

Midterm Evaluation of Erasmus+

National Report Denmark



THE DANISH
EVALUATION INSTITUTE

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1 Executive summary and conclusions

The Erasmus+ programme was launched in 2014 in order to support internationalisation within the fields of Education, Youth and Sport to stimulate lifelong learning through formal and informal learning. The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) and Rambøll Management Consulting (Rambøll) have prepared this national midterm evaluation of Erasmus+ in Denmark by order of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science and the Ministry of Education.

1.1 Main findings

Effectiveness

Overall, the three KAs are considered to be effective in regard to their specific objectives and in light of their different levels of funding, i.e. they complement each other very well. KA1 involves a significantly greater number of participants than the other KAs and has a much larger budget. It is thus more visible and to a higher degree demonstrates the value of European cooperation.

Regarding KA1 at an individual level, the surveys of beneficiaries and the participants' reports show that students' competences, language skills, etc. are improved. The impact analysis shows a small but significant effect on HE-students' employment compared to students who have not participated in mobility stays.

At an institutional level, the evaluation shows that Erasmus+ contributes to the internationalisation of the institutions. Furthermore, the beneficiaries find that Erasmus+ contributes more to the internationalisation of the institutions than other types of mobility programmes among students and staff.

The majority of KA2 projects are still ongoing making it difficult to assess their effects. The main findings related to KA3 are that the projects facilitate national and transnational youth meetings, which are an important part of realizing objectives like promoting intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity.

On a national level, it is difficult to measure or make any conclusions on the degree to which the political development in Denmark within the education and youth fields has been affected by Erasmus+ and its predecessors. However, the Danish authorities assess that it has made an important contribution to the internationalisation of the Danish educational system and the youth field.

The evaluation uncovers different areas where improvements might contribute to improved effectiveness, among other aspects:

- Most beneficiaries find that unit cost does not cover the actual expenses.
- The financial and administrative role of the project coordinator in KA2 is considered to be a heavy burden.

- Vocational colleges experience challenges in identifying partners and internships of sufficient quality.

Efficiency

The National Agency assesses that Erasmus+ can be managed properly within the current level of resources, but that it requires a steady focus on prioritization, efficiency and synergy between the sectors, and extensive use of external assistance for special tasks.

The evaluation shows that the integration of programmes into Erasmus+ has not led to visible efficiency gains at an institutional level, but has contributed to efficiency gains at a national level. Here the integration has made it possible to streamline processes and procedures across sectors and actions. At the level of beneficiaries, the transition to unit cost has simplified budgeting and reduced some of the administrative burdens associated with Erasmus+. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement.

Relevance

Overall, the evaluation indicates that the Erasmus+ objectives are still relevant for institutions working with them. Internationalisation, including mobility among students and staff, remains a priority for national policy and the educational institutions. However, even though Erasmus+ objectives are in line with the national strategy, focus on quality and relevance in higher education, especially employability, has increased over the last few years. Consequently, the contribution of Erasmus+ to quality development at the institutions and academic recognition and transfer of credits from mobility projects play an increased role. The evaluation shows that Erasmus+ only contributes to some extent to quality development at the institutions, and that transfer of credits remains a challenge.

The ability of the Erasmus+ programme to attract and reach different target groups varies from sector to sector and from KA to KA. Overall, the National Agency finds that applications within the various KAs and sectors reflect a great diversity when it comes to participant profiles. The National Agency tailors its communication efforts to the needs of each sector and target group, and new initiatives to reach more and new applicants are ongoing. Several national schemes support student mobility within higher education. National statistics and reports on mobility show that HE-students in a significant extent are seeking English-speaking countries, such as the U.K, U.S.A, Canada and Australia, when choosing where to study abroad. Furthermore, statistics show that they frequently choose other programmes and sources for financial support than Erasmus+ when travelling to these countries. This trend is expected to continue the coming years.

Internal and external coherence and complementarity

Overall, the evaluation shows that Erasmus+ complements a number of national and international programmes. Looking at the Erasmus+ programme, the coherence between the KAs is considered clear and logical, and differences between KAs are clear. There are also various examples of synergies within and between KAs, i.e. close cross-sectorial cooperation in KA2.

European added value and sustainability

The evaluation shows that Erasmus+ is believed to be more effective than other types of mobility programmes when it comes to internationalisation of the institutions. Furthermore, Erasmus+ requires projects to be transnational, thus creating the basis for a European added value.

The increase in budget is expected to be absorbed. The National Agency has launched a number of initiatives in order to ensure the absorption of the budget, but has emphasised that more flexibility in the distribution of funds between decentralised actions is required to ensure that the distribution between the KAs reflects needs and demands in a national context.

2 Introduction

2.1 Objectives of Erasmus+

The legal basis of Erasmus+ encompasses the following:

- the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, including the headline education target;
- the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), including the corresponding benchmarks;
- the sustainable development of partner countries in the field of higher education;
- the overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018);
- the objective of developing the European dimension in sport, in particular grassroots sport, in line with the Union work plan for sport;
- the promotion of European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union.

2.2 Erasmus+ in Denmark

In Denmark, the Erasmus+ programme is administered by the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education, supervised by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Erasmus+ offers programmes through three key actions (KAs):

- KA1: Learning mobility of individuals. KA1 supports mobility in the education, training and youth sectors and aims to bring long lasting benefits to the participants and the organisations.
- KA2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. KA2 make it possible for organisations from different participating countries to develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth.
- KA3: Support for policy reform. Key Action 3 provides grants for a wide variety of actions aimed at stimulating innovative policy development, policy dialogue and implementation, and the exchange of knowledge in the fields of education, training and youth.

Eligible applicants within the fields of school education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education and youth are described in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. KA1 and KA2 are used in both the education and training, and youth sectors. The decentralised actions under KA3 are only open to the youth sector.

2.3 Purpose of the evaluation

This Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation will:

- assess the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ actions in achieving the objectives of the programme and evaluate the efficiency of the programme and its European added value. The report will also address the programme's internal and external coherence, the continued relevance of its objectives, and the scope for simplification.

- assess the long-term results and impact of previous programmes (Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus, ALFA, Tempus, Edulink, Sport preparatory actions).

The evaluation only focuses on the decentralised parts of Erasmus+. The Danish Evaluation Institute and Rambøll Management Consulting have carried out the evaluation.

2.4 Methodology

In order to cover all three actions and ensure that the evaluation accommodates the perspectives of beneficiaries and participants, a mixed methodological design has been applied.

Survey among beneficiaries

Institutional surveys among beneficiaries of the fields of higher education, VET, school education, and adult education were conducted. The purpose of the surveys was to gain insight into the institutions' perspectives on Erasmus+, including its financial management, contribution to internationalisation, the quality of the Erasmus+ programme and the challenges related hereto. The response rates were quite high; see table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1

Survey of beneficiaries

	Population	Respondents	Response rate
Higher education institutions	41	37	90%
Vocational colleges	53	42	79%
Adult education organisations	21	17	81%
The field of school education	85	63	74%

Effect analysis

For higher education, an effect analysis was conducted in order to see whether an exchange with Erasmus+ has a short-term effect. As outcomes, we have studied employment status, income level and labour market mobility. The effect analysis was based on a treatment and control group design, with Erasmus+ students as the treatment group. Two control groups was constructed – one consisting of exchange students other than Erasmus+ and the other consisting of higher education students who have not participated in exchanges. The control group was constructed with the coarsened exact matching method. Access to statistical data from Statistics Denmark gave the possibility to control for background variables, including socio economic profiling.

Interviews with VET students

As a supplement to the results from the participant reports, we have conducted 15 interviews with VET students. The purpose of the interviews was to let the students tell their stories about their Erasmus+ exchanges. In addition, we were interested to hear how they have used/ are using the skills they have gained from the exchange. While the participant reports look back at the exchanges, the interviews gave us a perspective on the time after the exchange.

Interviews with beneficiaries

58 interviews were conducted. The purpose of the interviews was to gather insight into the institutions' perspectives on the activities and outcomes, efficiency, coherence and effectiveness of Erasmus+.

Qualitative interviews with beneficiaries under KA1

10 interviews with higher education institutions and 10 interviews with vocational colleges were conducted. The selection of institutions was based on the survey responses.

Qualitative interviews with project managers under K2 (Strategic Partnership programmes)

25 interviews were conducted with project managers under KA2, and the following criteria were used to select participating institutions:

- Received funding in 2014 or 2015
- Selected projects cover all sectors and have had different objectives, with reference to objectives of KA2
- Different kinds of institutions (educational institutions, organisations, NGOs, etc.)
- Diversity in size of grants, i.e. both small and large projects.

Qualitative interviews with project managers under K3 (Youth Meetings)

From 2014 to 2015, nine youth meetings were carried out, distributed among seven organisations under K3 in Denmark. All seven beneficiaries have been interviewed as part of the evaluation.

Self-evaluation

The National Agency was requested to complete a self-evaluation report. The purpose was to gain insight into their role in the administration and implementation of Erasmus+.

Data from other sources

The evaluation also used data from two other sources:

- Data from participants' reports from VET and HE students.
- Survey data from surveys of project managers and participants from the youth field (the RAY survey).

2.5 Terminology

Throughout the report, the following terms are used when referring to the respondents and interviewees in the study. The term beneficiaries refers to:

- The responsible Erasmus+-managers at higher educational institutions and vocational colleges under KA1
- The interviewed project managers under KA2 and KA3 (Youth Meetings)
- Respondents to the surveys for higher educational institutions, vocational colleges, the field of school education and adult education organisations.
- Project managers in the RAY survey that is included in this report.

The term participants refers to:

- Interviews with VET and HE students under KA1
- The participant reports from VET students
- Young participants in the RAY survey.

3 Main findings

3.1 Effectiveness

In this section, the extent to which the objectives of the Erasmus+ and previous programmes have been achieved is considered. The analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 1-9 (see appendix B).

3.1.1 Impact of Erasmus+ predecessors on employability and mobility among higher education students

To estimate the effect of Erasmus+ and predecessors on employment status, income level and regional labour mobility, two control groups were constructed that are comparable to Erasmus+-students. The identification of the control groups was followed by a regression in which we control for sex, age, ethnicity, type of education, the field of education, parents' ages when the student was born as well as parental ethnicity, education and income. Access to rich and detailed data from Statistics Denmark enabled us to exclude students who are no longer living in Denmark at the time of the analysis. Employment status was observed at 6, 12 and 24 months after graduation.

Defining the control group as higher education students who have not participated in exchange, small but positive significant effects of Erasmus+ on employment was found 6 and 12 months after graduation. The effect on employment 24 month after graduation was positive but insignificant. It is important to bear in mind, that it was not possible to examine effects after 24 months. No effect on wages or regional mobility were found.

TABLE 3.1

Effect of Erasmus+ on employment, wage and regional mobility

	Erasmus+ HE-students vs. other exchange stu- dents	Erasmus+ HE-students vs. Students who have not had a mobility pro- ject
Employment 6 months after graduation	-0,014	0,020**
Employment 12 months after graduation	-0,020*	0,017**
Employment 24 months after graduation	-0,010	-0,009
Wage	-0,021	0,013
Regional mobility	-0,001	-0,016

Source: Register data from Statistics Denmark Note: *** 1%-significance level, ** 5%-significance level, * 10%-significance level

When defining the control group as other exchange students, the impact analysis shows no significant effects of Erasmus+ on the employment status 6 months after graduation. When considering employment 12 months after graduation a small and marginally significant (p-value=0,09) negative effect of Erasmus+ is observed. After 24 months the impact analysis shows no significant effects, see table 3.1.

Several other factors than participating in mobility projects influence employment (network, prior work experience, grades, subject of final thesis, etc.). Therefore, the direct link between Erasmus+ and employment is expected to be weak. The remaining parts of the analysis focus on the more direct effect of Erasmus+ focusing on the competencies that the students participating in Erasmus+ are developing – according to the institutions and the students themselves.

3.1.2 Specific objectives regarding education and training (Question 1)

Competences and skills

One of the objectives of Erasmus+ is to improve competences and skills, especially those with relevance to the labour market and contribution to a cohesive society. Overall, the evaluation shows that the objectives of improved competences and skills through Erasmus+ have been achieved.

The VET students' participant reports, which are a survey among the students after completion of mobility projects, show that:

- 84% find they have gained knowledge, skills or competences or professional experience that they would not have gained in their sending institution
- 84% feel that participating in Erasmus+ has made them more confident and convinced of their abilities
- 74% believe they have improved their technical/professional skills/competences
- 79% believe that, thanks to their mobility experience, their chances of getting a new or better job have increased.¹

The interviews conducted with VET students show identical findings. The VET students believe that their general feeling of confidence and knowledge of their abilities have improved with the Erasmus+ programme, as well as their technical/professional skills/competences. They also feel that they have improved their chances of new or better jobs from taking part in the Erasmus+ programme. Furthermore, 90% of vocational colleges believe that VET students' participation in Erasmus+ provides the students with competences that are valuable to future employers

When it comes to the HE students, 81% state that it has improved their employability. 86% of the higher education institutions also believe that HE students' participation in Erasmus+ provides them with competences that are valuable to future employers.



It is my general experience, from what I have been told by the students who return from an Erasmus+ stay, that they grow both professionally and personally, and they return with valuable lessons – for their further studies and future career.

Beneficiary higher education institution

¹ The percentages are the sum of the categories “Rather agree” and “Strongly agree”, except for the first question, where the percentage represents all the “Yes” responses. Survey of VET-students 2017, EVA and Rambøll



They grow personally and professionally. The teaching they receive might not be of higher quality, but they are taught in different ways and in a different language. They learn how to be on their own. They have a different glint in their eyes when they return.”

Beneficiary higher education institution

Teaching and learning of languages and intercultural awareness

The learning of languages and intercultural awareness is also an objective of the Erasmus+ programme. The survey among VET students shows that:

- 77% feel that they have improved their language skills during their stay
- 89% state that they have improved their ability to see the value of different cultures.



I definitely improved my language skills. It is completely different to speak English all day than in class in Denmark... I also gained personal confidence from the experience. Moreover, knowledge of retailing and what a full time job feels like. I was also trained in sales, and my understanding of Irish culture grew.

VET student studying in retail

The participant report from 2014-2016 among HE students also indicates that their international competences improve. For instance, 96% of the students state that their language skills have improved.

The higher education institutions and vocational colleges also view the Erasmus+ programme as a contributing factor to better language skills and intercultural awareness. 100% of higher education institutions state that HE students participating in Erasmus+ have strengthened their international competences (language skills, knowledge about other countries, knowledge of workplace culture in other countries, etc.). Within the VET field, the assessment is similar. 95% of vocational colleges state that VET students participating in Erasmus+ have strengthened their international competences (language skills, knowledge about other countries, knowledge of workplace culture in other countries, etc.).

Quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation

Another objective focuses on internationalisation at the institutional level, including cooperation at institutional level. When it comes to transnational cooperation, 91% of higher education institutions state that outgoing mobility among students and staff within the Erasmus+ programme is either very much or to some degree contributing to the internationalisation of the institution. Among vocational colleges, the level is 86%. This is in line with the fact that 92% of higher education institutions and 91% of vocational colleges state that participation in the Erasmus+ programme has strengthened the international milieu of the institution. More results regarding internationalisation within Erasmus+ can be found under section 3.3.

3.1.3 Erasmus+ objectives within the youth field: Erasmus+: Youth in Action

The Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme has been evaluated in Denmark through the RAY-network (Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme). The following is based on the first survey in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, where project managers as well as young participants were surveyed.

The study shows that between 75% and 100% of the project managers agree or strongly agree that the objectives of Erasmus+: Youth in Action have been fulfilled. Table 3.2 shows the four objectives that most project managers agree or strongly agree have been fulfilled.

TABLE 3.2

Projects' fulfilment of objectives in Erasmus+: Youth in Action (agree or strongly agree)

	Agree	Strongly agree
To create solidarity among young people (n = 42)	45%	55%
To promote young peoples' respect towards cultural diversity (n = 42)	26%	74%
To strengthen intercultural dialogue (n = 42)	29%	71%
To develop young peoples' key competences (n = 41)	37%	63%

Source: For the full list of objectives and responses, see p. 40 in "Ungdomsudveksling gør en forskel" Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme (RAY), Internationale Uddannelsesprogrammer, Styrelsen for Forskning og Uddannelse, 2017.

In the RAY-survey participants were asked to assess their learning outcomes between 23 categories subjects. The three categories chosen by most participants are: 1) cultural diversity (71%); 2) youth and youth work (54%); and 3) personal development (22%).

The three specific competences most participants agree or strongly agree have been a part of their general competence development relate to social relations and cooperation, and they are: 1) ability to be together with people who have another cultural background; 2) ability to communicate with people who speak another language; 3) ability to work together in a group.

In the RAY-survey, participants were asked whether their participation in Erasmus+ had changed their attitudes towards a number of subjects. The three attitudes that have been positively affected in most participants are 1) appreciation of cultural diversity, 2) the feeling of being European and 3) the intent to contribute to youth policy (see table D.2. in appendix D). These attitudes are all objectives of Erasmus+ within the youth field. The attitudes that have been least affected are attitudes that demand action: 1) I am politically active; 2) I contribute actively to the protection of the environment; 3) I am engaged in civil society. On one hand, this can imply that the intent of the participants has yet to be fulfilled, and on the other hand, this can imply that actions are more difficult to influence than attitudes through a programme such as Erasmus+: Youth in Action.

When asked how their participation has changed their approach to youth work, the three most frequently chosen statements by the young participants are:

- I have learned something that I intend to use in my work with young people (96%)
- I have a better understanding of the idea behind non-formal learning (93%)
- I have learned more about how to promote non-formal learning in my work with young people (92%).

The interviews with beneficiaries (project managers) from KA3 show a similar picture. The beneficiaries agree that the objectives of Erasmus+ have been realized through their projects. They state that the projects facilitate cultural meetings across European countries and meetings with young people from partner countries. The cultural meeting is an important part of realising objectives such as promoting intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity. Several of the projects have created a forum for young people to promote active citizenship and participation in democratic life through dialogue with politicians and political decision makers, thereby giving young people an understanding that active citizenship is more than participation in elections:



The project has given young people a very good platform for meeting, sharing good practices and co-creating... They also built friendships across borders.

Project manager KA3

It is a common understanding among the beneficiaries that participants experience that political decision makers listen to young people, and that their voice matters in policymaking - thereby making the projects in KA3 a part of the realisation of the objectives of Erasmus+ for the youth field.

To sum up, the results of the RAY-survey indicate that the objectives of Erasmus+: Youth in Action have been fulfilled.

3.1.4 The realisation of the specific objectives has contributed to the general objectives of Erasmus+ (Question 2)

It is the general assessment of the National Agency that there is a good connection between the specific objectives and the general objectives in Erasmus+, and that this is in line with Danish priorities within the educational and youth policy areas.

3.1.5 Erasmus+ has contributed to the internationalisation of the Danish educational system and the youth field (Question 3)

According to the National Agency, the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessors have made an important contribution to the internationalisation of the Danish educational system and the youth field. The introduction of European Development Plans within Erasmus+ has raised further awareness of internationalisation in a strategic framework in the institutions and organisations. Furthermore, the National Agency finds that Erasmus+ has enabled cooperation and possibilities for exchange of experiences at different levels within the different sectors.

It is difficult to measure or draw any conclusions as to the degree to which the political development in Denmark within the education and youth fields has been affected by Erasmus+ and its predecessors. However, there are some examples where the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessors have affected policy development and legislation. Erasmus+ and the Bologna Process towards establishing the European Area of Higher Education (EHEA) have had a significant influence on the reforms of the Danish education system, which were carried out in the 2000's, e.g. through the implementation of the EHEA qualification framework for higher education, ECTS, etc.

The National Agency also assesses that the possibility to partake in mobility activities, including the Erasmus+ programme, have had an effect on the way higher education is structured. A vast majority of the higher education programmes in Denmark now have semesters where students can study abroad. It is not possible to conclude whether this development would have taken place without the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessors, but the National Agency deems it likely that the Erasmus+ programme and EHEA have contributed to this development.

Within the field of youth, there are examples of projects that have contributed to promoting young peoples' participation in politics. One example is the Youth Democracy Festival 2016, in which more than 15,000 young people participated, and where the Danish Prime Minister attended and spoke to and with the young people (KA3 project).

3.1.6 Communication and promotion as the main tools to enhance effects (Question 4)

The National Agency in Denmark has promoted the programme to relevant stakeholders. The communication strategy reflects the different target groups of the Erasmus+ programme. In the first years of Erasmus+, communication was targeted key actions, but based on surveys among beneficiaries the communication strategy has altered, and it is now directed at the different sectors. Among other things, the National Agency uses social media, various webpages, monthly newsletters and meetings to inform about Erasmus+.

The National Agency adapts its communication strategy according to changes in programme rules and priorities as well as changes in the needs of the applicants, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Co-funding schemes for activities implemented within the framework of Erasmus+ do not exist in Denmark, but several national schemes support student mobility within higher education. The calculation for university funding is based on a taximeter system, with different rates based on different outputs (performance). In addition to the general education rate, taximeter grants are awarded to universities based on the number of incoming and outgoing student exchanges (fixed rate per student). The higher education institutions have to ensure a balance in incoming and outgoing student exchanges. In general, the Danish funding systems for higher education institutions are coherent with the agreements on student exchanges. Furthermore, various programmes complement Erasmus+, cf. 3.4.2.

3.1.7 All KAs are considered to be effective (Question 5)

According to the National Agency, the three KAs are considered as being effective with regard to their specific objectives, and also in the light of their different levels of funding, i.e. they complement each other very well. KA1 involves a significantly greater number of participants than the other KAs and a much larger budget, see appendix C. It is thus more visible and to a higher degree demonstrates the value of European cooperation, as well as contributing to European awareness in the education and training sectors and among the public in general. As KA1 targets individuals within an organisational framework, the action has an immediate effect at the individual and personal level, but in the longer term also at an institutional level (e.g. internationalisation at home with incoming students), thus also strengthening the international dimension at systemic and national levels.

According to the National Agency, KA2 demonstrates an extra dimension to the Erasmus+ programme by adding strategic cooperation across sectors and by including other types of organisations (e.g. corporations and enterprises). The action contributes to the development of curricula, exchange of learning and teaching materials as well as innovative pedagogical approaches. Therefore, KA2 has an impact at institutional and systemic levels. During the first few years of Erasmus+, the funds for KA2 have been limited, and only few projects have received funds. Nevertheless, KA2 is effective in strengthening and fostering cooperation between partners within the fields of education and training, as well as youth.

When looking specifically at the activities within KA1, which is targeted at students and staff within higher education and vocational education and training, the survey among beneficiaries shows that higher education institutions find that student mobility (incoming and outgoing) contributes to internationalisation to a larger extent than staff mobility, see table 3.4. For vocational colleges, outgoing mobility (student and staff) is assessed to contribute more than incoming mobility (student and staff). In general, outgoing mobility is seen as contributing more than incoming mobility.

TABLE 3.4

To what degree do you think the following activities contribute to the internationalisation of the organisation/institution? (high or very high degree)

	HE (n =35)	VET (n = 41)	The field of school education (n = 63)	The field of adult education (n = 18)
Outgoing mobility for students in Erasmus+	94%	90%	N/A	N/A
Incoming mobility for students in Erasmus+	92%	69%	N/A	N/A
Outgoing mobility for staff in Erasmus+	78%	87%	86%	94%
Incoming mobility for staff in Erasmus+	74%	58%	67%	57%

Source: Survey of institutions, 2017. EVA & Rambøll

Table 3.5 below shows the differences between sectors regarding the assessment of the effects of Erasmus+. In general, beneficiaries across sectors find that Erasmus+ contributes to an international environment, strengthens students' professional expertise, study and international competences, as well as competences appreciated by employers. Across sectors, the beneficiaries do not assess that Erasmus+ has contributed to attracting staff, and only around half of the beneficiaries within the higher education institutions and vocational colleges assess that Erasmus+ helps attract students with new profiles.

When looking specifically at higher education institutions, 59% state that participation in Erasmus+ has contributed to professional expertise within new disciplines, and 65% that it has contributed to attracting students with alternative profiles to the institution, see table 3.5. This indicates that participation in Erasmus+ not only contributes to the individual development of students and staff, but has an institutional effect as well.

TABLE 3.5

To what degree do you assess that participation in Erasmus+... (high or very high degree)

	HE (n = 30)	VET (n = 36)	The field of school education (n = 52)	The field of adult education (n = 13)
...has strengthened the organisation/institution's international milieu?	92%	91%	91%	88%
...has contributed with professional expertise within new disciplines?	59%	44%	85%	77%
...has contributed to attracting students with an alternative profile to the institution?	65%	43%	N/A	N/A
...has contributed to attracting qualified staff?	37%	25%	37%	31%
... has strengthened staff's motivation/engagement?	58%	71%	90%	94%
...has strengthened students' professional competences?	83%	78%	N/A	N/A
... has strengthened students' study competences (independence, problem solving, etc.)?	95%	95%	N/A	N/A

	HE (n = 30)	VET (n = 36)	The field of school ed- ucation (n = 52)	The field of adult education (n = 13)
...has strengthened students' international competences (language, knowledge of the outside world, knowledge of workplace culture in other countries, etc.)?	100%	98%	N/A	N/A
...gives students competences that are valued by employers?	86%	90%	N/A	N/A
...has contributed to new perspectives on areas we have worked with before?	N/A	N/A	89%	94%

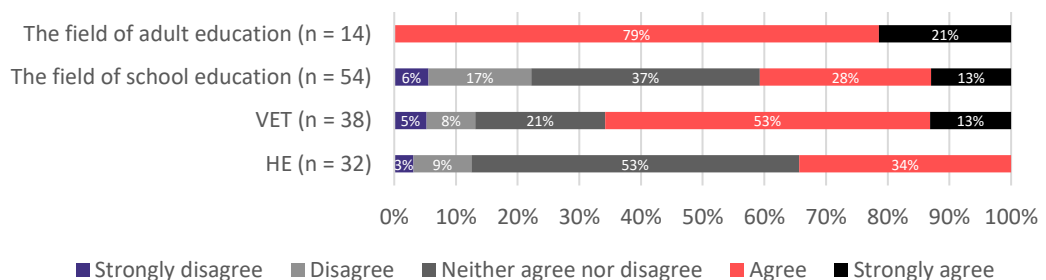
Source: Survey of institutions, 2017. EVA & Rambøll

3.1.8 Integration of programmes into Erasmus+ is considered somewhat beneficial (Question 6)

When Erasmus+ was launched in 2014, it brought together seven existing programmes into a single coherent framework. The beneficiaries consider the integration of the seven programmes into Erasmus+ somewhat beneficial. The survey shows that 34% of the higher education institutions agree or strongly agree that Erasmus+ has made it easier to work with mobility. This applies to 41% of institutions within the school education field. Vocational colleges and institutions within the field of adult education are more positive regarding whether Erasmus+ has made it easier to work with mobility. 66% of the vocational colleges and 100% of institutions within the field of adult education agree or strongly agree Erasmus+ has made it easier to work with mobility, see figure 3.1. Furthermore, 30% of the higher education institutions and 34% of institutions within the field of school education agree or strongly agree that Erasmus+ is a stronger brand among staff, as opposed to 46% of the vocational colleges and 47% of institutions within the field of adult education, see figure 3.2.

FIGURE 3.1

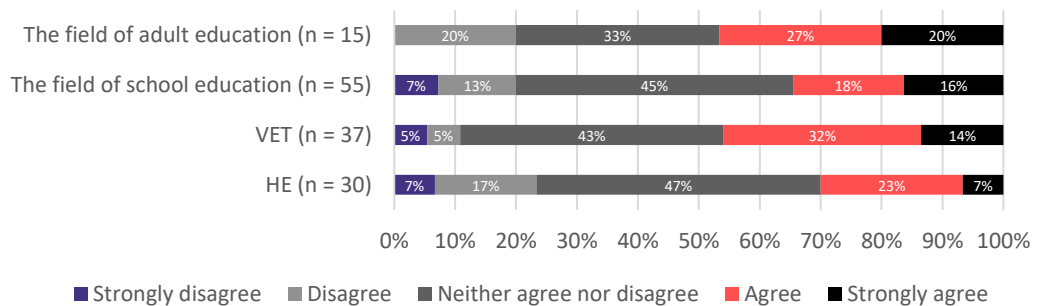
The new programme structure has made it easier for us as an institution to work with mobility



Source: Survey of institutions, 2017. EVA & Rambøll

FIGURE 3.2

The new programme structure has helped to give Erasmus+ a stronger brand among staff



Source: Survey of institutions, 2017. EVA & Rambøll

Beneficiaries at vocational colleges within KA1 mentioned that it is a great advantage that mobility now can be for shorter periods (minimum two weeks, as opposed to normally three weeks in prior programmes, and minimum two days instead of five for staff mobility). According to the interviewees, this gives more VET students the opportunity to go abroad, as it fits better into their regular schedule.

Interviews with beneficiaries from KA2 and KA3 show that their assessment of Erasmus+ is somewhat influenced by the implementation. It was slow in the beginning, as there was confusion about how certain rules should be understood, and the beneficiaries experienced many problems with the administrative IT tools. Their satisfaction has increased with the gradual improvement of the IT tools and a better understanding of the programme and accompanying rules and administrative procedures.

3.1.9 The budget of decentralised actions is considered adequate (Question 7)

The National Agency finds that the total budget for decentralised actions is adequate. Within KA1, the Agency has committed 100% of the allocated funds at application level. However, the results of the first year of Erasmus+ (2014) have shown that the realisation rate has been around 90%. Therefore, the Agency has analysed how the budget absorption can be improved and has decided to implement different initiatives from 2017 and onwards, e.g. overbooking, close monitoring, increase mobility rates, interim reports, etc. Within KA2 (all sectors) and KA3 (only the youth field) the Agency has experienced that the requests for grants within all sectors far exceed the funds available.

The Agency's own conclusions have been confirmed by the survey, which showed that not all schools and institutions in KA1 use the funds that they have been granted. 31% of higher education institutions, 28% of vocational colleges, 25% of adult education organisations and 14% of the field of school education experience a discrepancy between grants received and grants spent to a high or very high degree. The reasons why the funds are not used vary between sectors. As table 3.6 shows, the majority of the higher educational institutions agree or fully agree that the reason is that it is difficult to make an accurate prediction of the number of students/staff that will be applying for an Erasmus+ grant in the upcoming year. The majority of vocational colleges list structural changes (VET reform, etc.) and difficulties in estimating the number of students (enrolments).

TABLE 3.6

To what extent do you agree that the following are reasons why more grants are being applied for than are being used? (agree or strongly agree)

	HE	VET	The field of school education	The field of adult education
Application for grants is prior to student applications. This makes it difficult to assess the number of students in Erasmus+. (n = 11/11)	82%	73%	N/A	N/A
It is hard to assess the number of staff that want to participate. (n = 11/10/8/4)	91%	60%	63%	50%
Registered students regretted or signed off. (n = 11/9)	82%	44%	N/A	N/A
Registered staff regretted or signed off. (n = 10/7/8/4)	30%	29%	88%	25%
We apply for the maximum amount to make sure that costs/wishes can be covered. (n = 10/11/8/4)	50%	27%	25%	0%
Structural challenges (changes in curricula, policy reforms, etc.) are the reason we cannot use the full amount awarded. (n = 10/11)	50%	91%	75%	100%

Source: Survey of institutions, EVA & Rambøll 2017.

Note: Only respondents who answered “to a high degree” or “to a very high degree” to the question “Has the institution experienced discrepancy between grants received and grants spent?” have been asked this question.

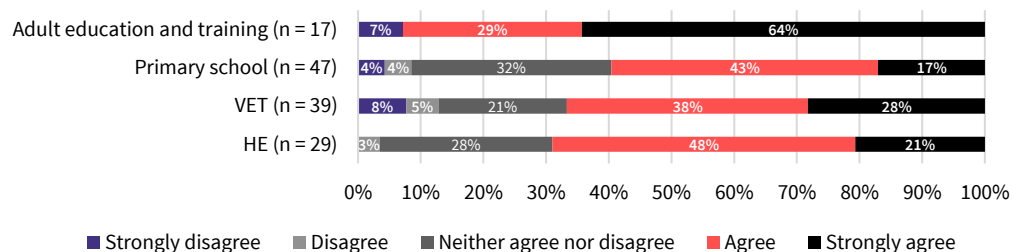
The survey and the interviews among vocational colleges and higher education institutions show that predicting the numbers of students going abroad in the coming year is challenging. Higher education institutions and vocational colleges tend to overestimate the number of students expected to go abroad in order to secure funds and to ensure they will not have to turn down students.

Simplified grants

As a part of the Erasmus+ programme, grants have been simplified, and unit costs have been developed. The surveys and interviews show that beneficiaries experience the system of simplified grants as an advantage in their daily work. The survey shows that 93% of adult education organisations, 60% of the field of school education, 66% of vocational colleges and 69% of higher education institutions agree or fully agree that the transition to unit cost has simplified budgeting and financial management, see figure 3.3. Interviews with beneficiaries within KA2 and KA3 show that funding by lump sum is regarded as a positive development. It means less hassle for beneficiaries with justification of expenses in the form of receipts. Several beneficiaries highlight that simplified grants have reduced their administrative burden compared with former programmes.

FIGURE 3.3

Transition to unit cost has simplified budgeting and financial management



Source: Survey of institutions, EVA & Rambøll 2017

Appropriateness of unit costs

Table 3.7 shows the institutions' assessment of unit costs. In general, less than half of the respondents find that the unit costs cover the actual expenses. When it comes to unit costs for HE students, only 15% of higher educational institutions agree to a high or very high degree that the monthly rate for students covers the expenses. The National Agency has informed that in the beginning of the programme period, the monthly rates were set at a low level to ensure that as many graduates as possible within the budget could study or take an internship abroad during their study programmes, which was a political priority at that time.

41% of vocational colleges agree to a high or very high degree that the daily rate for VET students covers the expenses. The field of school education and adult education organisations are generally more positive towards unit costs with more than 40% of the schools and adult education organisations agreeing that unit costs cover expenses. Organisations within the field of school education and adult education organisations are also more positive in their assessment of the unit cost for organizational support. More than half agree to a high or very high degree that unit costs cover expenses, compared to 36% of higher education institutions and 25% of vocational colleges. A major cost in relation to staff mobility is wages paid during mobilities and those are not covered by the grants.

TABLE 3.1

To which degree do you assess that the unit costs cover the expenses concerning... (high or very high degree)

	HE (n = 27)	VET (n = 39)	The field of school educa- tion (n = 51)	The field of adult education (n = 17)
...travel for staff?	38%	38%	54%	41%
...the daily rate for staff?	28%	28%	48%	35%
...the monthly rate for students?	15%	N/A	N/A	N/A
...the daily rate for students?	N/A	41%	N/A	N/A
...traineeship top up?	37%	N/A	N/A	N/A
...organizational support?	36%	25%	57%	53%

Source: Survey of institutions, EVA & Rambøll 2017

The daily rates for VET students and staff vary depending on country of destination and duration of mobility. If it is necessary to change destination countries during the course of the project, it has budget implications and adds to the administrative burden on beneficiaries in relation to budget absorption.

Beneficiaries of KA2 and KA3 experience challenges with the budget. One beneficiary within KA3 explains that there are some difficulties with the appropriation of unit costs when hosting youth meetings and seminars in Denmark:



The grant enabled us to buy the tickets and pay for the stay, even though it was a very low budget. In Denmark, you have 300 DKK (40€ per day) to pay for everything including speakers and busses, so it is a low budget. What we did was to divide people into national groups, each group being responsible in turn for a whole day; they bought the food, they cooked it and they served it, and it was fun with the different nationalities.

KA3 Project manager

Furthermore, several beneficiaries criticize the fact that host countries do not receive grants. The interviews with beneficiaries from KA1 also show discontent with examples of the taxation of grants for incoming mobility.

3.1.10 Challenges related to implementation of KAs (Question 8)

In general, the National Agency finds that the actions of Erasmus+ contribute to the goals set for the programme. As Erasmus+ encompasses different sectors, it has been attempted to target each KA to the needs of each sector, according to the overall objectives of Erasmus+.

The evaluation uncovered different challenges and difficulties related to the implementation of the various actions of Erasmus+ at the level of beneficiaries.

Challenges and difficulties related to the implementation of KA1 within Erasmus+

One important part of KA1 is the institutions' ability to find suitable partner institutions and internships. Table 3.8 shows that vocational colleges experience more difficulties than higher education institutions when it comes to finding partners that offer inspiring professional environments for their staff with relevant and high quality content. Almost two-thirds of the vocational colleges have experienced challenges in identifying partners that offer teaching based on relevant teaching methods. About one-third of vocational colleges and adult education organisations experienced challenges in identifying partners that offer an inspiring professional environment for their staff. In addition, about one-third of all sectors experienced challenges when identifying partners that offer teaching with relevant content. However, only 21% of higher education institutions experienced this challenge. In general, higher education institutions experienced fewer challenges in identifying suitable partners than the other sectors, except when it came to identifying partners that offer teaching based on relevant methods, where about one-third of the higher education institutions experienced challenges, compared to 29% of the organisations in the field of school education and 24% of adult education organisations.



It really depends on the partner institution. If it is a big vocational college like us, the quality is generally high. But the quality of the stay varies a lot when we look at small and intermediate sized organizations”

Beneficiary vocational college

TABLE 3.8

In relation to Erasmus+, to what degree have you experienced challenges when identifying partners that offer... (high or very high degree)

	HE	VET	The field of school education	The field of adult education
...an inspiring professional environment for the staff?	6% (n=31)	32% (n=35)	27% (n=56)	35% (n=17)
...teaching based on relevant teaching methods?	34% (n=31)	62% (n=34)	29% (n=56)	24% (n=17)
...teaching with high quality content?	12% (n=33)	28% (n=36)	30% (n=56)	24% (n=17)
...teaching with relevant content?	21% (n=33)	30% (n=37)	33% (n=58)	30% (n=17)

Source: Survey of institutions, EVA & Rambøll 2017

Table 3.9 indicates that vocational colleges have had more difficulties than higher education institutions in identifying internships of high quality and internships with a relevant content. 25% of vocational colleges have experienced challenges in identifying internships of high quality compared to the 12% of higher education institutions. Furthermore, table 3.9 shows that 26% of vocational colleges have experienced challenges in identifying internships with relevant content. This may be a reflection of the differences in terms of duration of internships between the sectors. In VET, they are often rather short.



Usually the quality of the internship is high. Nevertheless, we, as well as our partner institutions, have difficulties in finding internships. It is often very challenging – especially in smaller businesses – to find a counsellor who does not mind speaking English.

Beneficiary vocational college

TABLE 3.9

In relation to Erasmus+, to what degree have you experienced challenges when identifying internships that offer... (high or very high degree)

	HE (n=26)	VET (n=39)
... relevant content?	15%	28%
... high quality?	12%	25%

Source: Survey of institutions, EVA & Rambøll 2017

Challenges and difficulties related to the implementation of KA2 within Erasmus+

The interviews with beneficiaries indicate that KA2 is viewed as more difficult to implement and less flexible compared to the other KAs. In the interviews, beneficiaries of KA2 emphasize that the financial and administrative role of the project coordinator is considered a heavy burden.

3.1.11 Dissemination and exploitation of Erasmus+ and results of previous programmes in Denmark (Question 9)

Dissemination and exploitation of results are crucial areas of the Erasmus+ project lifecycle. Through dissemination of their results, the participating organisations have the opportunity to

communicate and share outcomes and deliverables, thus extending the impact of their projects, improving their sustainability and supporting the European added value of Erasmus+.

Erasmus+ Project Result Platform

The Project Results Platform is the electronic platform for the dissemination and exploitation of project results. Interviews with beneficiaries from KA2 and KA3 show that the platform is primarily used to upload project results and that it is not used as a source of inspiration in the development of new projects. Some project managers explain that they have used the platform to screen for similar projects in order to assess whether their own project was in fact innovative before submitting their application. Several project managers describe the platform as a good idea but highlight the fact that the amount of information is enormous, and that it is hard to understand how best to use it and that it is difficult to search through. This leads to an impression among project managers that knowledge is not properly shared among Erasmus+ beneficiaries. Furthermore, there is some criticism of the time-lapse from project results being submitted and their appearance on the platform. Several project managers across KAs suggest that the platform would be more user friendly if supported by a better search engine. Also, giving projects an opportunity to upload preliminary results might inspire in other ways when the projects are still running.

Most project results are disseminated and exploited in own network

The interviews with project managers from KA2 and KA3 show that most project results are mainly disseminated and exploited within the organizations' and institutions' own networks through their own project webpages, social media and local media, and not via Erasmus+ tools.

3.2 Efficiency

In this section, the focus is on whether the desired effects are achieved at a reasonable cost. Efficiency considers the relationship between the resources used by an intervention and the changes generated by the intervention. The analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 10-15 (see appendix B).

3.2.1 General satisfaction with cooperation and division of tasks (Question 10)

The National Agency finds that the cooperation and division of tasks between the Commission, Executive Agency, National Agencies, National Authorities, Independent Audit Bodies, and Erasmus+ Committee is well functioning.

According to the National Agency, the cooperation between the National Agency and the Commission works well. The NA meetings for directors and sector representatives are valuable for the development of Erasmus+, and issues raised and solutions suggested at these meetings have led to changes in the administration for the benefit of both beneficiaries and the National Agencies. The set-up of a number of working groups and webinars focusing on thematic or administrative matters is effective. However, the discussions and conclusions of the working group have to be shared with the NA Directors to ensure transparent and coherent implementation of the initiatives proposed by the groups. The cooperation between National Agencies and the Executive Agency can be strengthened, for instance, by ensuring a better information flow from the Executive Agency to National Agencies and vice versa.

The National Authority emphasizes that there is a good and constructive dialogue, but also suggests an easier and more intuitive access for the National Authority to relevant material, e.g. guide-

lines and meeting materials for Erasmus+ Programme Committee meetings (has now been developed). The National Agency also states that the cooperation between the National Authority and the National Agency is well functioning.

According to the ministries in Denmark, the Erasmus+ Programme Committee plays a key role in ensuring a good implementation of Erasmus+. In general, the interaction between the members of the Erasmus+ Programme Committee and the National Agency works well in Denmark, with mutual orientation and exchange of information before and after meetings.

Many audits incorporated in Erasmus+

The National Agency states that the audit firm BDO Denmark conducts an internal audit of Erasmus+ in Denmark. In addition, the independent financial audit body PWC conducts an audit of the National Agency (both on an ongoing basis and in connection with the annual report) on behalf of the Danish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The National Audit Office (Rigsrevisionen) regularly audits the Danish Agency of Science and Higher Education's management of funds. In addition to the national audits, an external company audit is carried out on behalf of the Commission's institutions. The many audits are time consuming and require many resources from all parties involved.

3.2.2 The integration of programmes has resulted in some efficiency gains (Question 11)

The interviews with beneficiaries and the self-evaluation show that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has resulted in the following efficiency gains at beneficiary level:

- The institutional approach to Erasmus+ and the introduction of the European Development Plan have strengthened the programme's objectives and the quality of project.
- The decentralization of the programme activities in Erasmus+ has made it possible for the individual national agencies to adapt their communication to the national context.
- The new programme structure has made it easier for some beneficiaries at an institutional level to work with mobility, see section 3.1.8.
- Transition to unit cost has simplified budgeting and financial management for beneficiaries see section 3.1.9.

According to the National Agency, the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has resulted in two efficiency losses:

- There was a significant decrease in the number of applications for Strategic Partnerships for schools only in Denmark in the first year of Erasmus+ compared to the previous programme due to the a new programme structure and requirements compared with the previous programme.
- It has been more difficult to activate informal groups of young entrepreneurs compared to the former programmes, as it is no longer possible within the programme to receive funding for national youth initiatives.

Efficiency gains at the level of the National Agencies

According to the National Agency, the Erasmus+ programme has resulted in several efficiency gains at the level of the National Agency when it comes to administration, cross-sectorial activities, flexibility, and programme quality:

- The level of standardisation in Erasmus+ has made it possible to streamline processes and procedures across sectors and actions due to the standardisation of contracts, IT-systems, and the Guide for National Agencies within Erasmus+.
- The standardisation of KA2 (except Strategic Partnerships for schools only and Transnational Youth Activities) in terms of opportunities and rules fosters better possibilities for cross-sectorial

Main findings

cooperation and synergies, e.g. training of experts prior to their qualitative assessment of applicants, start-up meetings for beneficiaries and thematic meetings in the use of Mobility Tool+.

- The introduction of Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA) within the education and training field has become an important instrument in achieving the overall NA operational objectives, i.e. maintaining the number of applications within KA1 and KA 2, attracting newcomers and improving the quality of applications.

3.2.3 Continued need for reduction of administrative burdens (Question 13)

The main findings related to administrative burdens are:

- The majority of beneficiaries find the application form easy to understand and complete when using the guidelines and information from the European Commission and the National Agency.
- The majority of beneficiaries are satisfied with the support received from the National Agency.
- The system of simplified grants has resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden (see section 3.1.9).

The survey shows that two-thirds of the beneficiaries think that the Erasmus+ application is easy to understand and complete when using the material provided by the European Commission and the National Agency, see table D.1. in appendix D. However, only about one-third of the field of school education agree with the statement, and interviews with beneficiaries across sectors show that some find it difficult to understand the application and the programme guide. They emphasize that the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ has resulted in a big and complex programme guide and application process, which they believe discourages newcomers to Erasmus+. They experience that it is necessary to attend training courses offered by the National Agency and to contact the National Agency for support during the application process in order to complete the application and receive funding. A project manager from KA2 explains:



It was essential that I participated in the meeting set up by the National Agency when it came to filling out my Erasmus+ application. It was difficult to understand the significance and meaning of the different categories in the application. One can easily end up repeating the same answers. It was very important to have that explained.”

KA2 Project manager

As the quote illustrates, support from the National Agency is highly appreciated by beneficiaries in all three KAs. The survey also shows that the beneficiaries are very satisfied with the support of the National Agency.

Even though the vast majority are satisfied with the administrative processes, three administrative challenges were outlined in the interviews with beneficiaries from KA1, KA2 and KA3:

1. There is an overlap in requested information in the application.
2. Several beneficiaries from KA2 had experienced that the IT-system lost information during the application process.
3. Several beneficiaries from KA3 emphasized that the task of collecting signatures from all participants during the youth meeting required a large amount of resources in relation to the project size and target group. There might be more than one hundred participants in an event, and the project managers do not always know who will attend. Consequently, beneficiaries often have to enter their participants manually in Mobility Tool +, as the system's ability to upload csv files for data transfer requires all data to be entered in an Excel file.

According to the National Agency, some unnecessary administrative burdens remain related to the VET-sector. For example, the requirements for the preparation of amendments to grant agreements for the transfer of grants from student mobility to staff mobility.

Within KA2, there are discrepancies between IT systems and program rules (grant agreement). The grant agreement indicates that the transfer between budget items is based on actual costs, while the IT systems calculate from unit costs. The rates within KA2 are also complex with many budget categories and subcategories. Although budget categories are addressed at seminars hosted by the National Agency, the applicants still find it difficult to understand them.

3.2.4 Less satisfaction with IT-tools (Question 14)

The evaluation shows that beneficiaries are generally less satisfied with the IT-tools and manuals provided by the Commission, see table 3.10. Higher education institutions appear to be the least satisfied compared to the other educational sectors.

TABLE 3.10

To what extent do you agree with the following statement... (agree or strongly agree)

	HE	VET	The field of school education	Adult education and continuing training
Participant Portal is user-friendly	27% (n =30)	54% (n =39)	35% (n =55)	53% (n =15)
Mobility Tool is user-friendly	68% (n =37)	78% (n =41)	50% (n =60)	47% (n =17)
OLS is user-friendly	60% (n =35)	40% (n =20)	N/A	N/A
Guide for Participant Portal is very useful	11% (n =28)	58% (n =36)	31% (n =55)	40% (n =15)
Mobility Tool Guide for beneficiaries of the Erasmus programme is very useful	30% (n =33)	74% (n =39)	43% (n =58)	47% (n =17)
It is easy to find the necessary information materials incl. guides	43% (n =35)	76% (n =41)	49% (n =61)	69% (n =17)

Source: Survey to institutions, EVA & Rambøll 2017

Interviews with beneficiaries show that there were significant problems related to IT tools when Erasmus+ was implemented in 2014. The Mobility Tool+ was not available in due time and did not work properly. With improvements implemented in the tools since 2014, most beneficiaries indicated the tools function better now, although the interviews show that obstacles still occur:

- Due to a missing link between the different tools, such as the Mobility Tool+ and OLS where similar data have to be entered multiple times.
- Beneficiaries do not always experience the language used in the different tools as clear, resulting in misunderstandings and mistakes.
- Interviews with beneficiaries from vocational colleges indicate some dissatisfaction with OLS, as it is targeted too widely, making it almost irrelevant to participants. In addition, the sound quality makes it difficult for participants to hear the sentences and words.

3.2.5 Availability of resources for implementation (Question 15)

Overall, the National Agency experiences that Erasmus+ can be managed properly within the current level of resources, but that it requires a steady focus on prioritisation, efficiency and synergy

between the sectors and with extensive use of external assistance for special tasks. According to the National Agency, the following actions have been taken in order to optimise efficiency:

- The National Agency has implemented uniform procedures and processes for the process of applications regardless of KAs and sectors.
- Working groups have been set up across sectors to collaborate on communication, dissemination, joint IT courses, etc. These measures have contributed to an effective management of Erasmus+ in Denmark.
- There is close cooperation with the other programme countries' national agencies, including Nordic countries, where knowledge sharing about administrative practices is discussed.

However, the National Agency also points to a number of challenges related to the implementation of Erasmus+ in Denmark and the availability and efficiency of resources:

- New initiatives and priorities introduced by the Commission take time to implement and are assessed as a challenge at the level of the National Agency.
- The administration of the international credit mobility is very resource-intensive and could be more efficient.
- Several untested IT-systems were introduced in connection with the launch of Erasmus+ and thus did not work optimally for the first two years of the programme. This caused great dissatisfaction among both the National Agency and the beneficiaries. The National Agency spent a lot of time identifying workarounds, which was resource-intensive.

According to the National Agency, the ongoing budget increases and implementation of new initiatives like European Solidarity Corps and Strategic EVS within the youth field, with very short preparation time, have been a challenge. The mobilization of new networks and stakeholders requires more long-term efforts. These changes have taken place in parallel with a limitation of the existing budget flexibility within KA1, where the biggest increase in the budget has occurred. The National Agency assesses the implementation of initiatives to have taken place so quickly that the administrative framework has not been in place, while there have also been high expectations to the delivering of results. The extra funding from the LIFE program granted with only one application deadline remaining in 2017 is named as an example in the self-evaluation.

3.3 Relevance

Relevance considers the relationship between the needs and problems in Denmark and the objectives of the intervention. The analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 16 and 17 (see appendix B).

3.3.1 The Erasmus+ objectives are still considered relevant (Question 16)

Overall, the survey, interviews with beneficiaries and the NA's self-evaluation indicate that the Erasmus+ objectives are still relevant for institutions working with them. Internationalisation, including mobility among students and staff, remains a priority in national policy and among the educational institutions (see table 3.11). The Danish authorities see the stability in the overall goals over a number of years as positive, as this enables beneficiaries to plan long-term. The National Agency also value the fact that the following year's political priorities of Erasmus+ are presented at the annual spring meeting of the Programme Committee, making it possible to plan ahead.

TABLE 3.11

To which degree is outgoing/incoming mobility a priority at the institution?

	Outgoing mobility a priority (strongly agree/agree)	Incoming mobility a priority (strongly agree/agree)	N
HE	76%	76%	35
VET	86%	58%	41
The field of school education	76%	55%	63
The field of adult education	77%	36%	18

Source: Survey of institutions, EVA & Rambøll 2017.

Looking specifically at higher education, changing governments have maintained focus on internationalisation throughout the years. To promote internationalisation within higher education, the Danish higher education institutions receive an “internationalisation rate” for every student they receive or send as a part of an exchange agreement, including Erasmus+. By law, the institutions are also obligated to ensure a balance between incoming and outgoing student mobility.

The Erasmus+ objectives are in line with the Danish national priorities. However, focus on quality and relevance in higher education, especially employability, has been increased over recent years. Looking at employability, academic recognition and transfer of credits from mobility projects play an increased role in the monitoring of higher education institutions. Erasmus+ participant reports Call 2014 show that around 90% of students experience that not all of their credits are transferable. Findings from the survey to the institutions show, that 28% of institutions state that they have students who do not receive credit for part of their mobility projects, which indicates that it might be within specific areas that credit transfer constitutes a problem. Some of the reasons mentioned by the institutions are that the students do not pass the courses, or that the courses, the students were supposed to attend, were cancelled by the receiving institution.

In regards to quality development and the higher education institutions’ strategies of internationalisation, the focus has shifted over the last years from primarily focusing on quantity, i.e. the number of students going or coming on a mobility project, to internationalisation as quality development, e.g. development of the study environment, curriculum, etc. However, the evaluation shows that Erasmus+ at this point primarily contributes to individual effects, i.e. strengthening the student’s competences and language skills, and to a lesser degree institutional effects (see table in section 3.1.7).

3.3.2 Tailored communication to meet the needs of different stakeholders and sectors (Question 17)

The Erasmus+ programme’s ability to attract and reach different target groups varies from sector to sector and from KA to KA. Overall, the National Agency finds that applications within the various KAs and sectors reflect a high degree of diversity when it comes to participant profiles.

The National Agency’s communication efforts are tailored to the needs of each sector and target group, and new initiatives are ongoing to reach more and new beneficiaries. Within the field of school education and youth, initiatives have been put in place to promote Erasmus+ among municipalities. Regarding actions aimed at youth, targeted campaigns have been conducted to attract new beneficiaries. This has led to an increase in the number of applications. Another example is

the cooperation with different associations within the VET-sector and the field of adult education. These associations serve as multipliers and support their members with application processes and so forth.

Within higher education, the National Agency monitors the activities of individual institutions. They also organise meetings with representatives from the institutions, where new initiatives are discussed, including what information initiatives institutions can take in order to reach other types of 'students' and increase the number of 'staff' using Erasmus+.

In Denmark, the same agency manages all KAs, although Erasmus+ falls under the auspices of two different ministries. This is believed to increase synergy between sectors and KAs.

The Erasmus+ programme aims at promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating access for participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers. In Denmark, most applications for participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities are within Youth. It is, however, the general assessment of the National Agency that there are more participants than the numbers indicate. Participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities have various possibilities in Denmark to receive financial support when participating in mobility projects. This might be one of the reasons why there are fewer applications within Education and Training. The National Agency has encouraged beneficiaries to register the number of physically or mentally disabled/disadvantaged persons, even though no further grants have been received for their participation, so that the statistics show a true picture.

3.4 Internal and external coherence and complementarity

In this section, the focus is on the extent to which the intervention does not contradict other interventions with similar objectives. The analysis is based on the standard evaluation questions 18 and 19 (see appendix B).

3.4.1 KAs are coherent, but inconsistencies remain (Question 18)

Overall, the evaluation shows that the coherence between the KAs is considered clear and logical, and differences between KAs are clear. There are various examples of synergies within and between KAs. Within KA2, there is a close cross-sectorial cooperation, which benefits all sectors. In KA2, there are strategic partnership projects that have led to development of tools and databases to heighten the quality assurance of VET students' mobility projects, which have been implemented by the vocational colleges working within KA1.

Inconsistencies within or between KAs

Student mobility within the field of school education falls within KA2. This has led to confusion among the schools given that student mobility for all other sectors falls under KA1. It is recommended that student mobility for pupils in the field of school education be moved to KA1.

Inconsistencies regarding grants have been found within two sub-actions in KA1 (Youth Exchanges and Training Activities). The inconsistencies arise from differences in grants given per participant for training activities versus youth exchanges. The grants for training activities are higher, which increases the incentive to apply for funding for training activities. More applications are received for training activities, and subsequently many are rejected given that most of the funds are earmarked Youth Exchanges.

3.4.2 Erasmus+ complements national and international programmes (Question 19)

Erasmus+ complements a number of national and international programs, including the national programme PIU scheme (scheme for practical training abroad for apprentices in VET) and DK-USA (grant programme that provides support for VET students that attend community college education or for apprentices that participate in practical training in companies in the United States). Erasmus+ and the PIU scheme do to some extent overlap, but Erasmus+ mobility projects are predominantly arranged for students on basic courses, who do not have access to support through the PIU scheme. Internationally, Nordplus, a programme established by the Nordic Council of Ministers, offers financial support to a variety of educational cooperation initiatives in the fields of life-long learning for partners from the eight participating countries in the Baltic and Nordic regions.

National statistics and reports² on mobility show that HE-students in a significant extent are seeking English-speaking countries, such as the U.K, U.S.A, Canada and Australia, when choosing where to study abroad. Furthermore, statistics show that they frequently choose other programmes and sources for financial support than Erasmus+ when travelling to these countries. This trend is expected to continue the coming years.

3.5 European added value and sustainability

The analysis is based standard evaluation questions 20 and 21 (see appendix B).

3.5.1 Erasmus+ is considered more effective than other types of mobility among students (Question 20)

Overall, outgoing and incoming mobility among students is a priority among educational institutions in Denmark, as mentioned in section 3.3.1. The survey shows that outgoing mobility among students in Erasmus+ is believed to contribute more to internationalisation of the institution than mobility among students not in Erasmus+, see table 3.12. For instance 90% of higher education institutions state that outgoing mobility among students in Erasmus+ very much or somewhat contributes to the internationalisation of the institution. This only applies to 70% when it comes to mobility among students not in the Erasmus+ programme. The same applies to mobility among staff.

TABLE 3.12

To what degree do you assess that the following activities contribute to the organisation/institution's internationalisation?

	HE (n = 35)	VET (n = 41)	The field of school education (n = 63)	The field of adult education (n = 18)
Outgoing mobility for students in Erasmus+	95%	90%	N/A	N/A
Incoming mobility for students in Erasmus+	91%	68%	N/A	N/A
Mobility for students not in Erasmus+	70%	66%	N/A	N/A

2 <http://ufm.dk/uddannelse-og-institutioner/videregaende-uddannelse/professionshøjskoler/publikationer-professionshøjskoler/tematisk-tilsyn-evaluering-af-balance-i-udvekslingen-m-v6aa59255bb0c45eba90c0abc09ad75cd?searchterm=balance>

Main findings

	HE (n = 35)	VET (n = 41)	The field of school education (n = 63)	The field of adult educa- tion (n = 18)
Mobility for staff not in Erasmus+	61%	52%	63%	71%
Incoming mobility for staff in Erasmus+	63%	75%	68%	57%
Outgoing mobility for staff in Erasmus+	78%	87%	86%	94%
International research projects	57%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other international activities, e.g. international guest lecturers	84%	56%	76%	93%

Source: Survey of institutions, 2017. EVA & Rambøll

Sustainability

Erasmus+ requires projects to be transnational (with the exception of national youth meetings within KA3), hence creating the basis for a European added value. In addition to Erasmus+ contributing to the development of the individual participants' personal and professional skills in the programme's activities, thereby potentially increasing their employability, Erasmus+ is at the same time an instrument for visualizing and supporting European values as well as education and youth policy priorities among the programme countries. Participation in Erasmus+ creates an international focus and perspective on institutions and individual participants, which contributes to greater knowledge and understanding of the cultures and societal challenges of other countries, and creates networks among actors at many different levels. Presentations held by beneficiaries in various contexts support the above considerations.

3.5.2 The increase in budget is expected to be absorbed (Question 21)

Overall, the National Agency expects that the large increase in the budget can be absorbed in Denmark. Since 2013, the objective of the National Agency has been to ensure that at least 95% of the budget is absorbed. The preliminary statistics from 2014 show a 90% absorption of the budget.

One of the challenges in ensuring that all funds are absorbed is that the institutions have to estimate way ahead of time the number of expected mobilities. The survey shows that around one third of the higher education institutions and vocational colleges experience discrepancies between granted funds and the funds actually used. The higher education institutions state that the discrepancy is primarily due to the difficulty of foreseeing how many students want to go abroad, and they therefore overestimate the funds needed in order to ensure that students applying will be able to receive a grant. Danish HE students have easy access to mobility programmes, as several funding options are available, and a large proportion of these students go abroad. 19 % of all higher education graduates from 2015 had a mobility. An increase of 3% points from 2013. Vocational colleges primarily list structural changes, e.g. policy reforms, as the main reason why they have had difficulties in absorbing the budget in the past.

Within the fields of school education, adult education and youth, communication efforts must be maintained in order to ensure that the increased funds are absorbed. However, the funds are expected to be absorbed.

According to the National Agency, the lack of flexibility regarding the budget in KA1 and KA3 (youth) makes it difficult to achieve optimal spending of the funds. The National Agency emphasises that more flexibility in the distribution of funds between decentralised actions is necessary to ensure that the distribution between the KAs reflects the needs and demands in a national context.

Appendiks A – Specific objectives

Specific objectives – Education and Training (Article 5)

- to improve the level of key competences and skills, with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society, in particular through increased opportunities for learning mobility and through strengthened cooperation between the world of education and training and the world of work;
- to foster quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation at the level of education and training institutions, in particular through enhanced transnational cooperation between education and training providers and other stakeholders;
- to promote the emergence and raise awareness of a European lifelong learning area designed to complement policy reforms at national level and to support the modernisation of education and training systems, in particular through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of Union transparency and recognition tools and the dissemination of good practices;
- to enhance the international dimension of education and training, in particular through cooperation between Union and partner-country institutions in the field of VET and in higher education, by increasing the attractiveness of European higher education institutions and supporting the Union's external action, including its development objectives, through the promotion of mobility and cooperation between the Union and partner-country higher education institutions and targeted capacity-building in partner countries;
- to improve the teaching and learning of languages and to promote the Union's broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness;
- to promote excellence in teaching and research activities in European integration through the Jean Monnet The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the Partnership Instrument for cooperation with third countries (PI), the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Development Fund, for the period 2016-2020 (EDF) activities worldwide.

Specific objectives – Youth (Article 11)

- (a) to improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, as well as to promote participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, in particular through increased learning mobility opportunities for young people, those active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders, and through strengthened links between the youth field and the labour market;
- to foster quality improvements in youth work, in particular through enhanced cooperation between organisations in the youth field and/or other stakeholders;
- to complement policy reforms at local, regional and national level and to support the development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy as well as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, in particular through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of Union transparency and recognition tools and the dissemination of good practices;
- to enhance the international dimension of youth activities and the role of youth workers and organisations as support structures for young people in complementarity with the Union's external action, in particular through the promotion of mobility and cooperation between the Union and partner-country stakeholders and international organisations and through targeted capacity-building in partner countries.

Appendiks B – Standard evaluation questions

Effectiveness

Question 1: To what extent have Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ specific objectives (as listed in point B.2 in annex 3) in your country? Are there differences across fields? Please provide, where relevant, your assessment for each of the specific objectives and provide evidence and examples where possible.

Question 2: To what extent has the progress on the realisation of the specific objectives contributed to the realisation of the Erasmus+ general objectives (as listed in point B.2 in annex 3) in your country?

Question 3: To what extent have Erasmus+ actions influenced policy developments in the domains of education and training, youth and sport in your country? Which actions were most effective in doing so? Are there marked differences between different fields?

Question 4: What specific approaches (such as co-financing, promotion or others) have you taken in order to try to enhance the effects of Erasmus+ in your country? To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified?

Question 5: Do you consider that certain actions of the programme are more effective than others? Are there differences across fields? What are the determining factors for making these actions of the programme more effective?

Question 6: To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ made the programme more effective in your country? Do you see scope for changes to the structure of Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase effectiveness?

Question 7: Is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what Erasmus+ is set out to achieve? Is the distribution of funds across the programme's fields and actions appropriate in relation to their level of effectiveness and utility?

Question 8: What challenges and difficulties do you encounter while implementing the various actions of Erasmus+? What changes would need to be introduced in Erasmus+ or its successor programme to remedy these?

Question 9: To what extent are the approaches and tools that are used for disseminating and exploiting the results of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes in your country effective? Where can you see the possibilities for improvements?

Efficiency

Question 10: To what extent is the system of cooperation and division of tasks between the Commission, Executive Agency, National Agencies, European Investment Fund, National Authorities, Independent Audit Bodies, and Erasmus+ Committee efficient and well functioning from the point of view of your country? What are the areas for possible improvement or simplification in the implementation of Erasmus+ or a successor programme?

Question 11: To what extent has the integration of several programmes into Erasmus+ resulted in efficiency gains or losses for the implementation of the programme in your country, both at the level of the National Agency/ies and on the beneficiaries' and participants' level? Do you see scope for changes to the structure of Erasmus+ or its successor programme that could increase efficiency?

Question 12: Do you consider that the implementation of certain actions of the programme is more efficient than others? Are there differences across fields? What good practices of these more efficient actions of the programme could be transferred to others?

Question 13: To what extent has the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies and 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, without unduly compromising its results and impact?

Question 14: To what extent are the IT tools provided by the Commission adequate for the efficient management and implementation of the programme in your country? Do they answer your needs? Give specific examples where they can be improved. Is the set of IT tools appropriate or should it cover more/less elements of the programme implementation?

Question 15: To what extent is the level of human and financial resources that is available for the implementation of the programme in your country adequate? What steps did you take to optimise the efficiency of the resources deployed for the Erasmus+ implementation in your country?

Relevance

Question 16: To what extent do the Erasmus+ objectives continue to address the needs or problems they are meant to solve? Are these needs or problems (still) relevant in the context of your country? Have the needs or problems evolved in such a way that the objectives of Erasmus+ or its successor programme need to be adjusted?

Question 17: To what extent are needs of different stakeholders and sectors addressed by the Erasmus+ objectives? How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope? Is the Erasmus+ programme well known to the education and training, youth and sport communities? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?

Internal and external coherence

Question 18: To what extent are the various actions that have been brought together in Erasmus+ coherent? Can you identify any existing or potential synergies between actions within Erasmus+? Can you identify any tensions, inconsistencies or overlaps between actions within Erasmus+?

Question 19: To what extent does Erasmus+ complement other national and international programmes available in your country? Can you identify any tensions, inconsistencies or overlaps with other programmes?

European added value and sustainability

Question 20: To what extent Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes produce effects that are additional to the effects that would have resulted from similar actions initiated only 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 value added?

Question 21: To what extent Erasmus+ will be able to absorb in an effective way the sharp increase in the budget that is foreseen in the coming years up to 2020 in your country? Could the programme use even higher budgets in an effective way? Do you see challenges to effectively use more money for particular actions or fields of the programme?

Appendiks C – Key figures

Key figures – Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals

TABLE C.1

Grants in euro

	2014	2015	2016
The field of school education	586.939	537.326	592.152
VET	3.870.961	3.878.124	4.021.869
HE	7.672.705	8.623.020	9.294.570
The field of adult education	284.363	95.856	130.907
Youth	2.010.528	2.171.855	2.549.147
Total	14.425.496	15.306.181	16.588.645

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.2

Projects granted

	2014	2015	2016
The field of school education	38	23	35
VET	45	32	32
HE	40	51	54
The field of Adult Education	13	6	8
Youth	69	74	82
Total	205	186	211

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.3

Participants in projects

	2014	2015	2016
The field of school education	332	321	354
VET	2.407	2291	2.503
HE	5.628	5723	6.067
The field of adult education	163	48	91
Youth	2.358	2.202	2.969
Total	10.888	10.585	11.984

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.4

Organisations involved in projects

	2014	2015	2016
The field of school education	57	38	41
VET	384	230	244
HE	40	51	54
The field of adult education	25	12	14
Youth	451	492	508
Total	957	823	861

Source: The National Agency

Key figures – Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices

TABLE C.5

Grants in euro

	2014	2015	2016
The field of school education	931.399	2.001.990	1.985.107
VET	1.236.087	1.003.407	1.374.149
HE	820.207	728.358	757.130
The field of adult education	392.674	602.758	663.866
Youth	750.097	627.500	514.866
Total	4.130.464	4.964.013	5.295.118

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.6

Projects granted

	2014	2015	2016
The field of school education	19	10	13
VET	5	6	5
HE	2	2	3
The field of adult education	2	3	4
Youth	6	5	4
Total	34	26	29

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.7

Participants in projects

	2014	2015	2016
The field of school education	3.581	2.914	2.780
VET	1.214	802	1.341
HE	565	420	952
The field of adult education	325	365	931
Youth	963	974	702

	2014	2015	2016
Total	6.648	5.475	6.706

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.8

Organisations involved in projects

	2014	2015	2016
The field of school education	24	67	73
VET	37	34	30
HE	15	10	18
The field of adult education	16	19	26
Youth	29	23	24
Total	121	153	171

Source: The National Agency

Key figures – Key Action 3: Support for policy reform

TABLE C.9

Grants in euro

	2014	2015	2016
Youth	106.600	129.454	130.270

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.10

Projects granted

	2014	2015	2016
Youth	4	5	3

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.11

Participants in projects

	2014	2015	2016
Youth	2.042	905	1.228

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.12

Organisations involved in projects

	2014	2015	2016
Youth	5	24	21

Source: The National Agency

Key figures – Total of all three Key Action

TABLE C.13

Grants in euro

	2014	2015	2016
Total	18.662.560	20.339.648	22.014.033

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.14

Projects granted

	2014	2015	2016
Total	243	217	243

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.15

Participants in projects

	2014	2015	2016
Total	19.578	16.965	19.918

Source: The National Agency

TABLE C.16

Organisations involved in projects

	2014	2015	2016
Total	1.083	1.000	1.053

Source: The National Agency

Appendiks D – Figures

TABLE D.1

To what extent do you agree with the following statement... (agree or strongly agree)

	HE	VET	The field of school education	Adult education and continuing training
...It is easy to find out who to contact for support in the NA	89% (n =37)	92% (n =42)	68% (n =62)	88% (n =16)
...It is easy to reach the relevant staff from the NA	89% (n =37)	93% (n =42)	84% (n =62)	87% (n =16)
...The NA can help us with the challenges we encounter.	87% (n =37)	95% (n =42)	92% (n =62)	94% (n =16)
...The NA's written manuals are very useful	N/A	88% (n =42)	52% (n =60)	62% (n =17)
...The NA's kick-off meetings for beneficiaries is very helpful	89% (n =34)	72% (n =41)	72% (n =57)	88% (n =17)

Source: Survey to institutions, EVA & Rambøll 2017

TABLE D.2

Have you changed attitude on a line of subjects?

	Less than before the project	The same as before the project	More than before the project
I appreciate cultural diversity	1%	34%	65%
I would like to contribute to the development of youth policies	2%	53%	45%
I feel like a European	3%	50%	47%
I am engaged in civil society	1%	69%	30%
I contribute actively to the protection of the environment	4%	69%	27%
I am politically active	3%	78%	20%

Source: For the full list of objectives and responses, see p. 40 in "Ungdomsudveksling gør en forskel" Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme (RAY), Internationale Uddannelsesprogrammer, Styrelsen for Forskning og Uddannelse, 2017.

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**THE DANISH
EVALUATION INSTITUTE
AND RAMBØLL
MANAGEMENT
CONSULTING**

T +45 3555 0101

E eva@eva.dk

H www.eva.dk