

# **Evaluation of the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ in Iceland**

**Conducted for the Ministry of Education and  
Children  
2024**



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## Contents

1	Executive Summary	1
1.1	Key Findings	1
1.2	Suggestions for Improvements	3
2	Erasmus+	5
2.1	Erasmus+ Priorities 2021-2027	5
2.2	Key Actions and Fields of the Erasmus+ Programme	5
2.3	Erasmus+ in Iceland	6
2.3.1	Erasmus+ Statistics for Iceland	6
3	Evaluation Methodology	8
3.1	Review of Documents and Data	9
3.2	In-depth Interviews	9
3.3	Focus Groups	10
3.4	Survey	11
4	Evaluation Criteria	13
4.1	Effectiveness	13
4.2	Efficiency	16
4.3	Relevance	19
4.4	Coherence	20
4.5	European Added Value	22
5	Results	24
6	Appendix	25
6.1	Appendix 1 – Report Questions	25
6.1.1	Effectiveness	25
6.1.2	Efficiency	26
6.1.3	Relevance	27
6.1.4	Coherence	28
6.1.5	European Added Value	29

# 1 Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation that has the aim to assess the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ in Iceland. It is based on information collected by document review, electronic survey, focus groups and interviews with individuals from The Icelandic Centre for Research and three different ministries involved in the programme, i.e., the Ministry of Education and Children, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation. In Iceland, the Erasmus+ National Agency for all sectors is hosted by The Icelandic Centre for Research (hereafter the Rannís). The evaluation emphasis for Iceland is mainly derived from the European Commission's specific objectives and *the National Reports on the Implementation and Impact of Erasmus+ Guidance Note*.

## 1.1 Key Findings

Analysis of the data obtained bring forward a few key findings in the process, management, and success of Erasmus+ programme in Iceland. These can be defined in three categories:

- Firstly, positive impact on the professional and personal development of teachers, trainers, and participants in Iceland, despite complications in application process and risks of projects not coming to fruition because of this.
- Secondly, the strong and efficient National Agency, both its staff and the service provided, as well as administrative processes throughout the network of Erasmus+, within Iceland and in European context.
- Thirdly, the great impact of Erasmus+ programme and its various objectives, e.g., on the educational system and policies.

In general, the Erasmus+ programme has been a success for the lifelong learning of Icelandic educators and their professional and personal development. Therefore, Erasmus+ has had a great impact on formal as well as non-formal education in Iceland such both teaching and training methods as well as individual participants who have taken part in funded projects.

The application process is complicated. Complexity is both related to computer systems and information to be provided in the process. In many cases, applications and projects are based on individual initiatives - especially amongst first time applicants - and there is a great risk of the leading person giving up before the application is submitted. In this way, it is possible that projects are cancelled due to personnel changes, that certain groups do not perform well in the application process, and that the distribution of projects is uneven between regions and sectors, especially where there is a lack of direct contact to the NA on individual basis. Under such circumstances, there is a high risk that important and valuable projects will not be realised.

According to the interviewees and survey respondents, the National Agency has highly qualified staff that serves beneficiaries with excellence. Cooperation between parties in the administration and management of Erasmus projects is exceptional, staffs' integrity is evident, and teamwork is efficient. The success of the NA team has strengthened the progress of the programme and minimized the external effects of organizational changes that have taken place during the period.



Globalization and European cooperation via the Erasmus+ and its predecessors have had general influence on the development of educational policy in Iceland, revision of current policies and helped staff in the education and youth sector to promote and communicate to colleagues and authority new trends and policies.

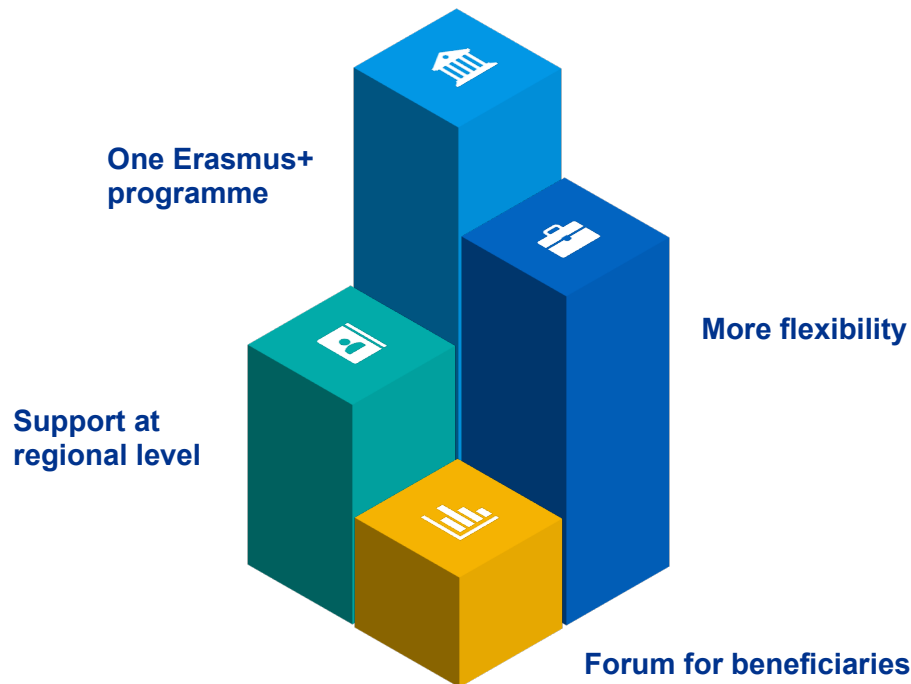
There are indications that applicants in the current programme are homogeneous despite the programme's effort to increase diversity. Records show that the vast majority of applicants has previous experience or expertise in the application process.

Project managers and participants in Erasmus+ projects praise the National Agency in Iceland for its support and follow-up, personal service, and solution-oriented approach.

The recent administrative/governmental change within the ministries in Iceland has had no effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Erasmus+ programme, according to participants in this evaluation. Strong processes ensure success of the programme despite these changes.

Success in communication with beneficiaries as well as resilience of the management of Erasmus+ programme during administrative changes in the ministries in Iceland indicates that structure and processes at the NA are working significantly.

## 1.2 Suggestions for Improvements



### One programme

- One programme and the policy networks supported by the programme should be integrated in one Contribution Agreement between the European Commission and the NA. This is expected to be more successful for Icelandic community. This includes e.g. Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps (ESC), Eurodesk, eTwinning, EPAL, Europass, Euroguidance. This means that ESC programme should be merged with the Erasmus+ programme.
- Iceland in general is not utilizing all opportunities within the Erasmus+ programme, such as centralized projects, e.g., Jean Monnet and sports grants. Furthermore, inclusion grants can be applied in more projects than we see today.

### **Increased flexibility**

- Flexibility in the system needs to be increased, both for NA as well as project coordinators. Also, greater flexibility is needed for NA in the allocation of funds between programs to maximize the use of grants.
- Green mobility grant is not suitable for Icelandic participants due to isolated location and the dependency on using flights to travel.

### **Support at regional level**

- To reach more diverse group of applicants it is inevitable to establish a closer connection between the NA and the regional associations of municipalities. This can be done by hiring an international coordinator at the regional offices, e.g., in the aim of increasing the number of applications from pre-primary, primary, schools and non-governmental organizations.
- Closer cooperation between the NA and regional offices could e.g., attract more sport related activities and projects. Nothing in the data suggests that this field has been utilized enough.

### **National forum**

- A national forum for those who are working on similar projects nationally as well as internationally will support beneficiaries and their project management. During focus group meetings in this evaluation process participants were exchanging email addresses to be able to compare their work and share experiences.



## 2 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is EU's programme that aims to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. The current programme, that covers the period from 2021 to 2027, has a total of €26.2 billion in budget which is almost double the amount of its predecessor programme 2014-2020.

The 2021-2027 programme places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life. The programme furthermore supports priorities and activities set out in the European Education Area, Digital Education Action Plan and the European Skills Agenda as well as supporting the European Pillar of Social Rights, implements the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and develops the European dimension in sport<sup>1</sup>.

### 2.1 Erasmus+ Priorities 2021-2027

The Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 has four core priorities:

- Inclusion and diversity
- Digital transformation
- Environment and fight against climate change
- Participation in democratic life.

Each of the projects funded by the Erasmus+ programme targets one or more of these four priorities.

### 2.2 Key Actions and Fields of the Erasmus+ Programme

**Key Action 1** - Learning Mobility of Individuals.

- Under this key action the programme aims to bring a long-lasting effect on participants and organisations involved. These participants may include pupils, students, trainees, apprentices, adult learners, and young people.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [What is Erasmus+? | Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](#) [Ret. 18.3.2024]

**Key Action 2** - Cooperation among Organisations and Institutions.

- Under this key action the programme aims to support various partnerships for cooperation, excellence, innovation, capacity building projects, and not-for-profit European sport events.

## 2.3 Erasmus+ in Iceland

Iceland is not part of the European Union but takes nonetheless an active part in the Erasmus+ programme for its citizens since signing the Agreement on the European Economic Area in 1994, with involvement of some actions even before that. Several thousands of Icelanders have since been given an opportunity to participate in projects and broaden their horizons with cooperation with fellow Europeans.

### 2.3.1 Erasmus+ Statistics for Iceland

Between 2021 and 2023, €25.781.443 were awarded to 226 projects<sup>2</sup> in Iceland based on statistics from the NA. A total of 409 applications were received during the three-year period. Of the 226 projects, 67 were assigned a total of almost €9 million in 2021 and €10 million to 78 projects in 2022.

Table 1: Erasmus+ Application status 2021-2023

Application Status	2021	2022	2023	Total
Number of applications	91	117	158	409
Contracts	67	78	81	226
Grant amount	€8.634.336	€9.967.905	€7.179.202	€25.781.443

The impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic can be seen in the number of applications as the number of applications increased in 2023 by a total of 41 compared to the previous year as 81 projects were assigned almost €7.2 million.

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.erasmusplus.is/um-erasmus/tolfraedi/tolfraedi-fra-2021/> [ret. 1/2/2024]

According to the annual report of NA, an estimated €13 million will be allocated to Iceland in the year 2024<sup>3</sup>.



Figure 1:  
Number of contracts by location in Iceland. Circle sizes indicate numbers of grants received.

Statistics from the NA, shown in figure 1, suggest that Erasmus+ applications are distributed throughout the country in proportion to population distribution as vast majority of Iceland's population lives within a 50 km radius of the city of Reykjavik.

<sup>3</sup> Source: [Ársskýrsla Rannís \(rannis.is\)](https://www.rannis.is) [ret. 15/3.2024]

### 3 Evaluation Methodology

As stated in the Guidance Note for National Report Erasmus+ Evaluation<sup>4</sup>, Article 24(3) of the Erasmus+ Regulation requires the Member States to submit to the Commission, by 31 May 2024, a report on the implementation and the impact of the programme in their respective territories.

Furthermore, the national reports on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ can provide essential supplementary information to the evaluation process.

In Iceland, the Erasmus+ National Agency for all sectors is hosted by Rannís in accordance with a designation by the Ministry of Education and Children as the National Authority.

The focus of the evaluation process is to bring forward the national view on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ including its strengths and weaknesses, lessons learnt and best practices, as well as the analysis of national results achieved. Five evaluation criteria to be examined in the process were defined, see table 2.

Table 2. Five evaluation criteria for the midterm evaluation of Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027.

Criteria	Definition
1. Effectiveness	To identify and assess the degree of achievement, the outputs, outcome, and impact of the evaluation period.
2. Efficiency	To assess the cost-efficiency of the programme, management, and administration efficiency.
3. Relevance	To assess extent to which the programme actions and objectives are aligned with the needs of EU and national policy makers, as well as those of beneficiary organizations.
4. Coherence	To assess complementarities between the Erasmus+ programme and other EU, national, and international funding instruments, policies, and strategies.
5. EU added value	To identify changes that can be attributed to the programme as an EU intervention.

<sup>4</sup> Source: [DRAFT E+ Interim Evaluation National Reports Guidance 16 12 2022 \(cmepius.si\)](#) [ret. 1/2/2024]

Thus, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to cover the five key criteria of the evaluation framework. The methodology implemented for the interim evaluation of the Erasmus+ in Iceland covers four main approaches:

- Review of documents and data.
- In-depth interviews with individuals from the NA and three different ministries.
- Focus groups among project managers and beneficiaries from participating organizations, promoters, and stakeholders.
- Electronic survey among project managers.

### **3.1 Review of Documents and Data**

The evaluation team reviewed documents from the European Commission and relevant documents provided by the NA and the Ministry of Education and Children. This included e.g., - previous evaluation reports of the programme, Study Inventory List and Assessment of Priorities in Icelandic Erasmus+ Applications. Also, annual reports as well as statistical annexes were inspected.

### **3.2 In-depth Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with representatives of:

- the Ministry of Education and Children
- the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
- the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation
- the Erasmus+ National Agency in Iceland
- The Icelandic Centre for Research

Nine interviews were conducted with the total of 15 interviewees.

Each interview discussed the five key criteria including the implementation and impact of Erasmus+, its strengths and weaknesses, lessons learnt and best practices.

Evaluation questions provided in the Guidance Note for National Reports were used as a framework for the interviews. However, the interviewees were given opportunities to deepen their opinions and views.

### 3.3 Focus Groups

The aim of running focus groups in evaluating Erasmus+ was to provide insight into the participants' views and experiences in the programme. The open-ended questions used in the focus groups were based on the European Commission's guidelines for evaluating the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ in Iceland.

Nine focus groups were formed, and 77 individuals were invited to participate. Each focus group represented different key actions of the Erasmus+ programme as to put emphasis on the inherent difference between projects' objectives. Participants were pointed out by the Erasmus+ National Agency in Iceland and selected by their experience and participation in the relevant Key Actions.

The focus groups were conducted in October and November 2023. The participants in the groups ranged from 3 – 8 people. The focus group discussion lasted for approximately 1.5 hours. Participants representing different group of applicants and different key actions of the programme are shown in figure 2.

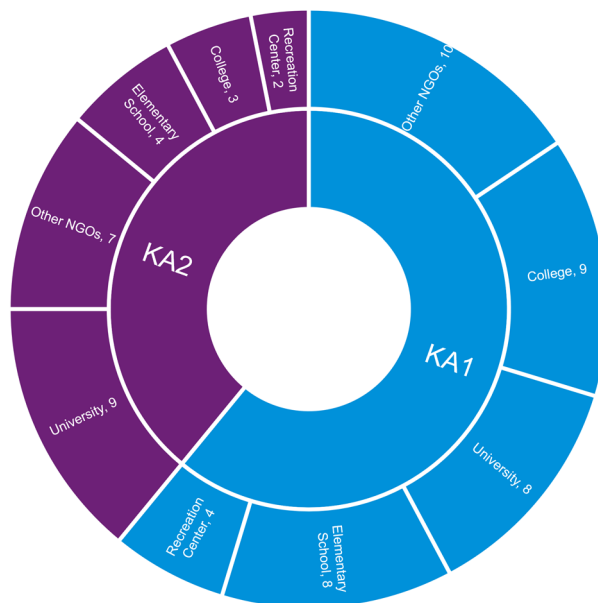


Figure 2: Participants in focus groups are here shown by different key actions of the programme. Underneath each program (KA1 or KA2) numbers of participants is shown, divided by different organizations and institutions they represent in the evaluation process.

### 3.4 Survey

Based on the Erasmus+ aims and the European Commission’s questions to be answered in the evaluation, an online survey was conducted among beneficiaries in January 2024. The survey was sent to those who have been granted support for projects during 2021-2023. Quite many of the beneficiaries were repeatedly noted in the list of emails, due to participation or management of more than one project during the defined period. In these instances, only one email was sent to the beneficiary despite having managed or participated in multiple projects during the years in question. Thus, survey was sent to total of 137 participants via email and the response rate was roughly 56%.

The selection of questions was carried out in cooperation with the NA and the National Authority (NAU). A variety of questions was included in the survey but can roughly be defined by two main categories: 1) Background questions for further analysing of answers e.g., gender, age, residence (postal code), and 2) nature of current project and experience of participation in Erasmus+ e.g., how many countries involved in project, how many partners involved and how many projects the participant was managing. Some questions were open-ended to give the respondent an option for further explanation.

Average age of participants who answered the survey was 49 years and 70% of them were female, see figure 3 and 4.

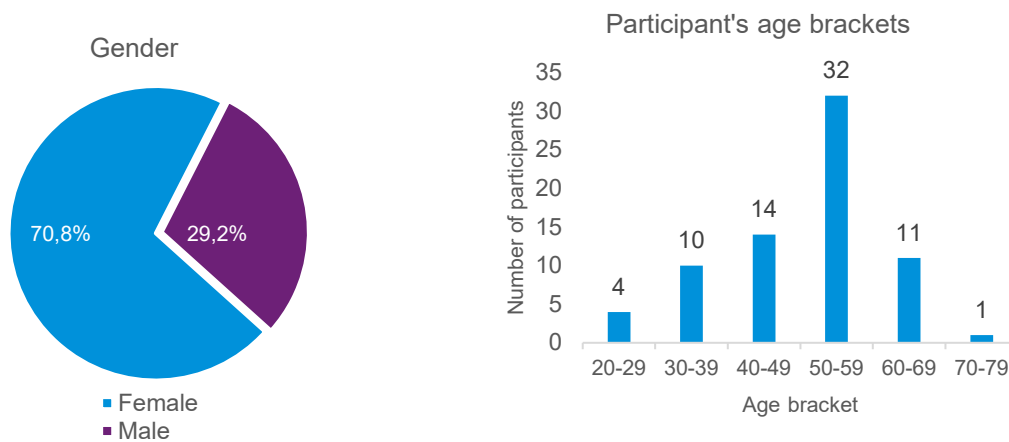


Figure 3 and 4: Gender balance in the group of applicants, according to survey results and age of participants in the survey.

Same ratio of participants, 71%, had previously applied for a grant and received one, 12% were first time applicants and 17% had previously applied for Erasmus+ but didn't receive a grant. 85% of answers were from individuals that got a grant in either 2022 or 2023, see figure 5.

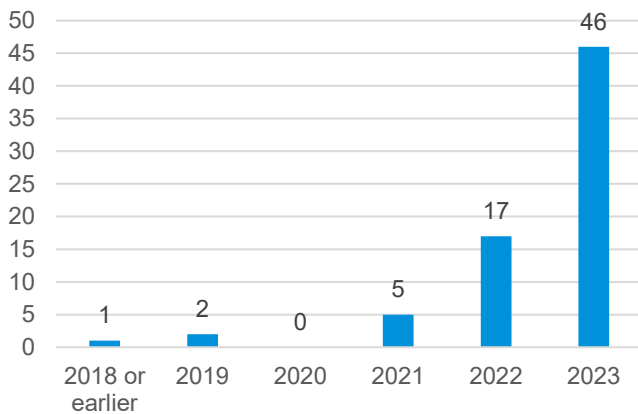


Figure 5. Majority of individuals applied for grants in 2023.



Figure 6: Location of survey participants.

As shown in figure 1 on page 7, vast majority of Iceland's population lives within a 50 km radius of Reykjavik city and contracts granted between 2021 and 2023 suggest that Erasmus+ applications are distributed throughout the country in proportion to population distribution. Figure 6, that provides the location of individuals that participated in the survey, indicates the same.



## 4 Evaluation Criteria

This section examines the questions in line with the *Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines*. Questions are answered from the national perspective based on the set of standard questions<sup>5</sup> that are organised following the structure of the five evaluation criteria to be examined:

1. Effectiveness
2. Efficiency
3. Relevance
4. Coherence
5. EU added Value

Evaluation questions are listed in Appendix I.

Conclusions are based on reviewed documents, as well as the survey and focus groups among project managers, participants and other stakeholders, and meetings with the NA and NAU.

### 4.1 Effectiveness

In the data obtained in this evaluation process it is generally noted that Erasmus+ programme and its predecessors has had a great impact on formal as well as non-formal education in Iceland. However, previous Erasmus programme is considered to have had greater impact on higher education than current Erasmus+ programme and a wide-ranging impact on the participation of Icelandic universities in international partnerships, e.g., accelerated the implementation of the Bologna process and helped create multinational research environment within the universities in Iceland.

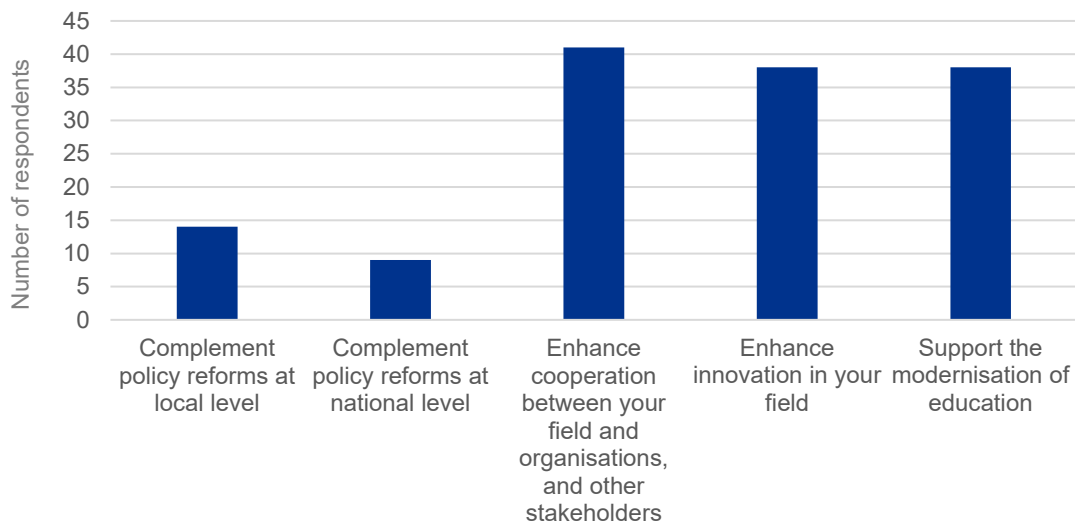
Cooperation and development work on behalf of the programme have now come to a relatively fixed limit at the university level. Erasmus+ has had impact on other levels of education but currently, there is still a lot of development ongoing in international cooperation at the lower levels of education and especially in the youth sector.

Globalization and European cooperation have generally influenced the development of educational policy in Iceland, revision of current policies and helped staff in the

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<sup>5</sup> Questions are listed in Appendix I

education and youth sector to promote and communicate to colleagues and authority new trends and policies. In interviews and focus groups it was also stated that the strength of the programme is e.g., to open the participants' eyes to the comparison of Icelandic and European participants and to confirm that schools and institutions are indeed characterised by both ambition and professionalism. In this way, participation in projects has increased the participants' confidence in their contribution to education, whether they are individuals, educational institutions, or youth organizations.



*Figure 7: Respondents in online survey discuss how participation in Erasmus+ has influenced the development of educational policy at different levels and driven the modernization and innovation in their field.*

In the youth sector, respondents stated that participation in cooperation and mobility projects had increased the quality of informal learning, set clearer limits, and strengthened the professionalism of individuals, associations and groups that had benefited from Erasmus+ grants.

Along with this development, the quality of applications has been increasing according to the participants in the assessment. There is more knowledge among applicants about requirements and project management, more people submit applications of higher quality, and the variety of applications is constantly increasing. However, there

is still room for improvement, especially in terms of applications in the youth part of the programme.

In the current Erasmus+ programme, there has been an increase in number of applications for apprenticeships. The participation of apprentices has strengthened the individuals who have taken part and opened a conversation with various companies and industries about the participation of the labour market in more ambitious studies.

The four horizontal priorities do not play a great role in the evaluation of the projects, according to interviewees and participants in focus groups. None of them stated that the objectives of the priorities were the main initiative for the structure of projects, the selection of cooperating partners or the determination of outcomes of the activities. However, participants were aware of the priorities and recalled having to determine their relevance during the application process. Interestingly, opposite result was evident in prior evaluation carried out by the NA, where participants expressed their satisfaction with the defined objectives of priorities and how the priorities framed the objectives of projects.

Focus on involvement of more diverse participants and use of inclusion grant is linked with the priority defined as *inclusion and diversity*, according to individuals in focus groups. They stated their project was defined to include more diverse participants and they felt support of the NA to broaden their perspective of selection of participants.

This might indicate unexploited opportunities where defined priorities are put in focus to more extent.

Current programme, Erasmus+ 2021-2027, was launched in different environment due to Covid-19. This had a significant effect on many Erasmus+ projects in Iceland. Almost half of the funding was designated to mobility, which was set on hold due to the pandemic. Flexibility on behalf of the NA was much appreciated; extension of projects, postponed starts etc. According to both interviewees and respondents in survey this was essential for many projects, making it possible for them to succeed despite the challenges of the pandemic, on a different timeline than applications stated. Nevertheless, few projects were halted or cancelled due to the pandemic.

Participants in the evaluation process were able to answer almost all the questions regarding *effectiveness* of the Erasmus+ programme. See appendix I.

## 4.2 Efficiency

Project managers and participants in Erasmus+ projects praise the National Agency in Iceland for its support and follow-up, personal service, and solution-oriented approach. According to individuals, both in interviews and focus groups, and survey respondents, the NA has highly qualified staff. Cooperation between parties in the administration and management of Erasmus+ projects is exceptional, staffs' integrity is evident, and teamwork is efficient.

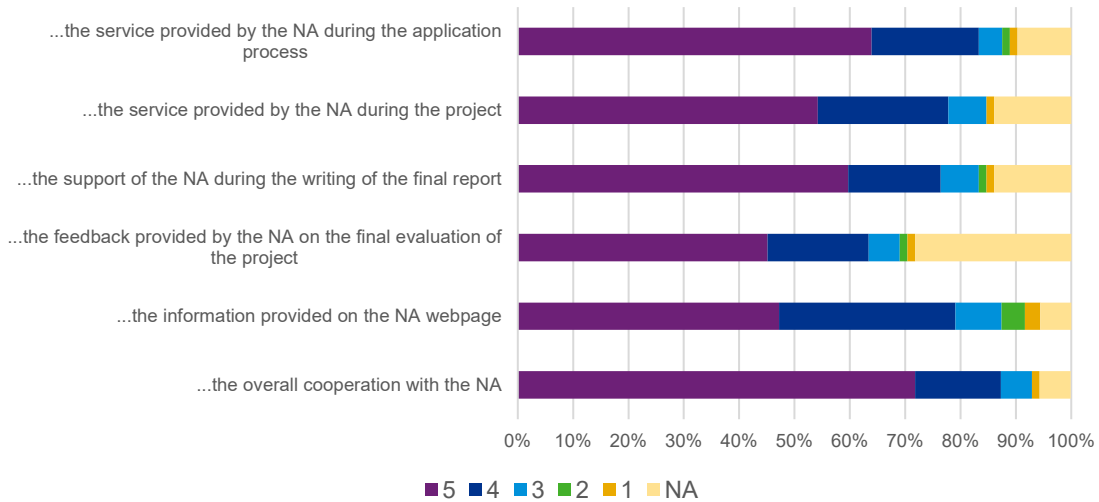
*“The office staff is solution-oriented and extremely kind. Always willing to help. But you must learn these things yourself. You’re not fed by information.”*

*Male participant in focus group*

The success of the NA team has strengthened the progress of the programme and minimized the external effects. Recent administrative changes within the ministries in Iceland played a huge role on the administrative level in Iceland during 2022. According to participants in interviews and focus groups these changes had no effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Erasmus+ programme, thanks to the determined and flexible team at the NA. This is evidence of well-established and efficient cooperation between different actors involved in the implementation and supervision of the programme despite organizational changes. Also, responsibility did not change on ministerial level during these changes.

Figure 8 shows results from the survey where respondents were asked directly how satisfied they are with the support or service provided by the NA during different phases of the participation.

### How satisfied are you with...



*Figure 8: Respondents in online survey answer how satisfied they are with the support or service of the NA provided during different phases of the Erasmus+ participation. The scale is from 1-5 where 5 presents the most satisfaction and 1 the least. NA means not applicable.*

In interviews and focus groups, however, it was stated that because the application process is complicated, the IT system is extensive and slow, and the whole process is complex, it is unlikely that grant applications would have become a reality if the support of the NA had not been sufficient. In many cases, applications and projects are based on individual initiatives - especially during the first projects of the applicants - and there is a great risk of the applicant giving up before the application is submitted. In this way, it is possible that projects are cancelled due to personnel changes, that certain groups do not perform well in the application process, and that the distribution of projects is uneven between regions and sectors, especially where there is a lack of direct contact to the NA on individual basis. Under such circumstances, there is a high risk of Iceland missing the opportunity of benefitting from good projects and their contribution.

Survey results show that where there is already positive experience of Erasmus+ projects, it is more likely that both time and resources are dedicated to applying for and manage projects. Furthermore, there are indications that same individuals apply for grants, year after year, and younger applicants are few. This trend is supported with mentions from interviews and focus groups. In different universities in Iceland, there

are projects managers responsible for the application process and the progress of international cooperation and projects. Where this is apparent, knowledge of application process and project management has been created, a network of partners has been established and the process is clearly defined, which again results in successful applications, success of projects, and good results for the participants. This arrangement on university level is quite unique, though not completely absent on other levels of the educational system. However, very few youth organisations and even fewer compulsory schools or preschools have the capacity to run more project simultaneously where teachers, trainers or other regular staff manage Erasmus+ projects beside their usual job.

Again and again, it was mentioned that the application process for all Erasmus+ projects is heavy and complicated. In particular, it was pointed out that there were complex and repetitive questions in the application documents and that IT systems were inefficient, both for application process and management of projects. This must be considered a major obstacle for participation in the programme.

*“We learned a lot during our first project, but honestly, the management work was a burden on top of the participation and the learning itself.”*

*Female participant in focus group*

Many participants also expressed concern that barriers in the application process itself were counterproductive to the program's objective of increased inclusion. Computer systems are not adapted to the visually impaired, bureaucracy and barriers in getting a registration number and recognition (OID and accreditation) deterrent for those interested etc.

Regarding grant amounts, it was criticized that the amount of grants did not fully finance the project. In this way, the subsistence grant would not consider the difference in cost of accommodation and subsistence depending on location in Iceland, and travel and transport costs within the country is not considered fully, which can be a barrier for parties outside the capital area.

Judging from discussions with the participants, there is not enough experience of inclusion grants in Iceland yet to be evaluated specifically.

Few questions regarding *efficiency* remain unanswered by the participants in the evaluation process. Those refer to the role of the Commission as well as wider opinions on the successors of the current programme, the difference between the different programmes and implementation of changes regarding the development of the Erasmus + programme.

### 4.3 Relevance

The objectives of the Erasmus+ programme are relevant to needs, referring to the participants in the evaluation process. As mentioned above, funding is not always sufficient for mobility projects, but it was also revealed in conversations that there is considerable competition for such grants. The experience of those who have been granted is, without exception, positive, and thus, it is pointed out that the increased possibilities for staff of youth organizations and teachers to obtain education and training in this way best meets their needs for continuous and lifelong learning.

*“Iceland is very popular travel destination – and an expensive one. Some participants really just want to be tourist and we need to be aware of this.”*

*Female participant in focus group*

Many interviewees pointed out that there is a great demand from abroad to visit Iceland, as the country is a quite popular destination. There is a lot of interest in working with Icelandic participants, resulting in collaboration requests from abroad often to be turned down. Still, more participants in KA1 come to Iceland on behalf of Erasmus+ programme than Icelandic participants travelling to Europe.

Most of the interviewees noted that the diversity of projects is sufficient and therefore projects usually reach a wide group of participants. However, little experience is yet of projects which have received funding for inclusion but expected that this support will reach an even more diverse group of individuals. Respondents in surveys support this, i.e., according to their answers, diversity is considered sufficient. However, it is important to point out that this might be counterintuitive to the fact that most respondents are between 40 and 50 years of age and female, see figure 5 on page 12.

The main criticism on relevance concerns green travel funds as these grants are not applicable for Icelandic projects. Living on an island makes it almost impossible for

applicants to use other means of travel than flight and thus excludes Icelanders from participating in projects where requirements are strict on green travel. Exceptions could be made.

*“A student who was not flourishing in his school participated in our project. He was very dependent on his parents and had never travelled abroad alone before. Cried during the night. Nevertheless, he travelled with us, and it turned out to be much more difficult for his parents than for him. Returning home, he was very proud of himself, but soon after he had to change school and he wasn’t in our school the following schoolyear. However, he asked if he could continue his participation in the project and he went again with us abroad. A year later he greeted foreign guests in his high school and this year he is an exchange student abroad. He is an example of a child who grew by many numbers because of his experience of Erasmus+.”*

*Male interviewee*

Questions regarding *relevance* in the Guidelines provided by the Commission for this evaluation process proved to be relevant to the participants in the process. Almost all of them were answered during interviews and focus groups with added value from the survey conducted.

## 4.4 Coherence

In Iceland, the Erasmus+ National Agency for all sectors is hosted by Rannís. National Agency for Erasmus+ and Nordplus with related activities and 12 national funds in education and culture became part of the Centre in 2014 and the youth part of Erasmus+ in 2017.

The merger of the NA did reduce inconsistency in advisory and support to applicants, but not completely, according to interviewees. The NA challenges in coordinating the different parts of the Erasmus+ programme were mainly related to the experience of the NA staff since individuals have built up a certain expertise in specific actions. This reflects cultural difference between youth programme and educational programs within Europe and of no exception for Iceland alone. An ongoing process of increasing synergy and cooperation between different parties and different actions is part of the management of the NA.



When discussing the overlap or synergy of different action objectives, several interviewees stated that they believed that different projects worked well together and were mutually supportive. Interviewees also said that getting different projects to work together is an essential part of the core project management. Thus, creating synergies between different procedure in different projects takes a considerable amount of time. Most said that the fact that projects were different did not hinder applications or participation.

However, quite a few had experienced Erasmus+ projects overlapping with other regional programmes, especially in the youth sector, where national funds are also available to NGOs. Their answers indicate that the Erasmus+ funding is more flexible than national funds, at least for the youth sector. It was also mentioned that Erasmus+ projects are generally more complicated in management than required by other funding programmes available to the interviewees.

Finally, interviewees expressed a strong wish of having national forum for consultation and peer learning for project managers and applicants. In Iceland, the group of people who manage Erasmus+ projects is growing, and it would be a great benefit for this group to share experience with each other, exchange useful advice and solutions. Such a forum could be across project categories because, according to interviewees, if a positive experience is obtained from the first Erasmus+ project, it turns out to be easier to apply for more grants for different projects within the Erasmus+ programme.

Quite many of the recommended questions regarding *coherence* of the programme turned out to be difficult to answer by the participants in the evaluation process. Those questions were mainly on synergies and complementarities between Erasmus+ and other EU, national or regional programmes, which might be outside the scope of experience of the participants in this evaluation.

## 4.5 European Added Value

All interviewees emphasized that participation in European projects is one of the most important opportunities for Icelanders to promote awareness of the common European background. Today, younger generations of participants feel that it is normal to be able to move between countries within Europe to obtain education and later to work. This is mainly due to the success of the Erasmus+ programme, stated by interviewees. It would seem a natural part of formal education, and now also informal education, that a part of the study takes place on mainland Europe.

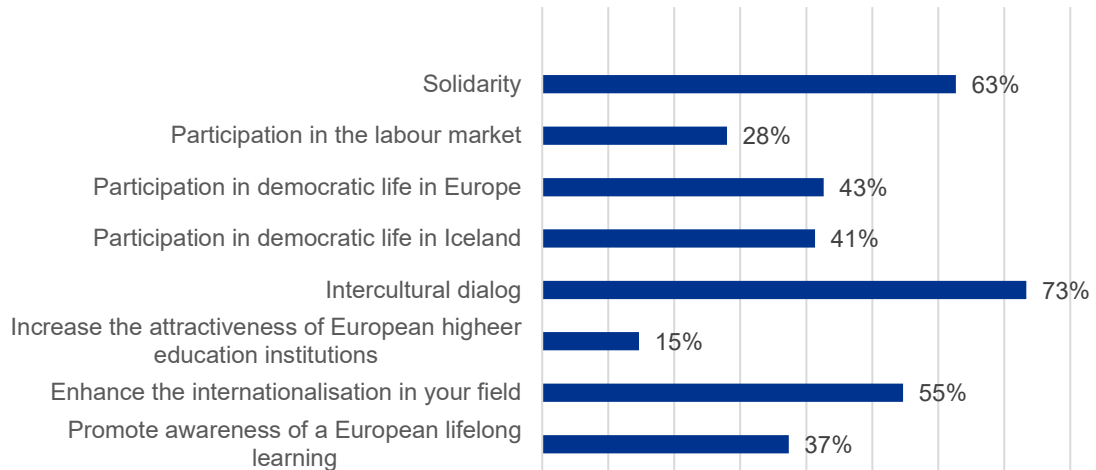
*“I remember an autistic boy who participated in our project. He went from participating to leading role play for a large group of well-known participants in the role-playing society. Today, he has participated in numerous Erasmus+ projects and been to Europe several times. He has even gone on trips as co-instructor.*

*For him, the participation in Erasmus+ is key for the future. He is “the man in the role-playing world” in our municipality. He is known to have the best adventures!”*

*Male interviewee*

However, knowledge of the background of the Erasmus+ programme has declined, today’s students are not familiar with its predecessors, previous European cooperation, or agreements on Iceland's participation in EU cooperation programmes, stated by many interviewees. Yet, this lack of knowledge does not prevent participation in the Erasmus+ programme. Participation in various European projects is said to be essential to promote Icelanders' awareness of globalization and the development of debate about Europe and international affairs. Figure 9 shows results from the online survey where respondents answer how they believe participation in Erasmus+ adds value to education and training.

### Added value



*Figure 9: Respondents in online survey share their opinion on how participation in Erasmus+ programme adds value to education and training.*

In this way, the projects of the Erasmus+ education programme are likely to increase openness, work against ignorance and reduce prejudice. The consensus of the interviewees was that everyone should have the opportunity, at some point during their studies or career, to participate in Erasmus+ projects.

All of the questions regarding *European added value* and listed in the Guidelines provided by the Commission were covered and answered in interviews and focus groups in the evaluation process, see appendix I.

## 5 Results

The Erasmus+ programme is considered to have had a great impact on formal as well as non-formal education in Iceland such as both teaching and training methods as well as individual participants who have taken part in funded projects. Furthermore, the programme has had a great impact on increased awareness of globalization and by doing so contributing to shifting attitudes of local communities.

Participants in focus groups and interviews both stated that despite the feasibility of grants and the valuable support of the NA the general complexity of application and management IT systems provided plays a major role in the risk of not taking part.

Success in communication with beneficiaries as well as resilience of the management of Erasmus+ programme during administrative changes in the ministries in Iceland indicates that structure and processes at the NA are working significantly and communications between the NA and relevant NAU personnel are strong.

Similarly, participants in the evaluation process stated that a national forum, where experience and best practices could be shared, would be highly appreciated by beneficiaries. This is considered to increase quality of applications, ease the application process for applicants, support the network of expertise within different sectors and other applicant bodies and strengthen the likelihood of positive experience of all participants.

Throughout discussions with interviewees and participants in focus groups, it was mentioned that one programme and the policy networks supported by the programme should be integrated in one Contribution Agreement between the European Commission and the NA. This means that the ESC should be merged with the Erasmus+ programme.

## 6 Appendix

### 6.1 Appendix 1 – Report Questions

Questions being addressed in the report, as recommended by the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines:

#### 6.1.1 Effectiveness

- To what extent have the various programme fields both within Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 delivered the expected outputs, results and impacts in your country?
  - What negative and positive factors seem to be influencing outputs, results and impacts? Do you consider that certain actions are more effective than others?
  - Are there differences across fields? What are the determining factors for making these actions of the programme more effective?
- What are the results and long-term impact of Erasmus+ 2014-2020 in your country?
  - We are interested in the impact of all actions/elements of Erasmus+ 2014-2020, and with special attention to those actions/elements that are continued in Erasmus+ 2021-2027.
  - We are also interested in the impact of actions/elements that have been discontinued to the extent that it might help design the future programme. What is your assessment of the quality of applications received in your country, and what measures could be taken to improve the quality of applications and awarded projects in your country taking into account the doubling of budget for the 2021-2027 programme cycle?
- Please identify, describe and quantify (if possible) the spill-over effects between various actions (clusters of actions) of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 in your country, as described in the intervention logic.
- To what extent has Erasmus+ 2021-2027 had a transformative effect in your country on systems, values and norms, in particular with respect to the four horizontal priorities of the programme: inclusion and diversity – digital transformation – green transition (environment and fight against climate change)– participation in democratic life and civic engagement?
  - Could you identify the horizontal priorities the programme had the highest impact on through its actions?
- What are the differences in impact of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 actions in your country on hard-to-reach groups, people with fewer opportunities or specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational or international activities as compared to other groups that benefit from the programme?
  - We are interested in the evaluation of the first effects of the Framework of Inclusion Measures and of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy on promoting accessibility to funding for a wider range of organisations, and to better reach out to more participants with fewer opportunities.

- To what extent do the actions/activities/projects supported by Erasmus+ 2021-2027 contribute to mainstreaming climate and environment actions and to achieving the climate and environment objectives, including those intended to reduce the environmental impact of the programme, in your country?
- To what extent have the forms of cooperation and the types of actions under Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 influenced policy developments in the fields of education and training, youth and sport in your country?
  - Which actions of the programmes are the most effective considering the needs of your country?
  - Are there marked differences between the different fields?
- What specific approaches (such as co-financing, promotion or others) have you taken in order to try to enhance the effects of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 in your country?
  - To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified?
- To what extent are the results of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 adequately being disseminated and exploited in your country?
  - Where can you see the possibilities for improvements?
- To what extent are the effects likely to last in your country after the intervention ends, both cumulatively and the level of each implemented grant?
- What if the Erasmus+ programme had not existed?
  - Would the relevant sectors (higher education, school education, adult education, vocational education and training, youth and sport) in your country be supported in the same way and to a comparable extent?
- How did the Covid-19 pandemic impact the implementation of the two generations of the programme in your country, and what was the effect of the measures taken to react to the consequences of the pandemic?
- What was the effect in your country of the measures taken in the frame of the programme implementation to provide a reaction to the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine?

### 6.1.2 Efficiency

- What is the cost-effectiveness of various actions (clusters of actions) of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 in your country?
- To what extent, compared to the previous programme, is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what Erasmus+ 2021-2027 is set out to achieve?
  - To what extent is the distribution of funds across the programme fields and key actions appropriate in relation to their level of effectiveness and utility?
- How efficient is the cooperation between the different actors involved in the implementation and supervision of the programme (Commission services – Erasmus+ Committee – Executive Agency –

National Authorities – National Agencies – Independent Audit Bodies – International Organisations)  
from the point of view of your country, and to what extent does the Commission fulfil its guiding role in the process?

- How has this changed between the two programming periods?
- What are the reasons for potential changes?
- What are the areas for possible improvement in the implementation of Erasmus 2021-2027 or a successor programme?
- To what extent are the measures applied by your National Agency/ies for monitoring and supporting applicants, beneficiaries (including small and newcomer organisations) and participants effective and proportionate?
  - What are the areas for improvement/simplification, considering the need for a smooth and effective implementation of the programme?
- To what extent have simplification measures put in place, such as the system of simplified grants and accreditation system, resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies, programme beneficiaries and participants?
  - Are there differences across actions or fields?
  - What elements of the programme could be changed to further reduce the administrative burden and simplify the programme's management and implementation, without unduly compromising its sound management, results and impact?
- To what extent do the indicators identified for the programme in the Regulation<sup>7</sup> correspond to the monitoring purposes at national level?
  - How could the overall management and monitoring system be improved?
- To what extent are the new management support tools consistent with the Erasmus+ programme needs and architecture?
  - Which additional features would you recommend for future developments?
- To what extent have the antifraud measures allowed for the prevention and timely detection of fraud in your country?

### 6.1.3 Relevance

- To what extent do the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 objectives as set up in Article 3.1 and 3.2 of the Erasmus+ regulation, in link with the EU policy agendas in the fields of education and training, youth and sport, continue to address the needs or challenges they are meant to help with?
  - Are these needs or challenges (still) relevant in the context of your country?
  - Have the needs or challenges evolved in such a way that the objectives of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 or its successor programme need to be adjusted?
- To what extent are the needs of different stakeholders and sectors in your country addressed by the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 objectives?

- How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope?
- How well is the Erasmus+ programme known to the education and training, youth and sport communities in your country?
- In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?
- What are the reasons of limited participation of certain target groups?
- **Are there target groups who chose not to participate or are there always external factors preventing them?**
- To what extent is the design of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 oriented and adapted towards the hard-to-reach groups, people with fewer opportunities or specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational or international activities as compared to other groups that benefit from the programme?
  - In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached in your country, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?
- To what extent are the needs and challenges linked to Europe's green and digital transitions reflected in the actions/activities of Erasmus+ 2021-2027?
- **What is the relevance of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 compared to the relevance of Erasmus+ 2014-2020 from the point of view of your country?**
  - **Has it been improved in the new programme generation?**

#### 6.1.4 Coherence

- To what extent are the objectives of different programme fields within Erasmus+ 2021-2027 consistent and mutually supportive?
  - What evidence exists of cooperation between the different programme fields, including those managed by different National Agencies, and actions?
  - How well do different actions work together?
  - To what extent there exist inconsistencies, overlaps, or other disadvantageous issues between the programme fields and how are they dealt with?
- **To what extent is Erasmus+ 2021-2027 coherent with other national or regional programmes, other forms of EU cooperation (bilateral programmes) as well as international programmes with similar objectives available in your country?**
  - **Can you identify any inconsistencies, overlaps or other disadvantageous issues with other programmes?**
- To what extent has Erasmus+ 2021-2027 proved to be complementary to other national and international programmes available in your country in the fields of education and training, youth and sport?



- To what extent is Erasmus+ 2021-2027 building effective synergies or interactions with other programmes at national or regional level and other EU or international programmes with complementary objectives available in your country?
- What evidence exist of synergies and complementarities between Erasmus+ and other EU, national or regional programmes?
- Can you identify any inconsistencies, overlaps or other disadvantageous issues with other programmes?
- Can you compare with the synergies and complementarities developed in the previous Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020?
- What is the coherence of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 compared to the coherence of Erasmus+ 2014-2020 from the point of view of your country?
  - Has it been improved in the new programme generation?

### 6.1.5 European Added Value

- What is the additional value and benefit resulting from EU activities, compared to what could be achieved by similar actions initiated only at regional or national levels in your country?
  - What does Erasmus+ 2021-2027 offer in addition to other education and training support schemes available at regional or national levels in your country?
  - What possibilities do you see to adjust Erasmus+ or its successor programme in order to increase its European added value?
- To what extent does the Erasmus+ programme contribute to developing knowledge in European integration matters, to raising awareness about the EU common values and to fostering a European sense of belonging in your country?
- To what extent does Erasmus+ 2021-2027 promote cooperation between Member States and third countries associated to the programme?
  - And between these countries and third countries not associated to the programme?
- What is the benefit and added value of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 for individuals or organisations participating to the programme compared to non-participants in your country?
- To what extent are the results of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 sustainable beyond the projects duration in your country?
- What would be the most likely consequences in your country if the Erasmus+ programme were possibly to be discontinued?



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