

CIVITTA



**Assessing Erasmus+ programme
Implementation in Lithuania: 2021-2027
Mid-term Review and 2014-2020 Final
Evaluation**

Document type: Evaluation report

Date: 2024-02-02

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADU	Adult education sector
AYA	Agency of Youth Affairs (liet. Jaunimo reikalų agentūra)
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EEA	European Economic Area
EESF	Education Exchanges Support Foundation (liet. Švietimo mainų ir paramos fondas)
ESFA	European Social Fund Agency
EU	European Union
HED	Higher education sector
HEI	Higher education institution
HP	Horizontal priorities (Inclusion and Diversity; Digital Transformation; Environment and fight against climate change; Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement)
ISEP	International Student Exchange Programs
KA1	Erasmus+ Programme Key Action "Learning Mobility of Individuals"
KA101	School Education and Staff Mobility (2014 – 2020)
KA102 / KA116	VET Learners and Staff Mobility (2014 – 2020)
KA103	Higher Education Student and Staff Mobility (2014 – 2020)
KA104	Staff Mobility in Adult Education (2014 – 2020)
KA105	Youth Mobility projects (2014 – 2020)
KA107	Higher Education Student and Staff Mobility between Programme and Partner Countries (2014 – 2020)
KA121	Accredited Projects for Mobility of Pupils, Learners, and Staff from Institutions in Different Sectors (SCH, VET, ADU) (2021 - 2027)
KA122	Short-term Projects for Mobility of Pupils, Learners, and Staff from Institutions in Different Sectors (SCH, VET, ADU) (2021 - 2027)
KA125	Youth Volunteering Projects (2014 – 2020)
KA131	Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff Supported by Internal Policy Funds (2021 – 2027)
KA151	Accredited Projects for Youth Mobility (2021 – 2027)
KA152	Mobility of Young People (2021 – 2027)
KA153	Mobility of Youth Workers (2021 – 2027)
KA154	Youth Participation Activities (2021 – 2027)
KA155	DiscoverEU Inclusion Action (2021 – 2027)

KA171	Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff Supported by External Policy Funds (2021 – 2027)
KA182	Mobility of Sport Coaches and Staff (2021 – 2027)
KA2	Erasmus+ Programme Key Action "Cooperation among organisations and institutions"
KA201 / KA219 / KA229	Strategic Partnerships for School Education/ Schools Only/ Exchanges Between Schools exchange (2014 – 2020)
KA202	Strategic Partnerships for Vocational Education and Training (2014 – 2020)
KA203	Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education (2014 – 2020)
KA204	Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education (2014 – 2020)
KA205	Strategic Partnerships in the Field of Youth (2014 – 2020)
KA210	Small-scale Partnerships in Different Sectors (SCH, VET, ADU, YOU) (2021 – 2027)
KA220	Cooperation partnerships in different sectors (SCH, VET, ADU, YOU) (2021 – 2027)
KA3	Erasmus+ Programme Key Action "Support to policy development and cooperation"
KA347	Dialogue Between Young People and Policy Makers (2014 – 2020)
KTU	Kaunas University of Technology
KU	Klaipeda University
LAMT	Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre
LR	Republic of Lithuania
LSU	Lithuanian Students' Union
MoESS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (liet. Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministerija)
MoSSL	Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (liet. Lietuvos Respublikos socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerija)
MRU	Mykolas Romeris University
NA	National Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NI	National institution, founder of NA (founder of EESF – MoESS, founder of AYA–MoSSL)
NPP	National Progress Plan
PFO	People with fewer opportunities
RTVMC	Radviliskis Technology and Business Teaching Center
SCH	School education sector
SDA	State Data Agency (liet. Valstybės duomenų agentūra)
SPO	Sports sector
ŠVAKO	Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences
VET	Vocational Education and Training sector

VILNIUS TECH	Vilnius Gediminas Technical University
VMU	Vytautas Magnus University
VU	Vilnius University
YICA	Youth International Cooperation Agency
YOU	Youth sector

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SUMMARY

The Erasmus+ Program (2021–2027) is the European Union's financing program for education, vocational training, youth, and sports, encompassing all previous EU programs implemented in these areas. The Erasmus+ program aims to provide people with opportunities to study, learn, gain work experience, thereby addressing youth unemployment and skills gap issues. By supporting the improvement of teaching and learning methods, the creation of new training programs, the professional development of educational institution staff and youth workers, and promoting closer collaboration between businesses and educational institutions, the program seeks to enhance the quality and relevance of European education, training, youth institutions, and systems.

The final (2014–2020) and interim (2021–2027) evaluation of the Erasmus+ program implementation in Lithuania was conducted by the Agency of Youth Affairs (AYA), responsible for program administration in the youth field. The goal of the evaluation is to assess the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to improving the quality of the Lithuanian education system and enhancing youth policy quality in Lithuania. The evaluation aims to provide conclusions and suggestions for the improvement of the current (2021–2027) and future (2028–2034) Erasmus+ programs.

The evaluation involved the analysis of primary and secondary sources, statistical data, analysis of best practices, and 30 interviews with various groups of respondents (representatives of national institutions and agencies, representatives from different education and training sectors, and other project implementers).

MAIN EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS BASED ON EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Relevance

The Erasmus+ program remains relevant in addressing societal needs and responding to challenges in both evaluation periods. This is attributed to the program's flexibility, allowing adaptation to external challenges and responsiveness to unforeseen crises or force majeure situations. The regular updates reflect the evolving needs of society, including diverse groups of individuals with different needs. The relevance of the program's goals largely aligns with the strategic priorities at the national level in Lithuania or consistently complements and contributes to the implementation of national objectives in various education, youth, and sports sectors.

During the 2014-2020 program phase, the Erasmus+ program introduced European priorities into the education and youth policy system—15-54% of all projects implemented in Lithuania during this period were related to horizontal priorities. The importance of horizontal priorities increased further in the 2021–2027 period, with the share of projects related to these priorities ranging from 25 to 92% in different sectors. In the new phase, the program became more accessible, especially among the individuals with fewer opportunities. The evaluation revealed that the post-pandemic and geopolitical context adds significance to other themes, such as the mental and emotional well-being of young people, societal resilience to crises, and civic resistance. In the rapidly changing technological and challenging external context, the relevance of the Erasmus+ program not only persists but continues to grow.

Efficiency

Efficiency and return on investment for mobility learning purposes are positively evaluated. The program has achieved a high level of efficiency among young people: university students, vocational school learners, pupils, and youth participants. The impact of the program for mobility learning purposes is clearly noticeable at the individual level, with results being greater and quickly felt. When evaluating the efficiency of strategic partnership projects, it is observed that projects whose results are later applied in practice on a broader scale tend to be more successful. Collaboration partnership projects in various sectors are characterized by a high degree of diversity, and their efficiency depends on the specific nature of the project and the usability of the results obtained. Strategic partnership projects in various sectors vary greatly and create an impact at the organizational, sometimes even systemic level. However, assessing

their results and impact is complex, as they often manifest over the long term. The success of the Erasmus+ program's performance depends on various factors, including internal ones (choice of partners, analysis of participant feedback, collaboration) and external ones (funding, scholarship size, etc.). Ensuring continuity is also a crucial factor, providing conditions for the long-term use of created products.

Effectiveness

Examining the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ program, it is noted that the higher education is the most supported and popular sector, consequently receiving the largest share of the total Erasmus+ program budget. Other sectors receive a smaller portion of funding, but in the new program phase, all sectors have been allocated increased funding, or funds have been redistributed among different actions. Considering the specificity of sectors and their participants, a larger budget is allocated for mobility learning actions in higher education and vocational training sectors, while the school education and adult education sectors receive more funding for strategic partnerships.

Additional measures, such as an effectively functioning collaboration system between the EC, NA, and national institutions, and simplified accreditation and grant systems, have contributed to a more effective implementation of the program. Nevertheless, certain challenges, e.g. related to the complexity of accreditation systems pose additional difficulties and administrative burdens for the NAs. Moreover, the persistent technical issues of the IT systems developed for the new generation of the Erasmus+ program only add to the increase in administrative burdens. Despite this, the participants in the study highly appreciate the work of the NAs. However, in the post-pandemic period, there is a desire for more live and practical meetings with the NAs to better understand the innovations and opportunities offered by the program. The upcoming safeguards from 2024, aimed at combating fraud and addressing the issue of "application factories," are particularly well-received.

Compatibility

Different key actions within the program are well-coordinated with each other, but examples of cross-sectoral collaboration are currently limited. In general, Erasmus+ is the best-known and most widely implemented mobility program in Lithuania. There are only a few other similar regional and international programs in Lithuania, but they do not duplicate the Erasmus+ program; rather, they complement it in various aspects.

European Added Value

Erasmus+ program is one of the most successful products of the EU, and its created European added value is evident in both program periods. The program's significant contribution in Lithuania includes fostering European identity through the promotion of European values and expanding horizontal priorities in various sectors. If the Erasmus+ program were to be discontinued, it would have consequences in various aspects: a decrease in the dissemination of European values and opportunities for skills development, a slowdown in the intercultural and international dimensions of organizational development, and at the national level, a diminished international reputation for Lithuania in academic and educational communities, impeding the development of youth policy and educational innovations.

Recommendations for program content:

- Increase the share of funding allocated to School Education (SCH), Adult Education (ADU) and Youth (YOU).
- Suggest continuing the accreditation system by increasing the budget for specific sectors, such as SCH or VET.
- Reduce the scope or altogether abandon highly expensive (grant - 400 thousand euros) strategic partnership projects, focusing more on smaller-scale projects (valued at 30-60 thousand euros).
- Maintain the principle of implementing horizontal priorities in the program.
- Increasing the flexibility of the program, adapting more closely to the geopolitical challenges and the needs and opportunities of the modern generation.

Recommendations for the program implementation at EU level:

- Consider the possibility of streamlining mobility between program countries and partner countries, as well as the administration of strategic partnership projects in the youth sector.
- Ensure the smooth operation of already developed IT tools and improve the interaction between tools.
- Index scholarship and grant amounts according to inflation and the economic situation of each host country.
- To reduce administrative burden and facilitate the implementation of the Erasmus+ program, recommend that the European Commission seek greater synergy between requirements set for different education, training, and sports sectors.

Recommendations for program implementation at the national level:

- Encourage inter-sectoral collaboration more actively.
- Communicate more widely the innovations and opportunities of the new Erasmus+ program.
- It is recommended to continue efforts at the national level focused on inclusiveness and diversity and attract as many people with less opportunities as possible to participate in the program.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus+ Programme (2021-2027) is the European Union's funding program for education, vocational training, youth, and sports, encompassing all previous EU programmes implemented in these areas from 2007-2013 and 2014-2020: the Lifelong Learning Program, the Youth in Action Program, and five international cooperation programs. The budget for the entire implementation period of the program amounts to €26.2 billion¹.

The Erasmus+ Programme aims to provide opportunities for people to study, learn, gain work experience, or engage in voluntary activities abroad, thus addressing the issues of youth unemployment and skills gaps. By supporting the improvement of teaching and learning methods, the development of new training programs, the professional development of education institution staff and youth workers, and promoting closer cooperation between businesses and educational institutions, the Programme seeks to enhance the quality and relevance of European education, training, and youth institutions, and systems. In the latest funding period of the Programme, 70% of the funding is allocated to individual mobility objectives, while the other 30% is allocated to cooperation projects and policy development activities, where organizations can exchange best practices, innovative teaching methods and etc.².

In Lithuania, the Erasmus+ Programme is administered by two national agencies: the Education Exchange Support EESF (hereinafter referred to as EESF), responsible for education and training activities, and the Agency of Youth Affairs (hereinafter referred to as AYA), responsible for activities dedicated to youth. The evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme implementation in Lithuania for both the final period (2014–2020) and the interim period (2021–2027) is conducted by order of AYA (hereinafter – the Evaluation).

The **purpose of this Evaluation** is to prepare a report on the implementation and impact of the Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, evaluating the contribution of this Programme to improving the quality of the Lithuanian education system and youth policy in response to the questions provided in Annex 1 of the Technical Specification (see Annex 2. Evaluation Questions), as well as to provide conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of the current (2021–2027) and future (2028–2034) Erasmus+ Programme.

To achieve the Evaluation's objective, the following **Evaluation tasks** are outlined:

- Evaluate the **effectiveness** of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania in terms of its contribution to improving the quality of the Lithuanian education system (across all sectors) and non-formal education for youth, as well as enhancing the quality of youth work;
- Assess the **efficiency** of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania;
- Evaluate the **relevance** of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania;
- Assess the **coherence** of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania;
- Evaluate the **European added value** of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania.

In carrying out the tasks, the Evaluation focused on its three main Programme actions³ within the key sectors of the Erasmus+ Programme (education and training – HED, VET, SCH, ADU, youth – YOU, and sports – SPO⁴), which were implemented during the EU funding periods of 2014–2020 and 2021–2027:

¹ European Commission, „Erasmus+ 2021-2027“, 2021. Accessed online: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ff1edfdf-8bca-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

² European Commission, „Erasmus+ 2021-2027“.

³ Key actions and activities of the Erasmus+ programme are detailed in Annex 4. Key Actions and Activities of the Erasmus+ Programme

⁴ The Evaluation report includes a chapter on SPO and provides preliminary insights based on the data gathered. Given that projects in Lithuania are only eligible for funding in 2023, it is not yet possible to fully assess the impact of projects in this area.

- 1) **KA1:** Learning mobility;
- 2) **KA2:** Cooperation among organisations and institutions;
- 3) **KA3:** Support to policy development and cooperation⁵.

In summarizing the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the Evaluation and addressing all Evaluation questions, **the outcome** comprises well-founded conclusions regarding the implementation process and relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and European added value of the Erasmus+ Programme. The final report highlights examples of best practices and offers proposals and recommendations for the improvement of the Erasmus+ Programme for the period of 2021–2027 and the upcoming programming period.

2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

In the Evaluation process, ensuring the reliability of data and the conclusions drawn, a triangulation approach was employed, combining primary and secondary sources along with qualitative and quantitative data. Responding to the Evaluation questions involved sourcing data from various information channels, aiming to enhance data reliability and prevent biases and subjectivity that might arise from relying solely on a specific data collection method. In the preparation of the report, the survey method was not employed, given the adequacy of information available in databases of National Agencies and the Erasmus+ Programme's results database to address the Evaluation questions based on existing statistical data. To delve deeper into certain Evaluation questions, a greater emphasis was placed on conducting in-depth interviews. Originally considering the use of focus groups for result validation, this approach was replaced by direct in-depth interviews in the final Evaluation report. This decision was driven by the minimal added value of the focus group method, as the participant list would largely overlap with interview respondents within the program. Further details on the data collection and analysis methods used in the Evaluation are provided in Annex 1. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

3.1. HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1.1. RELEVANCE

One of the objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme⁶ is to address relevant challenges: to help participants by enabling participants to acquire qualifications and skills through quality and inclusive education and training. This aims to empower individuals to meaningfully engage in democratic societies, foster cross-cultural understanding, and succeed in the labour market⁷. These objectives and challenges are linked to Lithuania's strategic objectives and education agenda in the field of higher education (HED), and the Erasmus+ Programme is helping to achieve them:

⁵ Note: applicable only for the 2014-2020 programme.

⁶ Regulation (EU) No 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Erasmus+ Programme of the Union for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013.

⁷ European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme guide*, 2023, 4.

- The 18th Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (the Programme of the Government)⁸ sets out the overall objective of ensuring the highest quality, international and accessible studies. One of the priorities is the necessity to promote student and teacher mobility and their participation in international networks.
- The State Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2050"⁹ outlines future scenarios for the Lithuanian state, emphasizing the integral role of quality education in its ideal development. One way to achieve this is to increase international exchanges and create an integrated learning ecosystem in Lithuania.
- One of the main objectives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport's (MoESS) 2021-2024 agenda¹⁰ is to create the conditions for strengthening the internationality and competitiveness of Lithuanian higher education institutions by supporting their participation in the "European universities" alliance initiatives.

These strategic documents justify the relevance and necessity of the Erasmus+ Programme to achieve Lithuania's strategic objectives in the field of HED. The staff of classical universities and universities of applied science are increasingly leveraging the opportunities offered by the Programme. Each year, around 4-7% of all Lithuanian students participate in learning mobility activities funded by the Programme.¹¹ Higher education institutions (HEIs) have separate project management units, sufficient human resources and administrative capacity, resulting in a high quality of applications in both periods¹².

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | The relevance and appropriateness of Erasmus+ Programme was extremely high, with the vast majority (43 out of 47) of Lithuanian universities and universities of applied science participating in activities, over 50.3 thousand staff and students from HEIs participated in KA1 mobility activities, and over 1,5 thousand participated in KA2 projects, based on the funding (call) year¹³. The participation of students with special needs in the Erasmus+ Programme in the HED sector was low, representing less than 1% of the total number of HED mobility participants¹⁴.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | More than 9.9 thousand HED representatives have benefited from the Mobility Programme between 2021 and 2023¹⁵. Due to the optimisation of the network of HEIs in Lithuania in 2021-2023, 34 out of 37 Lithuanian HEIs participated in the Programme. All of them have been awarded an Erasmus Higher Education Charter¹⁶, allowing them to receive funding for KA131 activities without a qualitative assessment of their applications. In this case, HEIs only have to indicate the need in their applications, after which the NA allocates the funding according to the criteria and methodologies set. Qualitative assessment is only applied to mobility with third countries (KA171) activities.

The new period of the Programme contributes more to inclusion and diversity: the share of people with fewer opportunities (PFO) reach 5.6% of all mobility participants in HED sector¹⁷. Most mobility project participants report that the Programme has broadened their understanding of inclusion and what

⁸ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution No XIV-72 of 11 December 2020 "Dėl XVIII-osios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programos".

⁹ Government of the Republic of Lithuania, "State Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2050"", 2023.

¹⁰ MoESS, "Agenda 2021-2024", 2020.

¹¹ Calculated by the Author of the Study, based on data from the EESF and SDA.

¹² Data from EESF.

¹³ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year.

¹⁴ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year. The total number of HED participants for KA103 activities in 2014-2020, was 45 449, including 39 persons with special needs; for KA107 activities - 4 862, including 10 with special needs.

¹⁵ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year. Note: The mobility statistics focus solely on KA1 participants. Starting in 2021, participants in the call for Action KA2 activities are no longer included in the mobility statistics.

¹⁶ The full list of Erasmus+ Higher Education Charter Institutions can be found here: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/lt/document/higher-education-institutions-holding-an-eche-2021-2027>.

¹⁷ EESF's data. The total number of HED participants in Action KA1 activities for the period 2021-2023 was 9 938, of which 560 were persons with special needs (note: data for 2023 is provisional).

constitutes PFO¹⁸. The Programme is tailored to cater to hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups, offering enhanced support, including individual supplementary grants for participants with health disabilities covering actual costs or through flat-rate payments. Additional provisions include top-ups to the monthly grant for Erasmus+ activities, extra funding for accompanying persons, and other support mechanisms.

In the new period of the Erasmus+ Programme, there was a gradual increase in the focus on the Horizontal Priorities (HP), with 11 out of the total 22 ongoing Action KA2 projects addressing the implementation of the HPs: digital transformation (5), environment and the fight against climate change (4), inclusiveness and diversity (1) and participation in democratic life (1)¹⁹.

3.1.2. EFFECTIVENESS

Individual, institutional and systemic changes

At the individual level, the majority of students participating in mobility programs experience improvements in their foreign language and communication skills. Additionally, they develop greater independence, self-confidence, and courage, broaden their horizons, and gain valuable experiences abroad that would not have been possible in Lithuania²⁰. Lecturers and higher education staff participating in the Erasmus+ Programme improve their professional qualifications, become more involved in activities, initiate new projects, and establish contacts with members of the academic community at international level²¹. At a systemic level, the quality of studies in the HED sector is being improved through exchanges of students, lecturers and HEI staff and the attraction of international students and researchers.²²

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | The Erasmus+ Programme's HED Participants' Reports for 2014-2020 show that, at an individual level, the Programme has achieved its objectives:

- 94% of respondents feel that they have improved their networking competencies,
- 89% have acquired competencies for equality and inclusion,
- 82% say they have matured as a person,
- 78% feel that the Programme has developed the competencies and skills they need for their future careers and
- more than 70% become more socially and politically conscious²³.

At the institutional level, the Programme promoted cooperation and contributed to the development of a network of HEIs. For example, since 2019, the "European University" alliances initiative has been launched, which brings together Europeans who can study and work in different European countries in different languages, sectors, and academic disciplines²⁴. In 2019-2020, 4 HEIs from Lithuania were recipients of funding as part of the "European University" alliances initiative. This number increased significantly to 7 HEIs during the period of 2022-2023²⁵.

¹⁸ EESF, "Inclusive Mobility", 2023.

¹⁹ Analysis of the Erasmus+ Results Database, 18 December 2023.

²⁰ Factus, "The impact of Erasmus+ international mobility on participants in higher education and vocational training projects", 2018, 15.

²¹ Interviews with HEI representatives.

²² Interview with the MoESS; Factus, "The impact of Erasmus+ international mobility on participants in higher education and vocational training projects", 2018, 27.

²³ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

²⁴ Erasmus+, "Naujas „Europos universitetų“ aljansų finansavimas skatina bendradarbiavimą aukštojo mokslo srityje", 4 July 2023. Internet access: <https://erasmus-plus.lt/naujienos/svietimas/naujas-europos-universitetu-aljansu-finansavimas-skatina-bendradarbiavima-aukstojo-mokslo-srityje/>.

²⁵ In 2019, KU and KTU participated in the European University Alliance; in 2020 -VMU and VILNIUS TECH; in 2022 - VU, KTU, KU; in 2023 - MRU, VMU, LMTA and ŠVAKO. Read more: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/lt/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative/timeline>

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | The mobility participants of the new programming period are developing the same competencies as in the previous period, with no significant differences:

- 94% of respondents improved their networking competencies,
- 91% gained competencies in equality and inclusion,
- 83% improved as individuals,
- 78% believe that the Programme has developed competencies and skills for their future careers,
- more than 75% of the participants say that they have become more socially and politically aware²⁶.

At structural level, the Programme has led directly to a breakthrough in inclusion. As a result of the Programme, HEIs have adopted internal policies and inclusion strategies which clearly define what constitutes a PFO and have started to provide additional financial programme support.

At the institutional level, the programme fosters the implementation of sustainability principles within universities. For example, Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) launched the "DON@ – Donation Opportunities for Newcomers" project 2023, which aims to facilitate the integration of PFO students and to improve their living conditions by fostering peer support, inclusiveness, and sustainable development. The digital platform created by the project enables the exchange and donation of items, the organisation of events and the dissemination of guidelines to support the implementation of similar projects in other HEIs²⁷.

Performance factors

The effectiveness of Erasmus+ Programme actions depends on several factors. The most important factor for Action KA1 projects is mass appeal²⁸. Given that, the area of HED has the largest scale of any of the education and training areas within the Erasmus+ Programme, it can also be assumed to be the most effective and impactful. The effectiveness of Action KA2 projects primarily contingent on partner selection²⁹, collaboration, project relevance, applicability, sustainability post-project completion, as well as meticulous planning and effective dissemination of results³⁰. To illustrate these points, an analysis of a successful Vilnius University (VU) project is presented in Annex 5. Analysis of Best Practice Examples(see Case Study 1).

Other factors also contribute to the effectiveness of Programme's Actions, which may be internal, such as the HEI's network of partners, the participants' feedback and its analysis, the administrative staff and their skills³¹, and external factors, such as the adequacy of funding and the size of scholarships. Research shows that for HEI students, financial barriers are a decisive factor in their decision to participate in a mobility programme. According to the HED mobility project coordinators, the primary reason students refrain from participating in Erasmus+ mobility programs is the reluctance to forgo employment opportunities and potential earnings. In addition, only 15% of respondents say that their HEI provides information about opportunities to work abroad³².

Effectiveness of publicising results

According to the information gathered from the HEIs, the results of the Programme are publicised in various ways and channels: presentations at the faculties, sharing of information through social networks, seminars, invitation to Erasmus+ alumni to share their experiences and advice, participation in NA

²⁶ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

²⁷ VMU, "Naujas projektas DON@ palengvins studentų integraciją", 9 January 2023. Internet access: <https://www.vdu.lt/lt/naujas-projektas-don-palengvins-studentu-integracija/>.

²⁸ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI , 8.

²⁹ Ibid, 9.

³⁰ Interviews with HED representatives.

³¹ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 8.

³² EESF, „Inclusive Mobility“, 2023.

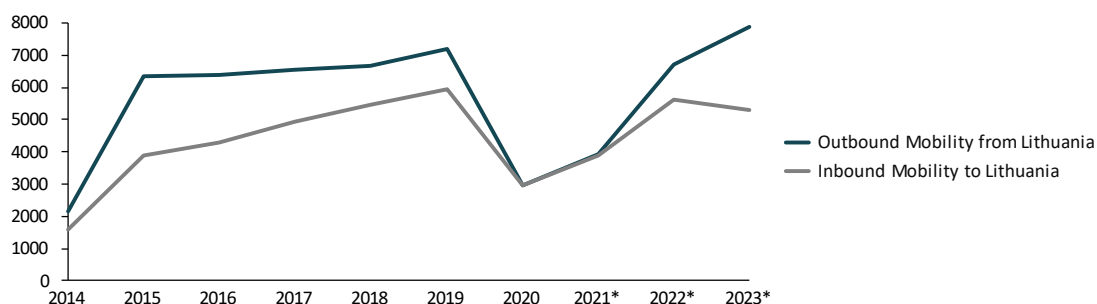
initiatives (e.g. 'Run with Erasmus+'), invitations to the Erasmus+ network, and contests with the possibility of winning prizes³³.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the Programme

Recent force majeure events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have presented challenges to all stakeholders. However, the Erasmus+ Programme has demonstrated considerable flexibility and adaptability in response to each of these situations.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EC allowed a reallocation of the budget, with more funds directed for strategic partnerships, extending their deadlines and keeping the Programme afloat, after a sharp drop of mobility participants. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mobility outcomes was primarily short-term, as evidenced by the number of mobility participants in the HED sector surpassing pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2023 (see Figure 1). During the pandemic, there was a notable surge in active participation by HED staff in the Programme, with more than a threefold increase compared to the initial stages of the pandemic³⁴.

FIGURE 1: CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF MOBILITY ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES (KA103, KA131, KA107, KA171), 2014-2023*



Source: EESF's data

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has also had an impact on the Programme and its implementation at various levels. At the national level, there has been a significant increase in the number of students and lecturers from Ukraine coming to Lithuania: comparing 2018-2019 and 2022, the number of mobility participants from Ukraine to Lithuania has increased about 8 times³⁵. At the European level, decisions about Erasmus+ Programme were made quickly and flexibly: although Ukraine is a third country not associated with the Programme, the Programme treated Ukrainians as PFO and provided them with scholarships.

3.1.3. EFFICIENCY

This section evaluates the cost-effectiveness of the Programme's actions, examining the efficiency of resource utilization. It analyses the budget allocation to Actions KA1 and KA2 projects as inputs and assesses the impact of these actions as outputs. This evaluation aims to determine whether the achieved benefits (impacts) are in proportion to the incurred costs. The adequacy of the budget is assessed in terms of the success rate of the proposals, i.e. the extent to which the supply of funding for projects meets the demand³⁶. Other aspects contributing to a more efficient implementation of the Programme are also

³³ Interviews with HED representatives.

³⁴ EESF's data. Staff members, who travelled abroad under Action KA1 projects: 337 in 2014, 1763 in 2015, 2001 in 2016, 2185 in 2017, 2476 in 2018, 3160 in 2019, 600 in 2020, 74 in 2021 (+1112 from the 2014-2020 Programme), 942 in 2022 (+2241 from the 2014-2020 Programme), 3004 in 2023 (+854 from the 2014-2020 Programme).

³⁵ EESF/EAC Dashboard, 2022-11-03.

³⁶ The project success rate shows the ratio between applications funded and applications received or the ratio between supply and demand for project funding. A coefficient above 0.5 indicates that the demand for projects has

assessed, such as the division of roles between National Agencies (Nas), National Institutions (Nis) and the European Commission (EC), the common management and monitoring system, the IT environment, anti-fraud measures.

Cost-effectiveness of programme actions

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | Higher education was the most supported and most popular sector of the Erasmus+ Programme, accounting for around €86 million, or 50.7% of the total funds allocated to education and training activities (or 45% of the total Programme budget), with the majority of €78.7 million (91.5%) being allocated to Action KA1 activities. The HED sector also has the highest share of funded applications compared to other education and training sectors, which stands at 77%.

Funding for the activity related to HE student and staff mobility (KA103) has been provided to all higher education institutions that submitted applications. Funding for HE student and staff mobility between Programme countries and partner countries (KA107) was provided to a lesser extent, covering approximately 83% of all received applications.

Meanwhile, the demand for strategic partnerships has not been satisfactory, with around 22% of all incoming applications for Action KA2 being funded throughout the programming period³⁷. In 2020, the number of applications for strategic partnerships (KA203) was twice as high as usual, but the proportion of funded projects remained the same, covering only one-third of the applications.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | In the new programming period, €49.3 million in grants have already been distributed to the HED sector, i.e. 37% of the total dedicated budget for education and training (or 34.5% of the total budget of the Programme). €43.8 million was distributed for learning mobility related activities and €5.5 million for strategic partnership activities.

The share of funded applications in the HED sector is even higher than the previous programming period, with 88% of all applications funded. The Erasmus+ Programme in this period is even more in line with demand, with all HED mobility projects (KA131) funded. Additionally, there is a very high percentage of HE mobility projects with Programme associated countries (KA171), with 100% of them funded in 2022, and 98% in 2023. Higher education cooperation partnerships (KA220) are also significantly more likely to be funded in the new programming period, with a success rate of 0.49³⁸.

The rise in the popularity of strategic partnerships can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has reduced the mobility opportunities for individuals, and KA2 projects were intended to compensate for this impact. After the pandemic, the priority of mobility for HED students and staff has increased. However, the need for strategic partnerships not only continues but is also growing, with almost double the number of applications received by the NA in 2023 compared to 2021. Although the HED-related activity budget is generally sufficient, challenges arise at an individual level for the mobility of individuals for learning purposes. Grants and travel allowances, amid rising inflation and prices, are often inadequate, especially for students traveling to more distant countries³⁹.

Other factors influencing efficiency

The cooperation and division of roles between the entities involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Programme is positive. NI representatives represent Lithuania in the Erasmus+ Committee, set the priorities of the NAs, approve their work programmes, audit their reports. The implementation and monitoring of the Programme is carried out by the NA. The cooperation framework between NA and NI is working well, as it is based on cooperation and partnership. On the other hand, there is a notable abundance of communication tools with the EC, such as the channel on the Microsoft Teams platform

been well met, or that the majority of applications have been funded. Correspondingly, a lower value indicates that a minority of applications were funded.

³⁷ Statistics on the budget of the Programme and the financing of applications are set out in Annex 7. Statistics on Program Budget and Funding Applications

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Interviews with HED representatives.

channel, the query system for Erasmus+ Programme related content, a separate system for addressing technical issues in the IT system, the system for hosting information on events, and the email communication.

The measures taken by the NA to monitor and support applicants, beneficiaries and participants are assessed as efficient and appropriate. The NA has consistently invested in monitoring and evaluation, encompassing ongoing monitoring of indicators, gathering supplementary data, such as participant satisfaction surveys and assessments of evaluators' perceptions of the evaluation process. Additionally, project coordinators are mandated to complete a survey at the conclusion of projects, aiming to pinpoint areas for enhancement. Additionally, NA periodically identifies weaknesses and looks for ways to improve its activities and supervision. Beyond monitoring indicators, NA also carries out practical monitoring, i.e. it checks and attempts to proactively manage emerging risks. This monitoring system applies to all education and training sectors.

The IT environment for the new programming period has not been well received due to persistent technical glitches and failures. HEI representatives cite a number of cases where information entered into the IT system has subsequently disappeared or the IT environment has displayed incorrect figures, requiring additional validations and recalculations by specialists, which is time-consuming and adds to the overall administrative burden. Digital tools that facilitate the digitization of the Programme, such as the "Erasmus without paper" platform for signing inter-institutional agreements, are generally evaluated positively, despite facing persistent issues attributed to high usage. Both the "Mobility tool+" used in the previous programming period⁴⁰, and "Beneficiary module" used currently⁴¹ are positively evaluated as they work well, and the institutions have become accustomed to using it⁴¹.

3.1.4. COHERENCE

Erasmus+ programme is the main instrument for Lithuania to promote cooperation between HEIs and similar institutions in Europe and third countries. The European Structural Funds are used to support Erasmus+ activities by contributing to their co-financing. There are few similar programmes in Lithuania, but they generally complement the objectives of Erasmus+. For example, students and staff of Lithuanian HEIs can participate in the "Nordplus Higher Education" programme⁴², benefit from bilateral programmes funded by Lithuania and foreign countries (e.g. "Fulbright" programme in the United States, the Swiss Government Scholarship Programme⁴³, the Taiwan Semiconductor Scholarship Program⁴⁴), and explore various other opportunities, continuously announced by EESF⁴⁵. Certain universities provide additional international exchange opportunities for their students – for example, VU offers its students the opportunity to participate in the International Student Exchange (ISEP) programme, allowing them to study in the USA or other ISEP partner countries⁴⁶.

⁴⁰ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 10.

⁴¹ Interview with HEI representatives.

⁴² Nordic Council of Ministers, *Evaluation of Nordplus 2021*, 2021, 48-58. Internet access: <https://pub.norden.org/nord2021-057> and <https://www.nordplus.lt/programos/nordplus-higher-education>

⁴³ EESF, "Swiss Government Scholarships for the academic years 2024-2025", 2023. Internet access: <https://stipendijos.lt/galimybes/sveicarijos-vyriausybes-stipendijos-2024-2025-akademiniams-metams/>

⁴⁴ EESF, "Taiwan-Europe Semiconductor Scholarship Programme for Lithuanian Students", 2023. Internet access: <https://stipendijos.lt/galimybes/taivano-puslaidininkiu-stipendiju-programa-studentams-is-lietuvos/>.

⁴⁵ Note: In the previous phase of the programme, HED representatives also had the opportunity to participate in bilateral programmes in Israel, China, Mexico and Turkey. Read more: Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania on the Approval of the Priorities for the Promotion of the Internationalisation of Higher Education for 2017-2018, 23 January 2017. No. V-32 Vilnius.

⁴⁶ VU, ISEP Student Exchange Programme, 11 January 2017. Internet access: https://www.vu.lt/site/files/TPRS/ISEP/ISEP_programa_KK.pdf.

3.1.5. EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE

Erasmus+ Programme allowed participants to experience the benefits of free movement of people in Europe, fostering a sense of European community, citizenship while acquiring valuable soft skills and experiences. In the current context of war and other challenges, participants express heightened positivity regarding the importance of European values⁴⁷.

The Erasmus+ Programme stands out as one of the EU's most successful initiatives. Its discontinuation would likely result in stagnation within the HED sector. Both students and lecturers may be less inclined to pursue opportunities abroad, potentially diminishing Lithuania's presence in the international academic community and leading to a decline in the quality of teaching and learning.

"Erasmus+ is clearly the largest and best-known Programme of this level and scale and has made a significant contribution to the development of the international dimension in the higher education sector."

HED representative

3.2. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.2.1. RELEVANCE

Lithuania's strategic documents focus on improving the quality of vocational education and training (VET). The Programme for Government and the National Progress Plan (NPP)⁴⁸ outline the commitment to enhance the professional teaching workforce. In this context, the objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme in the VET field are relevant, including improving the quality of VET, innovation, adapting vocational training programmes to the needs of the labour market, and the professional and personal development⁴⁹.

The Erasmus+ Programme aligns with Lithuania's strategic objectives and is widely recognized in the VET community, engaging both students and teachers in mobility activities, traineeships abroad and graduate placements.⁵⁰

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | Over the 2014-2020 period, more than 16.3 thousand VET professionals participated in exchange programmes, traineeships abroad and 0,7 thousand participated in capacity building through strategic partnerships in VET⁵¹. The quality of the applications submitted by VET institutions is very high: the vast majority (95-100%) of VET students and staff mobility applications (KA102) reach the minimum quality requirements. The quality of Action KA2 project applications is slightly lower but improving: 79% of all VET strategic partnership applications (KA202) were of high quality in 2014 and 86% in 2020.

It is noteworthy that the Erasmus+ Programme is increasingly reaching a broader range of hard-to-reach groups each year. In 2014, 122 participants from PFO engaged in KA102 and KA116 activities. By 2020, the number of PFO participants in KA102 and KA116 activities had increased to 162 PFO⁵². Over the whole programming period, PFO accounted for 5.5% of all participants in VET mobility activities PFO⁵³. In this

⁴⁷ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

⁴⁸ Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No 998 of 10 October 2021, On the Approval of the National Progress Plan 2021-2030, 2021.

⁴⁹ European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme guide*, 4, 228-229.

⁵⁰ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 12.

⁵¹ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year.

⁵² Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year.

⁵³ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year. In 2014-2020, KA102 activities involved a total of 10,043 VET participants, 570 of whom had special needs; KA116 activities involved 6,290 participants, 328 of whom had special needs. KA202 had a total of 690 participants, of which 4 with special needs.

respect, the Erasmus+ programme in Lithuania was particularly relevant, as it promoted the inclusion of PFO and fostered empathy and understanding among pupils.⁵⁴

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | Between 2021 and 2023, more than 4.3 thousand participants have benefited from the Programme⁵⁵. Annually, around 4.5% to 8% of all Lithuanian VET students participated in Erasmus+ funded learning mobility programmes. In the 2021-2023 period, the Programme has been tailored to better meet the needs of PFO, encompassing individuals with disabilities, migrants, those residing in remote areas, or those facing socio-economic hardships. Notably, when sending pupils with individual needs, they are accompanied and supported by designated accompanying persons throughout the mobility or traineeship period. Special clothing and equipment for traineeships are procured through the Programme if necessary, with additional funding provided⁵⁶. These efforts are reflected in the inclusion and diversity statistics, with the share of PFO in the new programming period being four times higher than in the previous period, reaching 21.7% of all VET mobility participants⁵⁷. In general, VET institutions stand out as leaders among other areas of education and training in updating their targeting strategies and the employing complementary measures to achieve inclusive mobility objectives⁵⁸.

In the area of VET, Erasmus+ Programme encourages project promoters to address the HPs with 18 out of the 30 KA2 projects implemented or ongoing being related to the implementation of at least one of the HPs (environment and climate change – 6, digital transformation – 10, inclusion and diversity – 2⁵⁹).

3.2.2. EFFECTIVENESS

Individual, institutional, and systemic changes

All available sources confirm that the results of the Programme in the VET sector at the individual level include an increased level of competence, increased willingness and motivation to learn, self-confidence and self-esteem, initiative, and broaden the horizon. During staff mobility visits, VET teachers improve their qualifications, acquire new knowledge, increase their specific and technological competences, adopt new ideas and teaching methods, and build relationships with foreign colleagues. Participants in strategic partnership projects learn and adopt teaching methods and technologies from other countries, which they apply in their teaching and learning process, and pass on their new experiences to colleagues, school executives and social partners.

The actions of the Programme contribute to the implementation of the internationalisation strategy, foster tolerance and interculturalism in the VET community, improve the relationship between VET students and staff, as well as the quality of VET, all of which have a positive impact on VET institutions. Thanks to the Erasmus+ Programme, VET institutions have established a network of foreign partners with whom they cooperate on Erasmus+ projects. According to the sector representatives, the teachers involved in the projects initiate new projects, employ innovative teaching methods, and collaborate with international partners to develop new curricula.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | Data from participant reports within the Erasmus+ Programme for the VET sector confirm that the Program is particularly successful in achieving its objectives in the field of VET:

⁵⁴ Interview with the MoESS.

⁵⁵ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year. Note: The mobility statistics focus solely on KA1 participants. Starting in 2021, participants in the call for Action KA2 activities are no longer included in the mobility statistics.

⁵⁶ Interview with EESF.

⁵⁷ EESF's data. In 2021, 1562 participants, including 399 with special needs, took part in KA121 activities. The following year, in 2022, the participation increased to 2534, with 472 having special needs. Preliminary data for 2023 indicate the involvement of 149 participants, with 49 having special needs.).

⁵⁸ EESF, "Inclusive Mobility", 2023, https://erasmus-plus.lt/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SMPF_Inclusive-Mobility_Survey-Report_2023-04-07.pdf.

⁵⁹ Analysis of the Erasmus+ Results Database, data from 2 February 2024.

- 95% of respondents consider that they have improved their professional competencies,
- 92% their career competencies,
- 92% have increased their perception of equality and inclusion;
- 90% say they have matured as a person and have improved their networking competences;
- 82% have become more socially aware,
- 78% more politically aware⁶⁰.

Vocational trainees particularly welcome traineeships abroad and graduate placements. For more than a third of learners (38%), Erasmus+ traineeships provided their only opportunity to experience time abroad⁶¹. Graduate traineeships abroad increased students' willingness to learn and to contribute to faster job placement (as evidenced by the Europass Mobility Certificate).

At institutional and systemic levels, the Programme has played a crucial role in enhancing inclusiveness and diversity, fostering a shift in young people's attitudes towards work, and promoting entrepreneurship, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of the quality of vocational training⁶².

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | The new programming period had the most positive impact on the following competences:

- 92% of the participants consider that the Programme has helped them to improve their networking competences,
- 89% have a better understanding of the values of equality and inclusiveness,
- 88% consider that the Programme has had a positive impact on their careers,
- 87% say that the Programme has helped them to develop their personality⁶³.

Participation in the Programme promotes structural and systemic change in vocational training institutions. The vast majority of Lithuanian VET institutions operating have established a project manager position, and the more active Erasmus+ participating schools also have separate project management and/or development units within their organisational structure⁶⁴.

The VET representatives welcome new developments of the Erasmus+ Programme, such as the possibility to participate in professional excellence competitions. Participation in such events motivate students, enhances the prestige of vocational schooling, and promotes the Lithuania abroad. At EuroSkills 2023, Europe's largest vocational skills competition, the Lithuanian team achieved notable success by securing ⁶⁵. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that not all VET institutions are aware of the Erasmus+ Programme funding opportunity for participation in these competitions⁶⁶.

Performance factors

The effectiveness of learning mobility depends on understanding the needs of the target groups. The more VET institutions conduct needs assessments and solicit feedback from students and teachers, the more

⁶⁰ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

⁶¹ Factus, "The impact of Erasmus+ international mobility on participants in higher education and vocational training projects", research report, 2018, 41.

⁶² For good practice mobility and strategic partnership projects in the field of VET and their impact at individual, institutional and systemic levels, see Annex 5. Analysis of Best Practice Examples

⁶³ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

⁶⁴ Analysis of vocational school websites based on the list of vocational schools in Lithuania provided by AIKOS information portal. The specific percentage of schools is not provided due to the inactivity of some vocational school websites during the analysis.

⁶⁵ EESF, „Pasveikinti didžiausios Europos profesinio meistriškumo konkurso „Euroskills“ laimėtojai“, 2023, <https://smsm.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/pasveikinti-didziausio-europos-profesinio-meistriskumo-konkurso-euroskills-laimetojai>.

⁶⁶ Interviews with VET representatives.

effective mobility projects become⁶⁷. Unlike other education and training sectors, in the VET sector English language proficiency is not a decisive factor – VET students typically choose traineeships and apprenticeships where they can develop more practical skills⁶⁸. The effectiveness of strategic partnerships, depends on various factors, including the capacity of project promoters, administrative staff, project progress and results, targeting and usability of project outcomes, and the commitment of VET institution managers⁶⁹.

Effectiveness of publicising results

The Erasmus+ Programme results in the VET sector are effectively disseminated through activities such as dissemination days, large-scale project closure events, article writing, and video production. These materials are then shared on school websites, social networks, and promoted through various media channels. Some VET institutions use non-traditional formats to disseminate information, e.g. the Kėdainiai Vocational Training Centre organises creative workshops⁷⁰, the Vilnius School of Trade and Commerce and the Kaunas Food Industry and Trade Training Centre have organised dissemination events/panel discussions inviting students and graduates to share their experiences in creating short videos in social media (reels) and demonstrate the skills they have acquired (e.g. in cooking and tasting)⁷¹.

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Programme

As in the HED sector, the EC has allowed NA to reallocate the available budget by increasing the number of grants for strategic partnerships⁷², extending the deadlines for strategic partnerships and mobility projects, and by ensuring the continuity of ongoing activities. After the pandemic, the VET sector has witnessed increased activity, with the number of applications for strategic partnership projects in 2023 doubling compared to previous years. Additionally, there has been a notable rise in the participation of VET teachers in Action KA1 projects, with the number increasing from 232 in 2020 to 708 in 2023, marking a threefold growth⁷³.

3.2.3. EFFICIENCY

Cost-effectiveness of programme actions

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | VET is the second most supported and popular sector of the Erasmus+ Programme. In the previous generation of the Programme, it received around €43.3 million, i.e. 25.5% of the total funds allocated to education and training activities (or 22.6% of the total programme budget), of which the majority - €33 million (76.2%) - went to the Action KA1, and €10.3 million (23.8%) to the Action KA2.

The proportion of funded applications in the VET sector is lower than in the HED sector but relatively high compared to other sectors in education and training. The Programme is adequately meeting demand, with 58% of all incoming applications funded during the 2014-2020 programming period. Funding for the mobility of VET students and staff (KA116) activities is available to all accredited VET institutions without a call for proposals, with 100% of applications for this activity funded for 2016-2020. With the advent of the Erasmus+ Charter, the share of non-accredited VET institutions in the funded applications for KA102

⁶⁷ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 14.

⁶⁸ Interviews with VET representatives.

⁶⁹ Interviews with VET representatives; Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Interview with Kaunas Food Industry and Trade Training Centre; Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 14.

⁷² EESF's data. Grants for the VET sector under Action KA2: €1.5 million in 2019, €2.2 million in 2020, €2 million in 2021 and €2.5 million in 2022.

⁷³ EESF's data. The number of staff travelling abroad under Action KA1 projects: 172 in 2014, 547 in 2015, 586 in 2016, 538 in 2017, 540 in 2018, 440 in 2019, 232 in 2020, 41 in 2021 (+411 from the 2014-2020 Programme), 412 in 2022 (+468 from the 2014-2020 Programme), 708 in 2023 (+25 from the 2014-2020 Programme).

activities became significantly lower, ranging from 46% to 72%⁷⁴. For the 2014-2020 VET strategic partnerships (KA202) activities, approximately 28-48% of all incoming applications were funded. As in the HED sector, the VET sector in 2020 also received almost twice as many applications as usual, but a similar proportion was funded – around one third of all applications⁷⁵.

The distribution of the budget for VET is sufficiently balanced, the use of the quotas is efficient, and their effectiveness is high – the skills and competences acquired are described in more detail in the previous section (see **Error! Reference source not found.** Effectiveness). In contrast, the sustainability of the results of KA2 projects implemented by VET institutions is limited, exhibiting a moderate utilization rate for the products they produce⁷⁶.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | The Programme has already allocated €23.6 million to the VET sector, which is less than 18% of the total funding allocated to education and training (or 16.5% of the total programme budget), of which €17.7 million are distributed to Action KA1 learning mobility activities and €5.9 million – to Action KA2 activities. Looking at the grant statistics for 2021-2023, the share of the budget for Action KA1 activities has decreased by 3.8%, while the share for Action KA2 activities has increased only by 1%.

In the new programming period, the proportion of funded applications in the VET sector is significantly higher, with 80% of all incoming applications being successfully accepted. The updated Programme is slightly more responsive to the needs of VETs, with almost all professional mobility and short-term mobility projects (KA121) being funded. Although the number of funded projects in the new round of VET cooperation partnerships has increased slightly, funding is still not meeting demand, with an overall success rate of 0.35 for Action KA2. Small-scale strategic partnership projects (KA210) accounted for 50% of the funding in 2021 and only 33% of the total applications received in 2022. The number of funded larger-scale strategic partnerships (KA220) is higher - 53% in 2021 and 71% in 2022.⁷⁷

However, criticizes the new programming period's condition of introducing expensive strategic partnership projects with a one-off fixed grant of EUR 400 thousand⁷⁸. The evaluation of last programming period's projects shows that few projects expressed a need of €250-300 thousand, which makes the amount available for funding too high and raises doubts about the sustainability of the results of such projects. In the NA's view, small-scale strategic partnerships are more efficient and have a significant impact on organisations, institutions, and local communities. Overall, the interviewees consider the distribution of funds in the VET area to be relevantly balanced but note that there is still a need for more funding. In addition, participants highlight that the grants awarded to Programme participants are not always sufficient, given the significant increases in both travel and living costs⁷⁹.

Other factors influencing efficiency

VET project promoters express positive evaluations of the simplified grant system, citing its role in streamlining project management and cultivating a culture of trust within organizations. This, in turn, has shifted the focus towards the quality and outcomes of the projects⁸⁰.

Erasmus+ accreditation, which is particularly popular among VET institutions, has also helped to reduce the administrative burden on grant beneficiaries. Over the lifetime of the accreditation system, 49 out of

⁷⁴ EESF's data. Proportion of applications funded for KA102 activities: 82% in 2014, 59% in 2015, 46% in 2016, 45% in 2017, 50% in 2018, 71% in 2019 and 72% in 2020.

⁷⁵ Statistics on the budget of the Programme and the financing of applications are set out in Annex 7. Statistics on Program Budget and Funding Applications

⁷⁶ EESF, „Erasmus+ intelektiniai produktai“, 2019.

⁷⁷ Statistics on the budget of the Programme and the financing of applications are set out in Annex 7. Statistics on Program Budget and Funding Applications

⁷⁸ European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme guide*, 241.

⁷⁹ Interviews with VET representatives.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

53 Lithuanian VET institutions have been granted accreditation⁸¹. This shows that these institutions have developed appropriate strategies for internationalisation and meet the quality criteria for international activities. On the other hand, the accreditation system has not alleviated the workload for the NAs. Instead, it has introduced additional tasks such as organizing accreditation competitions, evaluating intricate applications for these competitions, and verifying reports.

According to the VET representatives, NA efficiently provides the necessary support when problems or uncertainties arise. The interviewees appreciated the meetings organised by the NA with project promoters, the virtual training recordings, and seminars available on the EESF website, and provided project examples. However, some project promoters and coordinators expressed the need for more live events and workshops.

NA representatives positively evaluate the Dashboard tool as it provides access to information on all participants in the education and training sector, including vocational training. On the other hand, NA representatives consider that the information provided in the Dashboard should be more tailored. Without special preparation, such as searching for information or using filters, there is a risk of missing or misinterpreting important information. Also, the data in the Dashboard databases could be more user-friendly and more decision-oriented. For example, databases such as the Plagiarism Dashboard and the Multiple Submissions and Double Funding Dashboard, while appreciated, are unusable/difficult to interpret without further analysis.⁸²

Anti-fraud measures in the area of VET are considered efficient, with the use of the EC's plagiarism detection tool.

3.2.4. COHERENCE

In the vocational training and education sector, there is sufficient coherence between the different actions of the Programme, but there could be more cross-sectoral cooperation in the VET sector, with only one cross-sectoral partnership project being implemented during the two programming periods under review⁸³.

As in the HED sector, Erasmus+ Programme is considered to be the most important tool enabling VET institutions to develop the international dimension. In addition, VET institutions can benefit from the Nordplus sub-programme Nordplus Junior, which focuses on the mobility of students and teachers⁸⁴. Another complementary but not overlapping programme to Erasmus+ is the National Mobility Programme, funded by the Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan "Next Generation Lithuania" and implemented by the ESFA, which enables VET students to come to a sectoral practical training centre from other VET institutions that do not have one⁸⁵.

3.2.5. EUROPEAN VALUE ADDED

Compared to non-participants, vocational students who participate in the Programme have the opportunity to improve their skills and competencies, foreign language skills, broaden their horizons, gain confidence, and improve their social skills thanks to the Erasmus+ Programme, all of which help them to choose a career path and to find a job faster. In a context of geopolitical challenges, the vast majority (94%)

⁸¹ EESF's data. 40 organisations were accredited in VET in 2014-2020, 4 in 2021 and 5 in 2022.

⁸² Interview with NA.

⁸³ Erasmus+ Results Database, Karaliaus Mindaugas Vocational Training Centre project, "European Partnership for Service Specialists", 2014-2016. Internet access: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2014-1-LT01-KA200-000604>.

⁸⁴ Nordplus, "Nordplus Junior". Internet access: <https://www.nordplus.lt/programos/nordplus-junior>.

⁸⁵ ESFA, „Jgyk praktinių įgūdžių sektoriniame praktinio mokymo centre!“, 2023. Internet access: <https://www.esf.lt/veiklos-sritys/nacionaline-mobilumo-programa/1187>.

of participants rate the Programme's contribution to promoting European identity, contributing to the development of European values⁸⁶.

VET institutions see the Programme as an opportunity to expand their network of partners in Europe, elevate their profile and enhance the international dimension. Participating organisations appreciate the EU added value of Erasmus+ projects: noting that the Erasmus+ Programme has enabled them to achieve results that could not be achieved through regional or national programmes alone⁸⁷.

3.3. SCHOOL EDUCATION

3.3.1. RELEVANCE

The Erasmus+ programme seeks to encourage mobility for learning and collaboration, fostering quality and inclusive teaching and learning. It aims to promote innovation and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary in a rapidly changing, increasingly mobile, multicultural, and digitized society⁸⁸. This need is particularly relevant and closely aligned with Lithuania's national policy agenda, as articulated in the Programme of the Government's implementation plan. The plan aims to modernize and update pedagogical study programs using digital technologies, with a focus on training educators with broader specializations and internationalization. It also emphasizes collaboration with leading teacher training centres worldwide and increasing the participation of professionals from various fields in pedagogical study programs⁸⁹. This confirms that the Erasmus+ programme contributes to the implementation of Lithuania's strategic goals.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014–2020 | During the 2014–2020 programming period, over 3.6 thousand representatives from school education (SCH) sector participated in mobility for learning purposes programs, observed the work of others and improved their qualifications, while 12,6 thousand participated in strategic partnership projects⁹⁰. While the Erasmus+ programme included financial measures targeting individuals with fewer possibilities (e.g. funding for inclusion expenses of organizations and participants⁹¹), these initiatives faced challenges in reaching the intended groups in Lithuania. Over the entire period of 2014–2020, only 26 PFO participated in KA2 projects⁹².

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021–2027 | From 2021 to 2023, the Erasmus+ Programme engaged more than 2,6 thousand participants⁹³. It is becoming increasingly popular among teachers and other educational staff⁹⁴. As in the previous period, PFO constituted only a small portion of all mobility participants in the SCH sector⁹⁵. However, the Programme's focus in this programming period is evident in its commitment to

⁸⁶ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

⁸⁷ Interviews with VET representatives.

⁸⁸ European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme guide, 4-6.

⁸⁹ Implementation Plan for the 18th Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 13.

⁹⁰ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year.

⁹¹ Allocated to the institution based on the number of expected PFO participants outlined in the project or on participants who have indicated such a requirement in their application. Read more: <https://erasmus-plus.lt/programa/svietimo-ir-mokymo-sritis/>

⁹² Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year. In 2014-2020, 1 participant with special needs took part in KA201 activities, 25 in KA219 activities.

⁹³ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year. Note: The mobility statistics focus solely on KA1 participants. Starting in 2021, participants in the call for Action KA2 activities are no longer included in the mobility statistics.

⁹⁴ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023,. Employees who travelled abroad under Action KA1 projects: 45 in 2021, 660 in 2022, 896 in 2023.

⁹⁵ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by mobility start year. In 2021-2023, a total of 2,577 participants engaged in SCH sector activities, including 5 PFOs participants. Note: Starting in 2021, participants in the call for Action KA2 activities are no longer included in the mobility statistics.

making Erasmus+ more accessible to harder-to-reach societal groups in the SCH sector. This commitment is reflected in strategic partnership projects, with 28% of all implemented or ongoing projects specifically aimed at enhancing inclusion and diversity⁹⁶.

Overall, the Programme has brought more knowledge and understanding of horizontal priorities to the SCH community. During this programming period, there is a notable focus on these priorities – 44 out of 65 KA2 projects implemented or still ongoing in the SCH sector were related to HP, of which 15 projects were related to diversity and inclusion, 13 - to digital transformation, 14 – to the environment and climate change, and 2 – to participation in democratic life and civic engagement⁹⁷.

3.3.2. EFFECTIVENESS

Individual, institutional and systemic changes

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014–2020 | According to feedback from participants in the SCH sector, at the individual level, the Erasmus+ Programme has contributed to the development of their competencies as follows:

- 96% of respondents believe that the programme has contributed to increasing their social awareness,
- 89% improved personally during the programme,
- 88% enhanced their career competencies, and
- 82% acquired competencies in European values⁹⁸.

At the individual level, the Programme allowed teachers to improve their qualifications and contributed to the development of their intercultural and professional competencies. Through the mobility visits, they had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with other cultures and education systems of other countries, become more open to changes and the application of new teaching and learning methods and innovations⁹⁹. Participation in the Erasmus+ mobility projects has contributed to the confidence and self-esteem growth of teachers, who feel respected and valued for their acquired experience both, by students and their parents¹⁰⁰. It is noted that teachers who have participated in mobility visits are more inclined to apply new innovative teaching methods, integrate information and communication technologies and/or foreign languages into their teaching practice. These acquired skills and competencies contribute to the improvement of teaching quality, which in turn has a positive impact on both students' motivation to learn and their learning achievements. Strategic partnership projects have a significant impact on the development and expansion of educational content in schools, helping schools to specialize in specific topics, promoting international networking, and inspiring joint initiatives¹⁰¹. Read about the successfully implemented Erasmus+ project "Prepare for Future Careers" by the Kretinga District Education Center and its results in the Annex 5. Analysis of Best Practice Examples Annex 5. Analysis of Best Practice Examples

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021–2027 | From 2021 to 2023, the vast majority of mobility participants reported improvement in various competencies, such as:

- foreign language skills – 99 % of respondents agree,
- social awareness competencies – 93%,
- personal development competencies – 88%,

⁹⁶ Calculated by the Author of the Study based on the Erasmus+ results database as of 2 February 2024.

⁹⁷ Analysis of the Erasmus+ results database, 18 December 2023.

⁹⁸ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

⁹⁹ Research report of impact and sustainability of the Erasmus+ Programme Action KA1 mobility projects for Lithuania school education, 2015, 77. Internet access: https://erasmus-plus.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/I-Nacionalin%C4%97-ataskaita_LT.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 57.

¹⁰¹ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 17-18.

- career competencies – 86%,
- and networking competencies – 83 % of participants¹⁰².

At the institutional level, the mobility of SCH staff promotes structural, cultural, and strategic development of schools. According to respondents, Erasmus+ projects lead to the integration of new and innovative teaching methods into the curriculum, resulting in an improved quality of student engagement and performance. Teachers with international experience contribute not only to the improvement of teaching quality but also to the deepening of institutional knowledge, strengthening project management skills.

One of the side effects of the Programme emphasized is the sense of community that emerges in educational institutions. Familiarity with other cultures and education systems enhances teamwork in Lithuanian schools. Additionally, participation in projects leads to personal connections among school representatives and facilitates the exchange of both professional and personal information, creating communities of different schools from different countries and fostering a sense of belonging to Europe¹⁰³.

Performance factors

In the SCH sector, the effectiveness of mobility visits depends on the dissemination of results and the practical application of acquired skills and knowledge. Active promotion and mechanisms for transferring experience gained during mobility visits ensure that even teachers, who did not participate in Erasmus+ mobility activities, can effectively apply the knowledge and teaching methods brought by their colleagues. Another important factor in effectiveness is the relevance of strategic partnership projects and the involvement of school executives, ensuring that the implemented projects are beneficial and necessary for the school community, and that the products created during them are widely applicable in their school¹⁰⁴.

Similarly important are the capacities of project promoters and their project management skills¹⁰⁵. Many Lithuanian schools do not have dedicated international relations or project management departments. Consequently, projects are often administered by subject teachers for whom this is not their main activity, and they do not always receive compensation for additional workload. On the other hand, even with available human and administrative resources, the quality of KA101 mobility activity for general education staff applications has improved. For instance, while in 2014 only 55% of applications submitted met the minimum quality requirements, by 2020 this indicator had increased to 93%. The quality of applications for strategic partnerships in general education (KA201) also improved slightly: in 2014, 88%, and in 2020, 90% of applications met the minimum quality requirements¹⁰⁶.

The effectiveness of mobility projects is also influenced by the preparation for the visit and the work experience of the teachers participating in the programme. Teachers with shorter tenure at the school are more inclined to enhance their qualifications, establish connections with teachers working abroad, have better English language skills, and are more open to innovations¹⁰⁷.

The effectiveness of disseminating results

When evaluating the effectiveness of disseminating project results, according to respondents, information dissemination is actively carried out. This includes collaboration with municipalities, sharing project experiences and successes on both municipal and school websites, in local media, as well as during conferences¹⁰⁸. However, research indicates that traditional forms of disseminating project results could

¹⁰² Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action on the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies.

¹⁰³ Interviews with SCH representatives.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Research report of impact and sustainability of The Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 1 mobility projects for Lithuania school education, 2015, 27.

¹⁰⁶ EESF's data.

¹⁰⁷ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 19.

¹⁰⁸ Interviews with representatives of municipalities and SCH.

be replaced with more impactful public relations techniques, focusing on activities that can influence deeper attitudes among teachers¹⁰⁹.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the programme

Like in other education and training sectors, the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on mobility for learning purposes and the implementation of strategic partnership projects. However, budget reallocation, flexible and rapid response helped to maintain the continuity of activities. After the pandemic, there has been an observed growth in activity in the SCH sector – in 2023, both mobility and strategic partnership projects received significantly more applications than during the pandemic years of 2020–2021. Similarly to other education and training sectors, SCH teachers actively participate in mobility programmes for learning purposes: from 2020 to 2023, the number of participating teachers increased by 9 times¹¹⁰. This indicates that despite the downturn and slowdown in activities experienced during the pandemic, interest in the Erasmus+ programme remains in the SCH sector.

3.3.3. EFFICIENCY

Cost-effectiveness of Programme's actions

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014–2020 | The SCH sector is one of the least funded sectors within the Erasmus+ Programme. From 2014 to 2020, approximately €30,2 million were allocated to this sector, which is less than 18% of all funds allocated for education and training activities (or 15,8% of the total Programme budget). Out of this funding, €6,5 million were allocated for mobility for learning purposes, €9.4 million for strategic partnerships, and €14,2 million for KA2 activities for school exchanges.

Among all education and training sectors, the SCH sector had one of the lowest rates of funded applications during the 2014–2020 programming period, with only 31% of applications receiving funding. For mobility activities for school education staff (KA101), an average of 34% of all applications from schools received funding. This percentage increased over the years, starting from 20% in 2014 and reaching 46% by the end of the period.

For strategic partnerships in school education (KA201), an average of 39% of all received applications were funded. Meanwhile for strategic partnerships for inter-school cooperation (KA219) and school exchange partnerships (KA229), slightly less funding was provided, at around 33% of all received applications. Throughout the analysed period, the number of applications for strategic partnerships in school education gradually increased, reaching a record number in 2020, although the percentage of funded applications remained similar to that of 2019¹¹¹.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021–2027 | In the new programming period, an allocation of €19 million was designated for the field of SCH, constituting 14,3% of the overall funds allocated to education and training (or 13,2% of the entire Programme budget). This distribution mirrors the proportions assigned to Actions KA1 and KA2 in the previous phase, which were €10,1 million and €8,9 million, respectively. In comparison to the previous programming period, the allocation for Action KA1 has nearly doubled from 5,5 to 13,6% of the total budget allocated, whereas the share designated for Action KA2 has decreased from 47,5 to 32,5%. This significant change in the proportions is largely due to the transfer of the pupil exchange activity (KA229) to Action KA1 in the new programming period.

In the 2021-2027 programming period, the proportion of funded applications in the SCH sector is slightly higher, reflecting a more responsive approach to the substantial increase in demand, with 52% of all

¹⁰⁹ Research report of impact and sustainability of The Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 1 mobility projects for Lithuania school education, 2015, 62, 81.

¹¹⁰ Employees who travelled abroad under Action KA1 projects: 71 in 2014, 330 in 2015, 341 in 2016, 427 in 2017, 457 in 2018, 642 in 2019, 102 in 2020, 45 in 2021 (+497 from 2014-2020 Programme), 660 in 2022, (+645 from 2014-2020 Programme), 896 in 2023 (+35 from 2014-2020 Programme).

¹¹¹ Statistics on the budget of the Programme and the financing of applications are set out in Annex 7. Statistics on Program Budget and Funding Applications

incoming applications being funded. Almost all mobility projects for accredited organizations (KA121)¹¹² in school education and the majority (83% on average) of short-term mobility projects (KA122) in school education are being funded.

On the other hand, there was a notable decrease in funding for strategic partnerships, particularly evident in KA210 activity, with 46% of small-scale partnership applications being funded in 2021 and only 8% in 2022. This decline occurred despite a substantial increase in the number of applications, indicating significant interest and demand for this activity (35 applications received in 2021, 108 in 2022, and 130 in 2023). Funding for school education cooperation partnerships (KA220) saw a slight increase, yet remains insufficient to meet the rising demand: 55 percent of applications were funded in 2021 and 25 percent in 2022¹¹³ (the success rate of these applications is extremely low, with only 16% of incoming applications securing funding¹¹⁴).

As in other education and training sectors, the SCH sector experiences a notable surge in the number of applications received in 2023, which can be attributed to the fact that the new programming period of Erasmus+ better addresses the needs of school education, for example, by making short-term mobility projects and small-scale strategic partnerships particularly attractive to participants. However, despite the Programme efficiently meeting the demand for learning mobility, NAs highlight an issue with a considerable number of school exchange applications (formerly known as KA229 activities in the previous programming period). These applications were deemed of low quality and could not be funded as they were targeted at the wrong Action.

The data analysed in the study suggests that the Erasmus+ Programme funding allocated to the SCH sector is insufficient compared to the high demand, particularly for strategic partnerships in school education. This is also confirmed by the SCH sector representatives and NAs in the interviews. At the individual level, respondents emphasized a recurring shortage of funds for travel. They argue that the current procedure for allocating a fixed sum of money based on distance is inappropriate, especially given the substantial increase in travel costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine.

Other factors influencing efficiency

The SCH sector representatives value the measures taken by the NA to monitor and support applicants. Interviewees appreciate the training sessions and events organized by the NA, as well as the convenient and efficient telephone and email advice provided by their specialists.

The Erasmus+ accreditation is gaining momentum among SCH institutions, with only 5 accredited in 2020, 16 in 2021, and 38 in 2022¹¹⁵. According to interviewees, the simplified grants and accreditation system in Lithuania has proven highly successful, simplifying and expediting procedures for applicants and project promoters. However, the NA acknowledges that the accreditation process itself has not reduced its workload, given the complexity and the length of the applications. NA also sees a risk that in the next few years the Agency may reach a point where the available budget may not be sufficient to cover all the grants requested by accredited schools or may not be available for schools without accreditation. To ensure that the accreditation system aligns with its original purpose and concept, a larger budget allocation is needed to fund mobility projects in the SCH field.

The IT environment is generally perceived positively by SCH project promoters, although respondents acknowledge that it could be improved. Suggestions for enhancement include streamlining the system to make it less cumbersome and integrating it more closely with the course organizers' database to simplify and expedite data entry. Nonetheless, some interviewees expressed negative experiences with the

¹¹² EESF's data. 100% funded in 2021, 95% in 2022 and 100% in 2023.

¹¹³ EESF's data. Note: data for 2023 is provisional.

¹¹⁴ Statistics on the budget of the Programme and the financing of applications are set out in Annex 7. Statistics on Program Budget and Funding Applications

¹¹⁵ EESF's data. Number of school education institutions granted accreditation: 2020 - 5, 2021 - 16, 2022 - 38.

„Beneficiary Module“ system, noting instances where all entered information disappeared after completing the application form, necessitating the re-entry of data¹¹⁶.

The SCH sector has not encountered any cases of fraud, and teachers are careful in collecting information and verifying bank account details. The NA employs consistent anti-fraud measures across all education and training sectors, resulting in similar levels of efficiency.

3.3.4. COHERENCE

Different Actions within the Erasmus+ Programme in the field of SCH complement each other, and there are also adequate synergies with other sectors. Throughout the evaluated programming periods, HEI have undertaken several collaborative strategic partnership projects with gymnasiums, primary schools, kindergartens, and foreign partners¹¹⁷.

Regarding the alignment of the Programme with other similar initiatives, it is crucial to recognize that Lithuanian teachers, particularly those from regional schools, often lack the financial resources to fund seminars and professional development abroad independently. Therefore, the Erasmus+ Programme serves as a pivotal tool in fostering the internationalization and institutional growth of school education institutions and other entities engaged in this field. It facilitates students and teachers from SCH to acquire international exposure, enhance their skills, and forge connections with schools across borders. Aside from Erasmus+, similarly as in VET sector, certain Lithuanian schools also engage in the Nordplus Junior programme. Nonetheless, its scale and influence remain considerably limited in comparison.

3.3.5. EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE

Like in other areas of education and training, participants in the SCH sector hold a highly favourable perception of the significance of European values. According to mobility project participants' surveys, an average of 83% of participants indicated that the Programme has positively contributed to the cultivation of their European values. This sentiment reached a record high of 97% in 2023¹¹⁸.

Respondents express that the contacts and partnerships established through the Programme foster European unity and foster a sense of belonging to Europe. In essence, the exchange of best practices with European counterparts enables the expedited development of common European solutions to urgent challenges, the acquisition of new skills, and the collaboration of top professionals toward shared innovative objectives in education, particularly in the implementation of horizontal priorities.

In Lithuania, the Erasmus+ Programme could have a more significant impact in the SCH sector by making greater efforts to engage hard-to-reach groups. According to NA representatives, this could be accomplished through more active promotion of inclusive mobility examples or success stories that could serve as role models for the less advantaged. Additionally, educating and informing project promoters about the potential barriers that hinder and discourage participation of PFOs in Erasmus+ mobility activities could be beneficial¹¹⁹. Research also suggests that enhancing inclusion and diversity in Lithuania would be

¹¹⁶ Interviews with SCH representatives.

¹¹⁷ Erasmus+ results database, projects "EXPeriential EDUcation COMpetence" and "Inclusive Education: Socio-Psychological, Educational and Social Aspects".

¹¹⁸ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action on the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

¹¹⁹ Interview with NA.

greatly facilitated if the strategic documents and plans of educational institutions connected this priority to international mobility activities¹²⁰.

3.4. ADULT EDUCATION

3.4.1. RELEVANCE

In the field of adult education (ADU), Erasmus+ Programme aims to reduce skills gaps and labour shortages through lifelong learning, improve the competences of educators and other adult education workers, and encourage adults of all ages to acquire the relevant skills and key competences needed to be resilient to various changes and uncertainty¹²¹. The goal of creating a constantly learning society, creating conditions for persons who want to change or improve their qualifications, is also highlighted in the key strategic documents of Lithuania¹²². Overall, in the context of EU countries, Lithuania has a relatively low position in the field of ADU (in 2022, 20th position in the EU). According to the available data, only 8.5% of adults aged 25-64 had completed any type of learning experience in the last four weeks, while the EU average is at 11.9%¹²³. Thus, the Erasmus+ Programme contributes to the development of Lithuania's lifelong learning indicators and the implementation of strategic ADU policy goals.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | The Programme's profile has been growing annually: if in 2014 only 84 staff in the ADU sector participated in Erasmus+ learning mobility activities, in 2020 it reached 167 participants. The same trend is observed when analysing the Action KA2 statistics: in 2014, 16 participants participated in Action KA2, and in 2020 – 198. The number of ADU institutions involved in KA2 strategic partnership projects has also doubled¹²⁴. During the period of 2014-2020, a total of 0.9 thousand people participated in the ADU related Action KA1 activities, 0,8% of whom were individuals with special needs. The number of KA2 participants was 0.7 thousand, of which 0.6% had special needs¹²⁵. This indicator is lower than in other sectors of education and training, as in the field of ADU, the programme only focused on personnel mobility.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | During the period under review, more than 0.7 thousand people (including ADU staff members and adult learners) have already managed to take advantage of the opportunities of the mobility programme¹²⁶. In 2021, a record number of ADU institutions became involved in KA2 projects¹²⁷. Like in other sectors, Erasmus+ programme includes financial instruments to engage adult learners and ADU institutions' staff members, labelled as PFO or belonging to other disadvantaged

¹²⁰EESF, „Inclusive Mobility“, 2023.

¹²¹ European Commission, *Erasmus+ programme guide*6, 246-247.

¹²² For example, in the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, NPP, „Lietuva 2050“ , MoESS agenda.

¹²³ Eurostat, „Adult learning statistics“, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult_learning_statistics#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%20proportion%20of,in%202020%2C%20see%20Table%201.

¹²⁴ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023. In 2014, the number of KA2 project coordinators for ADU organizations reached 5, in 2020 – 12; In 2014, the number of KA2 project partners of AE organizations reached 29, in 2020 – 70.

¹²⁵ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year. In the period 2014-2020, 853 persons participated in KA104 activities, 7 of whom have special needs. A total of 702 persons participated in KA204 activities, 45 of whom had special needs.

¹²⁶ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023, by funding (call) year. Note: The mobility statistics focus solely on KA1 participants. Starting in 2021, participants in the call for Action KA2 activities are no longer included in the mobility statistics.

¹²⁷ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023. In 2021, the number of KA2 project coordinators for ADU organizations reached 26, in 2021 – 16, in 2023 – 7 (provisional data). In 2021, the number of KA2 project partners of ADU organizations reached 126, in 2022 – 74, in 2023 – 22 (provisional data).

people groups¹²⁸. The share of PFO and disadvantaged persons participating in learning mobility activities so far stands at 1,4% of the total number of participants in the Action KA1 activities¹²⁹.

In the field of ADU, the current Erasmus+ Programme funding period in Lithuania shows a strong focus on HP. 31 out of 56 projects already implemented or ongoing are related to one of the four HP: digital transformation – 15 projects, inclusion and diversity – 9, environment and the fight against climate change – 7¹³⁰.

3.4.2. EFFECTIVENESS

Individual, institutional and systemic changes

The data analysed during the evaluation reveals that during the mobility, participants experienced increased awareness, openness to new experiences, professional growth, increased motivation to continue learning and inspiration to improve through adult learning activities.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | Data from the feedback of the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme participants in the ADU sector the reveals that the mobility participants have a good assessment of the mobility programme and its impact on the development of their competencies.

- 97% say that the Programme has had a positive impact on their professional competencies,
- 87% believe that the Programme has contributed to their career competencies,
- 97% believe that the Programme has had a positive effect on foreign language skills,
- 89% of respondents say that they have improved their personal development competences, and
- more than 88% of participants say they have become more socially and politically conscious¹³¹.

At institutional level, the Programme has contributed to the development of a network of transnational cooperation partnerships, consistently developing the internationalisation dimension¹³². Participation in projects helps institutions to become centres of excellence on a specific topic. For instance, the Erasmus+ project "Media Literacy Education for Responsible Citizenship", implemented by the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, helped it to become a centre of excellence for media literacy education, developed media literacy and critical thinking skills among lifelong adult learners¹³³.

While the scale of the Programme in the ADU sector may be too small to observe any systemic change, certain projects are acknowledged for contributing to the enhancement of the Lithuanian ADU system¹³⁴.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | Examining the reports of participants of the new Erasmus+ Programme's implementation period's projects, it can be observed that mobility participants in the AE sector are developing similar competences compared to the previous period:

- 99% improved their foreign language skills,
- 86% believe that the Programme had a positive impact on their career competences,

¹²⁸ For example, the costs of supporting the inclusion of these organisations and/or participants are financed and allocated to the institution, taking into account the planned number of participants with fewer opportunities in the project and/or the planned number of those participants who have indicated such a need in the application. More information: <https://erasmus-plus.lt/programa/svietimo-ir-mokymo-sritis/>

¹²⁹ Data from EESF as of October 31, 2023. In 2021-2023, a total of 725 adult learners participated in Action KA1 activities, of which 10 were PFO. Note: As of the 2021 call, KA2 participants are not included in mobility statistics. Data for 2023 is provisional.

¹³⁰ Analysis of the Erasmus+ Programme's results database, as of 18 December 2023.

¹³¹ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action on the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

¹³² Interviews with ADU organisations' representatives. Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 2017, 21.

¹³³ Read more about the project recognised as good practice in Annex 5. Analysis of Best Practice Examples

¹³⁴ EESF, „Turi specialiuju poreikiu? Galimybems ribu nera“, 2019. Internet access: <https://erasmus-plus.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Specialiuju-poreikiu-leidinys-su-virseliu.pdf>.

- 91% of participants began to value EU values more,
- 92% of respondents improved their networking competencies,
- 95% became more politically conscious, and
- 91% of participants experienced personal improvement¹³⁵.

At the institutional level, mobility allows people to get acquainted with other practices, to understand the importance of cooperation with international partners. The knowledge and skills acquired during the mobility programme are integrated into ADU curricula, which has led to more practical activities being organised by the ADU institutions, better quality services provided for learners, while at the same time increasing the volume of learning activities, resulting in a greater learner satisfaction¹³⁶.

Performance factors

In the ADU sector, as in the case of the SCH, the effectiveness of the Programme's actions depends highly on the publicity and dissemination of the experience gained during the mobility projects and on the practical application of the skills and knowledge acquired. The capacity of project promoters and their project management skills are equally important. ADU institutions usually are not in a position to set up dedicated international (external) relations or project management units, so, as in the SCH sector, the project applications are prepared and managed by ADU's staff members.

The quality of mobility programmes is also influenced by the age of the staff of the ADU institutions and the level of knowledge of the English language. Interviewees note that the lack of language skills among ADU staff often a barrier that demotivates participation in projects. However, there are cases where Erasmus+ has significantly improved the participants' English language skills, enabling them to engage in new activities¹³⁷.

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Programme

As in other sectors of education and training, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the mobility of the ADU sector and the implementation of strategic partnership projects. To respond to these challenges, budget reallocation, extension of the deadlines for the implementation of activities, remote meetings and flexibility on both the part of the EC and the NA helped to ensure the smooth implementation of the activities.

Since the end of the pandemic there has been a significant increase in the interest of ADU institutions in the Erasmus+ Programme: in 2020, 39 people participated in the Erasmus+ Programme's projects 8 times as many in 2023, with 326 HE representatives¹³⁸. This demonstrates the growing activity of ADU specialists and demand to improve their professional qualifications.

3.4.3. EFFICIENCY

Cost-effectiveness of Programme's actions

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | ADU sector was the least funded sector within the Erasmus+ programme. In the previous funding period, around €10 million, less than 6% of the total funds allocated to education and training activities (or 5.2% of the total Programme budget), was allocated to ADU activities, of which 15% (€1.5 million) went to Action KA1 and the majority – 85% (€8.5 million) – to Action KA2 activities. In 2014-2020, 1.3% of the total KA1 budget was allocated to ADU sector, while KA2 activities received a significantly higher portion, accounting for 17.1%. The share of applications funded in the ADU

¹³⁵ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action on the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

¹³⁶ Interviews with ADU representatives.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ EESF's data. The number of staff travelling abroad under KA1 projects: 15 in 2014, 82 in 2015, 61 in 2016, 94 in 2017, 130 in 2018, 148 in 2019, 39 in 2020, 10 in 2021 (+154 from the 2014-2020 Programme), 298 in 2022 (+130 from the 2014-2020 Programme), 326 in 2023.

sector is the lowest and does not sufficiently meet the growing demand – in the Programme period for 2014-2020, the success rate for applications funded was 0.34.

Analysing each Action separately, it can be seen that:

- The number of applicants who received funding for mobility activities for ADU staff (Action KA104) gradually increased but was not enough to meet the growing demand. The success rate of Action KA1 applications in the AE sector is 0,36. Applications for mobility activities are of higher quality: 82% of applications for activities of adult education staff (Action KA104) meeting the minimum quality requirements in 2014, and 95% in 2020¹³⁹.
- Demand for ADU strategic partnerships is also not sufficiently satisfactory, with a success rate of 0.32. The number of applications received for strategic partnerships in ADU (Action KA204) during the period of 2014-2019 ranged from 19 to 27 applications per call each year, of which 5-11 were funded. In 2020, the number of applications tripled, but less than a one third were funded. Compared to other education and training sectors, the quality of AE applications has been at a lower level, but with a steady improvement: for example, the share of applications for ADU strategic partnership (Action KA204) activities, that met the minimum quality requirements, reached 53% in 2014 and 76% in 2020.

Similar to other education and training sectors, Action KA1 is considered to be most efficient. However, quantifying its impact is difficult, because both the share of the budget and the number of participants, although growing, still do not reach a critical mass to objectively measure the impact and assess the efficiency¹⁴⁰.

While strategic partnerships add value to institutions in terms of growing their work culture, there are still challenges. For example, there is the problem of 'application factories'; additionally, studies show that the utilisation of ADU Action's KA2 project results is the lowest of all education and training sectors¹⁴¹. On the other hand, the demand for Erasmus+ projects in the field of ADU is very high, as evidenced by the growing number of applications, and Lithuania's position low position in the field of lifelong learning (e.g., Lithuania's lifelong learning indicators are among the lowest among EU countries¹⁴²).

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | During the three years of implementation of the new funding period, €9.6 million has already been allocated to ADU sector, which is just under 7.2% of the total funding allocated to education and training (or 6.7% of the total Programme budget). Action KA1's learning mobility activities received €2.5 million, while Action KA2 - €7.1 million euros. In the new funding period, a larger budget share was allocated to the ADU sector - 3.4% and 25.9% respectively for Action KA1 and Action KA2. The share of funded applications in the ADU sector is also slightly higher in the new Erasmus+ Programme period, but still falls short of demand, with a success rate of 0.47.

The new phase of the Erasmus+ Programme pays significantly more attention to ADU learning mobility projects: for example, in 2021, the ADU Short-Term Mobility Projects (KA122) action received funding for 70% of all applications received, rising to 93% in 2022.¹⁴³

Meanwhile, the number of funded ADU strategic partnerships is significantly lower than in the previous period of the Programme: the success rate of the action of Action KA2 among ADU applicant reaches 0.24. Half of all applications received were funded in small-scale partnerships for adult education (KA210) in 2021, compared to just 38% in 2022. The funding rate of ADU cooperation partnerships (KA220) was slightly

¹³⁹ Statistics on the budget of the Programme and the financing of applications are set out in Annex 7. Statistics on Program Budget and Funding Applications

¹⁴⁰ EESF's data. Number of participants based on Action's KA1 projects: 80 in 2014, 154 in 2020, 260 in 2021 and 590 in 2023.

¹⁴¹ EESF, „Erasmus+ intelektiniai produktai“, 2019.

¹⁴² STRATA, „Žmogiškasis kapitalas Lietuvoje“, 2020.

¹⁴³ EESF's data. Note: Data for 2023 have not yet been published.

higher, at 67% in 2021 and 47% in 2022. Overall, in 2023, the NA received twice as many applications for mobility projects and three times more applications for strategic partnerships compared to 2021¹⁴⁴.

This unusually large jump in applications confirms that the Programme is gaining popularity among the ADU community, although part of the growth is also associated with the problem of "application factories". The NA considers that there are sufficient funds for the new round of KA1 projects in the ADU sector, but the budget size for ADU KA2 projects is too low for the number of applications received.

Other factors influencing efficiency

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING | Programme management and monitoring in ADU sector is implemented similarly as in other education and training sectors. In addition to the measures already mentioned, it is worth noting that NA applies certain motivating measures to potential applicants. For example, for several years in a row, the EESF has been organizing a "Quality Competition", which recognises and rewards the best quality Erasmus+ projects promoting inclusion, ecological thinking and develop digital skills at the competition's awards event. In 2023, 2 ADU projects have been nominated for the brightest start and expertise in the field of inclusion, while the mobility project "Preparing Foster Carers for Professional Care" implemented by the National Association of Foster Parents, Adoptive Parents, Training and Counselling has been awarded the prize for the biggest breakthrough¹⁴⁵.

The accreditation system in the field of ADU is viewed favourably by the representatives of ADU institutions as meeting their needs. On the other hand, Erasmus+ accreditation among ADU institutions is still in its infancy – in three years, accreditation has been granted to 14 ADU institutions¹⁴⁶.

NA applies the same anti-fraud measures in the ADU sector as in other education and training sectors. In addition, NA welcomes the EC's decision to strengthen monitoring from 2024 onwards by focusing on the assessment of the financial and operational capacity of applicants during the selection¹⁴⁷ – this should help to combat the problem of 'application factories', but it is too early to assess the efficiency of these measures.

3.4.4. COHERENCE

The various actions of the Erasmus+ Programme in the ADU sector are mutually aligned and complementary. ADU sector professionals can find partners across Europe, connect with them, and share content related to adult learning through the EPALE platform set up by the EC. However, due to the limited budget, ADU institutions are unable take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Programme. Nevertheless, Erasmus+ Programme is a key tool enabling ADU staff and learners to participate in mobility and strategic partnerships. As in other education and training sectors, in the field of ADU in Lithuania, Erasmus+ is complemented by the Nordplus programme¹⁴⁸.

3.4.5. EUROPEAN VALUE ADDED

Among ADU representatives, the Erasmus+ PROGRAMME is valuable for its role in promoting European values. According to a survey, 87% of ADU participants believe that the PROGRAMME has positively contributed to their perception of the importance of European values. Additionally, in 2023, a positive impact on the significance of European values is anticipated. The importance of European values was

¹⁴⁴ Statistics on the budget of the Programme and the financing of applications are set out in Annex 7. Statistics on Program Budget and Funding Applications

¹⁴⁵ EESF, "Išdalinti „Kokybės konkurso 2023“ apdovanojimai", 2023. Internet access: <https://erasmus-plus.lt/naujienos/svietimas/isdalinti-kokybes-konkurso-2023-apdovanojimai/> and <https://smpf.lrv.lt/lt/kokybes-konkurso-2023-nominantai/>.

¹⁴⁶ According to the EESF, 6 ADU organisations were granted Erasmus+ accreditation in 2020, 5 in 2021, and 3 in 2022.

¹⁴⁷ Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2024, 448-450.

¹⁴⁸ Nordplus, "Nordplus Adult". Internet access: <https://www.nordplus.lt/programos/nordplus-adult>.

emphasised by as many as 99% of adult education representatives¹⁴⁹. The Programme helps the participant feel like a European citizen, broadens his/hers horizons, makes the ADU community more tolerant, and makes the institutions themselves more modern.

3.5. YOUNG PEOPLE'S NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH WORK

3.5.1. RELEVANCE

One of the objectives of Erasmus+ Programme is to tackle the Europe-wide trend of under-participation in democratic life. Strengthening European identity and the participation of young people in democratic processes is important for the future of the EU, and the Programme therefore aims to develop young people's personal skills and competences, to promote their active citizenship and initiative, to increase the quality of youth work, to foster innovation, and to increase youth employability¹⁵⁰. These objectives and targets in the field of non-formal education and youth work (YOU) are not only complementary to the EU Youth Strategy and other EU youth policy goals but are also relevant in the national Lithuanian context. Lithuania's main strategic document in the field of youth policy, the National Youth Policy Action Plan 2023-2027, aims to ensure the social inclusion of young people and the development of global citizenship, in particular by promoting the inclusion and empowerment of young people in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Green Deal, and the development of a sustainable relationship with the environment. In this regard, the Action Plan highlights the relevance of the Erasmus+ Programme and seeks to encourage organisations to submit Erasmus+ projects within the scope of the Green Deal, through the organisation of remote information seminars on this subject.¹⁵¹

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | The Erasmus+ Programme was well known and responded to the needs of young people in Lithuania, as evidenced by the high number of participants and applications received during the period under review. The number of participants in the Programme amounted to more than 40.5 thousands, with close to 2.9 thousands applications, of which 761 projects were funded¹⁵². Disadvantaged young people and other individuals special needs accounted for almost one third of all Erasmus+ YOU participants.¹⁵³ However, the Programme mainly reached participants living in large towns or cities, while young people from small towns and rural areas participated less¹⁵⁴.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | During the implementation of this funding period, more than 3.6 thousand people have participated in YOU mobility activities, 28% of whom were PFO from disadvantaged groups¹⁵⁵. The AYA has set a strategic goal of having at least 30% PFO participants coming from disadvantaged groups of all Programme participants¹⁵⁶. This relatively high value of the indicator is based on the AYA's efforts to raise awareness among hard-to-reach groups and to encourage their participation (e.g. by specifying the specific cases where an individual is considered as PFO, by organising consultations and training for organisations working with hard-to-reach groups, by coordinating a network of regional

¹⁴⁹ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action on the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

¹⁵⁰ European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*, 4-6,247.

¹⁵¹ Resolution of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 July 2023, Nr. A1-469, „Dėl nacionalinės jaunimo politikos 2023–2027 metų veiksmų plano patvirtinimo“.

¹⁵² YICA, „Ką mums pavyko kartu nuveikti? Ir kas laukia ateityje?“, 2021. Internet access: https://erasmus-plius.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JTBA_2014-2020.pdf.

¹⁵³ According to the AYA, a total of 40,502 youth participants took part in the Erasmus+ activities between 2014 and 2020, of which 27.3% were young people with fewer opportunities and 2.9% were participants with special needs.

¹⁵⁴ YICA, „Ką mums pavyko kartu nuveikti? Ir kas laukia ateityje?“.

¹⁵⁵ AYA data as of November 23, 2023. A total of 3,602 participants took place in Action KA1 activities during 2021-2023 period, of which 1,008 participated were young PFO. It is planned that the number of YOU participants will reach 13,5 thousand.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with AYA.

consultants to encourage youth organisations to participate in the Programme, and by assisting in the preparation of the applications).

AYA is also involved in the implementation of the strategic network of NA project "Europe Goes Local", which aims to promote change at the level of local government in the YOU, to strengthen the development and implementation of youth policies in municipalities, to motivate project participants for transnational cooperation, and to help Lithuanian municipalities to take advantage of the opportunities of the Erasmus+ Programme to apply for and receive funding for project implementation¹⁵⁷. The NA acknowledges that participation of people with disabilities in the Programme is low, but it is looking for ways to attract them by organising meetings with disabled people's organisations (e.g. Lithuanian Disability Organisations Forum), conducting research to identify the needs of people with disabilities and how the Erasmus+ Programme could respond them and encourage this target group to become more involved.

In the new programming phase, youth-related activities have a strong focus on the HPs, with 36 out of 42 projects (implemented or ongoing) addressing at least one of the HPs: inclusion and diversity (8 projects), environment and climate change (14), democratic participation, shared values, and citizenship (7) and digital transformation (7). It is noted that in the post-pandemic and war in Ukraine context, the theme of physical and mental health (well-being) of young people is particularly relevant, with 40 projects implemented between 2021 and 2023 being related to this theme¹⁵⁸.

3.5.2. EFFECTIVENESS

Individual, institutional and systemic changes

At the individual level, youth organisation exchange projects contribute to the development of participants' language competences and social skills, autonomy, citizenship, awareness of shared European values and interculturalism, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and digital skills, as well as improving their employability¹⁵⁹.

At institutional level, Erasmus+ Programme enables youth organisations to grow, become more modern, increase their awareness, internationalisation, and visibility, and strengthen their capacity to plan and manage human and financial resources¹⁶⁰. In addition, participation in Erasmus+ activities improves the reputation of organisations at European and national level, helps to attract new partners in other projects and thus contributes to the further growth of the organisation through international opportunities¹⁶¹. It is estimated that youth sector-related activities of the Erasmus+ Programme have indirectly but tangibly contributed to the strengthening of the NGO and youth field in Lithuania¹⁶².

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | Data from the Erasmus+ participants' reports in the youth sector reveal that, at an individual level, young people who participated in the Programme perceived it to have been beneficial. On average:

- 90% claim they have acquired multilingual competences,
- 86% have improved their personal development and their social and learning to learn skills,
- 81% have become more civic-minded,
- 80% have acquired competences in cultural awareness and expression, and
- 76% feel that they have acquired entrepreneurial competences¹⁶³.

¹⁵⁷ YICA, „Ką mums pavyko kartu nuveikti? Ir kas laukia ateityje?“.

¹⁵⁸ Analysis of the Erasmus+ results database, KA1 and KA2 actions, as of 18 December 2023.

¹⁵⁹ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, , 24.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Interviews with YOU project promoters and representatives.

¹⁶² Interview with AYA; Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI 24-25.

¹⁶³ Detailed statistics on the impact of the learning mobility action on the competences of participants are set out in Annex 6. Statistics on the Impact of Mobility Program on Participants' Competencies

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | Youth participants in the new activities of the new financing period generally rated the impact of the Programme on the same competences as the best, but in a more modest way. On average:

- 82% of the participants claimed to have gained multilingual competences,
- 79% to have developed personal, social, and learning to learn competences,
- 75% to have become more civic-minded¹⁶⁴.

In the new Erasmus+ programming period, DiscoverEU's inclusion projects (KA155) have great potential to contribute to inclusiveness and diversity, as well as to greening, by giving young people with fewer opportunities, aged 18 and over, the opportunity to have short-term experience of travelling individually or as a group in Europe, by train or, where appropriate, by other transport modes¹⁶⁵.

Performance factors

According to the interviewees, there are projects that are successful at bringing young people together, but the objectives of the projects are not sufficiently clear¹⁶⁶. Interviewees felt that such projects are not effective, and that the sustainability of their products is limited. Another important factor for the effectiveness of projects is the coherence and continuity of activities, which must be given sufficient attention¹⁶⁷.

The effectiveness of the Programme's actions is influenced by the knowledge of the needs of the target groups (young people and youth workers). After enhancement to youth mobility exchanges or strategic partnerships, it is essential to ensure sufficient dissemination of the experiences and results of the participants.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the programme

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Programme has adapted flexibly, with the possibility to organise part of the activities remotely, the introduction of virtual mobility, the extension of projects, and the change of the timeline of planned activities. At the same time, COVID-19 had a spill-over effect on the NA, which, given that projects were allowed to be extended for a maximum period of time (12 months), imposed a higher than usual administrative burden and workload on NAs. The new funding period of Erasmus+ Programme started in 2021 with a noticeable sluggishness among young people, i.e. with a lower number of applications received than in the previous programming period. However, between 2022 and 2023, with a renewed increase in the willingness of young people's organisations to carry out projects, there is an apparent increased interest of young people in the Erasmus+ Programme in general¹⁶⁸.

3.5.3. EFFICIENCY

Cost-effectiveness of the Programme's actions

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | Compared to other education and training sectors, the Erasmus+ Programme's budget for youth-related activities is one of the smallest. In the previous programming period, €21.6 million was allocated to youth sector activities, i.e. 11.3% of the total Programme budget, of which €15.9 million for Action KA1 youth exchanges, €4.9 million for Action KA2 strategic partnerships in the youth field, and €0.8 million for Action KA3 policy dialogue and cooperation projects.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Erasmus+, „Kviečiame teikti „Erasmus+“ jaunimo srities projektų paraiškas. Naujovė – „DiscoverEU“ įtraukties projektai“, 16 August 2022. Access online: <https://erasmus-plus.lt/naujienos/jaunimas/kvieciame-teikti-erasmus-jaunimo-srities-projektu-paraiskas-naujove-discovereu-itraukties-projektai/>.

¹⁶⁶ Interviews with youth sector-related project promoters and representatives.

¹⁶⁷ Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme in Lithuania, PPMI, 25.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with AYA and AYA data: Between 2014 and 2020, an average of 410 applications were received per year. In 2021, 180 applications were received, in 2022 – 210 applications, in 2023 – 141 applications (note: Data for 2023 is provisional).

Looking at the distribution of Erasmus+ grants, 74% of the total budget to the youth sector was allocated to youth mobility (KA105, KA125), while Actions KA2 and KA3 accounted for less than a third of the total budget (23% for KA205 projects and 4% for KA347 projects).

The share of applications funded in the youth sector is one of the lowest and does not sufficiently meet the growing demand, with a success rate of only 0.15 for applications funded in the 2014-2020 programming period¹⁶⁹.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | In the new programming period, €10.3 million in grants (or 7.2% of the total Programme budget) have already been distributed, of which €5.6 million for Action KA1 and €4.7 million for Action KA2 activities.

The share of funded applications in the YOU has increased, but still falls short of the growing demand, with a success rate of 0.47 for funded applications. In the new programming period, grants for Actions KA1 and KA2 projects are split almost in half¹⁷⁰. The decentralised Action KA3 is no longer part of the Erasmus+ Programme for 2021-2027 period – projects under this Action are implemented centrally at the EU level and managed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)¹⁷¹.

The NA representatives are positive about the quality of the youth sector applications, with a negligible proportion of applications not meeting the minimum criteria, i.e. scoring below 60 points¹⁷². While the overall budget allocated to the youth sector is increasing, so is the demand. According to AYA, the demand for funding for youth mobility projects (KA151, KA152, KA153, KA154, KA155) and for strategic partnerships (KA210, KA220) is high: one in every two KA1 and one in every nine KA2 applications are funded, and there is a high level of competition between applicants, which is not favourable to some of the newer, less experienced youth organisations. Some newly established youth organisations, particularly those set up by young people themselves, are less likely to participate in the Programme due to the overly complicated application procedure and the complexity of project administration-related activities¹⁷³.

As in other sectors, the efficiency of youth exchange is assessed positively – the Programme involves many young people, gives them the opportunity to get acquainted with other cultures and acquire new key skills. It is difficult to assess the efficiency of strategic partnerships, as each project is content-oriented, and the Programme does not require applicants to ensure the continuity of activities¹⁷⁴.

The efficiency of Action KA3 is also difficult to assess, as it depends mostly on the results and impact achieved by the specific project being implemented, which is often difficult to measure. For example, in the last programming period of Erasmus+, the themes of KA347 projects were mainly related to increasing youth participation, strengthening democratic society, and promoting dialogue with policymakers¹⁷⁵, and the results of such projects are difficult to quantify and assess. On the other hand, project promoters believe that the Erasmus+ funded Actions KA2 and KA3 projects, among other factors, have contributed to the increased youth turnout in the municipal elections, which has increased from 16% in 2019 to 33% in 2023¹⁷⁶. For more information on the successful implementation of the "Žinau, ką renku" project and its impact on youth civic participation, see Annex 5. Analysis of Best Practice Examples

¹⁶⁹ Statistics on the budget of the Programme and the financing of applications are set out in Annex 7. Statistics on Program Budget and Funding Applications

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*. Access online: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-3>.

¹⁷² Interview with AYA.

¹⁷³ Ibid

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Analysis of the Erasmus+ results database, as of 18 December 2023.

¹⁷⁶ Interviews with youth sector representatives.

Other factors influencing efficiency

Respondents consider that the current measures taken by the NA to monitor and support applicants, grantees and participants are sufficiently efficient. Although the NA provides advice, educates Programme participants at events and takes note of irregularities, interviewees felt that more attention could be paid to the implementation phase and *ex-post* evaluation of activities. Although there is a two-way monitoring (the EC asks suspicious organizations to be verified, and the NA organises on-site inspections, monitors social networks, responds proactively to complaints and takes action in case of suspected irregularities, etc.), there were organisations that identified gaps in the Erasmus+ Programme and exploited them at the expense of the quality of projects¹⁷⁷.

Project promoters consider that projects with a longer implementation period would make the Programme even more efficient. In this way, project promoters would not have to prepare applications every year and could focus more on project implementation and results¹⁷⁸. Project promoters with Erasmus Youth accreditation had the opportunity to benefit from simplified implementation conditions when implementing KA152 and KA153 projects. However, during this period, project promoters of KA154 (Youth Participation) projects did not have access to the benefits of accreditation.

Erasmus Youth accreditation has been available since 2021. Although only eight youth organizations received accreditation during the evaluation period¹⁷⁹, the interviewees expressed a positive opinion about this system. It provides an opportunity to reallocate project savings, use them for other project activities, and focus more on long-term strategic goals¹⁸⁰.

Both NA and NI representatives consider the cooperation framework between the EC, NA and NI to be positive, based on the principles of support and partnership, with regular joint meetings at various levels. MoSSL's Centralised Internal Audit Unit also carries out financial, operational and management audits of Erasmus+ programme to assess how NA ensures proper implementation of the EC requirements and to assess the eligibility, validity, transparency, etc. of NA's activities and expenditure.

The design of the IT environment, created for the implementation of the new programming period, is viewed positively, but the technical problems mentioned in the previous sections are a challenge. Project promoters suggest improving the IT environment in aspects that would make the administration of the Programme more efficient. For example, the creation of an online guide ("wizard") for youth organisations would avoid duplication of information when filling in new project applications.

The anti-fraud measures taken by the EC and NA in the application process are appropriate and efficient. The tools developed by the EC allow the detection and prevention of the risk of double funding. The renewed assessment of applicants' performance capacity to be introduced from 2024, which NA will have to carry out prior to the award of funding, is particularly positive. The safeguards introduced from 2024 onwards, which should address the existing problem of "application factories", are also welcomed, but it is too early to assess their efficiency.

3.5.4. COHERENCE

When assessing the coherence of the Erasmus+ Programme with other programmes, it is recognised that Erasmus+ is a key tool for youth exchanges, international strategic cooperation and strengthening citizenship in Lithuania. Since 2018, Erasmus+ has been complemented by the establishment of the European Solidarity Corps, which is focused more on volunteering and solidarity projects. There are not many other similar programmes in Lithuania – the ESFA, through the EU's Contact Point for Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values in Lithuania (CERV), publishes calls for proposals to defend, promote and raise

¹⁷⁷ Interview with AYA.

¹⁷⁸ Interviews with youth sector representatives.

¹⁷⁹ AYA data. Access online: <https://jra.lt/page?id=1858>

¹⁸⁰ Interviews with youth sector representatives.

awareness of EU values¹⁸¹. There are also other programmes that support similar activities, for example, the EEA and Norway Grants, the Active Citizens Fund programme, designed to strengthen civil society in Lithuania and empower vulnerable groups. This programme is administered by the Public Institutions "Open Lithuania EESF" and "OSFL projects". All these initiatives complement Erasmus+ Programme by promoting citizenship and democratic values among society as a whole (and among young people).

3.5.5. EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE

In the current geopolitical context, Erasmus+ programme is one of the tools that promote cooperation and joint action on issues affecting young people. The Programme also enables the discovery and understanding of the importance of European values: when comparing the participants' perception of their European identity before and after their participation in Erasmus+ projects, it can be observed that those who participated in the exchanges feel 25% closer to the European identity and its values¹⁸².

The Erasmus+ programme serves as the primary and consistent source of funding for young people's non-formal, intercultural learning and other learning experiences. If the Programme were to be discontinued, the mobility of young people would be reduced, and those with fewer opportunities would likely lose the chance to go abroad. In addition to the above, it is likely that the discontinuation of the Programme would lead to a significant reduction in youth civic engagement and democratic participation, as well as a weakening of the entire network of youth NGOs, which would pose challenges for the development of Lithuanian youth policy.

3.6. SPORT

3.6.1. RELEVANCE

In the field of sports (SPO), Erasmus+ Programme aims to support staff mobility for learning purposes and thereby contribute to the development of sports organizations working in the field of physical activity. Additionally, it seeks to promote collaboration, quality, inclusivity, creativity, and innovation among sports organizations and at the level of sports policy.

The Republic of Lithuania's Sports Law establishes that national physical activity programs, national and regional physical activity projects, as well as projects for the improvement of sports facilities are financed with funds from the state budget. The funding for latter projects is facilitated through the establishment of the Sports Support Fund, following the procedure outlined by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport¹⁸³.

However, it is important to emphasize that while the state supports projects aimed at increasing the overall physical activity of Lithuanian residents, there is no specific strategic priority given to supporting staff mobility for learning purposes in sports. On the other hand, in the Sports Development Program for 2021–2030¹⁸⁴, it is highlighted that the qualifications of physical activity specialists in the fields of education, physical activity, modern methodologies, and the application of experience are insufficient, and there is a shortage of qualified sports specialists. Although the Sports Development Program includes certain measures to address these issues, none of them specifically promote staff mobility for learning purposes

¹⁸¹ CERV, "Paskelbtas kvietimas teikti paraiškas, skirtas ginti, skatinti ir didinti informuotumą apie ES vertybes: kvietimas tarpinėms institucijoms – pilietinės visuomenės organizacijoms, kurios teiks paramą trečiosioms šalims", November 5, 2023. Access online: <https://www.cerv.lt/2023/11/05/paskelbtas-kvietimas-teikti-paraiskas-skirtas-aktyviai-ginti-ir-didinti-informuotuma-apie-es-vertybes-kvietimas-tarpinems-institucijoms-pilietines-visuomenes-organizacijoms-kurios-teiks-p/>.

¹⁸² RAY-MON 2021-2023 data.

¹⁸³ Law on Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (Consolidated version valid as of 1 February 2023).

¹⁸⁴ ŠMSM, „2021-2030 m. Sporto plėtros programa“. MoESS, "2021-2030 National Sports Development Strategy"

in sports. Given that mobility can contribute to the enhancement of specialists' qualification of, the Erasmus+ activities in the field of sports are consistently seen as complementing national objectives.

3.6.2. EFFECTIVENESS

Given that funding for staff mobility projects in the field of sports (KA182) was allocated only in 2023, it is currently difficult to assess the effectiveness and benefits of the Erasmus+ Programme in this area. However, based on the preliminary assessment of the NA representatives and considering the checks carried out by the project promoters, the funding of these activities for sports organizations is regarded as highly beneficial.

3.6.3. EFFICIENCY

As mentioned earlier, funding for staff mobility projects in the field of sports (KA182) was allocated only in 2023, totalling €86,4 thousand, or 0.1% of the total budget allocated for mobility projects in the field of education and training. Nine organizations applied for this funding, out of which six were financed. Since the projects are still ongoing and their number is not significant, there is currently no sufficient data to assess their efficiency.

3.6.4. COHERENCE

When evaluating the compatibility of the SPO sector with other areas and actions of the Erasmus+ Programme, the NA notices certain differences in the Programme's administrative regulations. Comparing mobility projects for sports staff and those in the field of education and training, standardizing the conditions and requirements would be beneficial. Additionally, unlike in the case of education and training, the sports sector has a separate budget allocation, so there is no possibility to transfer funds from the remaining education and training financing.

3.6.5. EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE

Considering that this activity started in 2023, there is currently no sufficient data to evaluate the European added value it creates in the field of sports.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS BASED ON EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Relevance

Erasmus+ Programme remains relevant in both programming periods: the interventions respond to existing and emerging societal needs and address related challenges. This is largely due to the flexibility of the programme, which plays a crucial role in its ability to address various challenges and adapt to changing circumstances. The Programme's capacity to respond to unforeseen crises and *force majeure* situations ensures continuity and resilience in the face of external disruptions. Moreover, the regular updating of the Programme ensures that it remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of society, including those of groups of people with different needs. By providing opportunities to acquire relevant skills and competences, Erasmus+ Programme continues to contribute significantly to personal and professional development, fostering inclusivity and adaptability in education and training and youth sectors.

An analysis of Lithuania's strategic documents reveals that the Erasmus+ Programme is often a tool that directly or indirectly contributes to the implementation of the objectives of Lithuania's education policy agenda, or consistently complements them.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014–2020 | Erasmus+ Programme has been instrumental in shaping national policy, as evidenced by a notable shift in the Lithuanian education and youth agenda towards addressing

European challenges and priorities. This encompasses a targeted approach towards PFOs and harder-to-reach groups. However, despite efforts, there remain challenges in engaging participants from these demographics, representing only 3% of the total participants in the education and training sector during the reviewed period. Encouragingly, participation in youth sector showcases more promising outcomes, with young PFOs constituting 27% of all participants.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021–2027 | The new programming period is even more adapted and accessible to almost all targeted population. This is primarily achieved through tailored adaptations for harder-to-reach and PFOs. Representatives participating in the Programme are supported by additional financial support to the participants themselves. Furthermore, methodological support is also provided through the organisation of trainings and providing consultancy for organisations and project implementers working with these groups. Compared to the previous programming period, the share of PFO in mobility activities in Lithuania has tripled to 9%¹⁸⁵. Despite the significant achievements in the YOU field, NA has set an even more ambitious target for the new programming period, aiming for young people with fewer opportunities to account for at least 30% of all participants in the sector. Increasing inclusion rates have also contributed to a greater awareness of inclusion and PFO among mobility project participants.

Under Erasmus+ programming period for 2021-2027, the significance of HPs has escalated notably, with the share of projects addressing the horizontal priorities ranging from 50% to 86% across sectors¹⁸⁶. It is worth noting that in the aftermath of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine context, new themes are becoming relevant, such as the mental and emotional state of young people, societal resilience to crises, civil resistance and similar.

The growing number of applications across all education sectors in recent years is a clear indication of the relevance and necessity of the Programme. Given the dynamic landscape of evolving technologies and external challenges, the relevance of continuous improvement and international cooperation through strategic partnerships and exchanges should remain high.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of Erasmus+ Learning Mobility activities is evident: they consistently meet stakeholders' expectations and successfully achieve their objectives, resulting in a positive return on investment. The impact of learning mobility is visible at the individual level and the results achieved are largely sustainable. This is because the knowledge, skills, and experiences acquired by participants cannot be easily revoked or diminished over time. Strategic partnership projects exhibit significant diversity, their effectiveness depends on the specificities of the project and the usefulness of the results achieved.

The effectiveness of strategic partnerships is slightly more critically evaluated, with more successful projects being those whose results are then applied in practice. Such projects often have a notable impact at the organizational and sometimes even systemic levels, depending on factors such as adequate funding, high levels of participation, project continuity, and the presence of a critical mass for driving systemic change.

The effectiveness of the Erasmus+ Programme is greatly influenced by the scale of participation within a particular sector: for instance, Erasmus+ Programme has the largest scale within HED among all education and training areas, which likely results in the highest impact within this sector. The Programme operates on a smaller scale within the ADU sector, thereby leading to a relatively lower impact in this domain.

Effectiveness can also be influenced by various internal factors such as the selection of partner educational institutions and organizations, feedback from the participants and its analysis, self-reflection, collaborative efforts, understanding the needs of target groups, applicability, and sustainability of results beyond project completion, capacity and project management skills of administrative staff, as well as effective publicity

¹⁸⁵ EESF's data, 2023-11-28.

¹⁸⁶ Calculated by the Authors of the Study on the basis of the Erasmus+ Project Results Database 2021-2023: AM - 50%, PM - 60%, BU - 67.7%, ES - 55.3%, JS - 85.7%.

and dissemination of outcomes. External factors, including adequate funding and grant levels, also play a crucial role in determining performance. Ensuring continuity is another key factor for the success of Erasmus+ funded projects. According to NA representatives, there are instances where projects produce high-quality outputs, but their impact diminishes significantly due to a lack of continuity in their use and application.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | During this period, Erasmus+ Programme has played a pivotal role in enhancing participants' general, professional, and intercultural competencies. It has expanded their perspectives, bolstered their self-esteem, and fostered a stronger sense of European identity. Additionally, Erasmus+ funded traineeships have significantly bolstered participants' employability, providing valuable practical experience. For many individuals, Erasmus+ has served as their sole opportunity to experience living abroad.

During the mobility visits, lecturers and teachers have improved their qualifications, acquired new professional knowledge, and expanded their specific and technological competencies, adopted new ideas and teaching methods, became more open to change and innovative learning approaches, and established relationships with foreign colleagues. These acquired skills and competencies have directly translated into an improvement in teaching quality, which in turn has had a positive impact on both students' motivation to learn and their learning achievements.

The Erasmus+ Programme has made a significant impact on the internationalisation of educational institutions, enhancing the quality of science, studies, and educational innovation. In the field of YOU, exchange projects among youth organizations have played a pivotal role in developing linguistic competencies, fostering autonomy, citizenship, and awareness of common European values among participants, as well as have bolstered sustainability, entrepreneurship, and digital skills while also enhancing participants' employability prospects.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | All the impact observed in the previous programming period within the fields of education and training, as well as youth, particularly in terms of the development of general and specific competences, continue to be evident in the new phase as well. Project promoters believe that Erasmus+ funded collaborative partnership projects have played a role in bolstering youth civic engagement. This is evidenced by the notable increase in the proportion of young people participating in municipal elections, rising from 16 to 33% between 2019 and 2023. The Programme has made a significant contribution to the integration of PFO. However, concerns have been raised regarding the cost-effectiveness and utility of very expensive (400,000 Eur) strategic partnership projects, particularly in terms of the effectiveness and usability of the results they produce.

Efficiency

The cost-effectiveness analysis of Erasmus+ Programme actions involved assessing the proportion of the budget allocated to Actions KA1 and KA2 projects (inputs).

The share of funding allocated to the education and training and youth sectors is unevenly distributed. HED is the most supported sector, facilitating the development of the internationalisation of HEIs. This sector demonstrates a high level of maturity and institutional preparedness to engage in Erasmus+ Programme (separate project management units are being established, accumulating experience, and ensuring the high quality and consistency of activities; moreover, the vast majority of HEIs have been awarded a Higher Education Charter). In the VET sector, the distribution of funding is generally perceived as balanced. However, VET institutions express a desire for more mobility projects if additional funding becomes available. The institutional maturity within this sector is considered slightly lower compared to HED. While most VET institutions are accredited, not all have dedicated staff to prepare applications and manage projects. This suggests potential for further development and capacity-building efforts within the VET sector to enhance participation in mobility projects.

In the SCH field, Action KA1 projects receive adequate funding, while Action KA2 projects are underfunded. The transition of activities from KA1 to KA2 in the new programming period has resulted in a high number of ineligible applications, often due to incorrect activity selection. In the ADU sector, Action KA1 projects

receive adequate funding, and funding for Action KA2 projects is also meeting demand better than in the previous programming period. However, demand is increasing in line with the growing budget allocation for the sector.

In the area of YOU, there is a notable increase in the demand for mobility projects and strategic partnerships. This rising need could serve as an impetus to consider intensifying funding in this sector. Evaluating the adequacy of funding for the SPO sector is challenging due to the relatively short period since the commencement of activities, and the possibility of reallocating the budget between activities in other sectors is not yet foreseen.

Other factors also play a significant role in the efficiency of the Programme, such as the collaboration system between the EC, NA, and NI, which is deemed quite efficient in Lithuania and receives positive praises. Representatives of the NI represent Lithuania in the Erasmus+ Committee, establish priorities for the NA, approve their work programs, audit their reports, and oversee them. Meanwhile, the implementation and supervision of the Programme are conducted by the NA. Additionally, the cooperation system between NA and NI operates smoothly, fostering a culture of collaboration and partnership. The introduction of simplified accreditation and grant systems has indeed enhanced efficiency and alleviated administrative burden on grant beneficiaries. However, it is noteworthy that the burden on NAs has not only persisted but in some cases even intensified.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | In the 2014-2020 programming period, the distribution of the Erasmus+ budget varied significantly across different actions and sectors. Mobility projects for individuals in HED and VET received the largest share, constituting, respectively, 66% and 28% of the total budget allocated to ActionKA1. Less than 6% was allocated to SCH and ADU (5% and 1% respectively). In contrast, for Action KA2 projects, nearly half of the budget allocated to this Action was directed to the SCH sector (47%), with a notably higher share of the budget allocated to the ADU area, around 17%. The VET sector accounts for a similar share, around 21%, while HED accounts for the smallest share, 15% of the total budget allocated to Action KA2. There are noticeable disparities in the allocation of Erasmus+ grants within the youth field across various actions. During the 2014-2020 programming period, most of the total Programme budget (approx. 74%) was allocated to youth mobility projects. In contrast, Actions KA2 and KA3 received a smaller share, accounting for less than a third of the total budget (23% and 4% respectively).

The distribution of the budget best aligned with demand in HED sector, with 77% of allocation meeting demand. Similarly, the VET sector and SCH sector also had a relatively high success rate, with 58% meeting demand in each. However, the ADU and YOU sectors had the lowest demand met, with only 34% and 15%, respectively.

During this programming period, the efficiency has been significantly bolstered by the measures implemented by the NA to monitor and support applicants, beneficiaries, and participants, which are assessed as efficient and appropriate. The NA has consistently invested in monitoring and evaluating applicants by continuously monitoring indicators, collecting additional data, conducting participant satisfaction surveys, and measuring evaluators' perceptions of the evaluation process. Moreover, aside from monitoring indicators, the NA has conducted and continues to carry out practical monitoring to proactively manage potential risks.

The IT infrastructure established for this phase of the Erasmus+ Programme initially faced glitches and technical issues at the beginning of the period, but these were successfully resolved in the first year of the Programme. Measures implemented to combat fraud, including addressing issues such as plagiarism and double funding, were deemed efficient considering the challenges encountered during the reviewed period.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | Analysing grant statistics for 2021–2023, the same trend can be observed, with the HED and VET sectors receiving the largest share of grants for Action KA1 mobility projects, accounting for, respectively, 59% and 24% . In comparison to the previous programming period, the allocation of the budget to the SCH and ADU sectors increased significantly by more than two and a half times, with 14% and 3 percent of the total budget allocated for mobility projects, respectively. Grants

for mobility projects in the SPO sector were also allocated in 2023, albeit representing only 0.1 percent of the total budget.

In the field of education and training, the distribution of the budget by sector in the strategic partnership projects within the new programming period has undergone changes. A higher proportion of grants is now allocated to Action KA2 projects in the ADU sector, comprising 26%, and the HED sector, with 20%. The proportion of grants allocated to projects in the VET sector has remained similar to the previous programming period, at 22%. However, there has been a decrease in the share of grants allocated to projects in the SCH sector, dropping by 15%— i.e. 33% of the total budget allocated to Action KA2 projects. In the YOU sector, grants for Actions KA1 and KA2 projects were nearly evenly split.

As in the previous programming period, the budget allocation was concentrated in the same sectors, however the increased funding has notably improved the ability to meet growing demand in the HED sector (88% of applications funded), the VET sector and the SCH sector (80%). The areas of ADU and YOU had the least addressed demand, with 47% of applications funded.

Interviewees were positive about the meetings organized by the NA with project promoters, as well as the availability of virtual training recordings and seminars on the EESF website, along with project examples. However, some project promoters and coordinators expressed the need for more live events and workshops.

The IT system developed for the new programming period is rated poorly due to persistent technical glitches and failures. According to the interview respondents, the previous IT system operated more smoothly, despite lacking certain functionalities.

The NA's anti-fraud measures in the application process are adequate and efficient, with tools developed by the EC enabling the detection and prevention of double funding risks. The introduction of a financial and operational capacity assessment to be carried out by NA before funding is granted starting from 2024 is viewed as particularly positive. However, it is too early to assess its efficiency at this stage.

Coherence

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | The various actions of the programme are effectively coordinated, yet practical examples of cross-sectoral cooperation, involving projects across different sectors, remain relatively scarce in both the previous and current programming period. While there are a few instances within strategic partnerships where higher education institutes or businesses entities participate as partners in projects, such cases are not yet widespread.

Overall, the Erasmus+ Programme is the best known and most widely implemented mobility programme in Lithuania. There are few other regional and international programmes in Lithuania, which do not duplicate the scope of Erasmus+. Instead, they complement it by offering participants additional opportunities tailored to their specific needs and capabilities. In the field of education and training, ESFA, Nordplus, ISEP, bilateral programmes funded by Lithuania and foreign countries (e.g. USA, Israel, China, Mexico, Switzerland, and Turkey) are among the most well-known initiatives. In the YOU field, the most similar programmes encompass the EEA and Norway Grants (2014-2021) alongside the Active Citizens Fund programme, which aims to fortify civil society in Lithuania and empower vulnerable demographics. Facilitated by the Public Institutions "Open Society Foundations of Lithuania" and "OSFL Projects", these initiatives collectively complement Erasmus+ Programme by fostering citizenship and democratic values within society, with a particular focus on empowering young individuals.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | Programmes such as ESFA, Nordplus and ISEP continue in the new programming period. Due to shifts in Lithuania's foreign policy and geopolitical shifts, activities with China and Israel are no longer available. However, representatives from the HED sector have access to opportunities such as the Taiwan-Europe Semiconductor Fellowship Programme, among others, which are regularly updated and accessible via the NMPF website. In the YOU sector, the Active Citizens Fund programme remains ongoing, while the EEA-Norway Financial Mechanism ended in 2021.

European added value

Erasmus+ Programme is one of the EU's most successful initiatives, and its European added value is evident across all sectors of education and training, as well as in youth, spanning both the previous and current programming periods. Erasmus+ Programme has contributed to the creation of a European identity by promoting the development of European values and disseminating horizontal priorities across different sectors.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2014-2020 | During the 2014-2020 period, the Programme has significantly contributed to the development of participants' European identity. The proportion of participants perceiving that Erasmus+ Programme has enhanced their competences in European values ranges from 69 to 85 percent across different sectors. However, despite the creation of European added value, the sustainability of project outputs varies between sectors. HED sector demonstrates the highest utilization of project outputs, while the VET, SCH and YOU sectors exhibit a medium utilization rate and the ADU sector displays the lowest utilization rate.

PROGRAMME PERIOD FOR 2021-2027 | In the new programming period, participants perceive an even greater impact of Erasmus+ Programme on the development and dissemination of competences in European values, with the proportion ranging from 78 to 91 percent across sectors. However, assessing whether the outputs of the new generation of Erasmus+ projects are more sustainable than those produced in the previous programming period is currently not feasible. This limitation arises from the fact that the average duration of Action KA2 projects is approximately 3-4 years. As a result, it is more appropriate to evaluate the sustainability of the outputs produced in this phase within the framework of the Final Evaluation of the Programme's intervention for 2021-2027.

If Erasmus+ Programme were to be discontinued, the repercussions would be felt in several ways: there would be a reduction in the dissemination of European values and opportunities for skills development, additionally, there would be a slowdown in the advancement of interculturalism and the transnational dimension of organisations. At the national level, there would be a decline in promoting Lithuania's name in the international academic and educational community. Furthermore, the development of youth policy and educational innovations would also experience a deceleration.

A summary of the Evaluation by different evaluation criteria and sectors is provided in Annex 8. Evaluation Summary by Different Sectors and Criteria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations on programme content

- **Increase funding for school education, adult education, and youth.** These sectors are currently among the least funded at the Programme level, yet there is a notably high demand for mobility within them. While the new programming period of Erasmus+ does provide for increased funding in these sectors, it falls short of fully meeting the demand for learning mobility, especially within the youth sector.
- **Given the growing number of accredited organisations and the increasing popularity of the scheme, it is proposed that accreditation should be maintained, but with increased funding in certain sectors, such as SCH or VET.** While the scheme is currently functioning effectively, there is a potential long-term risk of insufficient funding to cater to all accredited organizations' needs or leaving no budget for non-accredited organizations. A larger budget allocation would help avert this scenario.
- **Scale down or eliminate entirely the very expensive strategic partnership projects with a grant of 400,000 Eur.** It is recommended that for large projects, the maximum disbursement amount should be between 250,000 and 300,000 Euros. Moreover, greater emphasis should be placed on small-scale strategic partnership projects with grants ranging from 30,000 to 60,000 Euros. This approach would ensure more equitable distribution of funds and allow for a broader range of projects to be supported.

- **Uphold the principle of implementing horizontal priorities within the Programme.** The advantages of these priorities are not only recognized by participating organizations and educational institutions – increased focus on European challenges and priorities, and the relevance of the four HPs is confirmed by the links to the Lithuanian national policy agenda. Therefore, the Programme should maintain this principle and, if needed, interpret them more expansively (for instance, the priority of active participation in education and training could encompass initiatives aimed at building resilience to crises).
- **Increase the flexibility of the Programme, making it more adaptable to the needs and opportunities of today's generation.** With the Programme's popularity on the rise and the aim to expand the number of participants, including hard-to-reach groups, it is recommended to continue and expand virtual exchanges in the field of education and training, allow the possibility to split the period of mobility according to individual needs, and combine several measures into one (for example, if students are going on mobility, they could also do a traineeship). This would facilitate the involvement of an even larger number of participants at a reduced cost, thereby allowing them to fully experience the benefits offered by the Erasmus+ Programme. Enhancing flexibility would yield benefits in terms of implementation. For instance, the current disparities in requirements for SPO compared to other education and training sectors impose additional administrative burdens on NAs. By fostering greater synergies in project requirements, not only reduce the workload of NAs, but the Programme could also more effectively address the evolving needs of society.

Recommendations for implementing the programme at EU level

- **Consider the possibility of streamlining mobility between Programme's countries and partner countries, as well as the administration of strategic partnership projects in the youth sector.** The Evaluation findings indicate that certain youth organizations, particularly those that are new or less experienced, are deterred from participating in Erasmus+ Programme due to the intricate application process and the complexity of Programme's administration. Simplifying the application, project administration, and reporting procedures would incentivize more youth organizations, especially newly established ones, to engage in the Programme. Furthermore, it would encourage greater participation from less active regions of Lithuania. Simplifying project administration would also be relevant across other education and training sectors.
- **Ensure the smooth operation of already developed IT tools and improve the interaction between them.** The recurring feedback from nearly all interview respondents highlight persistent technical failures within the IT environment created for the new programming period, creating a partly negative image of Erasmus+ Programme. Once the smooth functioning of the IT environment has been ensured, it is recommended to explore the introduction of additional functionalities aimed at enhancing the efficient management of the Programme. For instance, the implementation of wizards and the simplification of the process for uploading budgets could significantly streamline operations and improve user experience.
- **Index scholarship and grant amounts according to inflation and the economic situation of each host country.** Despite efforts to increase grants and allowances, in a context of external challenges, rising inflation and rising prices, they frequently fall short of adequately covering living and travel expenses. It is imperative that Erasmus+ does not become a programme exclusively for individuals from affluent backgrounds who can afford to finance a significant portion of their exchange program costs. Erasmus+ Programme should be accessible to all, including hard-to-reach groups, therefore, indexing grants and scholarships based on each country's economic situation and level of inflation would enhance livelihoods and foster greater participation among individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Recommendations for national implementation

- **Encourage inter-sectoral collaboration more actively.** While the internal components of the Programme are coherent, synergies between the various sectors of education and training, youth, and sport remain insufficient, with few joint projects spanning multiple areas. Measures to foster

joint cross-sectoral projects should be explored, including heightened communication of the benefits of Erasmus+ Programme. Enhanced synergies between the education and training, youth, sport, and business sectors would stimulate the emergence of new ideas and facilitate the exchange of best practices and experiences, which would further add more value to the Erasmus+ Programme.

- **Communicate more widely the innovations and opportunities of the new Erasmus+ programming period, increase sharing of success stories, and continue efforts to organise information events and activities both remotely and at local community level.** The findings of Evaluation indicate that some participants are not adequately acquainted with the Programme's innovations and benefits. While NA is already making efforts in this area, it is recommended to persist in these endeavours, with a particular focus on municipalities that have lower involvement in Erasmus+ activities. Moreover, there is a need to seek broader publicity through effective platforms and channels to ensure wider dissemination of information about the Programme's offerings and advantages.
- **Despite the considerable achievements of the Erasmus+ Programme and the National Agencies in fostering inclusion and diversity, it is recommended to continue efforts at the national level and attract as many people with fewer opportunities as possible.** It is suggested to consider various measures to increase inclusiveness: such as actively promoting examples of inclusive mobility and success stories, raising awareness among project promoters about the reasons and barriers hindering the participation of people with disabilities in the Programme, and integrating inclusivity into national Lithuanian documents in connection with international mobility activities.

ANNEX 1. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS

TABLE 1: EVALUATION METHODS AND THEIR COMPATIBILITY WITH ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

	Analysis of Primary and Secondary Sources	Analysis of Existing Statistical Data	Case Study	Interviews	
Relevance	 Justification			✓	
Effectiveness		✓	✓	✓	
Efficiency		✓	✓	✓	
<i>individual level</i>		✓	✓	✓	
<i>institutional level</i>		✓	✓	✓	
<i>systemic level</i>				✓	
Coherence					✓
European added value			✓		✓

Source: compiled by the Author of the Study

ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

To gather primary information about the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and European added value of the Erasmus+ Programme, and to support the answers to the Evaluation questions, an analysis of primary and secondary sources was conducted. When assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme, quantitative data from previous Erasmus+ Programme's analytical studies and evaluations were used, as well as an analysis of the monitoring data, application submission data, and financing statistics. To evaluate the compatibility of the Erasmus+ Programme with other programmes, strategic documents, reports, and other literature in the fields of education and training, youth, and sports in Lithuania were analysed. The list of used sources is provided in Annex 9. List of used literature and references

INTERVIEW PROGRAM

During the Evaluation, a structured interview program was conducted, comprising over 30 semi-structured interviews with respondents from various fields: representatives of public sector institutions shaping Lithuania's education and youth policy, national agency representatives, project promoters, non-governmental organizations, associations, and other stakeholders. The data gathered through the interview method revealed the perspectives of representatives from different fields on the Erasmus+ Programme, implementation challenges, its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, compatibility with other programmes, and areas for improvement in the content and implementation of Programme. The list of interview respondents is provided in Annex 3. List of Interview Respondents

CASE STUDY

Case analysis was conducted to delve deeper into the specific projects' results and their impact at individual and institutional levels, identify factors influencing project effectiveness, and assess the added value created by the Erasmus+ Programme at the national level. By analysing the database of Programme's projects' results¹⁸⁷, projects in the education, training, and youth sectors marked with the "best practice"

¹⁸⁷ Erasmus+ Project Results Platform: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

label were selected, and their implementation reports were examined. In total, 7 specific project cases were analysed and described. The analysis of best practice examples is provided in Annex 5. Analysis of Best Practice Examples

ANNEX 2. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

TABLE 2: STANDARD LIST OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS

EVALUATION CRITERION	EVALUATION QUESTIONS
EFFECTIVENESS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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? 2. 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? 3. 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. 4. 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? 5. 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. 6. 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? 7. 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? 8. 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

EVALUATION CRITERION	EVALUATION QUESTIONS
	<p>in your country? To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified?</p> <p>9. 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?</p> <p>10. 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?</p> <p>11. 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?</p> <p>12. 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?</p> <p>13. 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?</p>
EFFICIENCY	<p>14. What is the cost-effectiveness of various actions (clusters of actions) of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 in your country?</p> <p>15. 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?</p> <p>16. 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?</p> <p>17. 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?</p> <p>18. 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?</p> <p>19. To what extent do the indicators identified for the programme in the Regulation⁷ correspond to the monitoring purposes at national level? How could the overall management and monitoring system be improved?</p> <p>20. To what extent are the new management support tools⁸ consistent with the Erasmus+ programme needs and architecture? Which additional features would you recommend for future developments?</p>

EVALUATION CRITERION	EVALUATION QUESTIONS
	21. To what extent have the antifraud measures allowed for the prevention and timely detection of fraud in your country?
RELEVANCE	<p>22. 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?</p> <p>23. 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?</p> <p>24. 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?</p> <p>25. 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?</p> <p>26. 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?</p>
COHERENCE	<p>27. 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?</p> <p>28. 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?</p> <p>29. 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</p>

EVALUATION CRITERION	EVALUATION QUESTIONS
	<p>issues with other programmes? Can you compare with the synergies and complementarities developed in the previous Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020?</p> <p>30. 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?</p>
EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE	<p>31. 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?</p> <p>32. 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?</p> <p>33. 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?</p> <p>34. 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?</p> <p>35. To what extent are the results of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 sustainable beyond the projects duration in your country?</p> <p>36. What would be the most likely consequences in your country if the Erasmus+ programme were possibly to be discontinued?</p>

Source: Compiled by the Author of the Study on the basis of Annex No. 1 of Terms of References.

ANNEX 3. LIST OF INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

TABLE 3: LIST OF INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

NR.	NAME, SURNAME	INSTITUTION, POSITION
REPRESENTATIVES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING		
1.	Julius Jakučinskas	Director of the Lifelong Learning Department, MoESS
2.	Milda Špėlytė-Letulienė	Advisor to the International Cooperation Group, MoESS
3.	Gražina Kaklauskienė	Deputy Director, EESF
4.	Monika Skaringaitė	Head of Mobility Unit, EESF
5.	Donata Kavoliūnienė	Head of Mobility Projects Unit, EESF
6.	Vytautas Pačiauskas	Head Of Partnership Projects Unit, EESF
7.	Laura Jurkuvenienė	Monitoring Coordinator, EESF
8.	Inga Puiša	Project Activities Coordinator, Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Union
9.	Paulius Vaitiekus	President of the LSU
10.	Jonas Trumpa	President of the Lithuanian Union of Schoolchildren
11.	Inga Jagelavičiūtė	President of the Lithuanian Association of Adult Education
12.	Evelina Šalavėjienė	International Project Manager, Sunrise Valley (Science and Technology Park)
13.	Ilona Kazlauskaitė	Member of the International Relations Working Group of the Conference of Rectors of Lithuanian Universities and Director of the International Relations Department of VMU
14.	Jolanta Valiaugienė	Coordinator of International Partnership Development at Kaunas University of Applied Sciences
15.	Simona Vižinienė	International Relations Manager at International Relations Unit of Vilnius University and institutional coordinator of the Erasmus+ programme
16.	Paltanavičienė Aurelija	Head of development department at Kaunas Food Industry and Trade Training Centre
17.	Raimonda Makaveckė	Project Maanager at Kaunas Food Industry and Trade Training Centre
18.	Rimvydas Zailskas	Head of the Education and Sports Department of Prienai District Municipality Administration
YOUTH SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES		
19.	Rita Buitvydė	Equal Opportunities, Equality Groups for Women and Men Adviser, MoSSL
20.	Jonas Laniauskas	Director of the AYA
21.	Loreta Eimontaitė	Head of the International Youth Policy Department, AYA
22.	Giedrė Tumosaitė	Senior Advisor at Unit for International Youth Policy, AYA

NR.	NAME, SURNAME	INSTITUTION, POSITION
23.	Guoda Vaitiekutė	Coordinator of the initiative "Žinau, ką renku", Public Institution "Europos Namai"
24.	Rugilė Andrijevskytė	Mentor of the initiative "Žinau, ką renku"
25.	Areta Petrauskaitė	Lithuanian Youth Council (LIJOT), "Eurodesk Lietuva" Programme Manager
26.	Laura Janušienė	President of the National Association of Youth Coordinators
27.	Giedrė Valčiukaitė	Chairwoman of the Lithuanian Youth Workers' Association
28.	Anastasija Martynova	Ignalina District Municipality's Education Helpdesk Coordinator for the Youth Workers' Mobility Project "Integration and socialization of immigrants in education"
29.	Indrė Augutienė	Head of Public Institution "Pasaulio piliečių akademija"

Source: Compiled by the Author of the Study

ANNEX 4. KEY ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

TABLE 4: THE MAIN ACTIONS OF THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME AND THEIR ACCOMPANYING ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN LITHUANIA

KEY ACTION 1	LEARNING MOBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS
<i>Key Action 1 (KA1) includes the following activities:</i>	
2014 – 2020	<p>Mobility in education and training:</p> <p>KA101– School Education and Staff Mobility KA102 / KA116 – VET Learners and Staff Mobility KA103 – Higher Education Student and Staff Mobility KA104 – Staff Mobility in Adult Education KA107 – Higher Education Student and Staff Mobility between Programme and Partner Countries</p> <p>Mobility in the field of youth:</p> <p>KA105 – Youth Mobility projects KA125 – Volunteering Projects KA135 – Strategic EVS</p>
2021 – 2027	<p>Mobility in education and training:</p> <p>KA121-SCH – Accredited Projects for Mobility of Learners and Staff in School Education KA121-VET – Accredited Projects for Mobility of Learners and Staff in Vocational Education and Training KA121-ADU – Accredited Projects for Mobility of Learners and Staff in Adult Education KA122-SCH – Short-term Projects for Mobility of Learners and Staff in School Education KA122-VET – Short-term Projects for Mobility of Learners and Staff in Vocational Education and Training KA122-ADU – Short-term Projects for Mobility of Learners and Staff in Adult Education KA131-HED – Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff Supported by Internal Policy Funds KA171-HED – Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff Supported by External Policy Funds</p> <p>Mobility in the field of youth:</p> <p>KA151-YOU – Accredited Projects for Youth Mobility KA152-YOU – Mobility of Young People KA153-YOU – Mobility of Youth Workers KA154-YOU – Youth Participation Activities KA155-YOU – DiscoverEU Inclusion Action</p> <p>Mobility in the field of sport:</p> <p>KA182-SPO – Mobility of Sport Coaches and Staff</p>
KEY ACTION 2	COOPERATION AMONG ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS
<i>Key Action 2 (KA2) includes the following activities:</i>	
2014 – 2020	<p>Strategic Partnerships:</p> <p>KA200 – Strategic Partnerships Addressing More than One Field</p>

	<p>KA201 / KA219 / KA229 – Strategic Partnerships for School Education/ Schools Only/ Exchanges Between Schools exchange</p> <p>KA202 – Strategic Partnerships for Vocational Education and Training</p> <p>KA203 – Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education</p> <p>KA204 – Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education</p> <p>KA205 – Strategic Partnerships in the Field of Youth</p> <p>KA226 – Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness in the field of Higher Education</p> <p>KA227 – Partnerships for Creativity</p>
2021 – 2027	<p>Small-scale partnerships:</p> <p>KA210-SCH – Small-scale Partnerships in School Education</p> <p>KA210-VET – Small-scale Partnerships in Vocational Education and Training</p> <p>KA210-ADU – Small-scale Partnerships in Adult Education</p> <p>KA210-YOU – Small-scale Partnerships in Youth</p> <p>Cooperation Partnerships:</p> <p>KA220-SCH – Cooperation Partnerships in School Education</p> <p>KA220-VET – Cooperation Partnerships in Vocational Education and Training</p> <p>KA220-ADU – Cooperation Partnerships in Adult Education</p> <p>KA220-HED – Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education</p> <p>KA220-YOU – Cooperation Partnerships in Youth</p>
KEY ACTION 3	SUPPORT TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION
Key Action 3 (KA3) includes the following activities:	
2014 – 2020	<p>Political dialogue and cooperation with key stakeholders and international organisations:</p> <p>KA347 – Dialogue Between Young People and Policy Makers</p>

Source: Compiled by the Author of the Study based on data provided by the National Agencies

ANNEX 5. ANALYSIS OF BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

An example of best practice in HED sector:

Case study 1. Priority for digital transformation. Erasmus+ project "BlockChain Network Online Education for interdisciplinary European Competence Transfer"¹⁸⁸

Blockchain technology is one of the most promising and popular innovations of recent years. Consequently, it is imperative to fully understand how this new technology works and changes existing business and innovation models. The aim of this project is to facilitate students' acquisition of knowledge and skills related to blockchain technology through collaboration with higher education institutions. This initiative seeks to cultivate a professional workforce capable of harnessing the benefits of this innovation, while also fostering the development of other groundbreaking technologies. The project involved the development of interdisciplinary online courses on small networks, covering different disciplines that are most relevant for both the development of information systems and technologies (IT) and their application in business (computer science, IT security, supply chain and logistics, etc.).



At an individual level, the project has enabled students to enhance their understanding of blockchain technology and its diverse applications in business. Furthermore, the project's reports and scientific publications, which have been released throughout the duration of the project and have garnered thousands of online downloads, are yielding enduring benefits for the academic community, facilitating ongoing exploration of the technology's potential. At the institutional level, the project has successfully formulated an interdisciplinary course on blockchain technology, now publicly accessible and offering enduring advantages for other European higher education institutions.

For Lithuania, the primary significance of the project lies in the knowledge and experience acquired through collaboration with European higher education institutions across diverse disciplines. This is particularly crucial at a time when there is a growing national emphasis on the necessity to foster interdisciplinary (international) studies. The European Commission has recognised this project as an exemplary initiative. **Vilnius University (VU)** was the coordinator of this project¹⁸⁹.

An example of best practice in VET sector:

Case study 2. Priority for the environment and fight against climate change. Erasmus+ project "Smartel"¹⁹⁰

The push for enhancing energy efficiency has spurred a significant demand for digital and green skills associated with smart meters and home automation technologies. In addition to technical skills, electricians require a blend of digital and environmental skills to effectively address the growing demand for smart meters and energy efficiency enhancements in the installation, maintenance, and programming of home automation systems. The aim of the Smartel project was to offer modular vocational training courses on smart meters and home automation aimed at equipping electricians in all participating countries with contemporary digital and green skills, knowledge, and competencies. To achieve these objectives, modern teaching methods were introduced, providing access to innovative pedagogical resources and facilitating the mutual recognition of learning outcomes across the EU.

At an individual level, the project provided training opportunities for participants to acquire digital and green skills related to smart meters and home automation technologies. At the institutional level, the long-term benefits of the project include an increase in the enrolment of professionals in vocational training institutions, as well as the establishment of strategic partnerships aimed at forming a network of collaborating vocational training institutions and sector stakeholders.

¹⁸⁸ The project example presented in the case study is from the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme period. As many projects in the 2021-2027 financial period are still undergoing implementation, no good practices have been identified yet from this period.

¹⁸⁹ More information: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2018-1-LT01-KA203-047044>

¹⁹⁰ The project example presented in the case study is from the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme period. As many projects in the 2021-2027 financial period are still undergoing implementation, no good practices have been identified yet from this period.

The European Commission has recognised this project as an exemplary initiative. **Panevėžys University of Applied Sciences** was the coordinator of this project¹⁹¹.

An example of best practice in VET sector:

Case study 3. Priority for inclusion and diversity. "Foreign placements for disadvantaged pupils"¹⁹²

The project aims to support students with mild or severe intellectual disabilities, disadvantaged young people, as well as the teachers and professionals working with them. This is achieved by enhancing the quality of vocational education at RTVMC and improving the vocational knowledge, work skills, learning motivation, adaptability, and social skills of young people with intellectual disabilities and disadvantaged youth.



During the two years of the project, 10 student groups, guided by RTVMC teachers and specialists, participated in 3-week international placements. Depending on their specialization, students undertook placements in Germany, Malta, Spain, Turkey, Portugal, acquiring valuable professional competences and receiving Europass Mobility documents to certify their experience.

At the individual level, the project helped young people to strengthen their self-esteem and adaptive skills, improving their chances of entering the labour market. The international experience helped to change young people's attitudes towards future work, increased their chances on the European labour market and promoted entrepreneurship. At the institutional level, the project contributed to the enhancement of vocational skills not only within RTVMC but also among international partner organisations, thereby elevating the quality of vocational training overall.

The European Commission has recognised this project as an exemplary initiative. **Radviliškis Technology and Business Teaching Center** was the coordinator of this project¹⁹³.

An example of best practice in SCH sector:

Case study 4. Priority for inclusion and diversity. Erasmus+ project "Prepare for your future career"¹⁹⁴

The countries participating in the project (Lithuania, Italy, Poland, Romania, Turkey) share a common challenge of youth unemployment, evidenced by the struggles young graduates face in finding suitable jobs that match with their skills, competencies, and interests. In this context, the project aimed to cultivate entrepreneurial skills among young people by fostering communication and collaboration with neighboring, local, and European foundations, as well as private companies within the European labor market.



At an individual level, the project provided students with the opportunity to improve their business and entrepreneurial skills. It enabled them to explore opportunities for connecting with different companies across various sectors, both nationally and internationally. Additionally, the project fostered their capacity to adapt to shifts in the labour market and underscored the significance of lifelong learning. Moreover, it bolstered their versatility in the labour market, spanning national, international, or EU levels. At the institutional level, the project has ensured the incorporation of best practices for enhancing students' skills into the school curriculum.

For Lithuania, the primary value of the project at the national and European levels lies in enhancing the capacity of young people to integrate and adapt to a dynamically changing labour market. This capacity-building effort holds

¹⁹¹ More information: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2016-1-LT01-KA202-023154>

¹⁹² The project example presented in the case study is from the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme period. As many projects in the 2021-2027 financial period are still undergoing implementation, no good practices have been identified yet from this period.

¹⁹³ More information: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2015-1-LT01-KA102-013240>

¹⁹⁴ The project example presented in the case study is from the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme period. As many projects in the 2021-2027 financial period are still undergoing implementation, no good practices have been identified yet from this period.

the potential to reduce youth unemployment. The European Commission has recognised this project as an exemplary initiative. **Kretinga District Education Centre** was the coordinator of this project¹⁹⁵.

An example of best practice in ADU sector:

Case study 5. Priority of participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement. "Media Literacy Development for Responsible Citizenship"¹⁹⁶

Rapidly evolving technologies, the internet, and social networks have democratized the public sphere, allowing all interested parties to become news and information disseminators. However, this also presents opportunities for the spread of propaganda and false news to foreign countries, terrorists, or other groups.



The main objective of this project was to strengthen the civic responsibility of the Lithuanian population by developing media literacy and critical thinking skills among adults. This would enable citizens to effectively manage the rapidly increasing flow of information and misinformation, allowing them to discern between news and rumors. On an individual level, the project aimed to enhance the citizenship of the Lithuanian population, ensuring that more individuals possess the ability to critically understand and evaluate information disseminated in the public sphere. Over the long term, this will empower more people to exercise their civic rights and fulfill their duties by honing their media literacy skills. At the institutional level, the project was intended to help the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania become a competence centre for media literacy education.

For Lithuania, the primary value of the project at both the national and European levels is the development of a resilient civil society capable of critically assessing available information. The European Commission has recognised this project as an exemplary initiative. **Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania** was the coordinator of this project¹⁹⁷.

An example of best practice in YOU sector:

Erasmus+ project "ScoutNet 2021" ¹⁹⁸

The project aimed to enhance cooperation among the international network of ScoutNet organisations, empower member organisations to generate ideas for European collaboration, and unite active individuals engaged in voluntary work (Scouting). It sought to equip them with the competencies necessary to engage with young people within Scouting organisations.



The project primarily consisted of one main activity: a 5-day ScoutNet event in Palanga, where all participants engaged in an informative programme together. All participants were members of organisations affiliated with the international ScoutNet network, occupying various positions within their respective organisations and actively volunteering. A total of 44 individuals participated in the activities, including the organisational team and team leaders, who were also engaged in the learning process and all program activities.

On an individual level, representatives of youth organisations had the opportunity to meet counterparts from other countries, thereby enhancing their interpersonal skills. They also learned how to present and represent their organisation on the international stage. Participants improved their social and teamwork skills, leadership abilities, and intercultural understanding. Additionally, the programme provided participants with knowledge on environmental protection, youth education, non-formal education and various methods associated with it. In Lithuania, the organisations that participated in the project have acquired motivated and competent members with fresh ideas capable of applying the issues and methods covered in the project to their daily work. Additionally, these organisations engaged with the youth of Lithuania, introducing scouting activities, volunteering

¹⁹⁵ More information: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2018-1-LT01-KA229-046955>

¹⁹⁶ The project example presented in the case study is from the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme period. As many projects in the 2021-2027 financial period are still undergoing implementation, no good practices have been identified yet from this period.

¹⁹⁷ More information: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2018-1-LT01-KA104-046906>

¹⁹⁸ The project example presented in the case study is from the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme period. As many projects in the 2021-2027 financial period are still undergoing implementation, no good practices have been identified yet from this period.

opportunities, and other possibilities for young people to get involved. The European Commission has recognised this project as an exemplary initiative. **Lithuanian Scout Association** was the coordinator of this project¹⁹⁹.

An example of best practice in YOU:

Case study 7. Priority of participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement. Erasmus+ Action KA3 project "Žinau, ką renku"²⁰⁰

The project aimed to promote the participation of citizens, particularly young people, in the political life of Lithuania and Europe. The Election Monitoring Platform www.zinaukarenku.lt sought to enhance young people's civic participation and political literacy, fostering responsible decision-making and active engagement in public policy.



The project activities encompassed a series of seminars aimed at raising awareness and encouraging the participation of young people in EP activities and local elections. Additionally, the project involved monitoring the performance of Lithuanian MEPs, organizing seminars on local elections, arranging meetings with MEPs and local politicians, and developing a virtual monitoring platform for public policies. At the individual level, youth participants enhanced their political literacy and awareness, deepened their sense of civic engagement and social responsibility, improved their ability to collaborate toward common goals and work effectively in teams, and developed their capacity to articulate their views in public settings. At a systemic level, the project aims to increase citizens' participation in elections, enhance political awareness, and encourage responsible public engagement, thereby fostering a lasting change in political culture. The European Commission has recognised this project as an exemplary initiative. The main national coordinator of the project in Lithuania was **House of Europe**²⁰¹.

¹⁹⁹ More information: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2020-3-LT02-KA105-007216>

²⁰⁰ The project example presented in the case study is from the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme period. As many projects in the 2021-2027 financial period are still undergoing implementation, no good practices have been identified yet from this period.

²⁰¹ More information: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2014-1-LT02-KA347-000392>

ANNEX 6. STATISTICS ON THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY PROGRAM ON PARTICIPANTS' COMPETENCIES

HED:

TABLE 5: THE SHARE OF HED MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2014-2020, % (N=567)

KEY COMPETENCES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Key Competence - Career	74%	79%	80%	79%	79%	78%	78%
Key Competence - Cooperation	55%	55%	57%	55%	56%	56%	57%
Key Competence - Digital	59%	59%	60%	59%	58%	57%	68%
Key Competence - Equality and inclusion	88%	89%	89%	90%	89%	89%	89%
Key Competence - Europe	71%	69%	71%	69%	69%	67%	68%
Key Competence - Language	79%	79%	79%	76%	75%	71%	63%
Key Competence - Networking	92%	94%	95%	94%	94%	95%	92%
Key Competence - Personal development	79%	82%	83%	83%	82%	81%	84%
Key Competence - Political awareness	67%	68%	71%	70%	69%	70%	73%
Key Competence - Professional skills	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Key Competence - Social awareness	70%	75%	76%	76%	77%	78%	70%
All Key Competences combined	76%	79%	79%	79%	78%	77%	78%

Source: ESSF's data

TABLE 6: THE SHARE OF HED MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2021-2023, % (N=608)

KEY COMPETENCES	2021	2022	2023
Key Competence - Career	80%	77%	78%
Key Competence - Cooperation	58%	61%	64%
Key Competence - Digital	65%	58%	57%
Key Competence - Equality and inclusion	91%	90%	91%
Key Competence - Europe	71%	77%	87%
Key Competence - Language	66%	72%	78%
Key Competence - Networking	92%	95%	95%
Key Competence - Personal development	86%	82%	81%
Key Competence - Political awareness	74%	74%	76%
Key Competence - Professional skills	n/a	70%	54%
Key Competence - Social awareness	77%	85%	91%
All Key Competences combined	80%	78%	79%

Source: ESSF's data

VET:**TABLE 7: THE SHARE OF VET MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2014-2020, % (N = 12 621)**

KEY COMPETENCES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Key Competence - Career	95%	93%	93%	92%	91%	90%	90%
Key Competence - Cooperation	73%	67%	75%	78%	50%	-	-
Key Competence - Digital	82%	75%	76%	71%	65%	69%	65%
Key Competence - Equality and inclusion	97%	95%	94%	92%	90%	89%	89%
Key Competence - Europe	88%	86%	87%	80%	83%	81%	77%
Key Competence - Language	80%	73%	73%	70%	75%	72%	72%
Key Competence - Math and Science	-	-	-	59%	55%	59%	60%
Key Competence - Networking	92%	91%	92%	92%	89%	85%	92%
Key Competence - Personal development	93%	92%	92%	90%	90%	89%	88%
Key Competence - Political awareness	77%	81%	81%	77%	78%	77%	73%
Key Competence - Professional skills	97%	96%	96%	92%	-	-	-
Key Competence - Social awareness	82%	86%	87%	85%	81%	80%	74%
All Key Competences combined	90%	89%	89%	86%	86%	85%	84%

Source: ESSF's data

TABLE 8: THE SHARE OF VET MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2021-2023, % (N=5 537)

KEY COMPETENCES	2021	2022	2023
Key Competence - Career	89%	89%	86%
Key Competence - Cooperation	-	-	-
Key Competence - Digital	60%	64%	51%
Key Competence - Equality and inclusion	89%	90%	87%
Key Competence - Europe	75%	85%	94%
Key Competence - Language	74%	80%	92%
Key Competence - Math and Science	49%	50%	38%
Key Competence - Networking	90%	89%	96%
Key Competence - Personal development	88%	89%	84%
Key Competence - Political awareness	73%	79%	84%
Key Competence - Professional skills	-	-	-
Key Competence - Social awareness	79%	82%	77%
All Key Competences combined	83%	85%	87%

Source: ESSF's data

SCH:**TABLE 9: THE SHARE OF SCH MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2014-2020, % (N = 2 362)**

KEY COMPETENCES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Key Competence - Career	88%	89%	86%	89%	86%	88%	90%
Key Competence - Cooperation	32%	42%	44%	45%	44%	-	-

KEY COMPETENCES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Key Competence - Digital	70%	63%	64%	63%	60%	65%	79%
Key Competence - Europe	89%	84%	80%	81%	77%	81%	81%
Key Competence - Language	66%	69%	70%	76%	87%	98%	98%
Key Competence - Math and Science	-	-	-	41%	44%	41%	46%
Key Competence - Networking	90%	89%	87%	86%	84%	87%	85%
Key Competence - Personal development	87%	90%	88%	89%	88%	90%	93%
Key Competence - Social awareness	94%	98%	98%	95%	92%	93%	99%
All Key Competences combined	81%	83%	82%	84%	84%	86%	88%

Source: ESSF's data

TABLE 10: THE SHARE OF SCH MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2014-2020, % (N = 2 293)

KEY COMPETENCES	2021	2022	2023
Key Competence - Career	89%	89%	81%
Key Competence - Cooperation	-	-	-
Key Competence - Digital	69%	65%	67%
Key Competence - Europe	75%	85%	97%
Key Competence - Language	99%	98%	98%
Key Competence - Math and Science	39%	40%	39%
Key Competence - Networking	88%	88%	73%
Key Competence - Personal development	91%	91%	83%
Key Competence - Social awareness	94%	95%	91%
All Key Competences combined	85%	85%	90%

Source: ESSF's data

ADU:

TABLE 11: THE SHARE OF ADU MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2014-2020, % (N = 567)

KEY COMPETENCES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Key Competence - Career	86%	87%	90%	85%	89%	85%	89%
Key Competence - Cooperation	62%	53%	52%	49%	54%	-	-
Key Competence - Digital	100%	66%	70%	53%	66%	44%	59%
Key Competence - Europe	100%	83%	73%	78%	80%	84%	95%
Key Competence - Language	100%	88%	98%	95%	100%	98%	97%
Key Competence - Math and Science	-	-	-	11%	47%	23%	39%
Key Competence - Networking	90%	93%	89%	88%	91%	81%	92%
Key Competence - Personal development	80%	85%	87%	84%	93%	90%	94%
Key Competence - Political awareness	100%	93%	97%	97%	98%	98%	97%
Key Competence - Professional skills	97%	96%	96%	92%	-	-	-
Key Competence - Social awareness	74%	79%	81%	79%	78%	79%	72%
All Key Competences combined	85%	81%	83%	81%	88%	82%	87%

Source: ESSF's data

TABLE 12: THE SHARE OF ADU MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2021-2023, % (N = 608)

KEY COMPETENCES	2021	2022	2023
Key Competence - Career	86%	85%	-
Key Competence - Cooperation	-	-	-
Key Competence - Digital	57%	69%	-
Key Competence - Europe	83%	90%	99%
Key Competence - Language	99%	100%	98%
Key Competence - Math and Science	32%	37%	-
Key Competence - Networking	92%	92%	-
Key Competence - Personal development	92%	89%	-
Key Competence - Political awareness	95%	94%	-
Key Competence - Professional skills	-	70%	54%
Key Competence - Social awareness	79%	85%	90%
All k Key Competences combined	84%	85%	99%

Source: ESSF's data

YOU:

TABLE 13: THE SHARE OF YOU MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2014-2020, %

KEY COMPETENCES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Key Competence - Citizenship	77%	81%	81%	81%	82%	85%	80%
Key Competence - Climate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Key Competence - Cultural awareness and expression	79%	81%	78%	77%	77%	67%	100%
Key Competence - Digital	59%	62%	59%	59%	61%	68%	69%
Key Competence - Entrepreneurship	75%	76%	76%	78%	75%	77%	78%
Key Competence - Literacy	54%	53%	56%	53%	57%	57%	46%
Key Competence - Multilingual	89%	89%	89%	91%	92%	91%	89%
Key Competence - Personal, social and learning to learn	85%	86%	86%	88%	88%	88%	86%
Key Competence - STEM	33%	32%	29%	36%	35%	46%	45%
All Key Competences combined	69%	70%	69%	70%	71%	72%	74%

Source: AYA data

TABLE 14: THE SHARE OF YOU MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS WHO POSITIVELY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON THEIR COMPETENCES, 2021-2023, %

KEY COMPETENCES	2021	2022	2023
Key Competence - Citizenship	84%	81%	59%
Key Competence - Climate	-	64%	41%
Key Competence - Cultural awareness and expression	-	-	-
Key Competence - Digital	66%	63%	43%
Key Competence - Entrepreneurship	77%	75%	51%
Key Competence - Literacy	51%	57%	46%

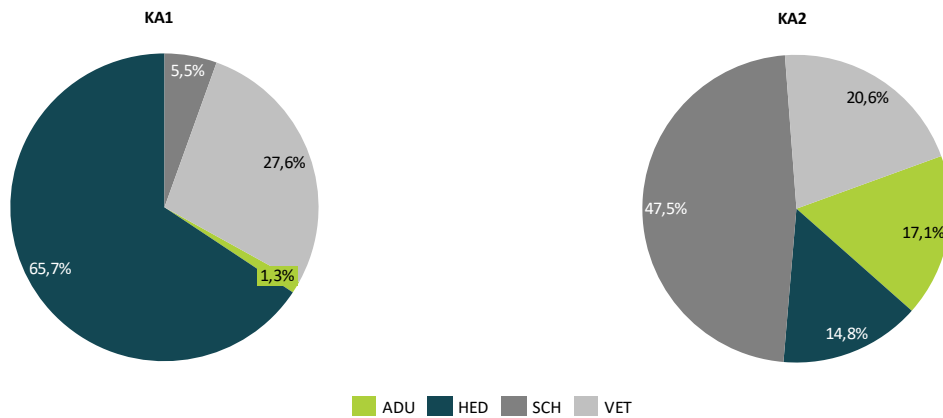
KEY COMPETENCES	2021	2022	2023
Key Competence - Multilingual	93%	90%	62%
Key Competence - Personal, social and learning to learn	88%	86%	63%
Key Competence - STEM	54%	46%	28%
All Key Competences combined	73%	70%	49%

Source: AYA data

ANNEX 7. STATISTICS ON PROGRAM BUDGET AND FUNDING APPLICATIONS

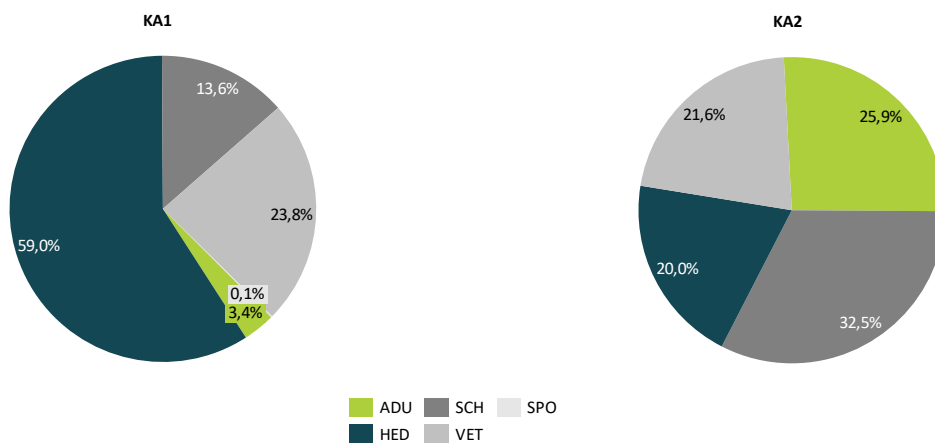
BUDGET ALLOCATION OF THE PROGRAMME IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF ERASMUS+ PROGRAM BUDGET BY DIFFERENT ACTIONS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, 2014-2020, %



Source: ESSF's data

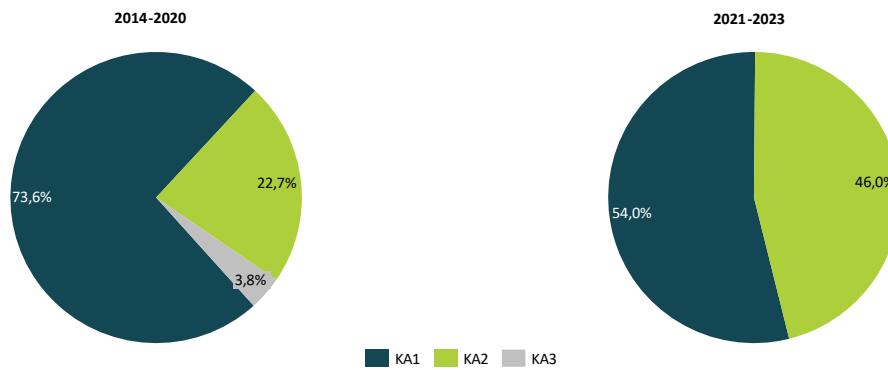
FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF ERASMUS+ PROGRAM BUDGET BY DIFFERENT ACTIONS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, 2021-2023, %



Source: ESSF's data

BUDGET ALLOCATION OF THE PROGRAMME IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

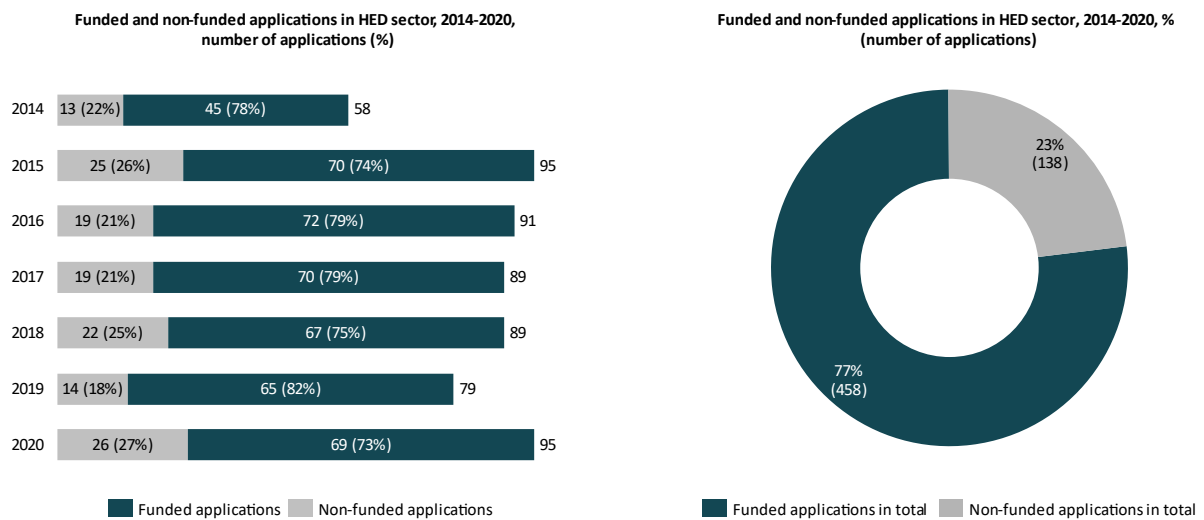
FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF ERASMUS+ PROGRAM BUDGET BY DIFFERENT ACTIONS IN THE FIELD YOUTH, 2014-2020 AND 2021-2023, %



Source: AYA data

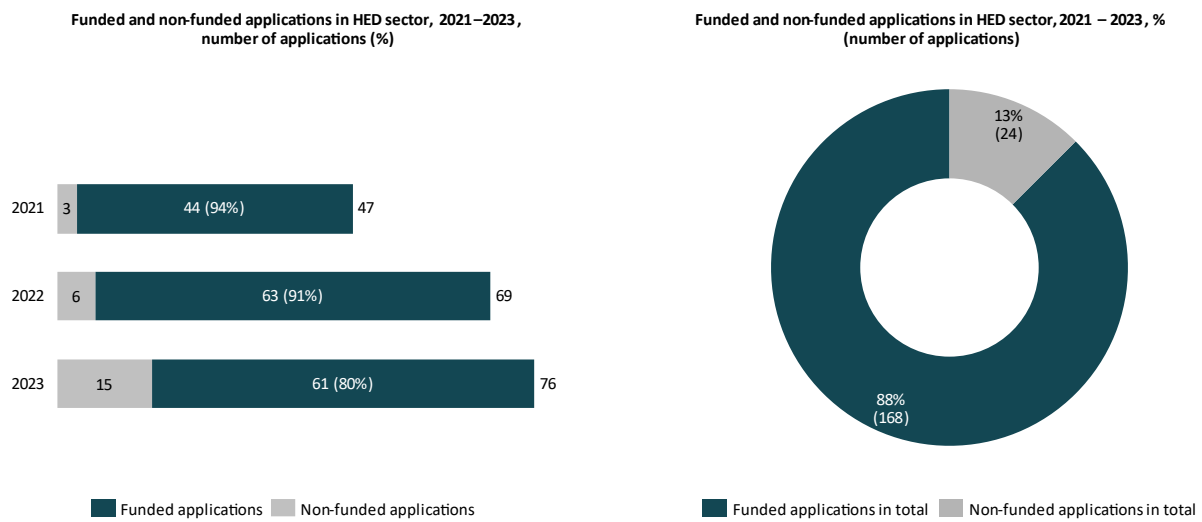
PROGRAMME INPUT: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND YOUTH

FIGURE 5: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE HED SECTOR, 2014-2020, %



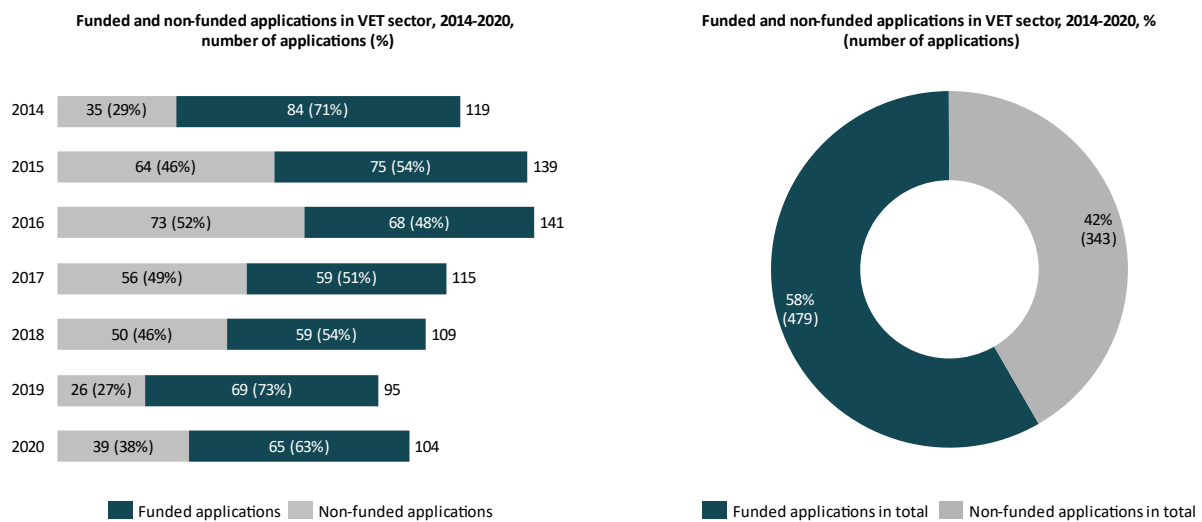
Source: ESSF's data

FIGURE 6: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE HED SECTOR, 2021-2023²⁰², %



Source: ESSF’s data

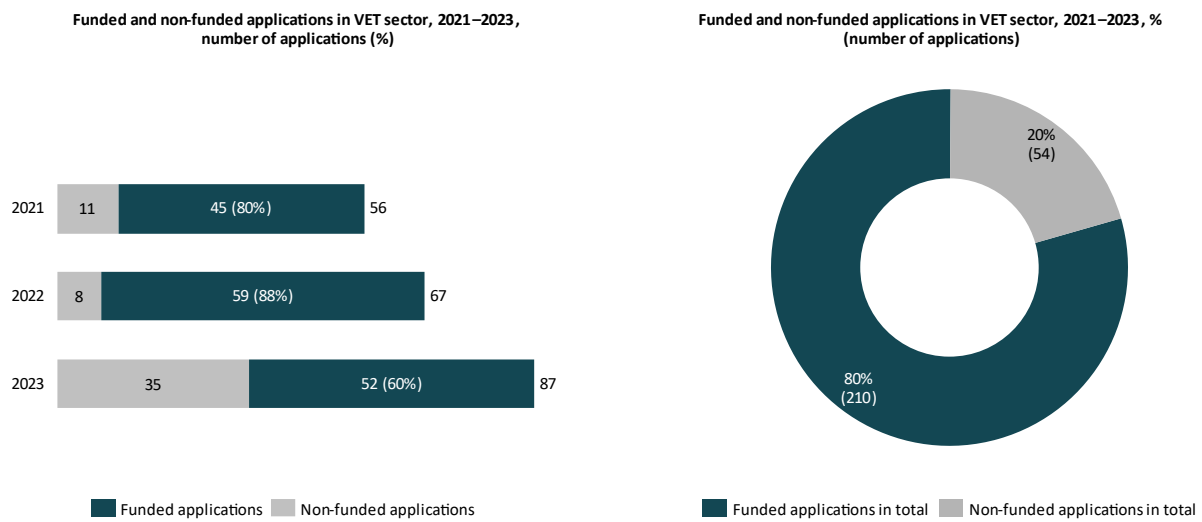
FIGURE 7: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE VET SECTOR, 2014-2020, %



Source: ESSF’s data

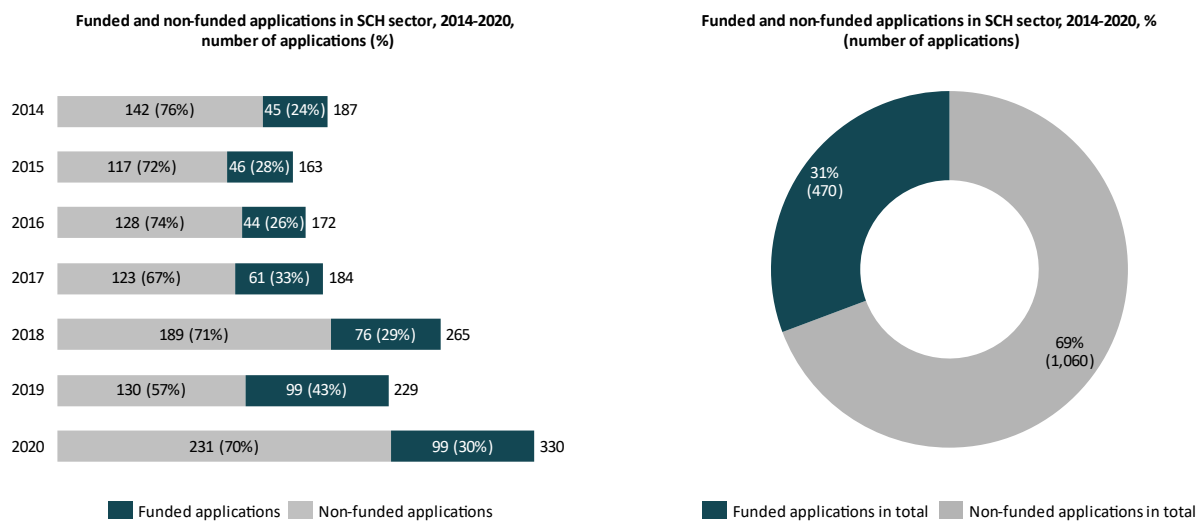
²⁰² Data for 2023 is provisional.

FIGURE 8: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE VET SECTOR, 2021-2023²⁰³, %



Source: ESSF’s data

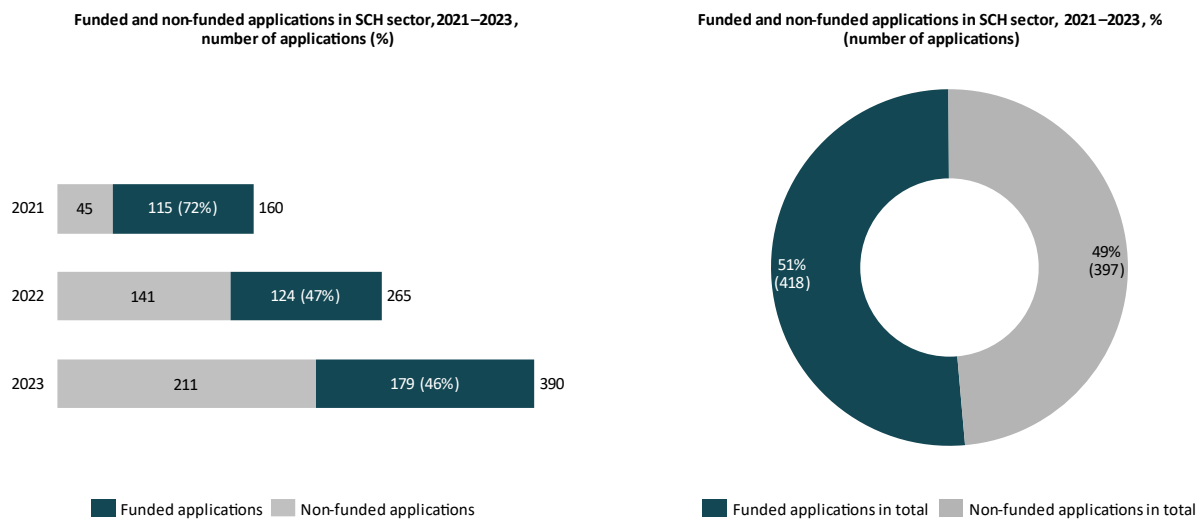
FIGURE 9: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE SCH SECTOR, 2014-2020, %



Source: ESSF’s data

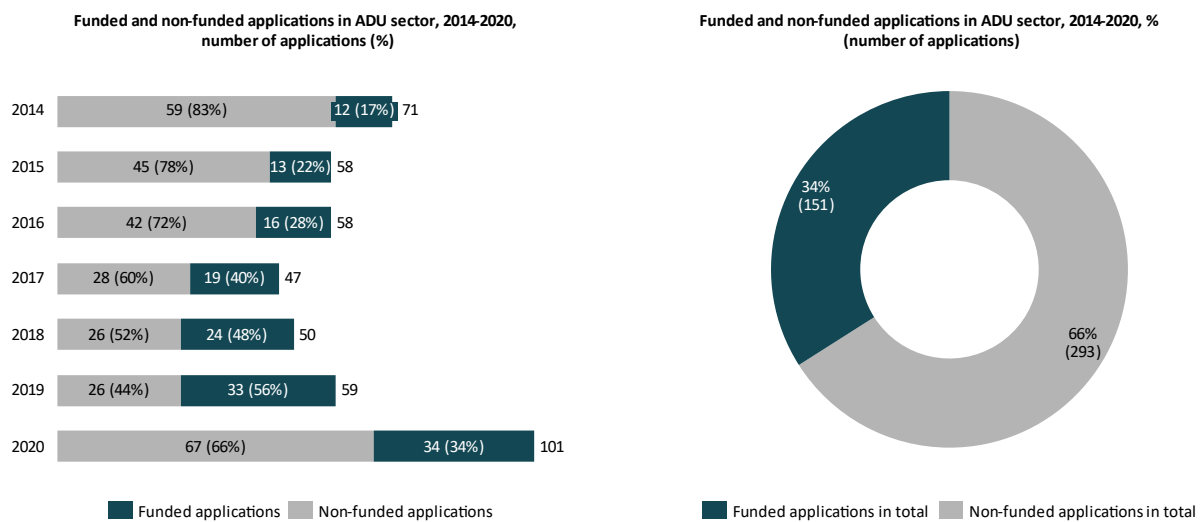
²⁰³ Data for 2023 is provisional.

FIGURE 10: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE SCH SECTOR, 2021-2023²⁰⁴, %



Source: ESSF's data

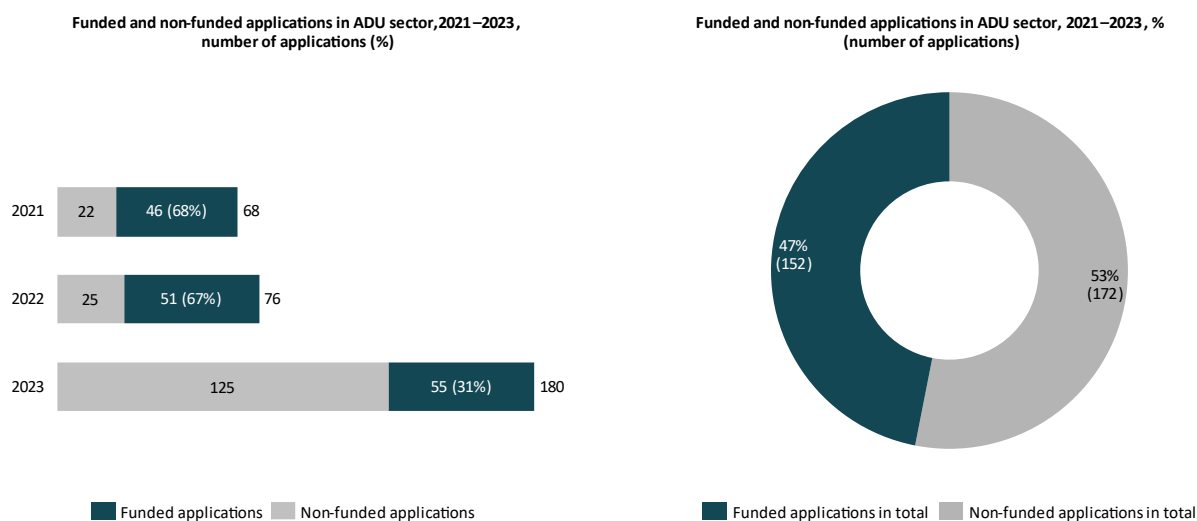
FIGURE 11; APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE ADU SECTOR, 2014-2020, %



Source: ESSF's data

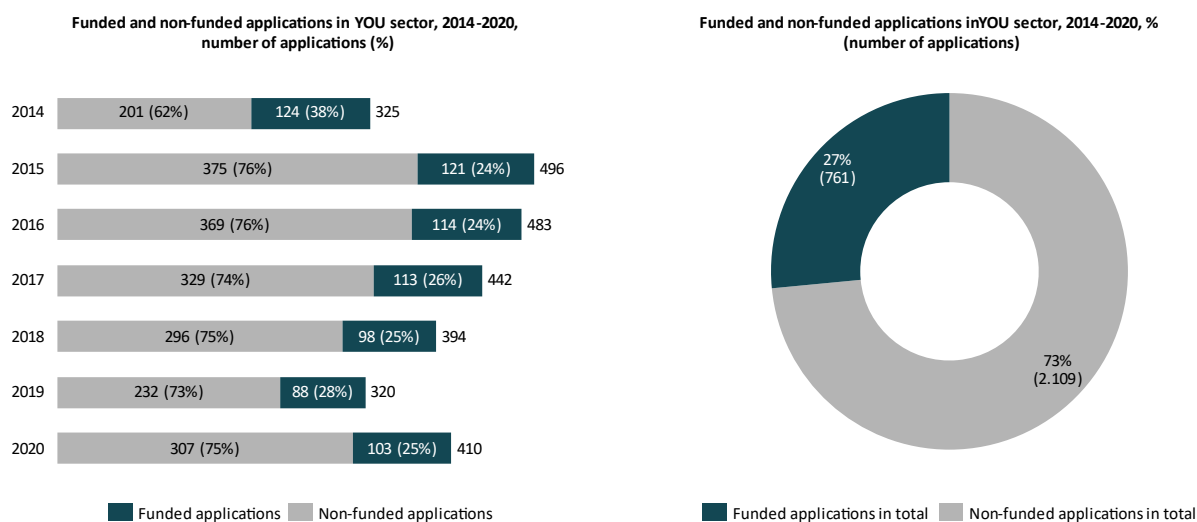
²⁰⁴ Data for 2023 is provisional.

FIGURE 12: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE SCH SECTOR, 2021-2023²⁰⁵, %



Source: ESSF's data

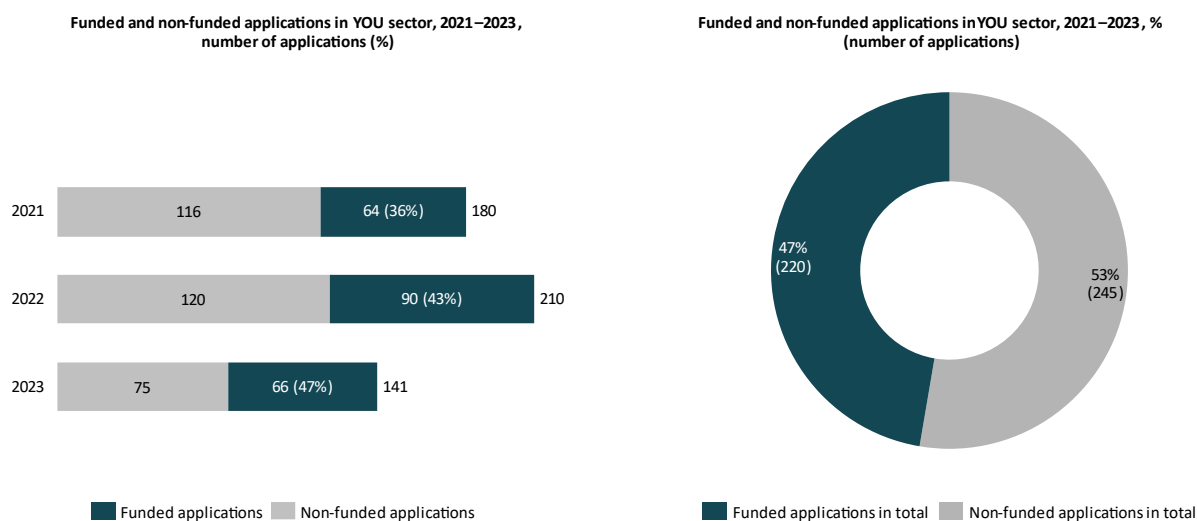
FIGURE 13: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE YOU SECTOR, 2014-2020, %



Source: AYA data

²⁰⁵ Data for 2023 is provisional.

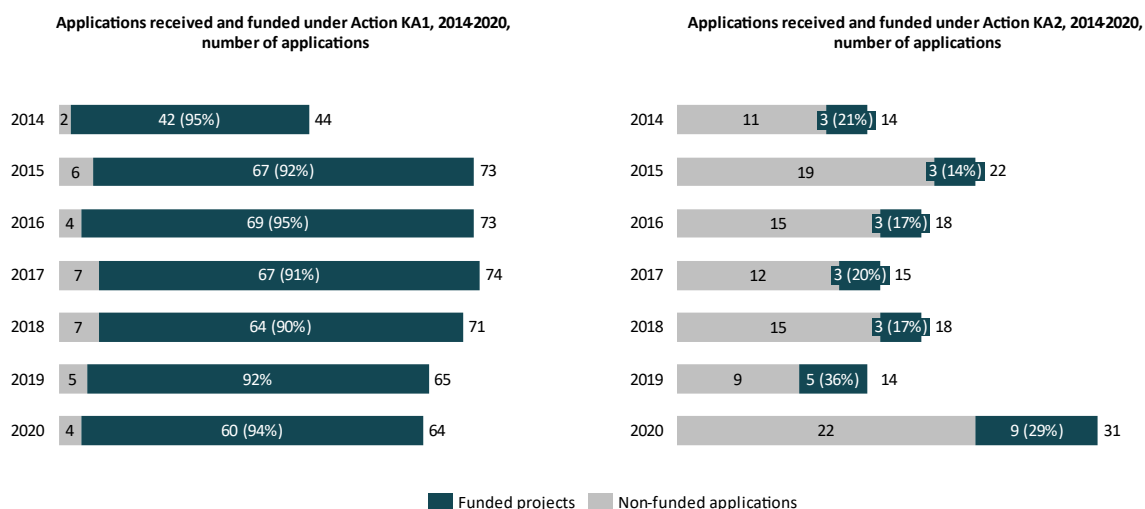
FIGURE 14: APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE YOU SECTOR, 2021-2023²⁰⁶, %



Source: AYA data

THE DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTIONS IN THE DIFFERENT SECTORS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND YOUTH

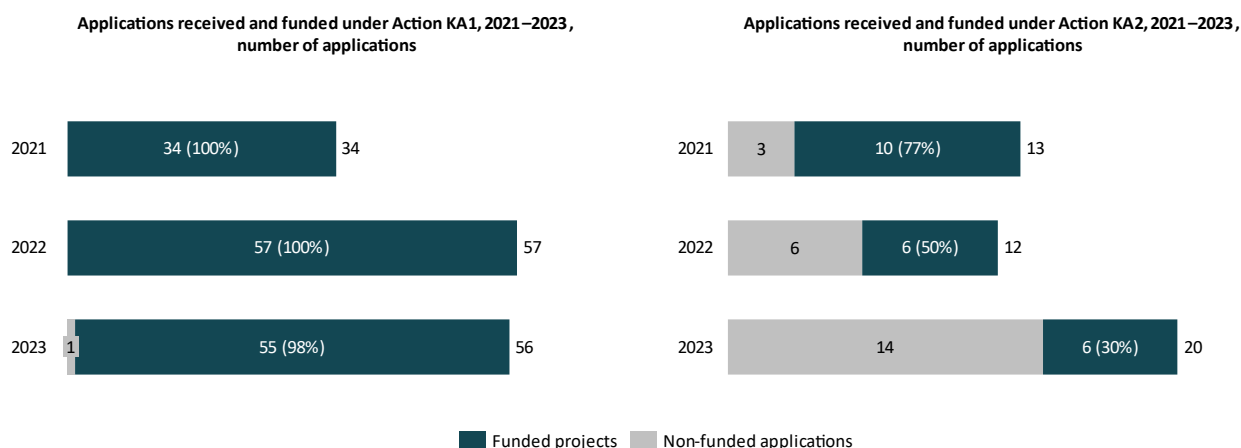
FIGURE 15: DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTION IN THE HED SECTOR, 2014-2020, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS (%)



Source: ESSF's data

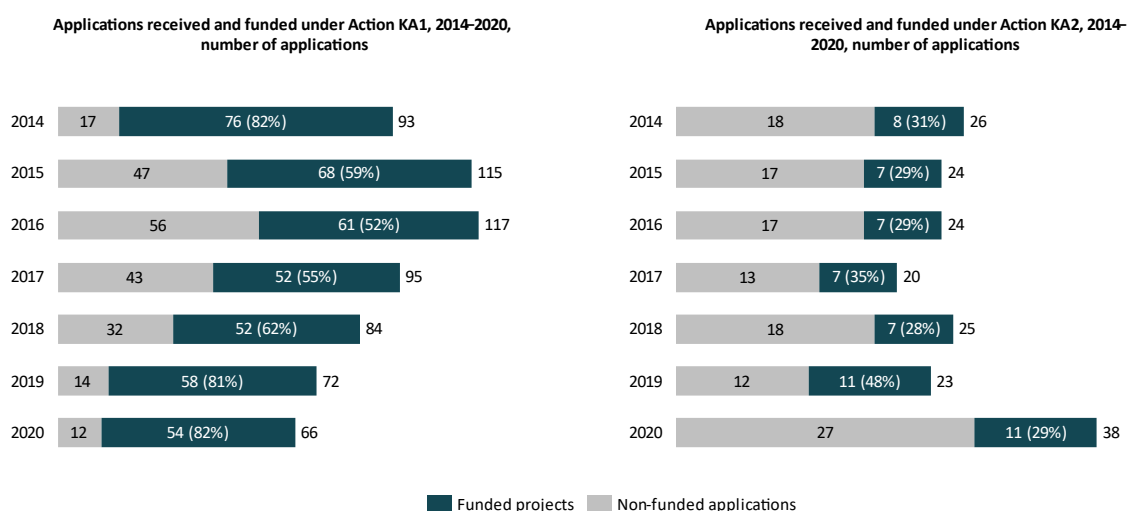
²⁰⁶ Data for 2023 is provisional.

FIGURE 16: DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTION IN THE HED SECTOR, 2021-2023²⁰⁷, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS (%)



Source: ESSF's data

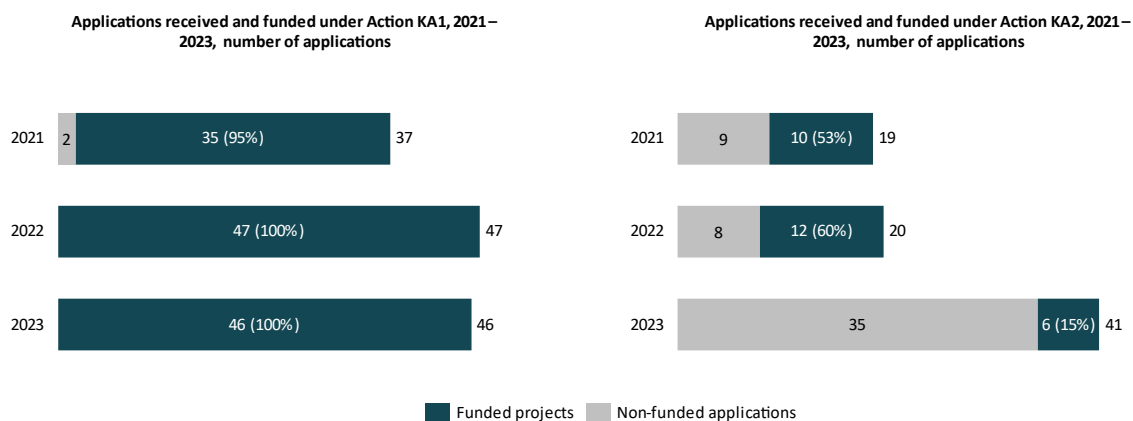
FIGURE 17: DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTION IN THE VET SECTOR, 2014-2020, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS (%)



Source: ESSF's data

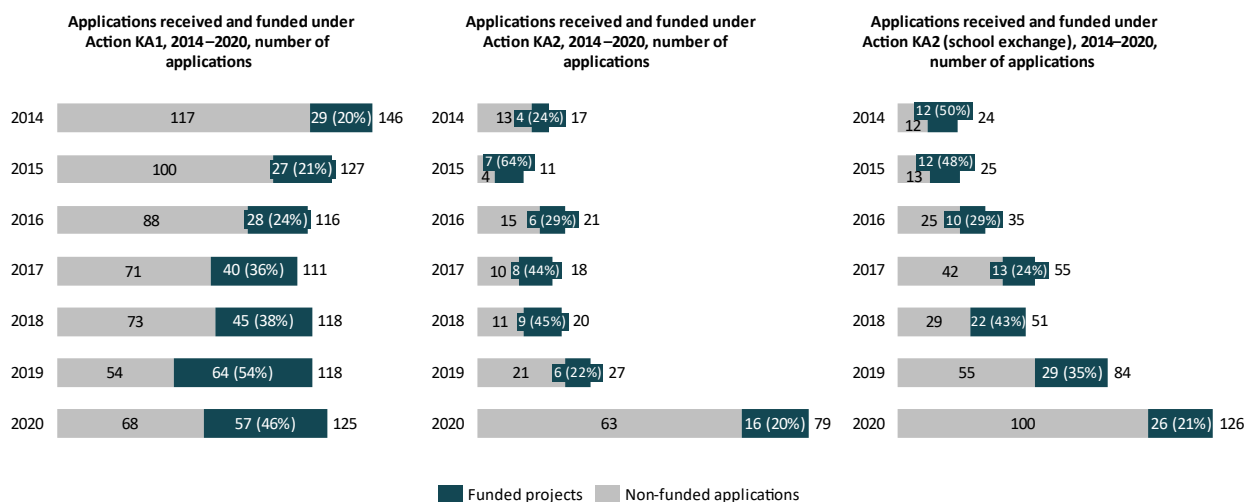
²⁰⁷ Data for 2023 is provisional.

FIGURE 18: DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTION IN THE VET SECTOR, 2021-2023²⁰⁸, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS (%)



Source: ESSF's data

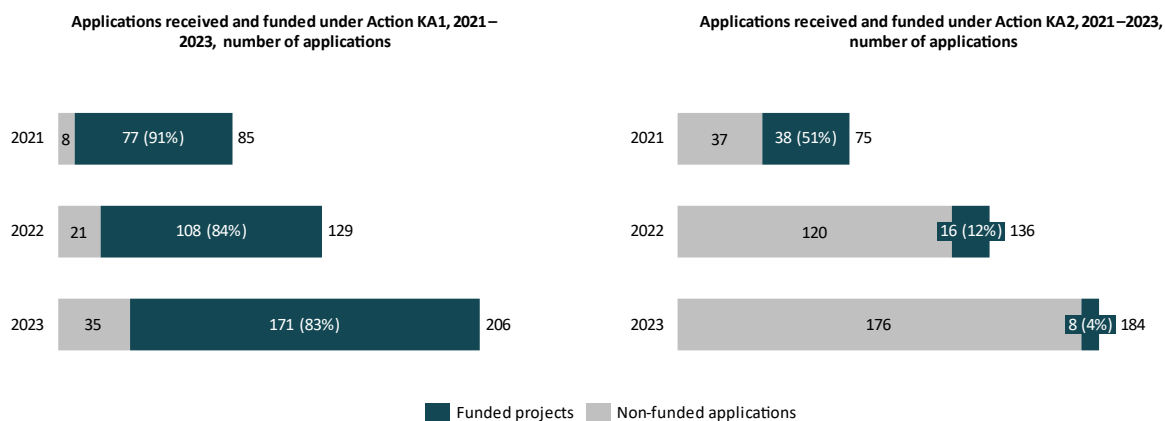
FIGURE 19: DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTION IN THE SCH SECTOR, 2014-2020, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS (%)



Source: ESSF's data

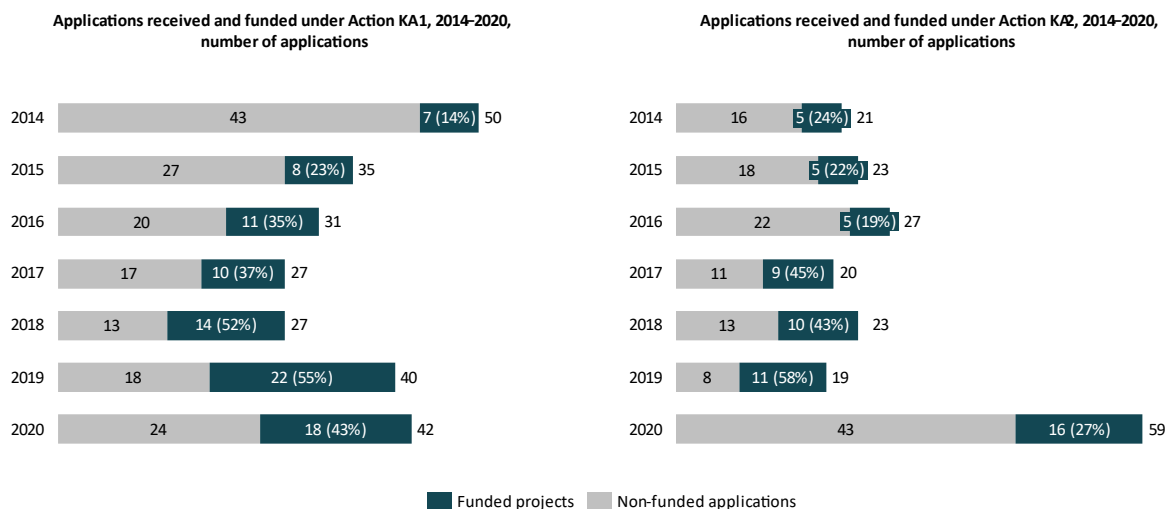
²⁰⁸ Data for 2023 is provisional.

FIGURE 20: DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTION IN THE SCH SECTOR, 2021-2023²⁰⁹, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS (%)



Source: ESSF's data

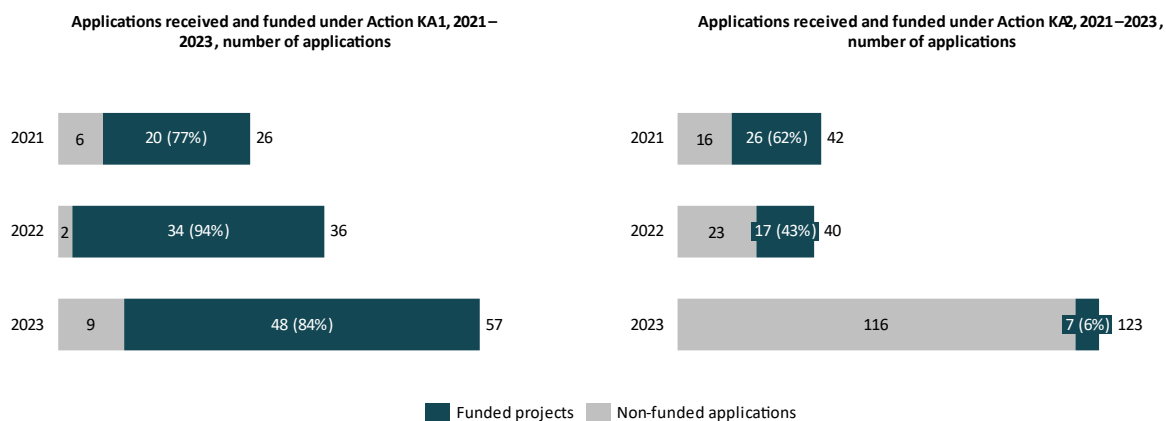
FIGURE 21: DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTION IN THE ADU SECTOR, 2014-2020, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS (%)



Source: ESSF's data

²⁰⁹ Data for 2023 is provisional.

FIGURE 22: DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATIONS BY ACTION IN THE ADU SECTOR, 2021-2023²¹⁰, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS (%)



Source: ESSF's data

²¹⁰ Data for 2023 is provisional.

ANNEX 8. EVALUATION SUMMARY BY DIFFERENT SECTORS AND CRITERIA

TABLE 15: SUMMARY OF THE ERASMUS+ EVALUATION BY DIFFERENT EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SECTORS²¹¹

	RELEVANCE	HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES (HP)	EFFECTIVENESS	EFFICIENCY	COHERENCE	EU ADDED VALUE
HED	Erasmus+ is in line with Lithuania's strategic priorities at national level.	<p>HP relevance: medium (impact on institutional set-up).</p> <p>The proportion of projects related to HP: 2021–2023: 50 %</p>	<p>Number of participants: 2014–2020: 50,3 thousand HED participants 2021–2023: 9,9 thousand HED participants</p> <p>Impact at the individual level: improvement of general and specific competences</p> <p>Impact at the institutional level: development of a network of HEIs</p> <p>Impact at the systemic or structural level: enhancing</p>	<p>Budget size: 2014-2020: €86 million (of which €78.7 million for KA1 and €7.3 million for KA2) 2021-2023: €49.3 million (of which KA1 - €43.8 million, KA2 - €5.5 million)</p> <p>Financing of applications (success rate): 2014–2020: 77 %. 2021–2023: 88 %.</p>	<p>Internal coherence: satisfactory</p> <p>External coherence: not duplicating but complementing (ESFA funding, Nordplus Higher Education, ISEP, bilateral programmes funded by Lithuania and foreign countries).</p>	<p>Proportion of participants who feel that the programme contributed positively to the development of their European values: 2014-2020: 69%. 2021-2023: 78%.</p> <p>Sustainability of the products produced by the projects: highest</p> <p>The consequences of terminating the programme: decline in international mobility and fewer opportunities to promote</p>

²¹¹ The following logic was used to summarise the results of the study for each criterion: (1) the relevance of the programme in the Lithuanian context was assessed in terms of the extent to which the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme are in line with, or complementary to, national policy needs and priorities; (2) the effectiveness of the programme is measured by the extent to which the programme has achieved its objectives, i.e. the number of participants (i.e. mass participation) and the impact at individual, institutional and systemic/structural level; (3) the evaluation of the efficiency of Erasmus+ actions initially examines the proportionality of the budget, assessing how much of the total Erasmus+ budget is allocated to different sectors and the distribution within them. Adequacy of funding per sector is then evaluated based on the balance between the supply of funding for projects and the demand, measured by the fundability or success rate of projects. A ratio higher than 50% indicates adequate funding allocation, with closer to 100% indicating better alignment with demand. Additionally, the number of institutions and organizations accredited or holding an Erasmus+ charter serves as an indicator of administrative efficiency, with accreditation systems reducing the burden on applicants and contributing to program efficiency; (4) Coherence is measured in two dimensions - internal coherence within the programme, i.e. how well the different actions are aligned, and external coherence, i.e. how well the Erasmus+ programme fits with other similar national, regional or international programmes; (5) European added value refers to aspects that cannot be achieved solely through national efforts. In the context of the Erasmus+ program, it examines how the program has fostered the development of a European identity by promoting European values across various sectors. It also assesses the sustainability of the program's outcomes beyond the duration of individual projects and considers the potential consequences for each sector if the program were to be terminated.

			the competitiveness and internationalization of HEIs	Erasmus+ Higher Education Charter granted to: 34 out of 37 HEIs in Lithuania		Lithuania in the international academic community.
VET	Although Erasmus+ is not explicitly mentioned in Lithuania's strategic documents, it can contribute to Lithuania's goals of enhancing teachers' digital skills and introducing innovative teaching methods.	HP relevance: medium (impact on institutional set-up and inclusion). The proportion of projects related to HP: 2021–2023: 60 %	Number of participants: 2014–2020: 16,3 thousand VET participants 2021–2023: 4,3 thousand VET participants Impact at the individual level: improvement of general and specific competences Impact at the institutional level: promoting interculturality, implementing an internationalisation strategy Impact at the systemic or structural level: structural changes in vocational schools	Budget size: 2014-2020: €43.3 million (of which KA1— €33 million, KA2 - €10.3 million) 2021-2023: €23.6 million (of which KA1 - €17.7 million, KA2 - €5.9 million) Financing of applications (success rate): 2014-2020: 58 % 2021-2023: 80 % Number of accredited VET organisations: 39 of 44	Internal coherence: satisfactory External coherence: not duplicating but complementing (Nordplus Junior, ESFA projects).	Proportion of participants who feel that the programme contributed positively to the development of their European values: 2014–2020: 83 % 2021–2023: 85 % Sustainability of the products produced by the projects: medium The consequences of terminating the programme: opportunities to improve the visibility of vocational schools and to develop the international dimension would be reduced; mobility opportunities would largely disappear, with the exception of short-term mobility programmes to Lithuania's neighbouring countries.
SCH	Erasmus+ and its role are not prominently emphasized in Lithuania's strategic documents. However, the program is important for fostering the development of civic citizens adapted to	HP relevance: high (more knowledge and understanding about HP in SCH community) The proportion of projects related to HP:	Number of participants: 2014–2020: 3,6 thousand SCH participants 2021–2023: 2,6 thousand SCH participants Impact at the individual level: improvement of general and specific competences	Budget size: 2014–2020: €30.2 million (of which €6.5 million for KA1, €9.4 million for KA2 and €14.2 million for KA2 school exchanges) 2021–2023: €19 million (of which €10.1 million for KA1 and €8.9 million for KA2)	Internal coherence: satisfactory External coherence: not duplicating but complementing (Nordplus Junior).	Proportion of participants who feel that the programme contributed positively to the development of their European values: 2014–2020: 82 % 2021–2023: 86 %

	the digital transformation and for and for the adaptation of the education system to promote the mobility of learners	2021–2023: 67,7 %	Impact at the institutional and systemic levels: internationalisation of schools	Financing of applications (success rate): 2014-2020: 58 proc. 2021-2023: 80 proc. Number of accredited SCH organisations: 54		Sustainability of the products produced by the projects: medium The consequences of terminating the programme: learning mobility opportunities in the BU sector would largely disappear, the sharing of good practices and new teaching/learning methods would be significantly reduced, innovation in education would stagnate, and there would be a decreased focus on HP.
ADU	The priorities of the Erasmus+ programme align with Lithuania's endeavours to boost the lifelong learning rates among the Lithuanian population	HP relevance: medium (contributes to the continuous development of adults in the context of changing technologies and external challenges). The proportion of projects related to HP: 2021–2023: 55,3 %	Number of participants: 2014–2020: 0,9 thousand ADU participants 2021–2023: 0,7 thousand ADU participants Impact at the individual level: improvement of general and specific competences Impact at the institutional level: expanding networks of partnerships, developing the international dimension	Budget size: 2014-2020: EUR 10 million (of which KA1 - EUR 1.5 million, KA2 - EUR 8.5 million) 2021-2023: €9.6 million (of which €2.5 million for KA1 and €7.1 million for KA2) Financing of applications (success rate): 2014-2020: 34 % 2021-2023: 47 % Number of accredited ADU organisations: 14	Internal coherence: satisfactory External coherence: not duplicating but complementing (Nordplus Adult).	Proportion of participants who feel that the programme contributed positively to the development of their European values: 2014–2020: 85 % 2021–2023: 91 % Sustainability of the products produced by the projects: lowest The consequences of terminating the programme: the opportunities for the ADU community to broaden its horizons would be reduced, the community would become less tolerant of other cultures in the long run, and ADU organisations would become less modern.
YOU	Erasmus+ is in line with Lithuania's strategic priorities at national level, which identify the	HP relevance: high (contributes to young people's participation in civic life,	Number of participants: 2014–2020: 40,5 thousand YOU participants 2021–2023: 13,5 thousand YOU participants (planned)	Budget size: 2014–2020: €21.6 million (of which KA1 - €15.9 million, KA2 - €4.9	Internal coherence: satisfactory External coherence: not duplicating but complementing	When comparing participants' perception of their European identity before and after their participation in Erasmus+ projects, those who have

	programme as key to developing young people's skills in various areas (e.g. environment and green skills)	<p>inclusiveness sustainability, and digital skills).</p> <p>The proportion of projects related to HP: 2021–2023: 85,7 proc.</p>	<p>Impact at the individual level: improvement of general and specific competences</p> <p>Impact at the institutional and systemic levels: strengthening the NGO and youth field</p>	<p>million, KA3 - €0.8 million)</p> <p>2021-2023: €10.3 million (of which €5.6 million for KA1 and €4.7 million for KA2)</p> <p>Financing of applications (success rate): 2014-2020: 15 proc. 2021-2023: 47 proc.</p> <p>Number of accredited youth organisations: 8</p>	(European Solidarity Corps, initiatives coming from Active Citizens Fund, etc.)	<p>participated in an Erasmus+ exchange feel 25% closer to their European identity and values.</p> <p>Sustainability of the products produced by the projects: medium</p> <p>The consequences of terminating the programme: the mobility of young people would be reduced, PFOs would lose the opportunity to go abroad, the civic activity and participation of young people in democratic life would decline, the entire network of youth NGOs would weaken, and Lithuanian youth policy would develop more slowly.</p>
SPO	Erasmus+ consistently complements national objectives in the field of sport, with the aim of increasing the overall physical activity of the Lithuanian population.	N/a	<p>Number of participants: 2021–2023: 20</p> <p>Impact at the individual, institutional and systemic levels: N/a</p>	<p>Budget size: 2021-2023: €86.4 thousand</p> <p>Financing of applications (success rate): 2021-2023: 67 proc.</p> <p>Number of accredited SPO organisations: 0</p>	N/a	N/a

ANNEX 9. LIST OF USED LITERATURE AND REFERENCES

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