to the development of professionals (99%), the quality of learning pathways (97%), added value of internationalisation (97%) and innovation (94%). A smaller majority experience a positive contribution at the administrative and management level (84%) and among volunteers (67%). The above suggests that the impact is mainly on the programme and professionalisation level (new methodologies and tools) and to a lesser extent on administration and management.

The clarifications of the respondents (open question on added value) show that the added value lies mainly in the professionalisation of staff and the development of new programmes for their organisation and to a lesser extent at the administration and management level. The respondents say that they were particularly able to develop as professionals by learning from their colleagues and building an international network. The respondents also state that participation has contributed to the professionalisation of their staff by, for instance, by including internationalisation in their job responsibilities. In addition, internationalisation and the international community are seen as a valuable addition to their own organisation. It has, for instance, made the participating organisations more aware of developments in other countries and the differences and similarities within AE and thereby broadened their horizon. Many respondents also say that they gained concrete new insights by studying the approach of other European organisations and their offers to target groups. These insights and knowledge were then translated to their own practice (see box below with an example of a respondent in the questionnaire).

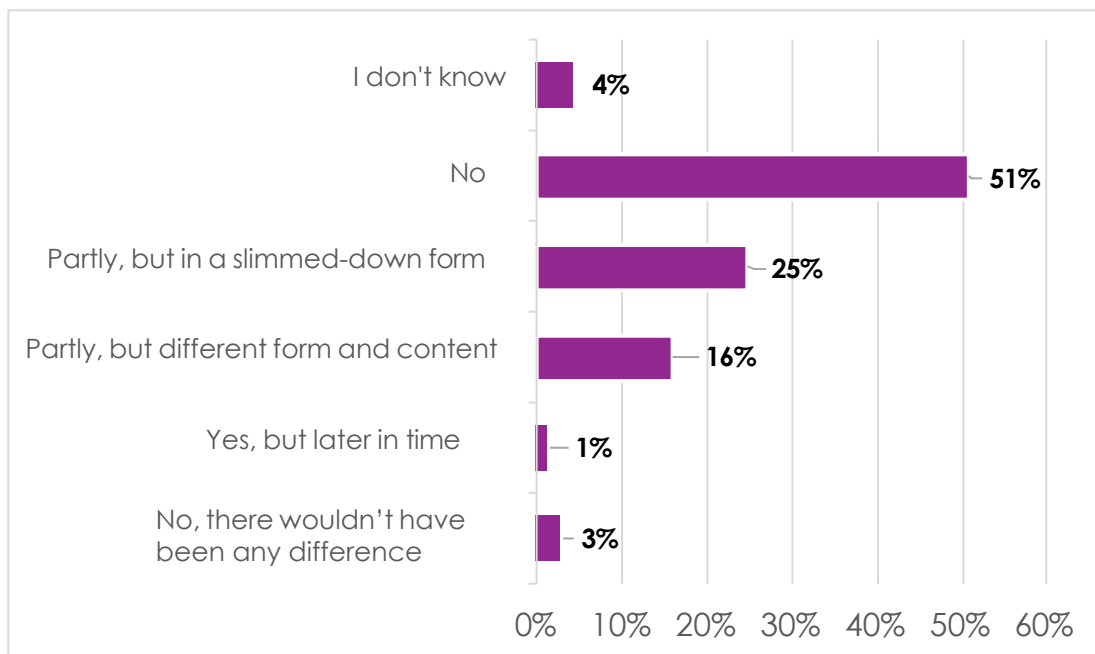
<sup>19</sup> The group of respondents who indicated that this question was 'not applicable' is not included herein (defined as 'missing value').

*"The visits have contributed to the professionalisation of teachers, in which the exchange of knowledge played an important role. Colleagues had an opportunity to look beyond their daily practice and gained a better perspective on how adult education is organised in other European countries. Teachers became more aware of differences and similarities between the Dutch education system and culture and those of other European countries. It made them aware of 'how things can be done differently', prompted greater reflection on their own (educational) practice and teaching methodology, and made them more open to 'the world outside their own school'. Clearly noticeable is that the colleagues involved are now exchanging more experiences. And of course, it is great that they included some of their new insights in their own teaching practice; which is sure to benefit the participants!"*

Source: online survey of participating VE organisations

To gain insight into the added value of Erasmus+, the question was also asked whether the activities would have been conducted in the same way without participation in Erasmus+ (see figure 3.3.2).

**Fig. 3.3.2 The extent to which activities would have been conducted in the same way without Erasmus+ participation**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N= 69)

Despite the risk of respondents giving socially desirable answers, half of the respondents (51%) say that the activities would not have been conducted at all, which proves the important added value of Erasmus+. However, a large number of the respondents (41%) say that the activities would partly have been conducted without Erasmus+, or in a slimmed down form, a different form, or with different content. A small group of the respondents states that the activities would have been conducted without Erasmus+ or in the same form at a later date. Despite a clear added value of Erasmus+, we can at the same time conclude that for nearly half the projects the activities would have partly been carried out by the organisation's own or other means. It is not known what other means these institutions would have used for this purpose.

## 4. Impact on the Quality of Learning Offer

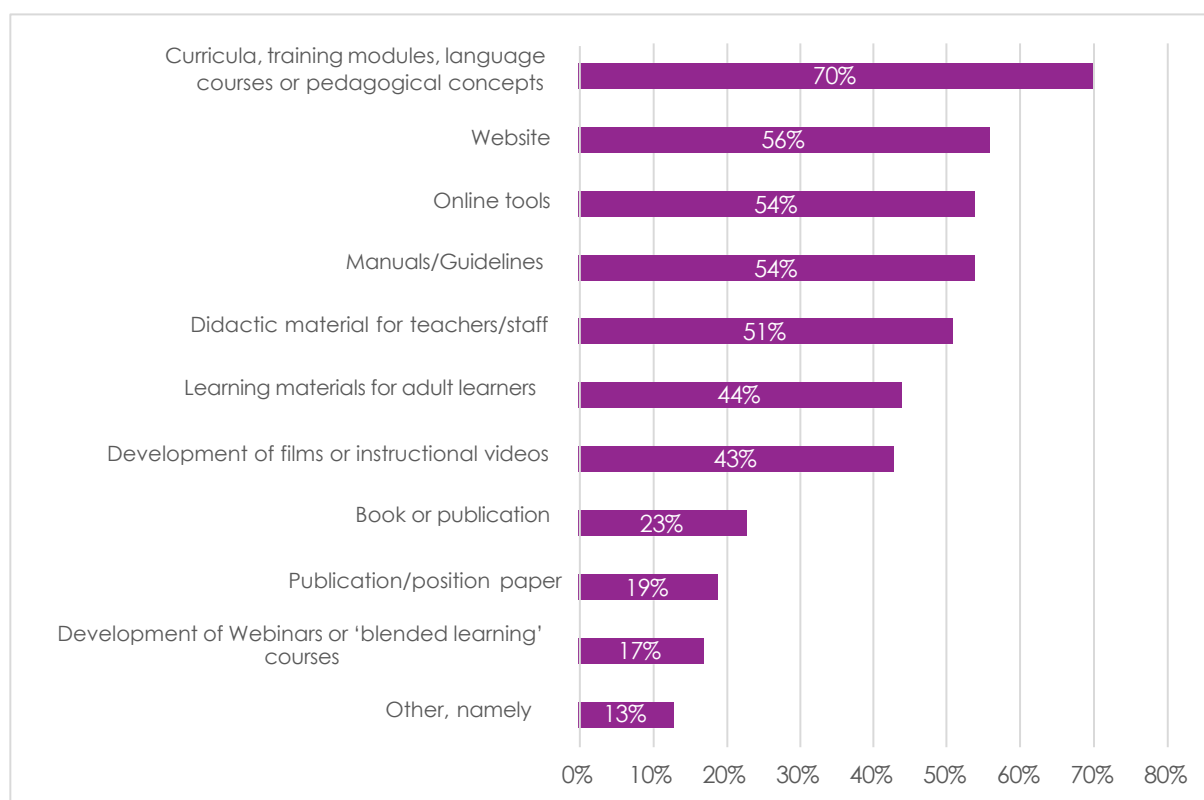
### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we look at the impact of Erasmus+ on the quality of the learning offers of the participating organisations. As organisations could conduct various activities and projects with the Erasmus+ subsidy, we first looked at the different types of products that were developed. Afterwards, we questioned what lasting impact results from Erasmus+ participation on, among other things, the learning offer after completion of one or more projects.

### 4.2 Type of Product developed

The impact of Erasmus+ on participating AE institutions varies, depending, among other things, on the type of product – or products – developed within the framework of their Erasmus+ participation (see figure 4.2.1).

**Fig. 4.2.1 Type of product developed within framework of Erasmus+ participation**



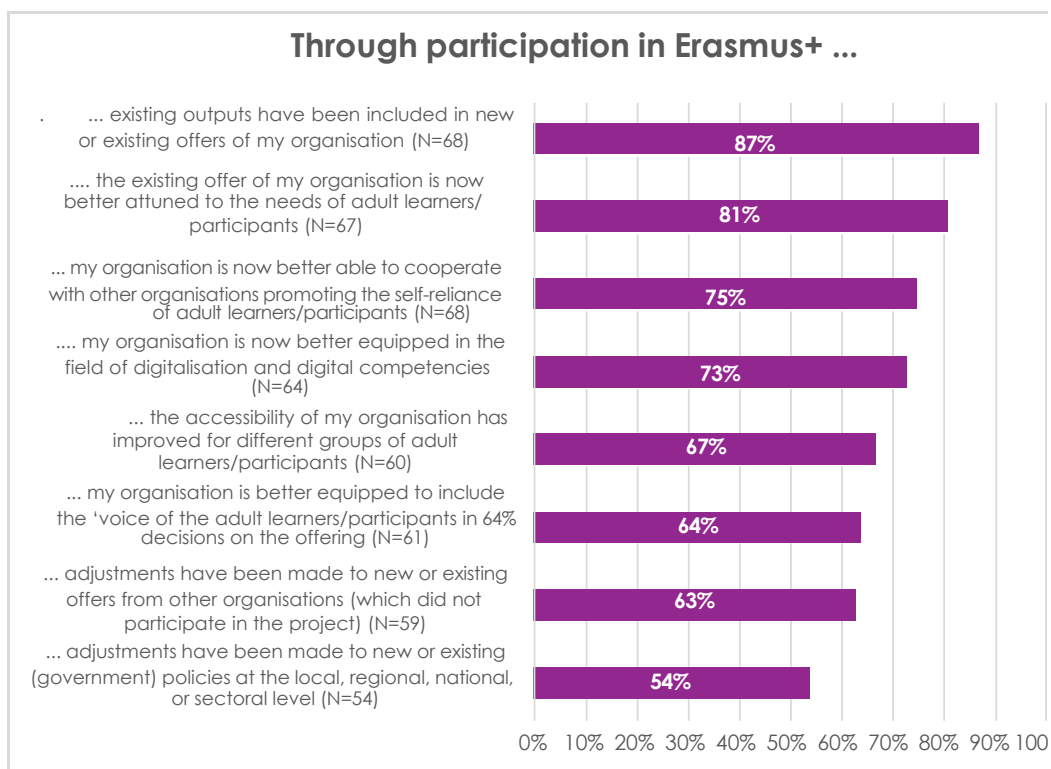
Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=71)

Figure 4.2.1 shows that nearly three quarters of the responding institutions choose development of products such as curricula, training modules, language courses, or pedagogical concepts (70%). Other often occurring products are a website (56%), an online tool (54%), a manual or guideline (54%), or didactic material for teachers or staff (51%). To a lesser degree were selected a book or publication (23%), a position paper (19%), or the development of webinars or 'blended learning' courses (17%). Supplementary categories named in the 'other, namely' category are software, an educational game, methodology, notes for influencing policy and inspiration for staff and volunteers.

### 4.3 Impact of Erasmus+ on the learning offer

To gain insight in the impact of Erasmus+ participation on the learning offer, various propositions were submitted to the applicants on the development of various aspects of their learning offers after participation in Erasmus+ (see figure 4.3.1). For greater legibility of the figures, only those respondents who either agreed or fully agreed with the proposition have been included. This means that the remainder of the percentage shown did either not agree with the proposition in question or had no opinion either way.

**Fig. 4.3.1 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the development of the learning offer (respondents who ‘agree’ and ‘fully agree’)<sup>20</sup>**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=71)

Figure 4.3.1 shows that a wide majority of the respondents (87%) say that the developed outputs have been included in their regular offers, which is a good outcome given the programme’s desire to further disseminate project outcomes and embed them in regular policy (‘mainstreaming’). One of the respondents says that:

*“Elements from training courses and exercises we developed in, for instance, the Sentyr, APEL and APPROACH projects, have been permanently integrated into the training courses we teach our participants”.*

*“Seeing the value of dual pathways has been converted to offering language internships and Language on the Shop Floor-pathways.”*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

<sup>20</sup> The group of respondents who indicated that this question was ‘not applicable’ has not been included (defined as missing value).

**City of Den Bosch – embedding the Move Beyond training course in the regular offer**

Within the Move Beyond-project, a training course was developed in which young adults learn to improve eight 21st century skills based on artistic, cultural, but also sports methods. It was precisely because of the use of artistic, cultural and sports activities that the attempts to reach young adults were successful. After this training course, their 21st century skills have been strengthened and they are able to enter the job market sooner. The most important part of the project is the training course for young adults. The young adults in the Dutch pilot executed by Weener XL from 's-Hertogenbosch receive benefits under the Participation Act. Some of them suffer from a mild intellectual disability and associated conditions and come to Weener XL from special or practical education. In addition, a number of them live in institutions and some face psychological or addiction issues such as drugs or gaming. The European partners have collectively developed a training manual in order to employ artistic, cultural or sports methods to make young adults work on their 21st century skills. To do this the right way, a trainer profile was developed in addition to a structure for the training course and a toolkit. After participation in a European train-the-trainer training course, two youth consultants got to work at Weener XL and taught the training course to the young adults.

Professional development of young adults is high on Weener XL's agenda. The organisation features a Weener Academy which seamlessly fits the Move Beyond offer and could therefore be integrated into the organisation. In addition, much attention was paid to which trainers were both able and willing to teach the training course. This ensured the participation of active and involved professionals who could teach the training course well. In addition, a safe learning environment was created, in which the interaction between artists and young adults could flourish and different disciplines be taught. This is a large part of the reason why it was a success with a 100% attendance of the young adults. Not many training courses achieve this level of attendance. Clearly a successful outcome for this project!

**ITTA and “Het Begint met Taal” (It Starts with Language) – VIME-model embedded in regular Policy**

The goal of the Erasmus + project on 'Volunteers in Migrant Language Education (VIME)' is to identify the different roles the volunteers play in teaching a second language to non-native speakers (NT2). Identification of these roles – and the corresponding competencies – contributes to an effective finetuning of individual teaching roles between professionals and volunteers. It was important for the Dutch context to improve this cooperation, especially because of the many budget cuts to the sector, as a result of which many professionals could no longer be paid, and the role of the volunteers kept growing. These problems continue to affect the sector today. It raises the question what the role of the volunteers vs the professional teacher is. The whole sector needed a framework to communicate the added value of the volunteers. A model was created within the project including a description of the roles and competencies of volunteers, screening tools, training modules for volunteers, and a model for policy development.

The interviews show that the VIME model is frequently used as a framework to clarify the relationship between the roles of professionals and volunteers (during presentations but also for training coordinators of the volunteers). The interviewed staff member of 'Het Begint met Taal' says that the model is used in nearly all of their activities (during presentations and training courses) and that hundreds of coordinators and partners have been reached this way. The training course for coordinators is taught four times a year to about 20 people. Reference is also made to the VIME- model in government policy, for instance, by the ministry

of Social Affairs and Employment which included the model in its guideline 'From Policy to Acquisition in Integration' (<https://www.pianoo.nl/nl/document/17635/handreiking-van-beleid-naar-inkoop-de-inburgering>). There is also an NT1-variant (for the group of adults who have Dutch as their native language) of the model, which is now integrated in the training of NT1 teachers (developed and offered by ITTA). In addition, the screening tool is used by network partners of Het Begint Met Taal. The Stichting Lezen en Schrijven (Reading and Writing Foundation) has also included the VIME- model in their basic training course for NT1. According to one of the interviewed staff members, it has contributed to a better understanding of the role of volunteers and thus to the way volunteers are perceived. One of the interviewed trainers phrased it like this: *"We are going to teach this training course today and we are going to give you words so you can properly tell your story to partners and local councils."*

**HVO-Querido – Lasting demand for loneliness training courses**

Within the KA2 project, HVO-Querido has focussed on the theme of loneliness among homeless people. The research conducted as part of the project showed that 95% of the target group was lonely, of which 50% seriously lonely. These figures played an important role in raising awareness of this problem. This was further translated into a training programme which has been included in the regular training offer. This training course is taught regularly by HVO-Querido across the country. There is also a guideline for colleagues called 'How do I address loneliness.' Their intention is to further explore the loneliness theme together with Erasmus+, through a greater focus on the prevention of loneliness, for which community living is a solution. To this end, they have applied for a small-scale partnership which they want to upgrade to a large-scale partnership application next year.

Source: Case study participating AE organisations

A wide majority (81%) also see a perceptible change in their own learning offer as it is better aligned with the needs of adult learners/participants. Two respondents have the following to say:

*"The training courses are offered in a bespoke format by means of intake interviews conducted beforehand via an assessment method. The training courses are evaluated, live at the location and afterwards online."*

*"The Erasmus-project has resulted in a beautiful contact with the young adults, which allowed me to make a proper assessment of their needs. I used these insights to launch a new project and want to start another innovative project in the near future."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

**Nieuwe Veste library – creativity as a basic skill**

The Nieuwe Veste cooperated with the provincial support body Cubiss in two of the three Erasmus+ projects that they organised. The first joint project of Cubiss and Nieuwe Veste was a KA1 project (2016-2017) in which Dutch professionals were job shadowing colleagues at international partners to gain knowledge in order to eventually develop an integrated approach for language houses in the Netherlands. The second project was a KA2 project (2017-2019) and a sequel to the first. This project was aimed at developing a toolkit for

language houses and the exchange of knowledge with international partners from five different European countries. Nieuwe Veste is the only project partner in the third project, in which they cooperate with three Belgian and one German partner. This KA2 project (2021-2023) is still ongoing and focuses on the use of a socio-artistic method to stimulate basic skills, connections, and self-expression.

The second KA2 project, 'Paving the Way for essential Skills Houses', focused on two tracks, namely creativity and work, for which networks were set up. Nieuwe Veste focused on the creativity theme. For this purpose, it sought cooperation with partners in the art and theatre sector, which resulted in new work forms and insights. In addition to stimulating language on the shop floor during this project (work track), acting was used to improve language skills among adults (creativity track). According to one of the project coordinators, many of the participants liked this format much better than a classroom setting, and their experiences formed the basis for an essay on strengthening language skills. Performing a scene, such as waiting in a waiting room, means you're actively engaging with language, and creates a safe practice atmosphere. It makes participants feel like human beings instead of 'the refugee.' The Nieuwe Veste also organises summer activities for participants in order to maintain their language skills, such as a city walk to meet people in a creative way and engage them in conversation ('Summer Language').

Through positioning creativity as a basis skill, Nieuwe Veste engenders a discussion among partner organisations. Nieuwe Veste's vision was eventually integrated in the policy plan, with which they have now defined creativity as a basic skill. Nieuwe Veste is in the vanguard of this development, but 'Theatre Language' has since been implemented in three other language houses in the region. Erasmus+ is regarded as a catalyst of processes and content and as a testing ground for the organisation, in which they were able to accelerate the development of their philosophy on creativity as a basic skill.

Source: Case study participating AE organisations

Furthermore, figure 4.3.1 shows that a majority see an improved cooperation with other organisations promoting the self-reliance of adult learners (75%).

**NEMO Science Museum –lasting cooperation with partner organisations**

The most important outcome for NEMO as an organisation is building a lasting cooperation with partner organisations, which would never have come about without Erasmus+. Through their cooperation with neighbourhood organisations (Vrouwen Vooruit (Women Onwards), Studiezalen (Reading Rooms) and Tinkersjop Curaçao), NEMO has gained experience in working with marginalised groups and there is now lasting interest for this hard-to-reach target group. NEMO's approach was to enter into a second-line cooperation with the neighbourhood organisations. In this way, NEMO contributes to a durable professionalisation of these organisations through knowledge sharing and expertise, so the impact continues to affect the chain cooperation after the conclusion of the project. Trust is essential for the target groups the project focuses on. It is known from experience that learning outcomes are bigger when the participants conduct a workshop with their assigned mentors, and the activity is actually connected to the target group's social environment. To this end, partnerships with intermediary organisations are crucial, in which staff are trained in the use of the Tinkering methodology. According to NEMO, it takes time and energy to build



the contacts with welfare organisations and you have to prove yourself before neighbourhood centres will accept you.

NEMO says it's a challenge to maintain these relationships even after a good relationship has been established and the idea of learning ecosystems been embraced by the organisation. It takes time and money which are not always available. Welfare organisations have insufficient means to purchase training courses. In addition, there is no room in NEMO's existing budgets for outreach activities. Without a project structure and external financing, the contact is therefore difficult to maintain, especially as both internally and externally there is no money for aspects falling outside of the regular activities. Another limiting factor to lasting cooperation is the limited size of welfare organisations who depend on just a few professionals and/or volunteers, and the level of turnover among staff and volunteers. It is essential for a lasting cooperation that knowledge is passed on and safeguarded.

However, NEMO will continue on the chosen path with the development of learning ecosystems in cooperation with local organisations. They have, for instance, now received budget from the province of Noord Holland to build a network in the province comprising four local ecosystems at neighbourhood level. The respondent says Erasmus+ has resulted in expertise on how to build such a network relationship, and they are now applying this expertise to other projects. Depending on the target groups and their preferences, activities are set up that align with the experiences and perceptions of the target groups, such as, for instance, migrant women engaged in artisanal weaving, where they next make the connection with science capital and gaining self-confidence.

**Netwerkpro – partnerships to strengthen the role as a knowledge institute**

The organisation now operates in a wider field. In addition to training (migrant) women, Netwerkpro now also focuses on training professionals and non-professionals, and on supporting the organisations in the network. In this way, Netwerkpro is also a knowledge institute in addition to being an executive body. This means Netwerkpro stays loyal to its mission to effect positive changes in communities and the society.

Source: Case study participating AE organisations

Organisations also see improvements in the field of digitalisation and digital competencies (73%). One of the respondents pointed to the Corona pandemic and the concomitant restrictions as the reason for an online version of their project. The extent to which accessibility has improved and the voice of the learner has been included scores lower but is still seen by slightly more than half of the institutions as an impact of participation in Erasmus+ (67% and 64% respectively).

**Netwerkpro – co-creation in the training course**

Within the Trainers for the Future project, there is room for input from participants, and co-creation by means of the Pillars of Power method provided room for dialogue between trainer and participant and increased the willingness to change.

**Stichting ABC (ABC Foundation) – the voice of the learner**

Stichting ABC is a volunteer organisation by and for low literates across the Netherlands which has existed for 25 years. The foundation fights for the interests of low-literate people, provides information, tests websites and texts for clear communication, and organises



meeting of language ambassadors to learn from each other. Stichting ABC has language ambassadors, hands-on experts, and test panel members; all of them low literates. Over the past few years, the foundation has executed the Erasmus+ project The Voice of the learner together with CINOP and Stichting Learn for Life. In a number of countries, it investigated how low literates are being reached, how their wishes are responded to, and how the relative policies and their execution have been given shape. This project is in keeping with the wish to broaden their service to include giving advice, so that hands-on experts become involved in the development of policy. The insights gained in Ireland, Wales, and Flanders will be included in the further professionalisation of the organisation. It is not yet clear how the results of the projects will be integrated into future activities. Stichting ABC is still studying the issue.

Source: Case study participating AE organisations

The impact of developed outputs on other organisations and policy is mentioned as outcome to a lesser extent but still named as impact by half of the respondents (63% and 45% respectively). Two respondents give as an example:

*“Setting up self-help groups of elderly people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods has been taken in hand by regular care and welfare organisations.”*

*“Our digital training course for the elderly has led to cooperation with local councils in other countries to make this possible there as well.”*

Source: Case study among participating AE organisations

**NEMO Science Museum – Use of the Tinkering method by other museums**

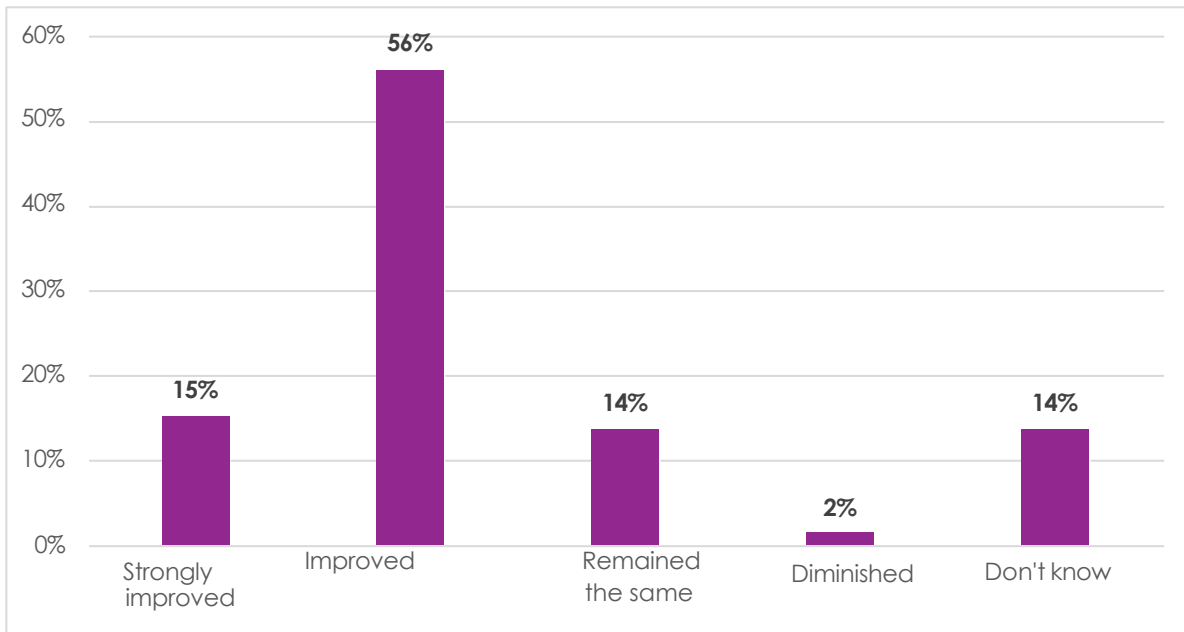
Other museums are now also adopting the Tinkering method developed with the assistance of Erasmus+. The international network of science museums meets annually at the Ecsite conference and nationally within the VSC network (sector organisation of science museums and science centres). The experiences with Tinkering were shared at these meetings. In the meantime, they also trained other museums in the use of the Tinkering method such as the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, the De Waag museum, but also the Amsterdam library.

Source: Case study participating AE organisations

The diversity of the work field, the nature of the developed outputs, and the mainstreaming potential of these outputs sometimes make it impossible to translate the results into general policy or other contexts. As a result, the impact of participation in Erasmus+ would appear to be limited to the immediate impact on the participating organisations and participants. This remains a point of concern as dissemination and mainstreaming of the Erasmus+ outcomes form an important part of the programme. Some of the respondents who were interviewed in the case studies therefore stated that the programme and the NA could offer greater support in the dissemination of developed products and the setting up of knowledge networks.

To gain even greater insight into the impact of Erasmus+, respondents were asked about the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the quality of learning pathways for adult learners/ participants, and whether this has improved, remained the same, or decreased (see figure 4.3.2).

**Fig. 4.3.2 Experienced impact of Erasmus+ on the quality of learning pathways after participation in one or more Erasmus+ projects**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=66)

The above figure shows that a majority of the participants experience an improvement in the quality of their learning pathways (71%) as a result of their participation in Erasmus+, a small number of them even see a substantial improvement (15%). A small group says it has remained the same (14%) or decreased (2%). The box below gives two examples of about the improvements to their learning pathways they experienced as a result of international cooperation.

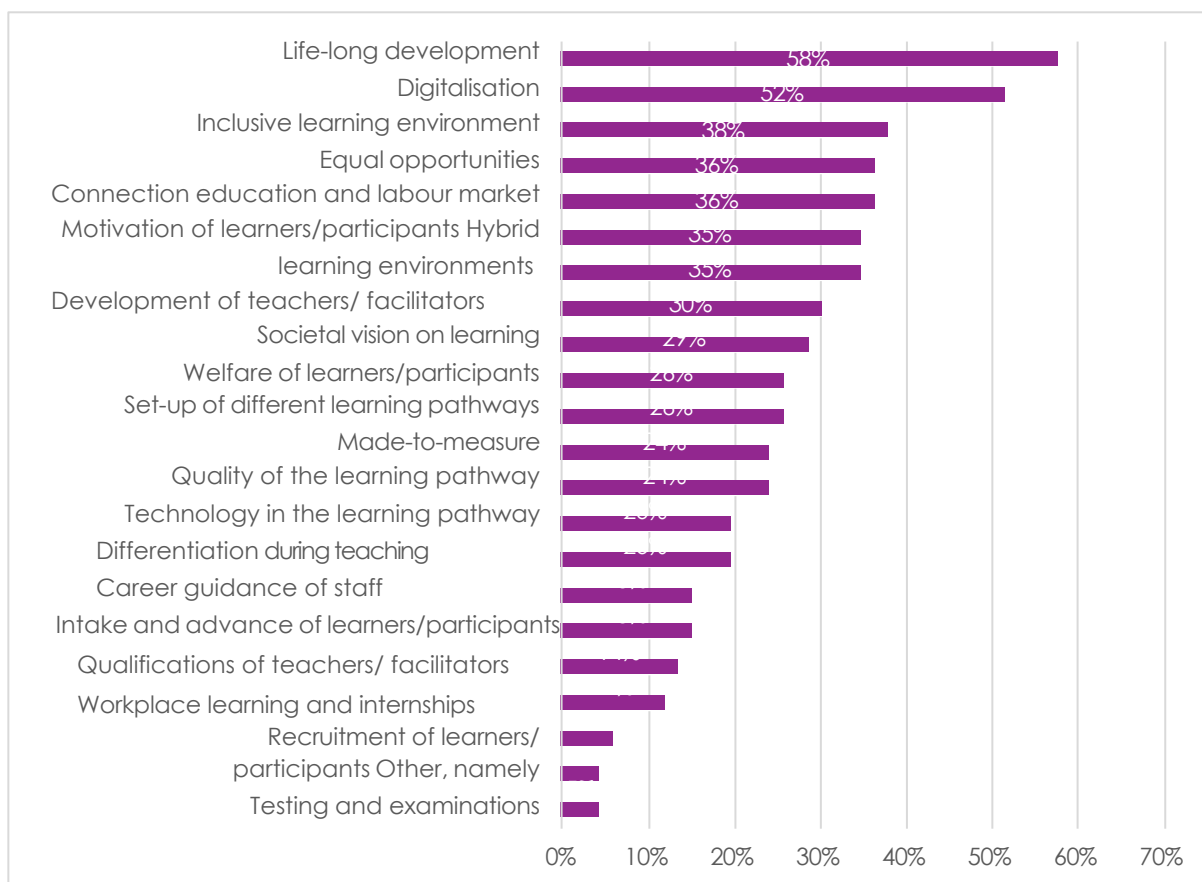
*“Our learning pathways have become more explicit because we examined and improved them within a European framework. The pairing with making learning results visible makes for better insight in the quality and applicability of a learning pathway.”*

*“Combining second language acquisition with (lots of) practice appears to yield good learning results as it stimulates language acquisition. Our school already offers similar pathways, but at a few partners has observed a more advanced form which is worth being explored and developed further.”*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

In addition to concretely embedding developed outputs in the regular learning offers, institutions were asked whether they paid any closer attention to one or multiple themes after their participation in Erasmus+ (see figure 4.3.2).

**Fig. 4.3.2 Themes to which institutions paid closer attention after participation in one or more Erasmus+ projects.**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=63)

The above figure shows that more than half of the respondents say that their organisation is now paying more attention to the theme of life-long development (58%), digitalisation (52%), and inclusion (38%) after Erasmus+ participation. The popularity of digitalisation, inclusion, and diversity themes is easily explained as they are two of the programme's four priorities<sup>21</sup>. To a lesser extent, more attention is being paid to the mentor and mentoring (30%), differentiation during mentoring (20%), and the qualifications of the learning pathway mentors (14%). Furthermore, few organisations pay more attention to workplace learning and internships (12%) and the recruitment of learners or participants (6%).

<sup>21</sup> Subsidy applications must contribute to one or more priorities of Erasmus+ 2021-2027: inclusion & diversity, digitalisation, participation, and Green Erasmus+ (sustainability, environment, and climate). See: <https://www.erasmusplus.nl/het-programma/prioriteiten>

## 5. Impact on Staff, Volunteers and Learners

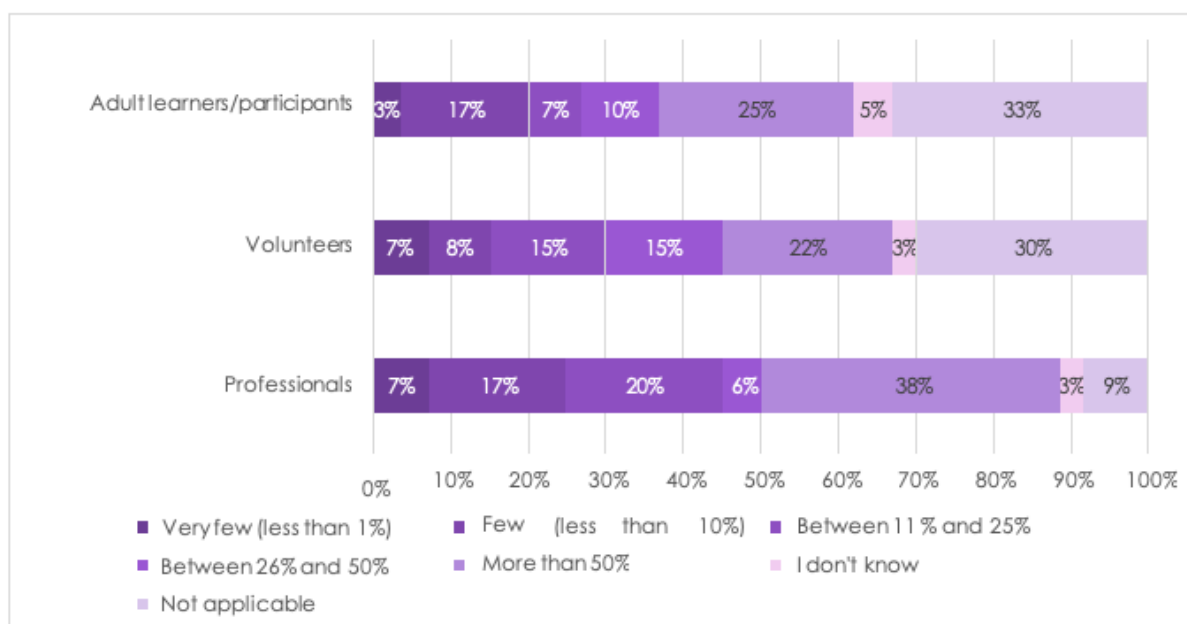
### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we look at the impact of Erasmus+ on the professionals, volunteers, and adult learners at the participating organisations. The questions concerning aspects of professionalisation include, among others, the mentoring of learners, identifying learning outcomes, and the level of attention paid to inclusion and diversity. The volunteer organisations were also asked these questions with regard to their volunteers. Finally, we looked at the impact of participation in Erasmus+ on adult learners/participants.

### 5.2 Involved Professionals, Volunteers and adult Learners

This paragraph comprises a description of the extent to which professionals, volunteers, and adult learners participate in Erasmus+ projects. For this purpose, respondents reported the percentage of the professionals, volunteers, and learners in their employ who participated in the most recently completed Erasmus+ project. They can be people directly involved in the development of intellectual output or mobility actions, but also persons engaged in testing of what has been developed with the assistance of Erasmus+ (such as a methodology or tool). Figure 5.2.1 below presents an overview of the different percentages and groups.

**Fig. 5.2.1 Percentage of professionals, volunteers, and participants involved in the most recently completed Erasmus+ project as a percentage of the whole of the institution**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=60)

The above figure shows that more than a third of the respondents (38%) state that more than half of their professionals participated in the most recent Erasmus+ project. This means that colleagues are often included in or reached by Erasmus+ projects. This is a substantial reach; however, these results must also be seen in light of the fact that AE institutions are often small-scale organisations which employ only a limited number of professionals, as a result of which the majority of the professionals are often involved in the Erasmus+ project. The average number of professionals employed by the participating organisations who filled in the

questionnaire is 197<sup>22</sup> and the figure for organisations working with volunteers is 51 on average. With regard to the involvement of volunteers, nearly a quarter of the respondents (22%) say that more than half of them were involved in the most recent project.

As to learners, a quarter of the respondents (25%) state that more than half of the learners participated in the Erasmus+ project. A relatively high percentage indicate that the involvement of adult learners did not apply to them (33%).

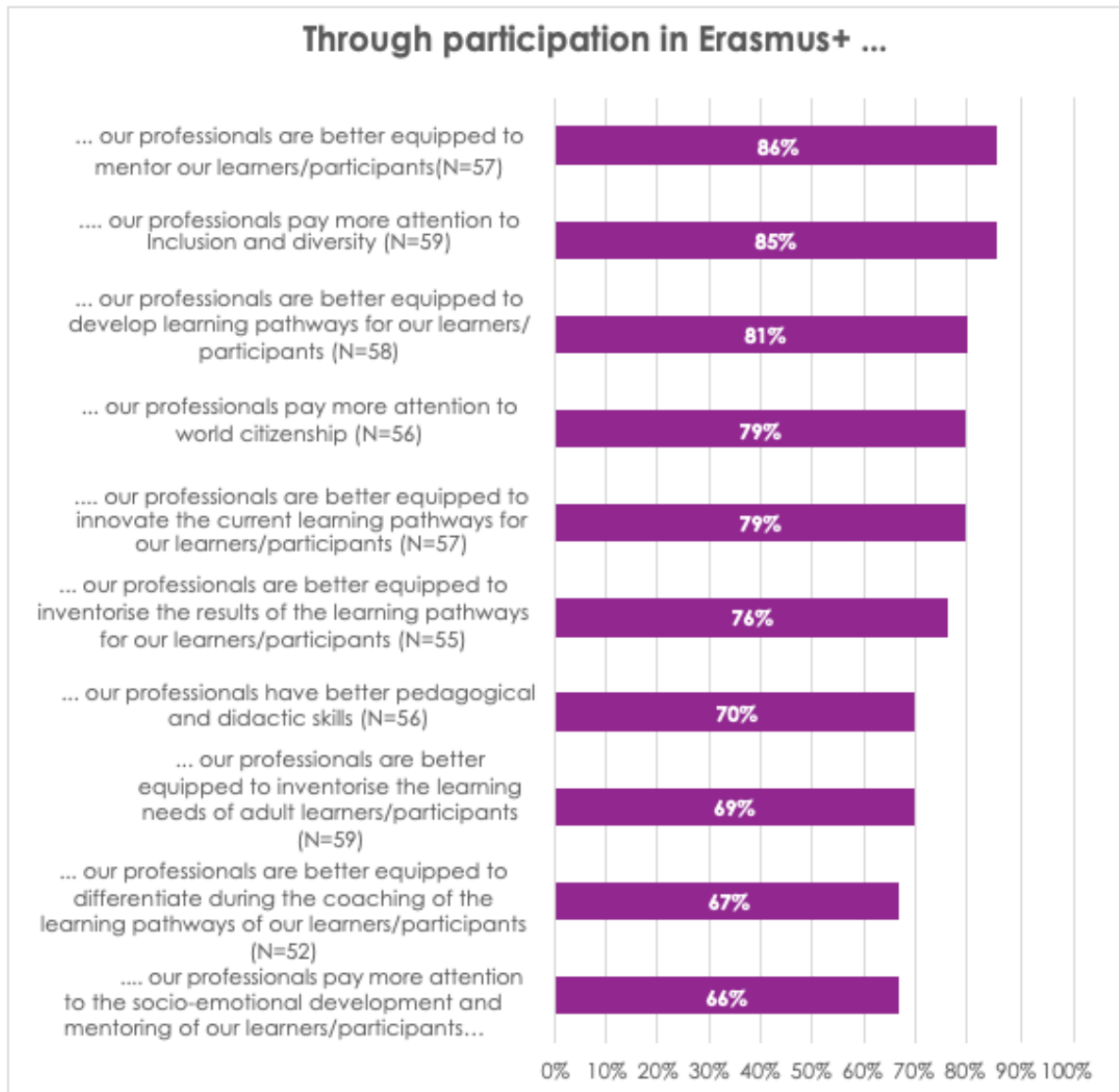
### 5.3 Impact on Professionals

In order to identify the impact of Erasmus+ participation on professionals, AE organisations were asked to give their opinion on the impact of Erasmus+ on the various aspects of the professionals in their employ (see figure 5.3.1).

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<sup>22</sup> NB: an organisation with 15,000 staff and 450 volunteers was left out of this count because it was an outlier which would have had to strong an effect on the average.

**Fig. 5.3.1 The impact of participation in Erasmus+ on the professionalisation and development of professionals working at the participating organisations (respondents who ‘agreed’ and ‘fully agreed’)<sup>23</sup>**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=67)

The above figure shows that a majority of the respondents sees improvement for all the questioned impact dimensions after participation in Erasmus+. The most reported impact for professionals was experienced in improved mentoring (86%), greater attention for inclusion and diversity (85%) and the development of learning pathways (81%). Respondents gave various examples of professionals using new insights for the improvement of their working method (see box below).

*“What stood out during an exchange with a Scottish educational institution was the way in which they approached independent working. The colleagues took great interest in this way of working which has since been integrated into our own material. There is a proposal to also include this working method in the pathway plans created for each participant.”*

<sup>23</sup> The group of respondents who stated this question was not applicable were not included (defined as missing value).

*“A colleague was inspired by a programme for learners with moderate, serious, and multiple learning difficulties and is going to use it as a basis for a programme that can be used in the context of her own educational practice.”*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

Also, a wide majority of the participating organisations report that professionals are paying more attention to world citizenship (79%). This is a dimension to which Erasmus+ projects can make a specific contribution due to their international character regarding cooperation and target groups.

Other impact on dimensions is less frequently mentioned, but still by a majority of the participating organisations, such as an improvement in the pedagogical and didactic skills of professionals (70%), identifying learning needs (69%), differentiation of learning pathways during mentoring (67%), and attention for socio-emotional development during mentoring (66%).

**NetwerkPro – personal creative strength as a starting point**

The trainers say that participation in the Erasmus+ project ‘Trainers for the Future (TvT)’ has had a positive impact on their working method, which now better matches the needs of the target group. The pathway, which had a strong focus on didactic skills, differentiation during coaching, and the personal development of the participants, utilized the Pillars of Power method. One of the trainers who was interviewed said that after participation in the project she is now better equipped to search for someone’s personal creative power and to activate and strengthen the target group. In addition, she has personally become more open and curious. As a professional, she is now more aware of internal prejudices and perspectives.

**NEMO Science Museum – cooperative skills**

The most important lessons for NEMO staff are related to the cooperation with new project partners and network relations. Staff involved in the cooperation found it really educational to do co-creation with another organisation than a school. For instance, the Tinker weaving workshop organised by ‘Vrouwen Vooruit’ (Women Onwards) which dovetailed with the social environment of migrant participants. Until this project, NEMO had only used the Tinkering method for activities involving children, and the Education department had little experience with the adult target group. The staff involved also said that establishing new cooperative relationships takes much time, sometimes requiring honest and difficult conversations. As an outsider, you need an open attitude to gain the trust of neighbourhood organisations and to really listen to their needs and those of the participants. And you have to take into account the limited budget and capacity of the

neighbourhood organisations to organise such activities. There is also impact on the participants who are now using the Tinkering method in their own context. A number of pedagogical staff who followed the digital Tinker workshop, have their own day care centres where Tinker activities are now part of the daytime activities. The Tinkering methodology is reportedly now also being used in the education of socio-pedagogical workers in Curaçao.

**City of Den Bosch – Improved work experience and cooperation**

The responsible manager says the project has resulted in something good: *“The energy and new ideas that came about in addition to the eventual product have affected the team. There is now an eagerness among the executive youth consultants, and also because of the enthusiasm among the participating young adults, people on the shop floor are now asking when the next training course is being organised.”* There is now an awareness within the organisation, but according to one of the professionals involved there also has been a change in the organisation: *“People are talking to each other more:*

*we have thick walls, but now they have doors in them.”*

**HVO-Querido – growing awareness of the added value of internationalisation**

The impact of mobility on staff lies primarily in a greater awareness of their own context and actions. Staff may realise that things are well organised within their organisation and the Netherlands as a whole, and that they are already acting appropriately actions.

Examples from other countries, such as about community living in Norway and Finland, reappear in training courses on this subject. One of the project coordinators says, for example, that the concept has already been developed much further in Norway, while interesting practical examples were collected in North Macedonia, for instance, with regard to a type of online marketplace specifically designed for their target group (via the website, for instance, people can donate money to someone who has an unpaid energy bill or donate a fridge).

One of the staff who participated in the working visit to North Macedonia was greatly impressed with the fact that despite a lack of policy for homeless people, a small foundation has been able to accomplish much through great determination and creativity, in which the end goal takes centre stage, such as acquiring a house for a client. It made the staff member realise that despite the fact that the Netherlands has a good shelter system in place, it can also function as an impediment to finding creative solutions and making exceptions. He took his findings with him to the Netherlands to initiate a conversation when the system works against his client. *“I no longer took no for an answer from the housing associations.” “It has served to empower me in my work).”*

The staff member says that there is an awareness of internationalisation within the organisation. He now regularly gets emails from colleagues in other departments who want information on his experiences during the working visit. He has now also submitted a proposal himself for a working visit to Poland with a group of LGBTQ+ staff, as he believes this group still experiences much negativity in shelters. According to him, Erasmus+ enables the organisation to gain new ideas abroad. He says that management too sees the positive influence of these working visits. It also leads to new approaches in the organisation, such as acting on the wish to hire more people from a health care background, or hands-on experts in every team. That is because he has seen that it works well abroad: *“In North Macedonia they also work with a small team including a lawyer, a hands-on expert, and a social worker”.*

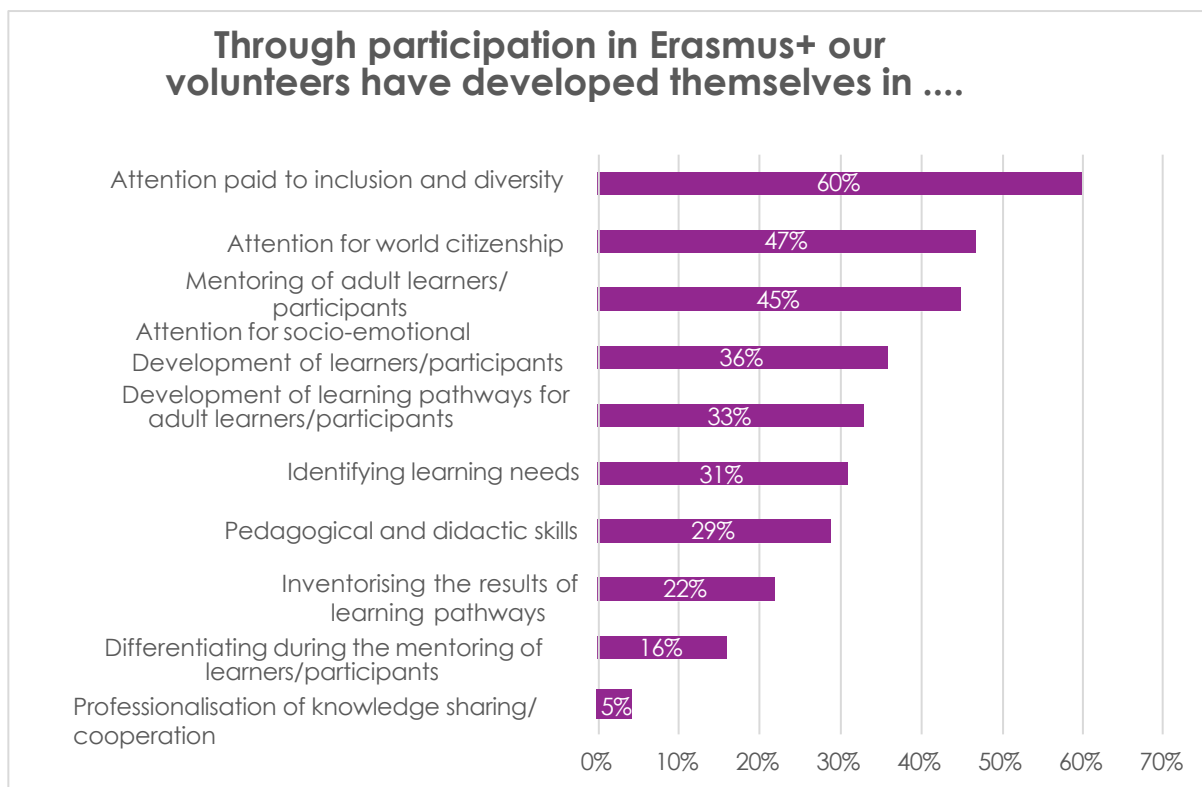
Source: Case studies participating AE organisations



### 5.4 Impact on Volunteers

In addition to professionals, Erasmus+ also has impact on volunteers working for participating AE organisations. Figure 5.4.1 presents an overview of impact areas in which responding AE institutions see improvement among the volunteers working for their organisation.

**Fig. 5.4.1 The impact of Erasmus+ participation on volunteers at the participating organisations**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=55)

The above figure 5.4.1 shows that, just like with the professionals, the most impact on volunteers is experienced in the field of attention for inclusion and diversity (60% of responding organisations), attention for world citizenship (47%), and the mentoring of adult learners (47%). To a lesser extent, respondents experience improvements in the mentoring of adult learners/participants (45%), the socio-emotional development of learners (36%), and the development of learning pathways for adult learners (33%). The least often reported is impact on identifying the results of learning pathways (22%), differentiating during mentoring of learners (16%), and the professionalisation through knowledge sharing/cooperation (5%).

**New Women Connectors – team building and greater involvement of volunteers**

New Women Connectors (NWC) was established in 2019 as a non-profit organisation led by migrant and refugee women. It is a volunteer organisation consisting of team members from different national, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, educational, and professional backgrounds. The platform offers refugees, migrants, undocumented, and stateless diaspora the means to identify their challenges, propose solutions, and become a ‘changemaker.’ The organisation strives to effect systemic change in policy and practice that ensure that communities with a migration background, specifically women, can fully exercise their rights to protection, services, and self-reliance.

Through Erasmus+, NWC has been able to work on their organisational development by means of the KA1 project New Competences to Act as Connectors and more recently the

ADVOC-ACT (Enabling newcomer citizens of Europe for direct participation), with the purpose of strengthening competencies of migrants and refugees as role models to represent their interests and facilitate change (agent of change) through training courses. These two projects have allowed NWC to reinforce the connection with their volunteers, but also contributed to organisation reinforcement and team building. For a long time, COVID-19 made it impossible to meet each other as an internationally operating team, and the trip to Rome (5-day training course) was therefore the first time they met. It has contributed to a better connection with volunteers, but also enabled them to work on their organisation's theory of change. This was the main benefit, as the training course in Rome did not fully live up to expectations (about learning techniques for non-formal education, but also to reinforce educational capabilities within their team). The most recent project ADVOC-ACT has contributed to reinforcing the volunteers' competencies. In addition, the volunteers who participated in the project feel more connected to the organisation and are more active in the network (during events but also on social media). The intention is to integrate the training course that has been developed into their regular offers to volunteers. They have also submitted a new application to Erasmus+ to finetune the training course, with storytelling as a tool to gain ownership of your own narrative.

One of the NWC volunteers (who lives in Denmark) who participated says that the training course in Rome has enabled her to meet the other volunteers and work as a team (also because most of the other volunteers live in the Netherlands). She met many of the volunteers for the first time during the training course. The trip to Rome also gave her much insight into the experiences of colleagues about their working methods and how this can strengthen the organisation. Also valuable was to see how Italian professionals and volunteers work and their attitude towards achieving results within the possibilities and limited financial means at their disposal (such as helping people find work). It is also interesting to see that many migrants/refugees are stopping over (Italy is not their final destination) whereas Denmark is seen as a final destination. She also appreciates that NWC made it possible for her (as a single mother) to have her child accompany her on the trip, even though the receiving organisation had not made all the necessary arrangements. The visit with her daughter has also empowered her because her daughter got to see her at work, view her as a role model, and that she is doing important work. Her mother as well got to see how she is acting as a role model because she supported her daughter on the trip by caring for her grandchild.

**Stichting ABC – Greater self-confidence**

Within the framework of the Erasmus+ exchange The Learners Voice, volunteers took part in a study trip to Ireland and Belgium. They are hands-on experts from Stichting ABC who overcame their low literacy. These language ambassadors say that the experience enriched them; one of the participants put it as follows: *“I came from nothing, and the participation strengthens you. To be allowed to say how you feel, think along, and to express your opinion means a lot to me and to us in general. It was like a party to me!*

*Before, I would sit in a corner quiet as a church mouse and now I can join the discussion and see how things are done over there.”* Volunteers have noticed that in other countries as well low literates have a voice in the design of the offering. *“I used to think that I was the only one who couldn't read or write, the language class made me realise that I wasn't the only one, and my work as language ambassador has taught me that there are many more in the Netherlands, and, because of our trip abroad, I realise that it's a global problem”.* During the

visit, language ambassadors went out with experts and policy makers, which took some of the language ambassadors some getting used to: *“At first, I had to feel my way, because I thought they knew it all and I was the only one who didn’t. Especially because they were speaking a different language. And then they explained that it’s not just us out there, and then after a few days there’s a whole different interaction. We were accepted for who we were and grew as a result. It is a growth process. It never goes away again.”*

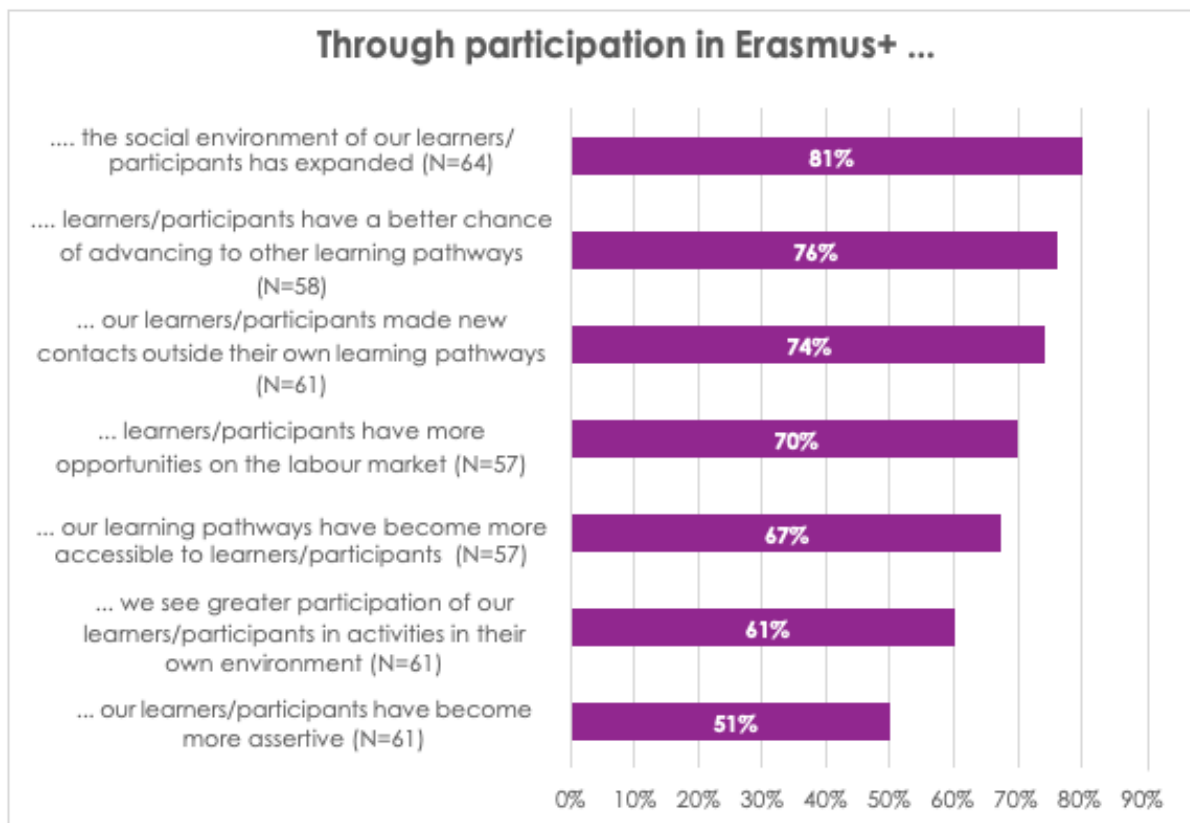
Another participating language ambassador said that the best moment of the working visit was to meet fellow ambassadors in a different country: *“We do not always understand each other, but it’s about what I radiate and what he radiates. That’s all we both need to know what we are talking about”*. He has learned that in Ireland low literates have a say in policy and that during meetings MPs are not superior to the target group but rather among them as equals. The participant said that there is a lot the Netherlands could learn from the Irish practice, which would require a change in attitude. *“These experiences help shape my role as ambassador but also in giving advice. Whenever necessary, I can now cite examples from other countries, and this strengthens my role as ambassador. The different international working visits I have been on with Stichting ABC have given me self- confidence. I was recently allowed to coordinate a working visit and select language ambassadors. You notice that three to four days on the road together gives people a boost in their self-confidence. This can be the result of little things, like travelling by plane or by train, or meeting ambassadors from other countries and communicating with them in another language. Some of them have never been to another country, for others it was years ago they last went abroad.”*

Source: Case studies participating AE organisations

## 5.5 Impact on Adult Learners/Participants

Eventually, the investment made with the assistance of Erasmus+ must benefit the adult learners/participants. A quality learning offer and professionalisation of staff makes the quality of learning - and the learning outcomes of learners - grow. Figure 5.5.1 below shows the percentage of AE organisations that see an improvement in the learners/participants involved on various dimensions.

**Figure. 5.5.1 Impact of participation in Erasmus+ on adult learners/participants (respondents who 'agree' and 'fully agree')**<sup>24</sup>



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=67)

The most often experienced impact that respondents see, is that participation in Erasmus+ has expanded the learners' social environment (81%), followed by better opportunities for advancement (76%), and new contacts outside their learning pathways (74%). Respondents also see that learners have better opportunities on the labour market (70%), and that other learning pathways of their organisation have become more accessible (67%). The least mentioned impact, but still by a majority of the participating organisations, is that learners participate more in activities in their own environment (61%) and have become more assertive (51%). Nevertheless, still more than half of the respondents say they experience this.

Examples given of the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners/participants include:

- The stimulation of **personal growth**. Prompted, for instance, by individual coaching, reflection, and generation of self-insights during projects and evaluations.

*"Participants say that because their social environment has expanded and they now have a buddy, the contacts that resulted from the project have greatly enriched them and they are now going to follow subsequent learning pathways via our organisation."*

*"We work with inmates a lot. The participants in our activities regularly say that our activities have given them better insight in their skills and qualities."*

<sup>24</sup> The group of respondents who said this question was not applicable to them has not been included here. (Defined as missing value).

*"We often encounter all of the propositions mentioned with regard to impact areas among our participants. We clearly see growth among the participants. There is also a higher degree of mutual involvement, as a result of which more help is offered from one learner to another."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

- The **development of skills and the acquisition of knowledge**. This can either be a by-product of project participation or the explicit goal thereof.

*"By going outside more, they are better able to fend for themselves and barriers are torn down."*

*"The participants are applying the exercises from the manuals and training courses we developed to their own work situation as well and are developing them further."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

- The development of **digital skills and vision**. This can be a by-product of the project participation or the explicit goal thereof.

*"Some participants have expanded their work field to include more digital working methods whereas others have maintained the trans-local contacts for further learning about nature and the ecology in different areas."*

*"For example, a 90-year-old computer illiterate/anti-digitalisation person now makes daily calls with one of their children via WhatsApp. Small benefit – big impact."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

- The acquisition of **knowledge of other countries and cultures**. This can, for instance, be the result of international cooperation or a foreign experience as a result of the project.

*"An older participant (SHARE) says they once again feel they matter. To be seen; engaging with other cultures is exactly what leads to greater connection and self-esteem."*

*"The fact that they could go on job-shadowing internships to another Erasmus+ partner in another country. Such a foreign experience is just as valuable to an adult learner as to a student."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

- The **advancement to the labour market or education**. This can be a by-product of the participation through other impact dimensions or the explicit goal of the project.

*"Participants tell us that they include their experiences in their CVs, employers take notice, and it helps them land the job. The same thing happens when they register for other programmes."*

*"Through developing a learning infrastructure, participants face a lower threshold and a wider choice."*

*"Advancing from NT2 to Entree and mbo 2 is a little easier."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

As stated in the methodological substantiation in paragraph 1.5, it was not possible to interview participants at the three AE institutions that successfully submitted a mobility application for adult learners. And yet, there are some experiences from the case studies and supplementary interviews regarding the impact of Erasmus+ on adult learners that we can share (see box below).

**HHVO-Querido – participation of a client in a working visit to Norway**

A client – resident of the shelter – joined a working visit to Norway as a hands-on expert. In the interview, the participant says he felt greatly honoured to be allowed to go on this trip, as the only client among a group of HVO-Querido staff. He was also the first client ever to be allowed to go on such a working visit abroad. At first, he thought he had done something wrong when he was invited for a brief conversation, but it turned out to be about a working visit to Norway. *“At first I was concerned: Am I going to be fun, am I going to be good company?” But they made me feel at ease, so I let go of that right away, was really treated like a VIP. It really helped to take part in the trip. One of the mentors was waiting for me at the airport. I had nothing to worry about, like getting lost or something like that. That’s important to me, I wasn’t treated like a client”.* The client took part in the programme: *“I actively participated, especially in the morning, which would surprise them, and they complimented me on that. So, I did not feel I was doing something wrong, but rather doing quite well and that was seen.”* The participant drew up a list of learning goals in advance and these were all achieved. He says that it was a fantastic experience for him: *“I haven’t been abroad at all for a very long time now. We had to be at Schiphol airport four hours in advance and go buy Norwegian crowns. It was really outside the box for me.”* He received a certificate after completing of the working visit: *“I also got a diploma there and I still have that certificate. Am really proud of that, that I really completed something. I also have this foreign experience on my CV and will also put it in my LinkedIn profile.”* *“The whole trip has given me a boost.”* His housemates have noticed as well. They come to him with questions which has given him self-confidence and a network. He now has the confidence to speak and share his experience: *“Those untold stories, they are just so important. I just did it, I’m no longer scared of the consequences”.* The participant has received an offer from HVO Querido to support people as a hands-on expert and help out at the shelter on the basis of a volunteer contract. However, the participant has chosen to accept a job as a lab assistant: *‘eventually, my old internship company found me’: “We have a fulltime job for you.”*

**City of Den Bosch – self-confidence and career change**

Within the framework of the Move Beyond project, a participant says that the creative methods gave her an opportunity to look at her dream for the future of her work in a whole different way. It made her change course to a different sector, in which she eventually wants to work. So, it offered her a perspective: *“Initially I wanted to do something with animals, but now something in tourism; so, the training has made me think about the future.”* One of the trainers also sees that the self-confidence of the young adults has grown: *“One of the participants is now less shy and has come out of her shell, making it easier for her to say how she feels about things.”* But the learning process itself was also special. One of the trainers said the power resided in the group: *“It became clear during the cooperation that everybody in the group played their own specific role and eventually they started coaching each other and giving each other feedback.”* They also gave each other compliments at

the end of the training. According to one of the trainers one of the most beautiful moments of the training course. As a side-effect, some of the protocols and processes were broken. *"For instance, they approached the young adults via WhatsApp, but that did make them show up!"*

### **NetwerkPro – discovering own talents and role model**

The focus of Trainers voor de Toekomst (Trainers for the Future) was on mental health, attention for trauma processing, and empowerment. The first months of TvT focus on personal reflection, identity, and talents. Together, they form a basis and learning goals for completing the project.

One of the participants said that the training course helped her discover her talent for drawing, separate from her role as a mother. Her talent for drawing gives her pleasure and she now has more confidence in her own power, especially after she contributed to the design of the TvT manual (logo). Another participant already had experience with the administration of their own foundation but felt a need for greater self-confidence and professional growth. Participation in TvT gave her the space and means to reflect and further develop herself, enabling her to more easily let go of negative aspects and to open up. According to this participant, the growth as a professional is the main impact, as she has now accepted a job as project assessor, something she would not have dared do in the past.

After completion of the empowerment pathway, participants can manifest themselves as role models to reinforce their network. Participants can later play an active role in an organisation such as Netwerkpro, or in their own network. The two participants who were interviewed now teach paid training courses for Netwerkpro. One of them hopes that the success of the training course and her positive experience will make it possible to repeat TvT at a larger scale.

Source: Case studies participating AE organisations



## 6. Participation in Erasmus+ and experienced Obstacles

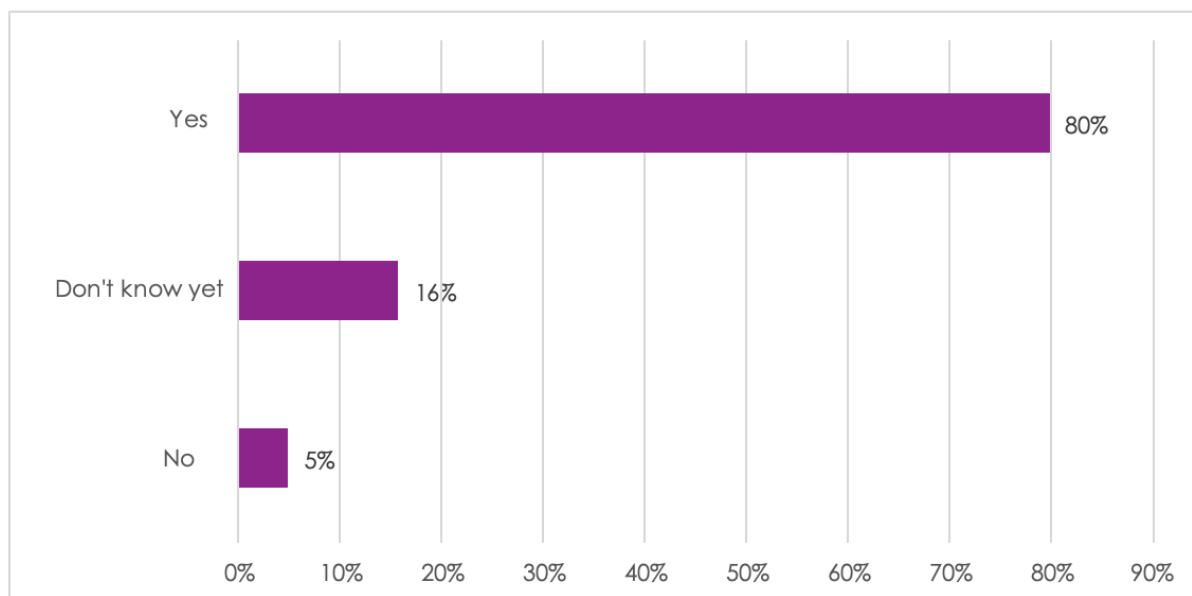
### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how AE organisations regard their own future willingness to participate in Erasmus+, and more specifically the mobility action for adult learners and the obstacles they encountered. When we talk about mobility obstacles, we refer to obstacles that limit the mobility of adult learners. They can be psychological, situational and/or institutional in nature (Cross, 1981)<sup>25</sup>. Psychological barriers involve attitudes and perceptions of the learners themselves, while situational barriers pertain to the life situations learners may find themselves in that can function as obstacles (such as the social and work context). Institutional context pertains to policy, laws and regulations that limit learners in their mobility (in- and outside of the programme).

### 6.2 Future Participation and experienced Mobility

Figure 6.2.1 below presents an overview of the willingness of AE organisations to submit an Erasmus+ application in the future.

**Fig.6.2.1 Willingness of organisations to submit an Erasmus+ application in the future**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=64)

Figure 6.2.1 shows that a vast majority says they are prepared to submit an application for Erasmus+ in the future (80%). Also, a small number of the respondents say they are not yet sure whether they would be willing to submit an application (16%). A minority state that they are not willing to submit an application for Erasmus+ in the future (5%). This suggests a stable group of return applicants who are partly dependent on Erasmus+ for their international activities. As stated earlier in chapter 2, the majority of the applicants have participated in multiple projects and say that the activities would not or only partly have been conducted without Erasmus+. At the same time, chapter 2 also concludes that up till now, not all stakeholders in the AE sector are participating, more specifically ROCs, language houses, and libraries. This is indicative of a group of programme insiders and outsiders, which immediately raises the question of how

<sup>25</sup> Cross, P. (1981). *Adults as Learners*. San Francisco, USA: Jossey-Bass.



better to reach the group of outsiders and mitigate the obstacles to their mobility that they experience.

### Mobility obstacles experienced by participating organisations

Despite the majority being willing to submit an application in future, AE institutions continue to experience specific obstacles to applying for an Erasmus+ subsidy. The obstacles mentioned most often in the online questionnaire are:

- The Submission of an application and completion of the project are experienced as a **major administrative burden**. The respondents say that writing an application is a complicated, bureaucratic affair that requires a substantial time investment by the organisation.

*"The administrative and financial burden; especially compared to Horizon Europe<sup>26</sup>."*

*"Our organisation is small, shrinking, and has too few people and facilities (finances) to be able to submit an application."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

- Participation in Erasmus+ constitutes a **financial burden and a risk for the organisation**. The possible outcome and reimbursement are not always sufficiently balanced with the required investment, and funding the co- and prefinancing can be a problem for small volunteer organisations.

*"The bureaucracy/time involved in the application and execution vs. the benefits. We are a foundation and receive no salary."*

*"KA2 has only a very limited possibility to claim the hours of professionals." Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

- **The responsibilities as coordinator**. The experiences with finding partners and driving cooperation for the application and execution of projects varies.

*"The administrative burden it entails, plus the responsibility for the contributions of project partners who gradually prove to be less active than hoped for."*

*"Varies per project: finding reliable partners with the same vision and willingness to invest takes time and requires a major investment prior to an E+ project."*

*"We participate in applications coordinated from other countries. We no longer participate as the Dutch coordinating partner due to our negative experiences with the evaluation of our project outcomes in the Netherlands."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

<sup>26</sup> Horizon Europe is the European Commission's programme created for the funding of research and innovation; the current programme runs from 2020 until 2027. See [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe\\_nl](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_nl)

In answering this question, a number of respondents said they experienced no obstacles or barriers whatsoever. Two respondents stated explicitly that they experience insufficient support from the NA and that this plays a role in their willingness to submit an Erasmus+ application. One respondent said, for example, that they found it difficult to find willing partner organisations in the Netherlands because they saw little Erasmus+ promotion from the NA. Another respondent experiences obstacles with regard to the national priorities and a negative attitude towards smaller organisation.

The supplementary interviews conducted during the case studies once again showed that organisations have problems finding dependable partners, especially in view of Erasmus+'s wish that new partners be involved for the stimulation of passing on good practices. Another example is that the organisation in hindsight was not satisfied with the training course offered by the receiving organisation (There had been no experiences with this organisation prior to the mobility).

The organisations also say that despite the added value of Erasmus+ for their organisation, there has been mounting pressure on air travel due to the green agenda, but also push-back from within the organisation as people are taken out of their primary work processes and the added value of foreign working visits is not sufficiently highlighted. One of the organisations says that despite Erasmus+ providing the means, it is still not always possible to fill the mobility spots. This may be due to the limited freedom staff are granted by their team managers, people getting cold feet, or staff fearing the judgment of their colleagues. Staff who were interviewed also said that people don't always have the possibility to go due to work pressure (partly due to shortages on the labour market or because the type of function they hold offers very little opportunity to go away for a few days): *"people who work on an ambulatory basis have greater control over their agenda"*. It also depends on their home situation, such as care obligations for children or others.

One of the respondents also said that the AE organisations in the Netherlands are still insufficiently aware of the added value of working internationally, such as, for instance, is the case in Spain where many organisations have an Erasmus+ accreditation and regularly send their staff abroad for a training course, including formal educational institutions, but also public job centres. There is also little room and willingness for the lasting integration of international exchange in educational programmes for adult learners (also because of the short duration of many programmes).

### **Mobility obstacles for organisations experienced by non-applicants**

In addition to the online questionnaire, interviews were also conducted among non-applicants to Erasmus+ projects. It became clear that the majority in this select group (of seven organisations) did not know about Erasmus+. At the organisations who were familiar with Erasmus+, people were slightly more familiar with the KA1 Staff mobility than KA2 Strategic Partnerships/Small Scale Partnerships and the KA1 Learners mobility (which is a new activity in the programme since 2021). Most of the respondents said they did not know about these actions (KA1 and KA2). Most of them also said they had never considered submitting an application.

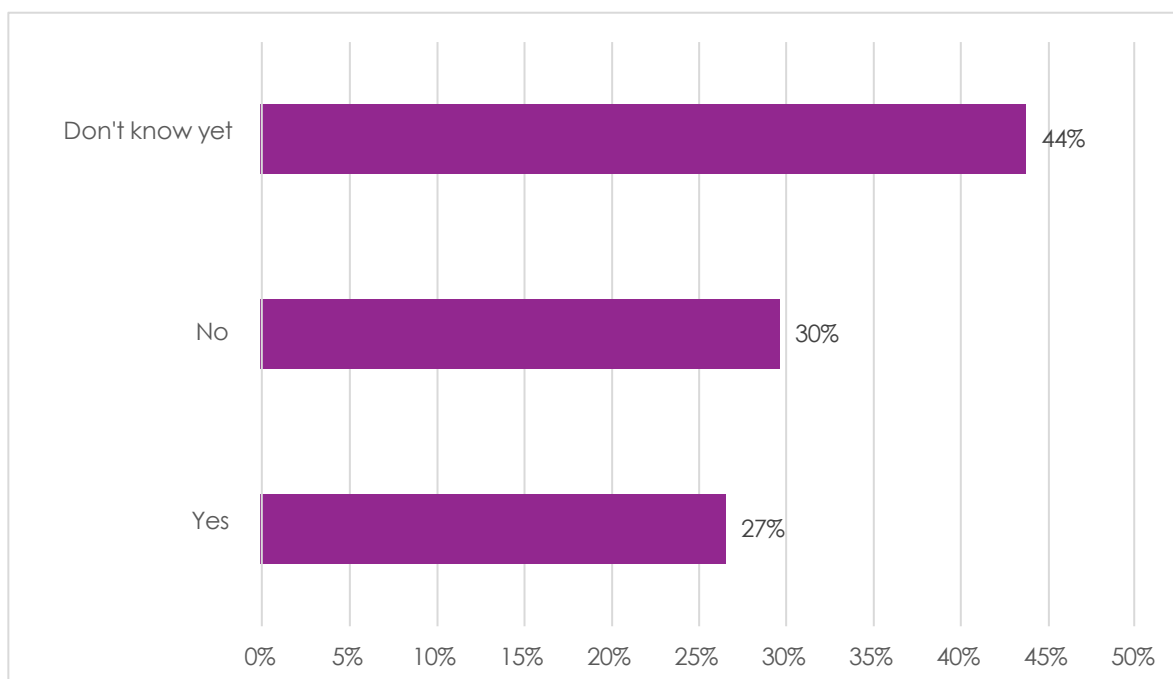
The obstacles to mobility for the organisations who did not submit an application are clear. First off, as stated above, people are unaware that the possibility exists and what its added value to their organisation would be. People also wonder what could concretely be achieved for their own organisation. Secondly, the respondents say they have no time. This reason is stated quite often. People are quite busy performing their regular duties and see little room to also submit an application. Finally, one or two people said they would face an administrative

burden if they were to submit an application. In comparison with the results of the online questionnaire (in which users of Erasmus+ were interviewed) it becomes clear that, in addition to providing support in dealing with the administrative burden, the added value of an Erasmus+ application for the organisation must be made clear sector-wide and how despite the pressure experienced on the shop floor this can result in a valuable service or product for the own organisation.

### 6.3 Future Willingness to participate in KA1 Mobility for adult Learners

For the first time, the current Erasmus+ programme offers the possibility to submit a mobility application for adult learners. Figure 6.3.1 below presents an overview of the willingness of organisations to submit an application for this mobility.

**Fig. 6.3.1 Organisations' willingness to submit an application for KA1 for adult learners**



Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations (N=64)

Figure 6.3.1 shows that slightly more than a quarter (27%) of the responding organisations says they are willing to submit an application, while nearly a third (30%) says they are not considering it. Most of the respondents say they don't know yet (44%).

The respondents who said they were not willing to submit an application for adult learners primarily gave practical reasons which impede participation in Erasmus+, such as not enough staff to facilitate the mobility of adult learners, and practical problems such as finding substitute teachers and rostering issues. For instance, one of the respondents said they have no time or space to execute an Erasmus+ project in addition to their daily duties:

*"The time available to colleagues to facilitate an exchange in addition to their 'regular work.' At the moment we are short staffed and dealing with many organisational changes, due, among other things, to a coming merger."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

Another aspect was that KA1 does not dovetail with the goals and/or capacity of the organisation very well.

*"We are too small an organisation to make a good pathway out of this."*

*"We don't quite know how to integrate adult mobility into our offer. For what goal and which learning outcomes?"*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

There is a small group that envisages a positive future participation. These respondents are positive about this action but say they don't yet have sufficient knowledge about this new possibility within the programme, or that they are dependent on partner organisations abroad. Another respondent said they are in fact engaged in a mobility for adult learners but are currently doing this via a different EU project.

*"We focus on the development of new resources/materials in the field of learning. We organise mobility of adult learners via the European Solidarity Corps."*

Source: Online questionnaire among participating AE organisations

In many cases, respondents who don't yet know whether they will participate say that up till now they have not been adequately informed about these possibilities within Erasmus+ and have insufficient information about this new possibility of the programme, the application procedure, and the conditions. The respondents also mention the same practical considerations, such as experiencing a heavy administrative burden, great financial risk, and a lack of capacity within their organisation. Potential applicants should therefore be better informed about the subsidy options for KA1 for adult learners and receive support in clearing practical obstacles.

**Supplementary interviews with regular applicants and non-applicants**

We conducted supplementary interviews with a select number of regular applicants, non-applicants, and a few hands-on experts who participated in a mobility action as part of a KA1 project for staff about possible obstacles to the participation of adult learners in a KA1 mobility.

The obstacles that were mentioned do not differ greatly from the points mentioned above. One or two people said that they had not investigated into the matter and that the possibilities are relatively unknown. However, the facilitators of adult learners in particular were somewhat reluctant. A number of facilitators feel that their group is a little too vulnerable. These adult learners have little travel experience, and it would probably take extensive support to ensure these people have a good trip. The greater stumbling block, however, would appear to be that a mobility would be impossible to combine with their private or work situation. It is clear that for some adult learners it is already a challenge to come to class because of their family or work situation. The question is then what the added value of an exchange would be if they had to make extensive arrangements for the home front. This would appear to be complicated in a number of cases.

Mobility obstacles are also experienced when the applicant decides to travel with groups facing psychological or addiction issues. This requires proper preparation and support during the visit. This demands much from people, including the realisation that mobilities are not for everyone. At the same time, respondents say that one should not assume too quickly that a mobility is not for some people (we should destigmatise).

It has been suggested that mobilities are more feasible for young adults in particular, as most of them do not have families and are less housebound. Central is in any case that the added value must be clear to the participants. 'What's in it for me?' is the guiding principle. This is why it's essential that the goal of the mobility and its embedding in regular activities are of great importance. Multiple respondents wonder, for instance, what the outcome of a visit abroad is supposed to be, what they are going to do there, and what they are going to learn apart from the foreign experience. The learning goal must be clear.

Some say that due to all kinds of practical thresholds it is already a huge investment just planning an excursion or outing with their target group in the Netherlands, such as combining work and care duties. According to them it is already a substantial investment for most of the participants to follow a learning pathway in the Netherlands, let alone having the time to travel: "we can't envisage going abroad with our learners. Too much hassle, even though Erasmus+ pays for everything.' Other practical problems are not having a visa to travel, or participants not being vaccinated against Covid-19.

Despite these objections, one or two of the non-applicants say that some adult learners could broaden their horizons and become inspired by participation in a KA1 project. It would take them out of their familiar surroundings, and they might find some inspiration for their own future lives.

#### 6.4 Mobility Obstacles experienced by Applicants KA1 Mobility for adultLearners

As indicated in the methodological substantiation, there are three accredited organisations that intend to organise mobility actions for adult learners in 2023. It is clear from the interviews conducted with two of these organisations that they are still busy with the preparations and no actual mobility has taken place as yet. In both cases no contact has yet been made with adult learners. One of the organisations says that, despite there not having been any contact with adult learners, they have established good contacts with partner organisations in which adult learners are active (a number of theatres working with the target group), but also with receiving organisations abroad through existing mobility projects involving staff and youth. The concrete elaboration and the bringing together of supply and demand is yet to take place. At the other applicant we interviewed, the possibility has not yet been discussed with the organisation expected to mobilise the adult learners (partners in their network). In this case, there has not yet been any contact with possible receiving partners abroad either. The focus with this applicant is on exploring the cooperation with these partners and the idea of having a group gain a learning experience abroad (with a group of Turkish women and a group of women who fled from Syria, Iraq, and Jordan, all of whom love to work with textile). At present, there is no notion either of where the mobility is headed in terms of its objective. There is a general idea to engage the group in conversation by means of textile, share experiences, and stimulate broader competencies among the target group. Textile allows the participants to keep their cultural heritage alive, but also to activate each other through sharing experiences. The concept is yet to be elaborated further.

The above examples make clear that the objective and execution of the mobility with adult learners will not yet have been elaborated at the time the budget application is made but is to take shape gradually. This elaboration is not a condition for organisations accredited for KA1, which are only obligated to state at the beginning of the year how many mobilities they expect to organise, so they can provide the detailed plans later ("We had the accreditation, but without an idea of with whom and how we would organise the mobility'). Given the challenges concerning mobilities with adult learners – and the vulnerable groups that many applicants

focus on – there is a certain risk that the mobility will eventually not go ahead. We know from experience that the first phase in which adult learners are to be mobilised takes much time. (reaching them, but also giving them the confidence to participate). Within the framework of this project, staff of one of the organisations described above followed a diversity training course to better reach the target group and make them feel welcome.

Both interviewed organisations see possible barriers to going abroad with adult learners. They see practical obstacles about how to manage care for their families, secure the commitment of the partners, work obligations, but also socio-psychological barriers. Much is still not clear at these organisations on how these obstacles will manifest themselves in practice, how they can be removed, and the possibilities within the programme to do this (such as funding childcare or supervision of children during the trip). In addition, capacity must exist at the partner organisations to facilitate this outward mobility and the receiving organisation abroad must be willing to cover the costs of the activities offered. A solution must also be found for possible language barriers (such as hiring an interpreter).

## 6.5 Supporting Factors

During the interviews, several factors were named that may contribute to reducing the obstacles for mobility.

- Respondents need greater support from the programme, such as, for instance a **guideline on mobility obstacles and good tips and practices for removing barriers for the target group**. This is primarily a matter of unfamiliarity about what can be funded through the programme, such as an interpreter, travel coaches, childcare, and more. This guideline could clearly distinguish three phases in which the obstacles present themselves, namely (1) the preparatory phase during which participants are mobilised; (2) the execution of the mobility; and (3) follow-up and after-care. The interviews make clear that it's primarily the first phase that is important, especially when the project focuses on vulnerable learners. It is here in particular that psychological barriers play a role in addition to situational ones. It would be helpful in this respect if the wishes/voice of the learner were included in the set-up and to hear what motivates and what impedes the person in question. To this end, a bond of trust must be created. Several respondents emphasize the importance of an interpreter, allowing participants to talk freely without feeling any impediments to expressing themselves.

*"For our trip to Ireland, we went by plane and had to be at Schiphol. That's where the problems start because this is difficult for a low-literate person. Fortunately, you're not alone there and you get help. You shouldn't be afraid, and you got to have that confidence. You manage okay on the train, or you travel together to Schiphol for a bit. But if I travel directly to Schiphol, I like to see someone with a flag who gives me the confidence that we are travelling together."*

- **Based on the experience with the current KA1 mobility projects for adult learners, more thought must be given in the application to what is to be achieved with the mobility for adult learners**, how to reach the target groups (among other things, via partner organisations), which programmes should be offered, and the role of receiving organisations. The interviews shows that this is still not always properly thought through in the applications.
- **The possibility of internationalisation for adult learners in existing AE programmes is still insufficiently embedded**. This requires a change in mindset, and to this end we should engage in constant dialogue. Good examples can support this effort. A first step could

be to link mobility for adult learners to existing KA2 projects in which new programmes are evaluated. This provides a framework to experiment with mobility within a clearly defined framework.

- **Better informing Dutch applicants about the possibilities of participation in foreign learning programmes (existing offer) and matching sending with receiving organisations.** The Erasmus+ programme already facilitates speed dates, but this can be intensified, including making the learning offer abroad transparent. This also includes clarifying how receiving organisations can be compensated for their contribution.
- **Facilitating an alternative programme for those who stay at home is mentioned as an option.** Respondents mention the problem that care duties at home form a serious obstacle to participation. One of the respondents named the three main barriers impeding mobility for migrant women: the language barrier, care duties at home (for instance, children), and the freedom to travel, i.e. the trust of their husband. A possible solution could be offering an alternative programme to those who stay at home (husband and children) and the applicant building trust between them and the participants.
- **Group mobility works better than individual mobility. This can remove doubt among participants.**



## 7 Conclusions and Points of special interest

### 7.1 Conclusions

#### **Conclusion 1: Erasmus+ is yet reach to all AE organisations and learners**

The study shows that Erasmus+ supports a wide variety of organisations. The business community (including consultancies) proves to be an important applicant, as are welfare institutions, cultural institutions, and foundations. Notable is that ROCs, other public and private educational institutions, language houses, and libraries participate in Erasmus+ to a lesser extent, despite their important role in the AE sector in the Netherlands. This raises the question whether the programme is reaching the right organisations that guide adult learners. Additional analyses of the names of the applicants in the project database shows that just over 20% of the applications are in direct contact with the adult learners. This means that the majority of the applicants have no direct contact with adult learners. These applicants include many umbrella organisations, foundations, consultancies, and research bureaus that find their way to the Erasmus+ programme and submit an application.

The study also shows that a wide majority of the applicants have executed multiple Erasmus+ projects. The majority of the participating organisations also say that they are willing to once again submit an application for Erasmus+ in the future, which will sustain the group of repeat users. This points to a group of programme insiders, which immediately raises the question of how to better reach the group of programme outsiders and mitigate the mobility obstacles they experience. These obstacles to participation in Erasmus+ are:

- Unfamiliarity with the possibilities of Erasmus+.
- Submitting an application and completing a project are experienced as a big administrative burden. Writing an application is regarded as complex, bureaucratic, and demanding a large time investment by the organisation, which it is unable to make.
- Participating in Erasmus+ is viewed as a financial burden and a risk for the organisation. The possible benefits and subsidy do not always balance out and the co- and prefinancing can be difficult to fund for small volunteer organisations.
- The responsibilities of the coordinator are often experienced as extensive. However, the experiences with regard to finding partners and boosting cooperation for the application and execution of projects vary.
- Resistance from within the organisation because people have less time for the primary work process when they participate in an Erasmus+ project.
- Doubts about the added value of internationalisation for the organisation.
- Support from the NA is experienced as insufficient, which plays a role in the willingness to submit an Erasmus+ application.

The programme appears to accommodate the wide diversity among adult learners and more in particular the vulnerable target groups.

#### **Conclusion 2: Organisational embedding of internationalisation has improved**

An important condition for internationalisation within AE is that internationalisation is organisationally embedded in the organisation. The study shows that the impact of Erasmus+ is primarily experienced in the internationalisation of staff, administration of international projects, the vision on internationalisation, and the structural financing thereof. The impact is experienced to a lesser extent in HR policy within the organisation. A large majority of the participating organisations do say that the organisational embedding has improved, while a smaller number of the respondents indicate that the organisational embedding has remained the same or has even decreased.



An overwhelming majority experience a positive contribution of Erasmus+ to the development of professionals, the quality of learning pathways, added value of internationalisation, and innovation. A narrow majority experience a positive contribution at the policy and management level and to volunteers. This indicates that the impact is primarily on the programme and professionalisation level (new methods and instruments) and to a lesser extent on policy and management.

Despite the risk that respondents might give a socially desirable answer, half of the respondents say that the activities would not have been carried at all without Erasmus+, while almost half indicate to implement the project in a slimmed down form, different form/ content, or later in time, which is proof of the important added value of Erasmus+ (while only a small group of 3% indicates that there wouldn't have been any difference).

### **Conclusion 3: Most developed outputs are mainstreamed in regular offer**

Nearly three quarters of the responding institutions have developed curricula, training modules, language courses, or pedagogical concepts with the assistance of Erasmus+. Other frequently occurring products are a website, an online tool, a handbook or guideline, or didactic material for teachers or staff. To a lesser degree, a book or publication, position paper, or the development of webinars or blended learning courses.

Most of the respondents say that the developed outputs have been included in their regular offer, which is a good outcome, given the programme's wish to further disseminate project outcomes and anchor them in regular policy (mainstreaming). A wide majority also see a measurable change in their own learning offer as a result of it being better aligned with the needs of adult learners/participants. In addition, the majority note an improved cooperation with other organisations promoting the self-reliance of adult learners, but also organisational improvements in the fields of digitalisation and digital competencies. The extent to which accessibility has improved (and the voice of the learner been included) scores lower, but still regarded as an impact of Erasmus+ participation by just over half of the institutions.

The impact of developed outputs on other organisations is, to a lesser degree, seen as an outcome, but still named by half of the respondents as impact. According to the respondents, the diversity of the working field, the nature of the developed intellectual outputs, and the mainstreaming potential of these outputs mean it is not always possible to translate results into general policy or other contexts. As a result, the participation of Erasmus+ would appear to be limited to the immediate impact on participating organisations and participants. As dissemination and mainstreaming of the outcomes are an important component of the Erasmus+ programme, this remains a point of special interest.

A large majority of the participants also experience a measurable improvement in the quality of their learning pathways as a result of Erasmus+, a small number of whom even see a strong improvement. However, a small group says the quality has remained the same or decreased. Additionally, more than half of the respondents say that after participation their organisation has more attention for the themes of life-long development, digitalisation, and inclusion, which is in accordance with the programme's four priorities<sup>27</sup>. To a lesser extent, more attention is being paid to the supervisor/ teacher and supervision of adult learners; think of the development of learning pathway of supervisors/ teachers, differentiation during teaching, and the qualifications and development of supervisors/ teachers. Also, few of the participating organisations have more attention for workplace learning, internships, and the recruitment of learners or participants. The latter is remarkable given the growing focus of policy on how better

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<sup>27</sup> Subsidy applications must contribute to one or more Erasmus+ priorities for 2021-2027: inclusion & diversity, digitalisation, participation, and Green Erasmus+ (sustainability, environment, and climate). See: <https://www.erasmusplus.nl/het-programma/prioriteiten>

to reach participants, (especially the NT1 target group) and so a point of special attention for future applications.

#### **Conclusion 4: Extensive reach among professionals with impact**

The study shows that over a third of the respondents say that more than half of the professionals in their employ participated in the most recent Erasmus+ project. This is a substantial reach, but on the other hand, these outcomes must also be viewed in light of the fact that AE institutions are often small-scale organisations with a limited number of professionals employed, which means that it does not take much for half of their professionals to be involved in the Erasmus+ project. With regard to learners, a quarter of the respondents say that more than half of the learners were engaged in the Erasmus+ project. A third say that the involvement of adult learners was not applicable to them.

The majority of the respondents also see improvement on all questioned impact dimensions after participation in Erasmus+. The most often reported impact on professionals was experienced in improved mentoring, more attention for inclusion and diversity, and the development of learning pathways. Also, a wide majority of the participating organisations report that professionals now have more attention for world citizenship. This is a dimension where Erasmus+ projects can make a specific contribution because of their international character in the field of cooperation and target groups. A large group also experiences, albeit to a lesser degree than for the dimensions above, an improvement of the pedagogical and didactic skills of professionals, the identification of learning needs, differentiation of learning pathways during teaching/ supervising, and attention for socio-emotional development during teaching/ learning.

In addition to professionals, Erasmus+ also has impact on the volunteers working for participating AE organisations. Just like with the professionals, the biggest impact is on the field of attention for inclusion and diversity, attention for world citizenship, and the facilitation of adult learners. To a lesser extent, the respondents experience improvements in the teaching of adult learners/participants, the socio-emotional development of learners, and the development of learning pathways for adult learners. Least often reported is impact on the identification of the results of learning pathways, differentiation during teaching of learners, and the professionalisation through knowledge sharing/cooperation. This is probably explained by the fact that the latter aspects often are not the activities left to the volunteers but rather carried out by the professionals.

#### **Conclusion 5: Improved Skills of adult Learners and social Activation**

The biggest impact on adult learners that the organisations see is that participation in Erasmus+ has expanded the learners' social environment, followed by better chances of advancement, and new contacts outside of their learning pathways. To a lesser degree, but still a majority, the respondents see that learners have better chances in the job market and that other learning pathways of their organisation have become more accessible. The least reported impact, but still by more than half the respondents, is that learners participate more in activities in their own environment and have become more assertive. Examples thereof are given in the interviews, such as stimulation of personal growth, development of skills, knowledge of other countries and cultures, and advancement to the labour market or education, which is proof of the important added value of Erasmus+.

## Conclusion 6: A difficult start for KA1 mobility for adult learners

More than a quarter of the responding organisations state they are willing to submit an application for adult learners, while nearly a third say they are not considering this. Nearly half of the respondents say they don't yet know. Mentioned barriers to participation are:

- As yet insufficient knowledge on this new possibility within KA1 for adult learners.
- A strong dependence on and unfamiliarity with receiving partner organisations abroad.
- Limited alignment of the mobility action for adult learners with the objectives of the own organisation and learning programmes.
- Doubts about the added value for adult learners.
- Practical considerations such as experiencing an administrative burden, financial risk, and a lack of capacity within their own organisation.
- Suppositions with regard to the group of adult learners, their vulnerability, and the level of support required, especially for the most vulnerable groups.
- Challenges to combine participation with the home or work situation (including care duties).

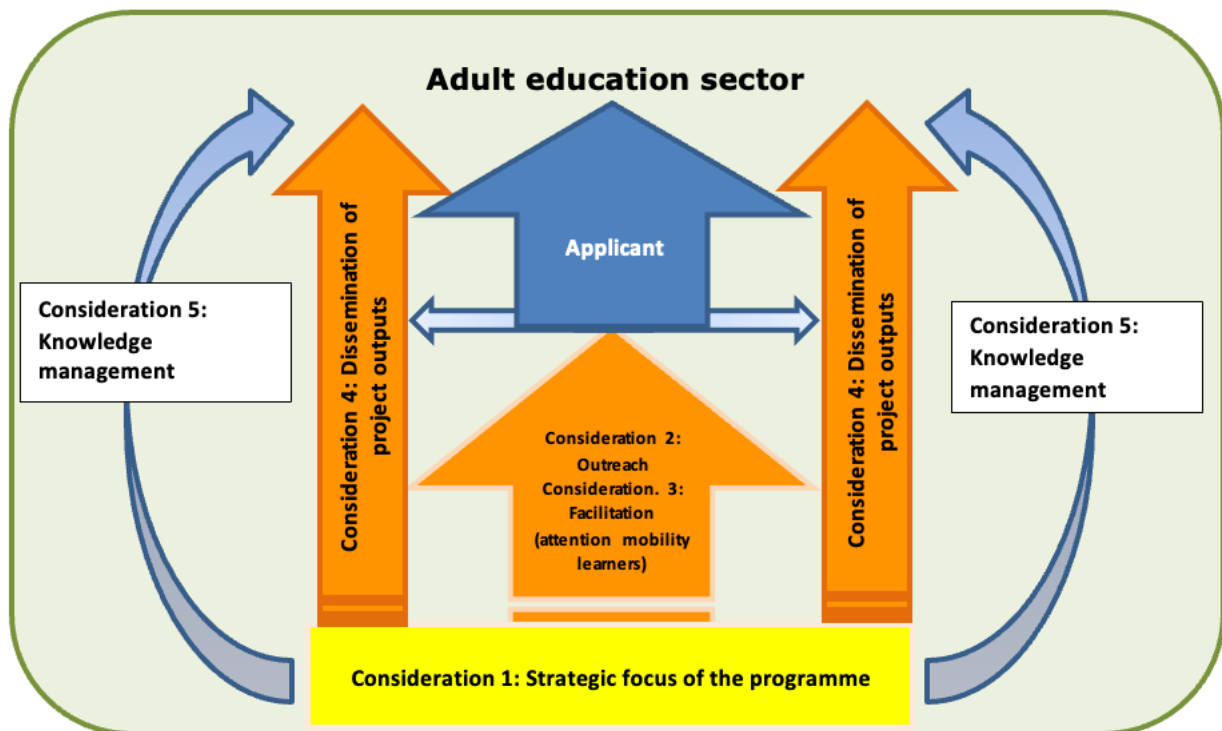
And yet, several respondents do see an added value for adult learners as participation might broaden their horizon and inspire them.

There are three accredited organisations intending to organise a mobility for adult learners in 2023. Interviews with two of these organisations shows they are still busy making preparations. In both these cases, no contact has yet been established with adult learners. Conversations we had make clear that the objective and execution of the adult learners mobility have not yet been elaborated but are to gradually take shape. Both the interviewed organisations see possible barriers to go abroad with adult learners, such as how to deal with care obligations towards their family, how to secure a commitment from their partner, work obligations, but also socio-psychological barriers. There is much as yet unclear within these organisations about how these barriers will manifest themselves in practice, how to remove them when they exist, and what possibilities exist within the programme (such as financing childcare or supervision of children during the trip). In addition, the partner organisations should have sufficient capacity to facilitate this outgoing mobility, as well as stimuli for the receiving organisations abroad to cover the costs of any activities offered. A solution must also be found for possible language barriers (interpreter).

## 7.2 Points of special interest

On the basis of the conclusion described above, we present below five points of special interest to render the programme more inclusive and impactful. Together, these points may provide the NA with guidance on how to increase the impact of the Erasmus+ programme for the adult education sector. Figure 7.2.1 show a possible future model for NA policy based on the five points of special interest resulting from the insights that resulted from the study. Here, the applicant takes centre stage. They are recruited through an outreaching strategy based on a possible strategic design of the programme, in which the NA provides inspiring content and facilitates the application whenever necessary and possible. A particularisation thereof is the facilitation of the mobility of adult learners. This requires additional attention given the results of the study. During the project, the NA can contribute to dissemination of the project outcomes and, additionally, on the basis of realised outputs and outcomes of the Erasmus+ projects, be in a position to inspire the adult education sector via active knowledge management.

Fig. 7.2.1 Overview of points of special interest to make the programme more inclusive and impactful



Source: the authors

**Point of special interest 1: Programme to be more strategically oriented**

Despite the fact that the power of the Erasmus+ programme lies in stimulating bottom-up initiatives and giving organisations scope to come up with relevant project proposals, it turns out that many similar initiatives are supported for comparable target groups with an overlap in type of output. This prompts the question whether the programme should approach this issue in a more strategic manner. A few considerations should be weighed in answering this question:

- o Consider how to better align Erasmus+ projects with national policy priorities. Identify what the sector needs and where therefore the focus should be on. This exploration could also be conducted in cooperation with the sector and Erasmus+ experts. A great example of a theme is the recruitment of NT1 learners, which is an important theme within the current Dutch policy, which as yet has only to a lesser degree been identified as an Erasmus+ impact area by participating organisations. Focus on these priorities during the initial information efforts, for instance, during theme-oriented preparatory meetings, to ensure a sufficient number of quality applicants are submitted.
- o Consider having experts give more weight to these national priorities in their assessment of the relevance and impact of project applications (assessment based on joint framework).
- o Look specifically at the additionality of applicants vs earlier Erasmus+ projects, and in so doing prevent reinventing the wheel time and again. This is also in line with point of special interest 4 to generate greater familiarity with the developed outputs, but also with point of special interest 5 on strengthening knowledge management at the NA.
- o Consider a joint assessment of project applications in a group of experts in order to arrive at a balanced judgment on which projects align most with the needs of the sector in the Netherlands, provided they are of sufficient quality (modelled on how the Flanders NA organises its project assessments).

### **Point of special Interest 2: Focus on outreach work and facilitate applicants**

There are already quite a few organisations that have found their way to the Dutch Erasmus+ programme. There exists, however, a large untapped potential of applicants. There are many organisations that are unacquainted with the programme and its added value. The NA should draw up a clear outreaching strategy and be persistent about it in order to eventually reach organisations who could benefit from this programme. In this respect, they could cooperate more intensively with umbrella organisations (for instance, those that ROCs, welfare institutions, and providers of non-formal and informal education are affiliated with). Together with these organisations one can reach the eventual providers. An important focus area is the institutions that are in direct contact with the adult learners and to provide them with concrete services (including learning pathways, coaching, training courses or mentoring). The eventual goal is to reach adult learners with the Erasmus+ programme and have the applicants develop innovative services for them that benefit the learners directly. These adult learners can be reached, among others, via ROCs, language houses, local councils, libraries, or welfare institutions.

In a second step, the NA should explain to the potential applicants quite concretely what the quick wins would be for them and what the eventual distinctiveness is, if they participate in an Erasmus+ project. Why should these organisations submit an application and how would they benefit? Does it strengthen their market position, will they attract more participants, is their educational quality going to increase, etc.. This must be clear when the organisations are approached.

In the final phase, it is desirable that the applicant is unburdened by the NA. The group of non-applicants struggle with the application. They find that writing the application is time consuming and in addition experience an administrative burden during and after completion of the project. The NA could play a support role in this regard and should accept its role as facilitator. Especially with those organisations that are first-time applicants. If a potentially good project is seen to come into being, it should be possible to fully or partly unburden the applicant.

### **Point of special Interest 3: Facilitate the mobility of adult Learners better**

Respondents need more support from the programme to facilitate KA1 mobilities for adult learners, such as by means of a guideline including an overview of mobility obstacles, tips, good practices to mitigate obstacles, and what the programme can do to help.

Applicants should think harder in advance about what they want to achieve with the mobility for adult learners, how to reach the target groups (among other things, via partner organisations), which programmes they want to offer, and what the role of the receiving organisations would be. In this respect, the NA can also better inform applicants about the possibilities of participation in foreign learning and teaching programmes (existing offer) and the matching of sending with receiving organisations. In addition, thought should be given to how better to facilitate the participant's families/loved ones who stay at home (e.g. providing an alternative programme for those who stay at home).

Another consideration is a better embedding of the mobility of adult learners in existing KA2 projects; to test the developed output (such as training courses or workshops) or make lasting use thereof in future through organising exchanges of adult learners between partners. These partnerships and the developed training courses provide a framework within which mobility of adult learners can be realised.

### **Point of special Interest 4: Support projects in the dissemination of outcomes**

Applicants experience difficulties in translating results into general policy or other contexts. This would appear to limit the participation of Erasmus+ to a direct impact on participating

organisation and participants. Because dissemination and mainstreaming of the outcomes of Erasmus+ form an important part of the programme, this remains a point of special interest. The participating organisations also expressed the wish to share more knowledge between projects, particularly between related projects. At the same time, organisations experience little room within the project to do this.

The programme and the NA could offer more support in the dissemination of developed products at the system level, but also in the exchange of knowledge between projects. This could be done by clustering related projects (for instance, on the basis of objective, target group, or methodology) and bundling them in thematic knowledge networks in which knowledge and experiences are exchanged. These knowledge networks can work together in the dissemination and mainstreaming of results and policy influencing. Such networks could be supported by a facilitator or ambassadors who can translate acquired insights into policy. In this regard, good results were obtained in a different European programme, namely the European Union's community initiative EQUAL (which ran between 2000 and 2007).<sup>28</sup> This would prevent projects working at cross purposes, but rather reinforce each other through exchanging knowledge and experiences and also bring about joint impact (for instance, in the field of empowerment of migrant women, which is the goal of many Erasmus+ projects in the field of AE). Joint dissemination events also come to mind (saves time too, as the same target groups are often defined as dissemination partner).

Also consider providing additional support to promising projects with their dissemination (like a two-stage rocket); within the possibilities of the Erasmus+ rules and regulations. A future Erasmus+ programme might also consider making a supplementary budget available to the most promising projects so they can further disseminate their outcomes (as applied in the ESF programme in Flanders within the social innovation theme).

Another consideration is that the NA seek a better connection with various knowledge platforms (EPALE; Expertisepunt Basisvaardigheden (Expertise Centre Basic Skills)) to put good projects and their outcomes in the spotlight.

### **Point of special Interest 5: Strengthen the programme's knowledge management**

This study represents a first step towards gaining better insight into the impact of the Erasmus+ programme on the AE sector. This study, and the points of special interest mentioned above, contribute to an improved knowledge management of the programme. The following points of special interest for the future could also be considered:

- Consider a more thematic layout of the impact measurement. This can be done by means of the thematic networks as described in point of special Interest 4.
- Consider introducing progress markers in future impact measurements so as to measure the progress in a number of dimensions, such as the Erasmus+ priorities (inclusion & diversity, digitalisation, participation, and Green Erasmus+).
- As NA, try to follow good practices for a few years with regard to their impact and create an image thereof.
- And finally, keep a file of which projects were executed on which themes and for which target groups in order to better identify the outcome of the programme for the Netherlands and what supplementary actions should be taken. Ensure that this analysis

<sup>28</sup> EQUAL focuses on projects that innovatively promote equal opportunities in the labour market. The ultimate goal of EQUAL is the mainstreaming of successful and transferable innovations. To support projects, National Thematic Networks have been set up that play an important role in vertical mainstreaming (towards policymakers and decision-makers in The Hague). Monitoronderzoek Mainstreaming EQUAL 2 Tweede interim-rapport Tussenmeting 2006 Eindrapport Een onderzoek in opdracht van het ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid P.M. de Klaver B. Buiskool, D.H. Grijpstra, Leiden, december 2006.

is repeated on a yearly basis with new projects and that this file is shared with Erasmus+ experts and potential applicants.



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