



End and Midterm evaluation ERASMUS+ Youth

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I. Extensive summary in Dutch

Dit onderzoeksrapport draagt bij aan de eindevaluatie van het jeugdruik van het afgelopen Erasmus+-programma (2014-2020) en de tussentijdse evaluatie van het jeugdruik van het lopende Erasmus+ programma (2021-2027). Het evaluatieonderzoek baseert zich op verschillende bronnen, met name interviews met vertegenwoordigers van het Nationaal Agentschap (NA) JINT en de Nationale Autoriteit (NAU) het Vlaams Departement Cultuur, Jeugd en Media, documentanalyse, kwalitatief onderzoek bij begunstigde organisaties, de analyse van RAY data en informatie uit het Qlik Dashboard.

Het rapport vertrekt van de standaardvragen van de Europese Commissie. De conclusies geven we weer onder de vijf evaluatiecriteria voorgesteld door de Europese Commissie. We sluiten af met enkele suggesties voor de toekomst van het Erasmus+ Jeugd-programma.

Effectiviteit

Erasmus+ Youth is een krachtig programma dat een breed scala aan mogelijkheden biedt voor het Vlaamse jeugdwerk. Het Vlaamse NA spendeerde €13.345.944,83 aan 254 Erasmus+ Youth projecten tussen 2021 en 2023 en €19.832.082,63 aan 765 projecten tussen 2014 en 2020.

Bijna alle deelnemers die in die periode deelnamen aan KA1-activiteiten en projecten, met name Groepsuitwisselingen, Mobiliteit voor jeugdwerkers en Participatieprojecten, melden een positieve ervaring. Deelnemers ervaren de sterkste impact op hun sociale vaardigheden, zoals op het gebied van samenwerking en communicatie. Andere vaardigheden, zoals de ontwikkeling van digitale vaardigheden of logisch denken, worden een stuk minder aangehaald.

Deelname aan een Mobiliteit voor jeugdwerkers bevordert de ontwikkeling van netwerken en leidt tot een zelfverzekerde houding bij de jeugdwerkers. Tegelijkertijd zijn er tekenen dat de kwaliteit van Mobiliteit voor jeugdwerkers kan worden verbeterd.

Erasmus+ Jeugd biedt duidelijk een sterke impuls voor jeugdorganisaties om internationale projecten te ontwikkelen en deze eventueel te integreren in hun beleid en activiteiten. Voor sommige organisaties is het Erasmus+ Jeugd-programma gaandeweg een integraal deel van hun werking geworden, een tendens die verder ondersteund wordt door het E+ Accreditatiesysteem. Toch blijft een internationale focus van een organisatie op termijn niet noodzakelijk behouden, bijvoorbeeld na personeelwissels of met de komst van een nieuwe generaties vrijwilligers. Impulsen en sensibilisering blijven nodig.

De vier horizontale prioriteiten die voor Erasmus+ Jeugd door de Europese Commissie naar voren zijn gebracht - inclusie en diversiteit - digitale transformatie - groene transitie (milieu en strijd tegen klimaatverandering) - deelname aan het democratisch leven en burgerschap – blijken relevant. Ze herinneren organisaties eraan te investeren in dat specifieke onderwerp, zelfs wanneer het buiten hun hoofdfocus valt, terwijl de brede omschrijving flexibiliteit biedt. Het implementeren van de prioriteit van digitale transformatie blijkt de grootste uitdaging te zijn voor projectteams en deelnemers.

Er ging al aanzienlijke aandacht naar het inclusief maken van het Erasmus+ Jeugd-programma. Deze inspanningen dragen vruchten af. Sommige maatregelen maken deel uit van de architectuur van het programma, zoals de vereiste dat elke NA een Supportive Approach moet hebben. Het Vlaamse NA JINT loopt voorop op vlak van inclusie. Sommige inclusie maatregelen in de programma-architectuur missen echter hun doel. Bijvoorbeeld de DiscoverEU Inclusie actie is gericht op kansarme jongeren, maar wordt als erg ontoegankelijk ervaren door potentiële begunstigde organisaties. Over het algemeen is het grootste waargenomen obstakel voor inclusie de administratieve last.

De periode 2020-2022 werd natuurlijk overschaduwd door de Covid-19-pandemie en de bijbehorende maatregelen. Gedurende de pandemie heeft het jeugdwerk in Vlaanderen veel veerkracht getoond. De meeste toegekende projecten konden uiteindelijk worden uitgevoerd, mede dankzij de proactieve reactie van het NA JINT. Mensen met minder kansen en organisaties die met hen werken lijken meer negatieve gevolgen te hebben ervaren. Het NA (JINT) speelde daarop in. Sinds het einde van de pandemie is er een toename van het aantal projectaanvragen.

Efficiëntie

Over het algemeen lijken de monitoring- en ondersteuningsmaatregelen die door het NA JINT worden geboden effectief en evenredig te zijn. De begunstigde organisaties ervaren de NA dienstverlening als toegankelijk en behulpzaam. Het NA JINT mist echter de capaciteit om ook gepersonaliseerde ondersteuning te voorzien, bijvoorbeeld door het samen schrijven van een (eerste) aanvraag. Op dat vlak zijn bijkomende maatregelen dus nodig.

Zowel de NA als de aanvragers omarmen de Erasmus+ accreditaties, aangezien dit systeem aanvragers aanmoedigt om een langetermijnstrategie te ontwikkelen voor internationale projecten en tegelijkertijd de drempels voor het aanvragen van projectfinanciering verlaagt. Accreditatie wordt door organisaties beschouwd als een belangrijke vereenvoudigingsmaatregel. Het biedt ook ruimte om andere organisaties te ondersteunen bij een (eerste) Erasmus+ activiteit.

De managementondersteunende instrumenten zijn vaak moeilijk om te gebruiken en weinig gebruiksvriendelijk. Het niet goed functioneren van IT heeft invloed op prestatie-indicatoren en op het welzijn van de medewerkers van JINT en begunstigde organisaties. Het heeft ook invloed op de manier waarop de Europese programma's als bureaucratisch en hoogdrempelig worden beschouwd.

Relevantie

Net als de hierboven genoemde horizontale prioriteiten zien de begunstigde organisaties ook de relevantie van de Erasmus+ doelstellingen. Organisatoren van projecten en activiteiten vinden het haast vanzelfsprekend om hun eigen prioriteiten te koppelen aan de doelstellingen van de Erasmus+ verordening. Desondanks lijkt het erop dat het programma voor veel potentiële begunstigden nog onbekend is of dat ze het voor zichzelf niet als relevant beschouwen.

Deze fenomenen doen zich mogelijks in het bijzonder voor bij organisaties die werken met kansarme jongeren. In de Vlaamse context identificeren we drie groepen van personen die te maken hebben met minder kansen, die relevant zijn voor het Erasmus+ Youth-programma: (1) kansarme jongeren, (2) personen die naar België zijn gemigreerd en (nog) geen volledig burgerschap hebben en (3) personen met een mentale of fysieke handicap. De stakeholders erkennen de vele kansen die Erasmus+ Youth biedt voor mensen die behoren tot deze (intern zeer diverse) groepen, en er zijn ook al heel wat voorbeelden van projecten die deze doelgroepen betrekken. Toch is er nog ruimte voor verbetering. Leeftijdslimieten, verblijfsvoorwaarden, de complexiteit van de aanvraag, etc. werken inclusie tegen.

Coherentie

Nationaal gefinancierde jeugdinternationalisatie is vrijwel verdwenen door het succes van EU-jeugdprogramma's waaronder Erasmus+. Bel'J-programma is het enige complementair initiatief en is geïnspireerd door de architectuur van de EU-jeugdprogramma's.

Europese meerwaarde

Deelnemen aan een Erasmus+ Youth project of activiteit versterkt het Europese gevoel van verbondenheid dat bij deelnemers vaak al aanwezig was vóór hun deelname. Samenwerking met niet-geassocieerde derde landen is vrij belangrijk in de Vlaamse context: ongeveer 40% van de Groepsuitwisselingen en Mobiliteiten van jeugdwerkers gefinancierd door het NA JINT hebben minimaal één partner in zo'n land.

De aanbevelingen in hoofdstuk 6 omvatten suggesties aan de Europese Commissie, het Nationaal Agentschap en de Nationale Autoriteit, gericht op het verbeteren van het Erasmus+ Jeugd-programma en het aanpakken van specifieke uitdagingen.

II. Introduction

This report contains an interim evaluation of the Erasmus+ Youth programme 2021-2027 and the final evaluation of the Erasmus+ Youth programme 2014-2020. The report is commissioned by Flemish National Authority (NAU) which is the Department of Culture, Youth and Media (DCYM).

The Social Work Research Centre at Odisee University College, got assigned to complete this evaluation. As Social Work Research Centre, we stand for high-quality practice-based research. By doing so, we contribute to service provision and education. We focus on the realisation of fundamental rights and are committed to social justice, full citizenship and human dignity. Research findings can find their way into teaching content. At the same time, we actively incorporate feedback from the field, including youth work organisations, into shaping our research agenda.

The report was created through close collaboration with the National Agency (NA) JINT vzw and the NAU DCYM.

In the first section of the report, we delve into the methodology employed, outlining the roles of various stakeholders and the processes used for selecting and addressing questions. This section ends with a list of the abbreviations used.

In the second section of the paper, we present a compilation of questions along with formulated answers drawn from diverse data sources. Following the conclusions, we then formulate suggestions for the future of the Erasmus+ Youth programme (E+). Lastly, towards you will discover a reference list, accompanied by a summary of the Tables and Graph provided, as well as the appendices.

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III. Methodology

Role of actors

Three partners were represented in the steering committee leading the evaluation. DCYM serves as the NAU, while JINT serves as the NA responsible for implementing the EU funding programmes Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps in the Flemish Community, situated in the Flemish and the Brussels-Capital Regions. The Social Work Research Centre of Odisee University of Applied Sciences was appointed as the research partner through a public procurement process. While Odisee took charge of preparing, coordinating, and executing the research activities, JINT and DCYM provided extensive feedback, collaborated in the planning process, and supplemented the preparations.

Furthermore, to realise certain specific support tasks in the youth field, the Flemish Youth Decree designates a range of non-profit umbrella organisations. Currently, these 'intermediate organisations' are De Ambrassade & Vlaamse Jeugdraad, JINT, Bataljong, Kenniscentrum Kinderrechten en de Kinderrechtencoalitie. The organisations that are not part of the steering committee were all contacted at the start of the evaluation process to inform and invite them. Due to recent staff changes and/or their limited expertise with EU programmes, their level of involvement was rather limited.

Selection of questions

The questions central in this report are taken from the European Commission's guidance note (EC DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2023). This set of standard questions is *organised following the structure of the five evaluation criteria to be examined in line with the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines¹: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, European added value.*

In the report, aspects of each of the five evaluation criteria are discussed. In Table 20, you will find an overview of the standard questions, along with an indication of the questions addressed in this report. In the conclusion, we refer back to the five evaluation criteria.

The selection of questions happened in close consultation with the three partners of the steering committee, namely the NAU DCYM, the NA JINT and the research partner Odisee. We discussed with the partners of the steering committee which subjects and themes were most relevant to them and for the Flemish context. Together with the partners we then selected the questions that were relevant and for which there was at least some data source available. This decision was made in consensus. Eventually, 19 out of 36 questions to evaluate Erasmus+ Youth were retained (see Table 20).

¹ See Better Regulation Tool [br toolbox-nov 2021 en 0.pdf\(europa.eu\)](https://br-toolbox-nov-2021-en-0.pdf(europa.eu))

The European Commission's guidance questions appeared to be often multi-layered and complex. Recognising the need for clarity and precision, we systematically deconstructed these intricate inquiries into more tangible components. This approach aimed to enhance the overall comprehensibility of the research process, facilitating a more nuanced and focused exploration of each facet within the framework of the study. Parallely to the selection of questions, we listed up the available sources, including the RAY questionnaires, annual reports and/or people with the necessary expertise. We linked the available sources to the questions, with the help of the partners of the steering committee.

Interviews National Agency and National Authority

A lot of expertise is with the NA and the NAU. To bring this experience to the evaluation, we organised a series of interviews between December 2023 and February 2024: one group interview with the NAU (three participants) and eight interviews with in total ten staff and management members of the NA. We discussed their view on and experience with the EU youth programmes. We also took the opportunity to pose targeted questions, elaborating on their unique expertise within the organisation and the programmes. These insights allowed us to answer some specific guidance questions. In the report we refer to this source as 'Interviews NA' and 'Interview NAU'. After reviewing the advanced draft, staff members of the NA and the NAU made some additional points, which are clearly marked as such.

Qualitative inquiry on participating organisations

The perspective of organisations submitting projects in the EU youth programmes takes a crucial place in this report. We strived for a diverse range of organisations in terms of experience, programmes they submitted on, profile, age and location. Depending on their availability and preference, the inquiry took different forms. We organised one focus group with 5 participants, one double interview and three interviews with representatives of the following organisations:

- AFS Interculturele Programma's vzw
- De Ark Vlaanderen vzw
- JOETZ vzw
- Kiwanis Europe vzw
- Mobile School vzw
- Mu-zee-um vzw
- Roots Vlaanderen vzw
- UCOS vzw – Universitair Centrum voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking
- vzw AjKo

In the report we refer to this source as 'Survey organisations'.

The respondents for the organisational survey were recruited through various ways. Initially, an open call was distributed through the newsletter of the NA JINT. Additionally, JINT directly contacted representatives of organisations to invite them to participate. Furthermore, the research team personally approached representatives of organisations directly, mostly after having met on the Catch'Up event, a biennial training and networking event organised by the National Agency.

The primary objective of the organisational survey was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practices used in Erasmus+ Youth and ESC activities and to gather specific examples and insights from the field. Efforts were made to ensure a diverse sample in terms of experience, implemented actions from the Youth programmes, geographical distribution and primary target groups.

However, it's important to note that the survey conducted among organisations does not yield representative results due to the limited sample size. Certain phenomena may have been captured to a greater or lesser extent, depending on whether they occurred in the organisations surveyed.

Document analysis

Documents that were analysed as a resource for answering the research questions are:

- Pots, S. (2023). *Inclusion in European Youth Programmes*. Tumult vzw.
- Stevens, F. (2017). *Midterm Evaluation Erasmus+: Youth In Action—Belgium (Flemish Community)*. Howest.be.
- Stevens, F., & Desnerck, G. (2021). *Effecten en uitkomsten van het Erasmus+ Youth in Action programma. Het perspectief van projectparticipanten en projectbegeleiders*. howest.be.
- JINT. (2024). Covid effect, schriftelijke input voor Mid-term en eindevaluatie. JINT.

RAY MON analysis

In the RAY MON project, the [RAY network](#) collects data on the implementation of Erasmus+ Youth by sending standard surveys to participants in projects and activities. Project participants and (members of) project teams were invited by e-mail to answer an online questionnaire. The datasets, along with an estimate of the response rate percentage, were supplied by the RAY network.

Before 2021, there were two national datasets for Erasmus+ Youth (RAY MON), namely one for Project Leaders and one for Project Participants. The data for Erasmus+ Youth were collected between June and October 2023 on projects that took place between 2021 and 2023 and is provided in three datasets.

The analyses of the data is based on the cleaned and harmonised data. The national datasets RAY MON 2021-2023 with the number of respondents after harmonisation and the response percentage before data cleaning, as provided by the RAY data team are the following:

Questionnaire	Abbreviation	n	Response rate
E+ participants: young people Project Participants (KA1 – Mobility of Young People, Youth Participation Activities)	PP	187	21%
E+ participants : youth workers (KA 1 – Mobility Youth Workers)	YWM	183	27%
E+ Project teams	PT	135	39%

When interpreting the data, it is important to be mindful of specific considerations.

- Whenever feasible, we combined the responses from both the youth workers and the project participants into a larger dataset ($n= 187 + n= 183$), enabling us to delve into the overall perspectives of participants regarding the Erasmus+ Youth programme. Both groups of respondents received the same thematic modules, while the other modules, including the impact modules, differed.
- Due to a technical issue with the online survey, not all respondents got to see the randomised thematic and impact modules in the MON PP. 78 respondents of the PP questionnaire jumped straight from the opening module to the reflection module of the questionnaire. As a result, this limits the sample of respondents from which we can derive conclusions about the thematic modules (consisting of six to seven questions) and the impact module (comprising 12 questions).

- The other 109 PP respondents were randomly distributed over four thematic modules and two impact modules. This restricts the sample of respondents from which we can draw conclusions. Further specifications, for example based on the attribute of belonging to an inclusion group, lead to only a few responses per thematic module or impact module, making this kind of comparisons between for example the impact for project participants with or without fewer opportunities impossible.
- The 183 participants in the YWM survey were divided across four thematic modules (and one impact module). This limitation narrows down the pool of respondents from which we can derive conclusions regarding the thematic modules.
- The RAY MON data collected from 2021 to 2023 is challenging and, strictly speaking, impossible to compare with the data from 2015 to 2020 due to the application of different methodologies (Likert scale versus dichotomy: marked/not marked), offering different items to respondents, and providing project participants with the same questionnaires as participants in youth work mobility.

Overall, we urge caution when interpreting the RAY data. The RAY data provide relevant indications but for now it's difficult to estimate to what extent generalisations are possible and it is not always possible to compare the data from the two Multiannual Financial Frameworks (MFF).

Qlik Dashboard

The software company Qlik offers a platform for data analytics. Qlik gathers data from sources such as the programme monitoring and management tools, participant surveys, project reports, and administrative records maintained by project organisers, the NA and the European Commission. Based on these databases, Qlik generates a range of dashboards presenting aggregated data on the EU youth programmes. The dashboards are managed by the European Commission. The NA possesses the expertise to effectively navigate the platform and provided data that is integrated in this report. Typically we performed some additional calculations to arrive at presentable results.

In the report we refer to this data source as 'Dashboard'.

It should be noted that while for some indicators, the EC dashboards offer quite solid datasets (that can be verified by matching NA information), for other indicators, the data quality is much more questionable, and as a result, difficult to interpret correctly. Generally, full transparency lacks in terms of how certain indicators have been measured. Also, for a number of core indicators across or even within Programme Actions, the dashboard data is clearly incomplete. In other cases, data collection happened in a non-consistent manner across Call Years, for instance by changing the way of measuring indicators, which undermines a comparative perspective.

More precisely:

- Overall, participant numbers are distorted for several reasons.
 - For KA2 projects, which are the largest in terms of budget, there is a complete absence of participant number estimation, resulting in a count of zero participants.
 - For Participation projects, from 2022 onwards, beside the 'core' group also those participating in events only are included, leading to a massive increase in participant numbers.
- With regard to participants with Fewer Opportunities (FO):
 - Until 2020 'Special Needs' were counted separately from Young People with Fewer Opportunities (YPFO), but from 2021 onwards both categories have been merged.
 - For Participation Events, making up a large share of the overall participant numbers (see above), no data is gathered regarding the FO status, thereby distorting the overall representation of YPFO in the participant numbers.
 - For Mobility of Youth Workers, no data is available on the FO status of participants.
- With regard to project topics, the topics of accredited projects (as mentioned in the E+ Accreditation applications) as well as DiscoverEU projects are not transferred into the relevant dataset.
- Data on the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 is presented in different dashboards, organised differently. This hinders the comparability of these two program periods.
- Projected budget data on accredited projects is lacking, offering a distorted image of the actually submitted budgets.

As a result, caution is needed when interpreting the dashboard data.

List of Abbreviations

DCYM	– Department of Culture, Youth and Media for the Flemish Community
E+	– Erasmus+
EC	– European Commission
ESC	– European Solidarity Corps
EU	– European Union
FO	– Fewer Opportunities
KA	– Key Action
MFF	– Multinational Financial Framework
NA	– National Agency
NAU	– National Authority
NET	– Networking Activities
NEET	– Not in Education, Employment, or Training
PP	– Project Participants
PT	– Project Teams
RAY	– Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of European Youth programmes
SALTO	– Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities
SAP	– Supportive Approach
SNAC	– Supporting National Agencies Coordination
TCA	– Training and Cooperation Activities
VZW	– Vereniging Zonder Winstoogmerk (non-profit organisation)
YPFO	– Young People with Fewer Opportunities
YWM	– Mobility of Youth Workers

IV. Answers to the standard questions

1. Outputs and results Erasmus+

To what extent have the various programme fields both within Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 delivered the expected outputs, results and impacts in your country? What negative and positive factors seem to be influencing outputs, results and impacts? Do you consider that certain actions are more effective than others? Are there differences across fields? What are the determining factors for making these actions of the programme more effective?

1.1. Inputs and outputs

The Erasmus+ programme actions evidently affects all stakeholders involved. Assessing this impact is complex, and grasping it remains an ongoing challenge. We therefore rely on several sources to provide insight.

First we look at **inputs and outputs**, which includes the budget expenditure compared to the quantity of received and awarded projects and the number of participants awarded (EC DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2023 Annex 2).

During the Erasmus+ programme cycle 2014-2020 the Flemish National Agency granted €19.832.082,63 to 765 awarded Erasmus+ Youth projects, with 28.891 awarded participants. 65% of the received projects got successfully granted (see Table 1). The success rate differs substantially between the mobility actions (KA1) with 71,4% and the co-operation actions (KA2) 33,9%.

During 2021-2023 the Flemish NA granted €13.345.944,83 to 254 Erasmus+ Youth projects, with 20.641 awarded participants. The success rate dropped to 46%, as discussed under question 7 (see Table 2). The success rate difference between KA1 mobility actions and KA2 cooperation activities also appears in the 2021-2023 period. From 2023 onwards, the success rate of KA1-projects also takes a downward turn: from 68% (2021) and 66% (2022) it drops to 41% in 2023. Overall, the downward tendency in terms of success rate seems mainly related to the increasing numbers of submitted projects.

Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA) are an integral component of the Erasmus+ Youth program, aiding in the facilitation of activities at both national and transnational levels (Sterckx et al., 2023). JINT is involved in nine strategic cooperations between the national agencies (SNAC) in the youth field, which have an impact on the youth field beyond the projects funded under the youth programmes. JINT is the coordinator for Europe Goes Local. Through SALTO Inclusion and Diversity, JINT also coordinates the Strategic Partnership on Inclusion (Interviews NA).

For 2021 and 2022 this resulted in a total of 2289 participants in these TCA for a realised budget of €784.287. The DiscoverEU Learning Cycle reached in 2022 out to 989 participants with a budget of €84.349.

1.2. Self-reported skills development by youth participants

Beside the above-mentioned numbers, the effects of the interventions on beneficiaries and participants offer an indicator of quality. In general, almost 95% of the youth participants in KA1-projects during 2021 to 2023 expressed positive project experiences (RAY PP 21-23; Q4).

The **self-reported skills development** of project participants is documented in the RAY data (see Table 3). For the project participants, the most indicated developed skills are 'cooperating with others', 'expressing ideas creatively' and 'developing arguments'. Using digital technologies is clearly less reported among the project participants.

Table 4 (Stevens & Desnerck, 2021) shows that cooperation competences ranked high among project participants in both 2015-2020 and 2021-2023, just like expressing yourself and communication skills. Conversely, skills related to digital technologies or media content scored low in both programme periods, as did logical thinking skills.

1.3. Self-reported skills development by youth workers participants

Overall, youth workers participating in Youth Workers Mobilities or TCA report a positive experience: more than 90% report having had a positive experience.

Through the RAY data (RAY YWM 21-23; Q4), we have some insights in the effects of participation (see Table 5). These effects are diverse. Youth workers report that they:

- were able to extend their networks (81%),
- became aware of their personal learning process (84%),
- learned about fostering non-formal learning (85%)
- learned about strengthening youth-led youth work (85%),
- are better able to strengthen diversity in youth work (81%)
- are better able to deal with ambiguity and tensions in my youth work (74%)

In general, we can assert that participation has a significant impact on the skills and abilities of youth workers.

While making precise comparisons based on the RAY data proves challenging and strictly speaking impossible due to differences in item formulation and response scales, we observe similar effects in previous surveys. Participation as a youth worker fosters the development of networks and leads to a self-confident attitude towards cooperation, participation, and the international context of youth work.

1.4. Effects on project team members

The members of the project teams report in more than 90% (n=137) a general positive experience of the E+ project (RAY PT 2021-23). Members of project teams indicate positive effects on self-confidence (84%), autonomy (78%) and empathy (81%). Participation in E+ projects as a member of a project team also promotes awareness of personal learning and the competences one wants to develop (87%). Finally, we also found indications that participating in E+ projects facilitates an attitude favourable towards fostering non-formal learning (95%) and strengthening youth-led youth work (87%) (see Table 7).

These learning effects are confirmed by RAY MON survey results of earlier periods. Although making precise comparisons based on the RAY data proves to be challenging due to differences in item formulation and response scales, we observe similar effects in previous surveys. According to the members of the project teams, participating in an Erasmus+ Youth project or activity strengthens their self-confidence, their awareness of their learning process and provides levers for non-formal learning (see Table 8).

1.5. Differences across actions

Concerning the effectiveness of different actions, we collected data through the interviews with beneficiary organisations and staff members of JINT (Survey organisations, Interviews NA). Generally, all the Erasmus+ Youth actions were considered effective and impactful, mostly on the level of participants themselves.

The most obvious outcome from our qualitative data is the impact of KA1 projects, and especially Group exchanges, on the participating young people, offering a chance to young people to informally learn about themselves and the world (Survey organisations).

“For our organisation, we mainly work in leisure time, and for us it seemed like a unique opportunity to offer young people opportunities to travel, and by travelling also to broaden their world view, to get to know other cultures, and also to get to know themselves better by finding out in nature where their limits lie, through our experience-based approach. We do find that this bears enormous fruit.” (Participant survey organisations, own translation)

Youth partnerships sometimes lead to concrete outcomes, such as a tool or a platform (Survey organisations ; Interviews NA).

Some surveyed organisations question the quality of some of the mobility for youth workers projects. Although there are sure interesting outcomes, participation in a YWM does not necessary fuel sustainable impact on the participants and their organisation. Participation in a youth work mobility is generally a good experience for the involved youth worker as a stimulus for motivation and enthusiasm, but does not always fulfil the role of a solid training moment. There is room for improvement here (Survey organisations).

TCA activities are powerful tools for the NA to address needs within the Flemish youth sector more directly. They are in particular useful to reach out to youth field actors who are

not involved (yet) in E+ funded projects, thus widening the impact of Erasmus+ in the youth field. This is for instance the case for the topic of inclusion: annually, the NA addresses a priority theme related to inclusion and develops TCA activities accordingly. For instance, Flemish organisations seek expertise in working with young people with disabilities or dealing with teenage parenthood. Subsequently, the National Agency proceeds to collaborate with the NA's of other programme countries to seek out international partners who possess such expertise or encounter similar challenges. Through a TCA project, these organisations can exchange knowledge and enhance their capacities. A similar approach is developed for a wide range of other topics, especially under the umbrella of the 9 Strategic NA cooperations JINT is involved in (Interviews NA).

2. Long-term impact, quality of applications

What are the results and long-term impact of Erasmus+ 2014-2020 in your country? We are interested in the impact of all actions/elements of Erasmus+ 2014-2020, and with special attention to those actions/elements that are continued in Erasmus+ 2021-2027. We are also interested in the impact of actions/elements that have been discontinued to the extent that it might help design the future programme. What is your assessment of the quality of applications received in your country, and what measures could be taken to improve the quality of applications and awarded projects in your country taking into account the doubling of budget for the 2021-2027 programme cycle?

Measuring long-term impact of Erasmus+ Youth is challenging. The RAY MON data does not provide information on this component. Some information on long-term effects can however be found in the interviews, especially those with the surveyed organisations.

One observation is that members of organisations involved in applying for or implementing Erasmus+ Youth typically have prior experience with the programme, gained during the previous cycle or before. This firsthand experience has convinced them of its utility and potential impact for their constituency. This motivation is often needed for the EU programmes to take root in the organisation or to remain committed to them (Survey organisations; Interviews NA).

Another observation is that, for certain organisations, the Erasmus+ Youth Programme, has transformed into a fully operational unit within their structure. Erasmus+ Youth has become integral to their policy and mission, fostering expertise building and professionalisation (Survey organisations; Interviews NA).

Additionally, organisations engaged in Erasmus+ Youth over an extended period may establish partnerships with European counterparts working on similar topics. Youth Partnership and TCA projects can facilitate the promotion and consolidation of such partnerships (Survey organisations; Interviews NA).

However, it is important to note that the international dimension of an organisation's operations is not always guaranteed. At times, due to the introduction of new staff

members or shifting organisational priorities, the focus on internationalisation in general, and specifically the Erasmus+ Youth program, may diminish or even disappear from the organisational mission. Overall, the fairly high staff turnover in the youth field is an important factor here, as it makes sustained vision and expertise building more difficult (Survey organisations; Interviews NA).

3. Transformative effects, with respect to the horizontal priorities

To what extent has Erasmus+ 2021-2027 had a transformative effect in your country on systems, values and norms, in particular with respect to the four horizontal priorities of the programme: inclusion and diversity – digital transformation – green transition (environment and fight against climate change) – participation in democratic life and civic engagement? Could you identify the horizontal priorities the programme had the highest impact on through its actions?

Considering the four horizontal priorities, the application in projects and activities differs strongly. For some organisations, the priorities match perfectly with their own priorities. At times, the European Commission's horizontal priorities indirectly influence project outcomes. Typically, organisations initiate projects based on their own priorities. However, there is a recurring experience that the broad definition of horizontal priorities allows organisations the flexibility to align their project plans accordingly (Interviews NA, Interview NAU, Survey organisations).

3.1. E+ transformative effect on inclusion and diversity

The RAY data suggests a slight positive impact on the participants' attitude with regard to supporting diversity among the participants in E+ projects and activities. 53% (n=66) of the RAY survey respondents indicates to actively support diversity more after the project/activity than before (Table 9).

For almost half of the participants, there is no considerable improvement on their support for diversity. This is somewhat in contrast with the expectations of the project team members, where 90% (n=30) of the RAY survey respondents expects the participants to be better able to actively support diversity and 76% (n=30) expects that the participants are better able to stand up against discrimination and tolerance (Table 10). One explanatory hypothesis for the limited improvement on participants support for diversity suggests that the engaged people already hold favourable attitudes towards diversity before the start of the project or activity (Additional point NA).

3.2. E+ transformative effect on digital transformation

For some organisations the digitalisation priority suits the nature of their activities very well. For example, the digitalisation of museum collections and the development of virtual museum visit goes with the inclusion and digitalisation priorities. Yet, in general, the digital transformation priority seems to be the most difficult one to put in practice for members of project teams and participants. Also, it is often not considered as a priority topic by youth work organisations in Flanders (Survey organisations). It should be noted that under the mobility actions, no financial incentives are given for projects specifically working in a digital way, including virtual mobility, or on the topic of digital transformation (NA, additional input).

Most of the RAY survey respondents that participated in Youth Work Mobility and other E+ projects do not notice improvements in their competence in using digital technologies, while only one on four indicates improvements (Table 11). Again, the expectations of the project team members are general somewhat higher. Although also for them, the use of digital technologies is generally not a priority.

3.3. E+ transformative effect on green transition

Highlighting environment and climate action as one of the key priorities of the E+ programme might encourage organisations to intensify their efforts in these areas.

“For instance, being greener, which is something we are not always so intensely occupied with, but because it is a priority, it actually ensures that you become more aware, and that we actually adjust our organisation or our operations in that sense, because we realise that it is indeed very important. It motivates you to take steps in that direction. Even if it is not as obvious as the other priorities.” (Participant survey organisations, own translation)

Although having environmental sustainability as a priority might help to create direct effects (e.g. diminishing the carbon footprint of mobility activities), the E+ projects/activities do not seem to have an overwhelming impact on the participant’s personal behaviour. Most participants that completed the RAY survey say that they will contribute to the same extent to environmental sustainability in their everyday life as before the project/activity (Table 12). About 30% (n=71) will contribute more to this priority.

There is again a contrast with the expectations of the project team members. Almost 60% (n=31) of them says that the participants are better able to contribute to more environmental sustainability in their life (Table 13).

3.4. E+ transformative effect on participation in democratic life and civic engagement

Concerning the participation priority, some 42% (n=59) of the project participants that completed the RAY survey indicate that they will engage more in civil society after the project than before (Table 14).

A possible explanation of this limited number is that many participants are already involved in civil society before the project. This points again to the importance of accessibility and inclusion so that also young people who were less involved in society yet, can join the projects and activities.

42% (n=59) of responding project participants indicates that they will engage more in civil society after the project than before. 80% (n=30) of responding project team members indicates that the participants should be more able to actively engage in civil society after the project/activity (Table 15). The perceived potential seen by project team members surpasses the number of participants who explicitly state they will become more involved in civil society post-project.

4. Inclusion & diversity strategy

What are the differences in impact of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 actions in your country on hard-to-reach groups, people with fewer opportunities or specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational or international activities as compared to other groups that benefit from the programme? We are interested in the evaluation of the first effects of the Framework of Inclusion Measures and of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy on promoting accessibility to funding for a wider range of organisations, and to better reach out to more participants with fewer opportunities.

Some inclusion strategies are provided by the Erasmus+ Youth Programme itself:

- Every national agency should have an inclusion officer.
- The national agencies are supposed to offer a supportive approach (SAP).
- The possibility to indicate exceptional costs in application forms.

The NA JINT has a history of implementing inclusive practices. An internal working group developed and monitors the inclusion and diversity strategy. The did not bring a radical change to the work of JINT, which has been prioritising inclusion for a long time. Under the impulse of the Strategy, JINT further developed its supportive approach and brought existing measures together.

Some important SAP strategies applied by the NA JINT are:

- Staff members organise information sessions for potential beneficiary organisations and reach out to stakeholders in the field. Outreach is especially focused on organisations working with young people with fewer opportunities.

- Newcomers organisations working with YPFO get specific support in project preparation, looking for partners ... and all kind of questions they may have.
- Support is provided in administration, such as application forms and in the reporting modules.
- Project calls on the website are not considered sufficient in terms of communication. The staff members also direct organisations towards the project calls.
- The Erasmus+ Youth Programme guide was redesigned into a more manageable format.

Annually JINT takes part in a TCA project with a focus on inclusion and networking (e.g. ‘intersectionality’ in 2023, ‘young people with a disability’ in 2024). JINT actively invites organisations. Those meetings sometimes work as an eye-opener for the possibilities the programmes are offering and for the possible impact of internationalisation. As one youth worker of an organisation working with YPFO testified:

“I myself, and colleagues of mine, have participated in a number of TCAs, which have inspired us enormously. (...) Now we try to apply it more and more in our daily work, but also during the youth exchanges.” (Respondent survey organisations, own translation)

The staff members observe how organisations working with YPFO do not always indicate this in their project applications. Often the ‘inclusion’ aspect is so obvious to them that they do not consider it as ‘special’. Sometimes, they want to avoid to label their participants as having FO. As the registration data in the dashboard only shows YPFO for whom additional funding is asked (through a request for inclusion support), this data offers a distorted view. On the contrary, some organisations indicate in their project applications they are working with YPFO, while it is unclear to what extent their constituency effectively deals with fewer opportunities. The possibility of getting funding for exceptional costs is considered very important, e.g. to provide hiking shoes for disadvantaged young people or to provide extra assistance for people with a disability.

DiscoverEU Inclusion emerged as a specific addition to the DiscoverEU initiative, aimed at YPFO. Organisations can apply for a DiscoverEU-project in the E+ Youth Programme, taking the role of supporting the young people who will join the DiscoverEU-activity and coordinating the activity itself. They get the access to the travel tickets and receive a fixed amount per person per day to cover expenses such as accommodation and food. All organisations also applied for inclusion budget, to cover costs tailored to the target group of youngsters they involve. While the concept is praised, as indicated by a large number of applications in the first call, the different technical procedures in the implementation phase are seen as riddled with barriers, resulting in low application numbers. Furthermore, the age limit poses an obstacle as young people can only avail of DiscoverEU opportunities in the year they reach 18 (Interviews NA).

“And as an organiser, you're required to request your ticket in one tool, input individual young people into another tool—pre-inputting them even though they could easily drop out the day before, which may happen with people belonging to a precarious target group. Then,

if an issue arises, you're left to navigate through individual InterRail helpdesk to make adjustments. You need to have all the youngsters email addresses because those addresses are linked to the ticket and the youngsters must install an app on their own phones, not to mention set up a new password and login for that app, all linked to their email address. It's just not feasible to manage all of this as a group leader." (Respondent interviews NA, own translation)

Overall, the biggest observed obstacle for inclusion is the administrative burden, even worsened by the technical problems with the Beneficiary module. Organisations are put off by this, especially those working with YPFO. Many respondents from beneficiary organisations and the NA staff stress that the programme actions that are supposed to be accessible are in fact not accessible, again mostly due to the administrative burden.

5. Policy developments

To what extent have the forms of cooperation and the types of actions under Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 influenced policy developments in the fields of education and training, youth and sport in your country? Which actions of the programmes are the most effective considering the needs of your country? Are there marked differences between the different fields?

There is no clear overview regarding policy developments influenced by Erasmus+ Youth actions. However, several indicators suggest a convergence of European, national and local youth policies. The needs of Flemish youth organisations frequently align with European priorities. For instance, Europe Goes Local, a European collaboration project coordinated by JINT aims at enhancing local youth work and local youth policies. It connects local and European youth policy developments and brings the European priority of youth participation to the local level. To ensure the alignment of European and local needs, JINT fosters a close partnership with local youth offices and Flemish youth organisations, such as Bataljong (Interviews NA).

Conversely, JINT perceives internationalising the Flemish youth work as an ongoing challenge. Local organisations often maintain strong local ties, potentially overlooking international opportunities. Moreover, an organisation's involvement in Erasmus+ at one point, does not guarantee continuity, as shifting priorities in combination with a generally high staff turnover in the field of youth work may divert attention from internationalisation (Interviews NA).

Another obvious influence from the Erasmus+ Youth Programme on policy developments is the composition and implementation of the Bel'J programme. This initiative developed by the authorities of the three Belgian Communities, draws heavily from the principles and structure of the Erasmus+ Youth Programme, as elaborated upon in question 16 (Interviews NA ; Interviews NAU).

6. Covid-19

How did the Covid-19 pandemic impact the implementation of the two generations of the programme in your country, and what was the effect of the measures taken to react to the consequences of the pandemic?

This question is mostly answered based on a document prepared by JINT as part of the evaluation, including elements from various annual reports (JINT, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024).

The Covid-19 period had a strong impact on the implementation of the E+ Youth Programme. Not only were the national borders locked for several periods in 2020 and 2021, but youth organisations also had to review and adjust their day-to-day operations. In awarded **Erasmus+ projects**, short stays such as exchanges were postponed several times, mobility projects were transformed into domestic projects; youth partnerships were usually continued with the support of digital formats.

Several **TCA-activities** have been transformed into online activities. This quick adaptation to the new digital reality, supported by a strong co-operation within the European TCA network, was experienced successful. Notwithstanding this flexible attitude, several activities planned in 2020 and 2021 had to be cancelled, transferred into online concepts or postponed to 2022. Particular challenges for TCA activities were that some planned activities could not be postponed (due to limits in the transferability of TCA funds), that the insecurity caused by shifting Covid-19 regulations was leading to hesitance among some other NAs to host activities (due to the high financial risk) as well as difficulties to find participants. Overall, the variety of Covid-19 realities and regulations was a significant hinderance to transnational cooperation.

The **support of organisations and participants** in (potential) projects continued through digital means and strengthening online community building, and through experiments such as walking meetings in which the NA provided information to (candidate) applicants. Especially in the first phases of the pandemic the focus lied on **crisis management and (practical) support**. During the pandemic the NA was able to help the beneficiaries either adapt their projects to the restricting measures or postpone within the allowed timeframe. Also an extra and specific project call under KA2 aimed at remediating the impact of Covid was launched.

As a year of 'recovery' after Covid, JINT was strongly committed to a **'relaunch' of international mobility in 2022**. Reinforcing international mobility and trust in the EU programmes, after 2 difficult Covid-19 years 2020-2021, by showing the value and impact of international cooperation. Through the organisation of a 2 days "Go Strange"-event the national agency reinforced the networking and community building of young people and organisations involved in ESC and E+. In contrary to what was feared, many organisations still implemented their mobility projects during the summer of 2022. The supportive approach and pro-actively communicating with organisations on the possibilities the programme offered (prolonged project period, change of partners/location/exceptional costs/etc.) had a positive impact on the implementation rate. Many KA2 projects that were

completed in 2022 still suffered the consequences of the Covid-crisis. They had to adapt by either postponing and cancelling physical activities or using more digital tools to implement the project. From spring 2022 on, when the Covid-19 pandemic was slowing down, offline/residential activities started again. There is still a preference for physical mobilities, whereas a virtual exchange is seen as most valuable as an addition to a physical activity.

In general, Covid-19 continued to affect programme implementation in 2022 as some of the regular beneficiaries still had open projects from previous years (leading to less project applications from their side). Also, the NA observed an influx from newcomers as applicants, including informal groups and small NGOs.

Several organisations also discovered the opportunities of doing in-country international or intercultural activities (see for [example](#)).

For YPFO and inclusion organisations the obstacles for implementing their project became higher during the Covid-19 pandemic; due to workload in organisations, unemployment, practical barriers, etc. During the pandemic, according to the NA, organisations working with YPFO submitted less applications compared to the period before the pandemic. The NA offered extra support to organisations working with YPFO, so that they could still submit an Erasmus+ project regardless of Covid-19 (JINT, 2024).

7. Consequences measures after Russian invasion

What was the effect in your country of the measures taken in the frame of the programme implementation to provide a reaction to the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine?

The consequences of the measures taken in the frame of the programme implementation to provide a reaction to the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine did not affect the implementation of Erasmus+ Youth in Flanders or with Flemish partners strongly (Interviews NA).

There used to be a good cooperation between the Flemish youth sector and organisations in Russia. Yet, projects involving Russian organisations already dissipated since the Russian invasion in eastern-Ukraine in 2014 (Interviews NA).

8. Appropriateness of the E+ budget

To what extent, compared to the previous programme, is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what Erasmus+ 2021-2027 is set out to achieve? To what extent is the distribution of funds across the programme fields and key actions appropriate in relation to their level of effectiveness and utility?

The dashboard shows that in the 2014-2020 cycle 65% of the received projects were awarded (Table 1). Between 2021 and 2023 the success rate dropped to 46% (Table 2). Several factors are causing this lower success rate, including a bigger influx of projects with a relatively smaller proportion of quality projects.

However, the absolute number of qualitative projects (passing the assessment thresholds) has also increased. There is a strong intention to make the programme accessible by informing and supporting local organisations. This has resulted in a gradual situation where there are more high-quality projects than there is available funding (Interviews NA). For certain subactions, such as the participation projects, budgets do not align with the demand by organisations. Especially in 2023 this tendency is remarkable. For instance, in 2023 a surplus budget of 50% would have been needed to fund all suitable participation projects. For cooperation partnerships, in that year a 109% surplus would have been needed. For the entire period of 2021-2023, the average surplus budget needed would have been 35% (Interviews NA; Dashboard; Additional notes NA).

There is an impression that the priority of the European Commission in terms of budget growth is mainly on traditional ways of mobility, such as Group exchanges. Other actions that came later, such as KA2 partnerships do not grow accordingly to their potential and to the submitted projects (Interviews NA).

From the organisational point of view, the responding organisations mostly consider the funding with E+ as sufficient to cover the costs of their projects and activities. An important exception are organisations developing tools within the KA2 action. They sometimes lack the means for proper development of online tools (Survey organisations).

9. Supervision, guiding role EC

How efficient is the cooperation between the different actors involved in the implementation and supervision of the programme (Commission services – Erasmus+ Committee – Executive Agency – National Authorities – National Agencies – Independent Audit Bodies – International Organisations) from the point of view of your country, and to what extent does the Commission fulfil its guiding role in the process? How has this changed between the two programming periods? What are the reasons for potential changes? What are the areas for possible improvement in the implementation of Erasmus 2021-2027 or a successor programme?

To answer this question, we rely on the interviews with people of the NAU and the NA.

The three main actors involved in the implementation and supervision of the programme are:

- The European Commission. The European Commission has a double role in the Erasmus+ Youth Programme: review the national management and control systems on the one hand and management of the programme on the other hand.
- The NAU. The NAU has a double role in the in the Erasmus+ Youth Programme: monitoring and supervising the implementation of the programme on the one hand and management of the programme on the other hand.
- The NA. The NA promotes the Erasmus+ Youth Programme, manages project application, assessment and funding procedures, implements a supportive training and networking activity offer, supports applicants and participants, cooperates with other NA's, the EC and youth field stakeholders and monitors and evaluates the programme.

Crucial for the cooperation is the Programme Committee, composed of representatives of the European Commission and the National Authorities of the Member States. The Programme Committee is a management mechanism that determines priorities, actions and budgets. The committee advises the European Commission (Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 Establishing Erasmus+, 2021 Article 34).

Since 2013 there is one Programme Committee for the whole Erasmus+ programme, including the various policy areas education, youth and sport. The fact that the committee is mixed with the different policy fields sometimes prevents specific tailored measures for youth to be taken. A dedicated committee for youth affairs would offer a place for consultation for the European Commission, the Member States and the NA's on specific youth affairs (Interview NAU).

Moreover, certain decisions within the European Commission's program management appear to be unilaterally enacted by the Commission, lacking reliance on the Programme Committee or transparency in the outcomes of committee discussions. The reduction of deadlines for Erasmus+ projects from three to two, and the dissemination of information during the Covid-19 period serve as examples.

Beside the management of the programme, the European Commission also has a role in reviewing the national management and control systems. The European Commission performs this supervision role through regular unexpected visits to the national authority and national agencies. This involves scrutinising the accounts. This is experienced as correct and necessary (Interviews NA). Furthermore, there are evaluation conclusion letters by which the European Commission revises the NA Management Declaration, the IAB Opinion and the October Report (Additional point NAU).

As part of the Regulation, a yearly audit of the NA is executed by an independent audit body which is designated by the NAU (Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 Establishing Erasmus+, 2021).

A third mechanism for supervision is that the NAU is represented in the Board of directors from the National Agency.

In Flanders, Erasmus+ Youth is managed by a Youth NA with the backing of a NAU with youth policy competency. This dedicated focus of both NA and NAU on the youth field allows the NA to set up tailored support and outreach towards applicants (youth organisations) and young people, closely aligned with the core principles and priorities of the youth field (non-formal learning, youth participation, etc.). In this context, the indirect management system fulfils the promise of making the Erasmus+ Youth programme more accessible and relevant to local and national youth field stakeholders.

For the implementation of the Erasmus+ Youth programme, civil society organisations are indispensable. They hold significant expertise and act as a link to their constituencies of young people and potential beneficiaries of the programme.

10. Monitoring and support by the National Agency

To what extent are the measures applied by your National Agency/ies for monitoring and supporting applicants, beneficiaries (including small and newcomer organisations) and participants effective and proportionate? What are the areas for improvement/simplification, considering the need for a smooth and effective implementation of the programme?

Within the project cycle, standard monitoring measures exist, such as the final report. However, the NA conducts additional monitoring. Monitoring of applicants varies in approach by the NA, with a less intensive process for accredited organisations compared to those conducting single projects (Interviews NA). The monitoring activities are often also supporting measures.

- Monitoring through the administrative tools

At various points in the project cycle, the NA conducts checks. At the beginning of a project application, there is an eligibility check. Next, each application form undergoes a risk assessment, scrutinising objective factors such as prior experience with EU Youth Programmes, the requested budget, and the location of the legal representative. Besides, the NA might check the organisations website or attend an activity of the organisation. If anything suspicious is detected, it will be reported internally (Interviews NA). Organisations applying for more than €60.000 per year or per project undergo an additional financial capacity check conducted by an accountant. At the end of the project cycle, all end reports are checked, with some end reports receiving more thorough desk checks (Interviews NA).

- Project visits

Regular field visits of projects taking place in Flanders and Brussels are planned through random sampling. This allows the staff members of the NA to keep track of project implementation as well as tendencies in the youth field. It also allows (informal) contacts and allows them to see if and what support is needed. It ensures that staff members are approachable by the beneficiaries. In addition, on the basis of risk, financial and organisational capacity checks, projects and organisations are also visited for on the spot checks during and after the project (Interviews NA).

- The appointment of a contact person

Whenever feasible, each beneficiary organisation is assigned a designated contact person at the National Agency, fostering stronger connections (Interviews NA). This approach is viewed positively by both the NA staff members and the questioned beneficiary organisations.

The organisations surveyed view the NA as accessible and supportive. Based on their experiences, JINT makes complex project administration more manageable by providing explanations and assisting the process of reporting. Additionally, organisations can pitch

their ideas to JINT, which helps them to evaluate if the project is suitable for the Erasmus+ Youth Programme. Several organisations recognise that JINT is somewhat of a positive exception compared to other National Agencies, which are less accessible (Survey organisations).

In general, the monitoring and support measures provided by the National Agency appear to be effective and proportionate. Very few organisations that were awarded a grant fail to implement any aspect of their Erasmus+ Youth activity or project which would require them to refund the 80% deposit. In the 2021 project cycle this occurred only once. Additionally, organisations generally view the monitoring and support provided by the National Agency positively.

However, the National Agency often lacks the capacity to offer personalised assistance prior to the deadline. Therefore, supplementary support measures remain relevant. The idea of seeking assistance from "peers" or partner organisations with similar experiences and/or located in the same region holds promise in addressing this gap.

Another occasional remark was made regarding the expertise of JINT, which is particularly strong in certain areas such as project writing and inclusion. However, there is a noted scarcity of expertise in other relevant areas, such as residence permits and assurances.

11. Simplification measures

To what extent have simplification measures put in place, such as the system of simplified grants and accreditation system, resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies, programme beneficiaries and participants? Are there differences across actions or fields? What elements of the programme could be changed to further reduce the administrative burden and simplify the programme's management and implementation, without unduly compromising its sound management, results and impact?

Apart from the challenge of obtaining accurate information about its existence and applicability, respondents highlighted the administrative burden linked with EU Youth Programmes as the primary obstacle to participating in E+ (Survey organisations). They concur that reducing this burden should primarily target actions that have the explicit goal to be accessible, such as Youth Exchanges and Participation projects. Also JINT staff members suggest simplifying application forms primarily for these actions. DiscoverEU Inclusion is highlighted as particularly intricate in proportion to its target group, as highlighted under question 4 (Interviews NA).

Respondents enthusiastically embrace the E+ accreditation system (Survey organisations). By February 2024, 16 youth organisations have acquired an E+ accreditation. In 2021-2022 the contracted projects of accredited organisations received in total €1.976.255 of project funding (Additional notes NA).

Among the organisations surveyed, three either possessed an E+ accreditation or were in the process of acquisition (at the time of interview). Accreditation affords them the opportunity to organise projects with significantly reduced administrative requirements. Accreditation enables organisations to focus on long-term objectives, such as investing more effort in recruiting young people rather than in the application process. An additional significant advantage of accreditation is that accredited organisations recognise opportunities to allocate the time saved toward supporting unfamiliar or new organisations or informal groups in EU Youth Programmes. This contributes to promoting the programmes and potentially enhances inclusion strategies. There is however some concern that non-accredited organisations, despite sometimes being more grassroots and innovative than some accredited ones, might face increased difficulty in obtaining funding. Given the novelty of the accreditation system (with the first seven accreditations granted in 2020), its evolution remains to be monitored.

While the accreditation system facilitates a smoother project application process by reducing its administrative burden, the significance of the final report remains unchanged. Consequently, the NA needs to pay similar attention to monitoring activities for accredited projects compared to other projects (Interviews NA).

In KA2 projects, lump sums are awarded to the project beneficiaries. This is seen as a positive development by the involved organisations, particularly when developing tools within an Erasmus+ Youth project. Previously, the program did not cover costs for technical support or developers without explicit demand and proof. The provision of lump sums provided a solution, resulting in significant administrative simplification in the experience of those involved (Survey organisations).

12. Management support tools

To what extent are the new management support tools consistent with the Erasmus+ programme needs and architecture? Which additional features would you recommend for future developments?

‘The new management support tools’ refers to the new IT landscape that *has been rolled out for the new programme generation replacing the previous tools to adapt to up-to-date technology and new needs* (EC DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2023).

Staff Members from the NA and representatives of beneficiary organisations observed significant issues with the new IT landscape. The beneficiary module is most often mentioned in this regard. The beneficiary module errors had repercussions on organisations, causing delays in the payment of the final part of the granted budget until the summer of 2023.

“At the time of our first accreditation, there was a bug that made that one of our partners was not seen as official (...). Finally, we actually waited a year, or even longer, before we could actually submit, just because of that one bug. But of course that has consequences

because of the financial, because there is an accreditation, that involves a lot of money, so it was not easy.” (Participant survey organisations, own translation)

IT tools frequently appear to malfunction and lack user-friendliness. Surveyed organisations report that while the National Agency is always willing to assist, finding solutions involving software development typically falls beyond their jurisdiction.

Apart from the malfunctions and technical issues, the application forms and the beneficiary tool lack user-friendliness, while the questions are not always clear. This situation leads organisations to seek alternative methods of collaboration and management. They find it helpful to work in a Word-document with the questions of the application form. Or they use other platforms for partnering with organisations abroad. Additionally, for keeping track of budget expenditures, organised mobilities and events, organisations do not rely on the beneficiary tool, but often keep their own Excel sheets. In short, they resort to using different systems alongside management support tools, resulting in duplicated efforts rather than the management tools streamlining their work.

“And because of that, we decided each time to work in a Google Drive and share that document with the partners and work together on the file, and at the last moment, once it is finished, bring everything into the platform. Because we can't rely on that platform. Last year, we lost everything and had to start all over from scratch, and that wasn't really nice, so we don't dare risk working in it anymore. And we make a lot of backups.” (Participant survey organisations, own translation)

At the time of writing, the management support tools seem to be mostly functional.

Similar to the observations made in the 2017 midterm evaluation (Stevens, 2017, p. 26), project leaders still find themselves repeating information frequently due to the similarity of certain questions. Furthermore, they highlight that some questions are not pertinent to certain sub-actions.

Future developments could focus on a more user-friendly and efficient application form and beneficiary module. For instance, implementing the programme guide on IT tools could help avoid situations where, for example, only three participants are entered when a minimum of four is required (Interviews NA).

Some of the respondents suggest that it would make more sense to enhance existing systems than to launch new ones (Survey organisations; Interviews NA).

From the perspective of the NA staff, the IT tools for the MFF 2021-2027 have been one of the most significant challenges for staff and beneficiaries to manage. As in the previous MFF, they are built while the programmes are being implemented. This has led to numerous problems: postponed deadlines, slow working IT tools to the extent that average tasks takes up much longer than under the MFF 2014-2020, dashboards that partially could not report on the indicators or had mistakes in them that could not be fixed timely for the yearly reporting. Also for the NA, the administrative workload has increased exponentially as working in the PMM (project management tool) requires many more steps than under the previous system (EPLUSLINK) (Interviews staff NA ; Additional points NA).

At the start of 2021, management of applications was a real problem within the programme management tools and although it has improved, it remains an issue with smaller or bigger problems each deadline with project organisers that cannot apply due to technical issues, applications being 'lost' or arriving late for management, etc. It is pointed out that final reports became available in the Mobility Tool, but also could not be processed in the Project Management Tool and/or the assessment tools. This has led to late finalisations and late payments to beneficiaries. One of the key tasks of the NA in this process next to just handling the reports was management of the expectations and complaints of beneficiaries as they could not receive the final payment of the project due to the non-functioning of the system (Additional points NA).

The whole situation of the IT-issues required a high level of stress-management for NA staff as they were first in line in contact with beneficiaries and at the same time were frustrated themselves over the non-functioning tools especially PMM and the Beneficiary Module in the first 2,5 years of the programme. The situation had also management repercussions as extra steps have to be dealt with inside the different tools. In addition, additional staff had to be hired to deal with the large influx of final reports in autumn 2023. The situation around the IT-problems for final reports has stabilised since October 2023 although some essential functions were only implemented by the end of the year (Additional points NA).

The IT-non/malfunctioning has impacted the performance indicators for the NA and the programme, it has impacted staff and their well-being, management costs increased but most importantly it has had an impact on the way Erasmus+ is viewed as bureaucratic and not easy to apply for or to work with.

13. Needs and challenges

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

Objectives such as to support the personal development of young people, strengthen European identity and active citizenship, promote non-formal and informal learning mobility, promote inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of youth, still seems very relevant. This is confirmed by the responding beneficiary organisations, as underpinned by some quotes (Survey organisations).

"It gives the chance to strengthen competences of youth workers, and also the chance for youngsters to exchange. And especially interesting is the thread of nonformal learning. That's aligning with youth work. It's not that you sit somewhere and have to listen. It's very... non-formal." (Participant survey organisations, own translation)

“For us, actually, one of our main focuses has always been innovation. How can we be innovative? How can we make it more efficient? And I think that has also always been one of the priorities within Erasmus+ projects as well. In addition, also concerning the digitalisation objective: our products are right in there. I don't remember now exactly how it was described, but lifelong learning, and supporting that. We do feel that need among the youth workers we have contact with.” (Participant survey organisations, own translation)

The dashboard indicator “project topic” offers a view on the relevance of particular topics for beneficiary organisations. (Table 16). Each project has been assigned up to 3 different topics.

The top five topics selected by the 223 awarded Erasmus+ projects in 2021-2023 (*not including the 20 accredited projects and the 11 DiscoverEU projects*) are:

- Creativity, arts and culture (59)
- Inclusion of marginalised young people (51)
- Bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divide (46)
- Physical and mental health, well-being (45)
- Democracy and inclusive democratic participation (38)

The topics that have not been picked, or that were selected only once or twice by awarded E+ projects (Table 16) are the following:

- Development of disadvantaged rural and urban areas (2)
- Digital safety (2)
- Equal access and transition to labour market (2)
- Pedagogy and didactics (2)
- Prevention of bullying (2)
- Tackling geographical remoteness and involving rural areas (2)
- Disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery (1)
- Green transport and mobility (1)
- Social innovation (1)
- Soft skills (1)
- Recognition, transparency, certification (0)

14. Stakeholders, target groups, limited participation

To what extent are the needs of different stakeholders and sectors in your country addressed by the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 objectives? How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope? How well is the Erasmus+ programme known to the education and training, youth and sport communities in your country? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this? What are the reasons of limited participation of certain target groups? Are there target groups who chose not to participate or are there always external factors preventing them?

Participants in the Erasmus+ programmes typically assess their experience positively. Almost all of them consider the activity they participated in as meaningful, and most even as very meaningful, and 40% even gives the highest score of 'very meaningful' as is visible in Table 17.

Respondents of organisations indicate that the Erasmus+ Youth Programme is not known to many actors in the education, training and youth sectors. They point to the need for intermediary organisations to reach out to them (Survey organisations). As part of their inclusion strategy, JINT is quite active already. But organisations on the field indicate that additional efforts by peers is needed.

Some of the responding organisations did not know about the programmes until recently.

It seems again that target groups who do not choose to participate are usually put off by the administrative burden.

15. Fewer opportunities, factors limiting access

To what extent is the design of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 oriented and adapted towards the hard-to-reach groups, people with fewer opportunities or specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational or international activities as compared to other groups that benefit from the programme? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached in your country, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?

15.1. People with fewer opportunities in the context of Flemish Community

It is part of the EU Regulation that the Erasmus+ Youth Programme should be more inclusive by improving participation among people with fewer opportunities (Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 Establishing Erasmus+, 2021).

‘People with fewer opportunities’ is defined as *people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a reason that could give rise to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme* (Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 Establishing Erasmus+, 2021 Art. 2).

In the context of the Flemish Community, we identify three primary groups of individuals facing fewer opportunities, which are pertinent to the Erasmus+ Youth Programme. These classifications are derived from interviews conducted with the NA, the NAU, and notably, the feedback provided by beneficiary organisations during the organisational survey.

Firstly, there are disadvantaged young people who encounter social exclusion, often stemming from financial poverty and/or precarious family situations. Secondly, there are individuals who have migrated to Belgium and do not have full citizenship (yet). Thirdly, there are individuals with mental or physical disabilities. Several organisations that benefit from the Erasmus+ Youth Programme appear to have a lot of experience and expertise in working with people with disabilities.

It is important to note the vast diversity within and between these groups, with varying needs and opportunities across individuals. For example, supporting individuals with mental disabilities or specific physical disabilities needs distinct approaches and forms of support. Additionally, there may be other relevant groups falling under the definition of ‘people with fewer opportunities’, but they may not have been extensively discussed or mentioned during the data collection for this report.

15.2. The involvement of young people with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+ Youth

Data from former years shows that Erasmus+ Youth does reach out to participants from excluded groups. Data from the dashboard shows that during the Erasmus+ programme cycle 2014-2020 there were 28.891 participants in awarded projects, of which 671 had special needs and 5.298 had fewer opportunities (Table 1). In that period, a distinction was made between 'people with special needs' and 'people with fewer opportunities'. From 2021, this was no longer the case; both groups fall under 'people with FO'. During 2021-2023 the dashboard shows that there were 20.641 awarded participants, of which 2.831 with fewer opportunities (Table 2).

In the 2014-2020 project cycle, 20,7% of participants in awarded projects were identified as having FO. However, during 2021-2023, this percentage decreased to 13,72%. Nevertheless, direct comparison between these percentages is not straightforward.

Overall, the above-mentioned figures are likely underestimations due to three primary reasons:

- For Participation Projects, only for participants in 'mobilities' the status of YPFOs has been registered; for the high numbers of participants in 'events' their YPFO status is not accounted for. This factor leads to significant distortion.
- For Youth Partnerships (KA2), there are no participation figures available, leading to a lack of information on YPFO.
- Regarding Mobilities for Youth Workers, while there are participation figures, there is an absence of data on YPFO, despite its request in the project file. This discrepancy may stem from a potential technical issue.

Taking into consideration the above elements, the share of YPFO among participants for 2021-2023 almost triples to 35,80% (i.e. 2.493 out of the 6.964 awarded KA1-participants for whom the FO status has been registered). Specifically, accredited organisations accounted for a significant portion of YPFO participants, comprising 40,43% during the 2021-2023 period (Dashboard). These differences in numbers compared to the general share, highlights the need for more appropriate monitoring system of YPFO.

While Erasmus+ Youth shows to reach out to young people with FO, there is however room for improvement.

When talking about barriers for participation in Erasmus+ Youth projects it may be useful to distinguish between young people with fewer opportunities as participants, on the one hand, and young people with fewer opportunities as project organisers, on the other hand.

15.3. People with fewer opportunities as participants

- *People with fewer opportunities as participants: disadvantaged young people*

International youth work is relatively little known in general, and this is definitely the case for young people with fewer opportunities (Pots, 2023, p. 3). To inform these young people is a first important step. The young people should be aware about the opportunities, and as several organisation representatives stress, also believe that they are actually a possible target group (Survey organisations). Some beneficiary organisations work (almost) exclusively for young people with fewer opportunities. For them it is clear how to inform and invite participants with fewer opportunities. Other organisations are less familiar with those target groups. Establishing partnerships is a good practice here (and often more realistic than trying to reach out to young people with fewer opportunities without the appropriate expertise and networks). Of course, such processes take time and energy.

Also the preparation process may ask some additional efforts. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are not always used to travel. For some of the participants it may be the first time going abroad or to take a plane. There is a need for tailored support ((Pots, 2023) ; Survey organisations).

- *People with fewer opportunities as participants: limited resident permits*

Several organisations have identified travel restrictions, primarily due to legal status, as a significant barrier to accessing the Erasmus+ Youth and ESC programmes (Survey organisations). These challenges become particularly evident when attempting to involve young individuals with limited residence permits or non-Schengen passports. The process of applying for necessary documents is often lengthy and has an uncertain outcome ((Pots, 2023) ; Survey organisations). Not getting the necessarily travel documents may of course lead to disappointment, and to reluctance to future participation.

- *People with fewer opportunities as participants: disability*

For some beneficiary organisations, projects with young people with fewer opportunities are at the core of their international activities. They organise group exchanges for both young people with and without a disability, for example (Survey organisations). During the interviews with beneficiary organisations, such projects came up as one of the great merits of Erasmus+ for the organisation and the society.

A main factor limiting the access of young people with a mental disability is the age requirement. People with a mental disability are often older than 30 years old before they are ready to engage in international projects.

“Not many people with a mental disability come to us before the age of 25. So for them, just not living with their mum and dad anymore is already such a big step, you shouldn't then start sending them to Estonia for a few weeks. It's actually already fantastic if they are getting to know the local garden and dare to take the bus on their own. And we've seen many times that by the time people are ready to have that look outside their own country, they are at least 35, if not already 40. And when they are 50 you have to stop already, because then

they can't handle it physically. But I have been bumped many times, I know several people where I would so say "go somewhere for a month or for two months", but they won't make it before they are 30, really." (Participant survey organisations, own translation)

15.4. People with fewer opportunities as project organisers

While there are considerable barriers for participation in Erasmus+ Youth projects, the bigger challenge is to make Erasmus+ Youth accessible for project organisers in general and for organisers with fewer opportunities in particular.

Getting the information about Erasmus+ Youth to the concerned people is a challenge, as discussed in the parts on the limiting factor for participants and for the inclusion strategy.

Writing a project is quite time-consuming. The help of experienced people is necessary. JINT's SAP offers a certain assistance, but some organisers that are not familiar with project applications need more intense guidance, at least for a first time. The surveyed organisations see positive opportunities from accreditation here, to include smaller, informal organisations for and by young people with fewer opportunities in tow.

Many respondents stress that the programme actions that are supposed to be accessible are in fact not accessible, mostly due to the administrative burden, starting from the application form (Interviews NA).

Young people might have an idea for a project, e.g. a youth exchange, but they do not understand the questions in the application form. They are not familiar with the applied terminology.

Also, the NA recognises those factors limiting access. They sometimes criticise the fact that the application process for small scale projects and activities that are supposed to be accessible is the same as for more complex and expensive projects.

"A €5.000 grant has exactly the same contract as a €400.000 grant, that's out of all proportion, that's not okay. And then, that's just one aspect, and then you have the whole IT failure, a lot of barriers in registration of participants, of organisations, as well. This is out of proportion to the subsidies that come against it." (Respondent interviews NA, own translation)

15.5. Actions to remedy the limited access

- Provide more budget for 'exceptional costs' as the current measures are useful but not always enough. E.g. when engaging YWFO it is not always possible to buy travel tickets much in advance. This may lead to higher mobility costs (Survey organisations, Interviews NA).
- Provide user-friendly tools that work. The Application module, the European Youth Portal and the Beneficiary module are not perceived as user-friendly or even as functional ((Pots, 2023): Survey organisations).
- Consider short-term projects as a stepping stone to internationalisation and possibly other actions with ESC or Erasmus+ Youth (Survey organisations, Interviews NA). This includes additional support to further follow-up and keep the young people involved in a short-term project engaged.
- Address potential issues with residence permits and visas. A clearer statute, official letters of support from the European Commission and increased awareness of the European Youth projects at embassies and foreign affairs departments could help a lot (Survey organisations; Interviews NA ; (Pots, 2023, p. 8)).
- Reconsider age limits. Although there is much understanding for ESC and Erasmus+ Youth to be Youth Programmes, the age-limits are often problematic when working with people with a mental disability. They are often over 30 years old when they would be ready to engage in an international project (Survey organisations, Interviews NA).
- Instead of expecting individual organisations working with YPFO to apply for and manage the whole project cycle, it could be more realistic to invest in organisations that already have the necessary expertise and that can support YPFO organisations or organise and follow up on the whole (Survey organisations, Interviews NA).

16. Complementarity to other available programmes

To what extent has Erasmus+ 2021-2027 proved to be complementary to other national and international programmes available in your country in the fields of education and training, youth and sport? To what extent is Erasmus+ 2021-2027 building effective synergies or interactions with other programmes at national or regional level and other EU or international programmes with complementary objectives available in your country? What evidence exist of synergies and complementarities between Erasmus+ and other EU, national or regional programmes? Can you identify any inconsistencies, overlaps or other disadvantageous issues with other programmes? Can you compare with the synergies and complementarities developed in the previous Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020?

The national funding for internationalisation in the youth sector has been phased down, mostly due to the success of the EU Youth Programmes ((Stevens, 2017) ; Interviews NA; Interview NAU).

The only obvious programme that is complementary to Erasmus+ is the Bel' J program. This is a cooperation between the Flemish, French and German speaking Communities in Belgium for exchanges, trainings and volunteering in another language Community. The Bel'J program is designed complementary with Erasmus+ Youth and ESC. Three possible actions within Bel'J are exchanges, training of youth workers and voluntary work. In every Community an agency has been appointed to implement the Bel'J program. It is the task of that Agency to disseminate information, liaise with the organisations involved, support young people and handle administrative and financial formalities. The national agencies are the same ones as for the EU-Youth Programmes, e.g. JINT for the Flemish Community (Interviews NA; Interview NAU).

17. Additional value EU activities

What is the additional value and benefit resulting from EU activities, compared to what could be achieved by similar actions initiated only at regional or national levels in your country? What does Erasmus+ 2021-2027 offer in addition to other education and training support schemes available at regional or national levels in your country? What possibilities do you see to adjust Erasmus+ or its successor programme in order to increase its European added value?

To provide elements of an answer to the above question, we asked the surveyed organisations what their motivation was to apply for grants from the Erasmus+ Youth Programme. Based on the answers, we could somehow distinguish between bigger, more established and professionalised organisations on the one hand, and smaller, more local organisations on the other hand.

A main recurrent motivation among the more established organisations is the benefit of working on a larger and more diverse scale. This opens enormous opportunities for the organisations. Exchanging good practices on for example accessible museums, art

education, mental health care, certified youth work ... has a positive impact on the involved organisations, but also on the broader societies in Flanders and in the partner countries.

The European scale provides a valuable platform for developing tools with input from individuals from various countries and cultural backgrounds. Youth partnerships, particularly KA2 projects, are highlighted in this regard.

And then the KA2 projects: the knowledge we gain and the knowledge we can then transfer here locally is enormous. So much we have learned about accessibility, arts education... it is huge for us, really, we're still working on it every day, and we keep on searching and testing. I think without all those European projects our operation would likely be a mere shadow of what it is today. (Respondent Survey organisations, own translation)

The EU Youth Programmes appear to be distinctive in this aspect, as surveyed organisations do not mention similar or alternative project opportunities.

Smaller organisations, more often working with young people with fewer opportunities, mostly focus on the unique added value for their constituency, rather than organisational capacity or development. Erasmus + offers a way for the young people to go abroad and to experience internationalisation.

For young people with a migration background, Erasmus+ Youth can provide a framework to learn about the countries of their ancestors in a more nuanced and in-depth way. For example, by going on a group exchange with partners in Italy, Morocco or Turkey. This is a terrific addition to their development (Survey organisations).

Beside the opportunities for project funding, there is the European training and networking offer of the NA network, including strategic NA cooperations (realised via the TCA budget). On average, more than 100 youth workers from Flanders directly take part in this offer. These European trainings are adding a layer of low-cost European training and networking activities to the available offer in Flanders & Brussels. Participants often cite such trainings to be a step out of one's 'zone of comfort', a chance to professionalise, a place to reflect on one's cultural reference framework, to renew job motivation and to grow personal networks. Besides, often the component of networking with compatriot youth workers from Flanders and Brussels is often cited as a surprising side-effect of taking part in an international training or networking event: being together abroad may create a strong sense of connection which sometimes leads to new cooperations at the local or national level (Interviews NA ; Additional points NA).

18. EU awareness raising

To what extent does the Erasmus+ programme contribute to developing knowledge in European integration matters, to raising awareness about the EU common values and to fostering a European sense of belonging in your country?

In the RAY survey the youth and youth worker participants are asked how close they feel to Europe before the project/activity, and how close they feel to Europe after the project/activity.

Most respondents already felt close to Europe before the project/activity. 81% (n=311) of the respondents to the question scored this question with a five (on ten) or more (Table 18). Yet, after the project the number raises to 94% (n=314) (Table 19). It is clear that participation in the Erasmus+ Youth project fosters a European sense of belonging. As is also visible in the Graphic 1.

19. Third countries

To what extent does Erasmus+ 2021-2027 promote cooperation between Member States and third countries associated to the programme? And between these countries and third countries not associated to the programme?

The cooperation with third countries is important in the Flemish context. Many organisations in the Flemish youth sector maintain good relations with partners in third countries (Interviews NA). Third countries associated to the programme (i.e. Turkey, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, North-Macedonia and Serbia) are treated the same as member state countries by the NA (Interviews NA). Both categories are 'programme countries'. So in addressing this question, we are looking at third countries not-associated to the EU. Main partner countries for Flanders are Armenia, Albania, Palestinian territory, Georgia, Moldova and Morocco.

Cooperation between Flemish organisations and organisations with not-associated third countries mainly happens in Group exchanges (KA105) and Mobility of Youth Workers (KA153). Around 40% of these awarded projects have minimum one partner in a non-associated third country. Often the activity also takes place in that third country (Interviews NA).

The NA reports that that within Erasmus+ Youth, the cooperation with non-associated third countries is not actively promoted, but neither is it discouraged by the architecture of the programme. Third countries can participate in all Erasmus+ Youth actions, so here there are no technical constraints.

Yet, budgetary constraints exist for not-associated third countries; normally, 25% of the NA's budget for group exchanges and YWM can be spend on third countries. However, these limits can be surpassed upon providing sufficient motivation to the European Commission. JINT requests and receives such an exception annually. Sometimes projects

with a third country partner organisation should wait a bit longer to receive money, but until now it has always turned out well.

Overall, there is a strong will to continue the cooperation between Flemish organisations and organisations in third countries.

“What is important, and remains important, is that we are very happy that the partner countries are in. If you see how much of our budget goes there, if you look at the ongoing collaborations, the amazing impact projects have, it is very important to us that this possibility remains, that the programme does not fold back to the EU, but that it remains open to those regions, that is very important.” (Respondent Interview NA, own translation)

V. Conclusions

Below, we delve into the conclusions based on the five evaluation criteria and the standard questions proposed by the European Commission (see Table 20).

Effectiveness (Q1-Q7)

Erasmus+ Youth is a powerful programme that offers a broad range of possibilities to youth work. Nearly all participants in KA1 activities and projects during 2021-2023, including Mobility projects of youth workers and youth participation activities, report a positive experience (Q1.2). Participants perceive the strongest impact on their social skills, such as skills related to cooperation and communication. Some other skills, such as the development of digital skills or logical thinking, are less prominently mentioned.

Participation in a Mobility for youth workers fosters the development of networks and leads to a self-confident attitude towards cooperation, participation, and the international context of youth work. At the same time, there are some signs that the quality of youth work mobility could be enhanced to be even more effective.

Erasmus+ Youth offers clearly a strong impetus for youth organisations to develop international projects and embed these into their policies and operational activities. There are clear formats adapted to the needs of youth and voluntary organisations.

For some organisations, the Erasmus+ Youth Programme, has transformed into a fully operational unit within their structure. The E+ Accreditations are perceived as a support for this more strategic approach to internationalisation. Nevertheless, it is sometimes considered challenging to maintain a strong international focus at the long term (Q2).

The four horizontal priorities of the European Commission, which are inclusion and diversity; digital transformation; green transition (environment and fight against climate change) and participation in democratic life and civic engagement, appear to be relevant and affect the design and implementation of projects. They may remind organisations to invest in that particular subject even when it's outside their main scope, while the broad definition allows flexibility. However, implementing the digital transformation priority appears to pose the greatest challenge for project teams and participants (Q3).

Considerable attention has been given to making the Erasmus+ Youth Programme inclusive by the Programme Committee. These efforts bear fruit, reflected in a considerable share of around 36% YPFO among the awarded participants (in 2021-2023) for whom their FO status was queried. Some measures are part of the architecture of the programme, e.g. every NA should have a SAP. The Flemish NA JINT is a forerunner in this area. The inclusion priority also resonates with the applying organisations concern.

Some inclusion measures in the programme architecture miss the mark. E.g. the DiscoverEU Inclusion is aimed at YPFO but is perceived as inaccessible by potential beneficiary organisations. Overall, the biggest observed obstacle for inclusion is the administrative burden (Q4).

The 2020-2022 period has of course been overshadowed by the Covid-19 pandemic and measures. Throughout the pandemic, the youth field in Flanders demonstrated resilience. Most awarded projects could be implemented eventually, also because of the pro-active response by the NA. In terms of the impact on YPFO and organisations working with them, these seem to have been affected more negatively than other groups (Q6).

After the pandemic period, there has been a sharp increase in project application numbers.

Efficiency (Q8-Q12)

The indirect management by a youth field-focused NA allows to promote and implement the Erasmus+ Youth programme in the national content in an efficient and effective manner attending the needs of the local and national youth field stakeholders (Q9).

In general, the monitoring and support measures provided by the NA appear to be effective and proportionate. The NAs supportive services are considered as accessible and helpful by (candidate) applicants. However, the NA sometimes lacks the capacity to reach the demand of personalised assistance required (Q10). Both the NA and applicants have embraced the E+ Accreditation system, since it encourages applicants to develop a long-term, strategic approach to international projects while also reducing the barriers to apply for project funding. Also the lump sum system in KA2 is regarded positively by both sides. The introduction of lump sums and E+ accreditations are considered to be major simplification measures (Q11).

Considering simplification and users-friendliness, there is still a lot of potential in improving the management support tools. The IT-non/malfunctioning has impacted the performance indicators for the NA and the programme. It also has an impact on the way the European Programmes are viewed as bureaucratic and not easy to apply for or to work with (Q12).

Relevance (Q13-Q15)

Just as the above mentioned horizontal priorities, the general objectives of Erasmus+ are considered as relevant by beneficiary organisations (Q13). Organisers of projects and activities easily link their own priorities to the broad objectives of the Erasmus+ regulation.

Popular topics addressed by projects are creativity, artis and culture; inclusion of marginalised young people, bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divides and health and wellbeing.

It seems however that the E+ programme opportunities are not known by all potential beneficiaries, or are known but considered as not relevant or suitable to their core activities or target groups. This may be especially the case for organisations consisting or working with YPFO. In the Flemish context, we identify three primary groups of individuals facing fewer opportunities, which are pertinent to the Erasmus+ Youth Programme: disadvantaged young people who encounter social exclusion, individuals who have migrated to Belgium and do not have full citizenship and individuals with mental or physical disabilities. It is broadly recognised by different stakeholders that Erasmus+ Youth offers

possibilities for these (internally very diverse) groups, which is also reflected in the representation of YPFO in the KA1 participant numbers and in the presence of organisations working with YPFO among the beneficiaries. Yet still, there is still room for improvement. Age restrictions, residency permit conditions, the complexity of the application process and a general lack of familiarity with the programme are hindering inclusion efforts.

Coherence (Q16)

The Erasmus+ Youth Programme is coherent with other programmes, as there are no direct similar programmes.

European added value (Q17-Q19)

Most participants in Erasmus+ Youth projects and activities already felt close to Europe before the project. Participation in the Erasmus+ Youth project further fosters a European sense of belonging. Cooperation with not-associated third countries is not actively promoted, but neither is it discouraged by the architecture of the programme. About 40% of Group exchanges and Mobility of Youth Workers that is funded by the NA JINT has minimum one partner in such a country.

This is yet another proof of the vast opportunities the programme offers for internationalisation and reflects the positive mindset prevailing within Flemish youth work.

VI. Suggestions

Suggestions to the European Commission

- To closely monitor the growth potential of the Erasmus+ Youth Programme, and take adequate action where needed to meet the demand. The national context in Flanders illustrates a need for a more ambitious budget growth path, matching the growing number of high-quality project applications. Any recommendation to JINT to broaden its outreach, reach more organisations and young people, should therefore be paired by the provision of adequate (equally growing) budgets.
- To continue to define the program priorities in a broad manner, allowing project applicants to align them with local and national priorities.
- Further simplify the administrative burden. Beneficiaries, both current as well as potential ones, are put off by this. It is advisable that smaller projects in the Erasmus+ Youth Programme are not held to the same strict rules as larger ones. The principle of proportionality should be respected in this regard. Alternatively, implementing a minimis rule could be a solution, exempting smaller projects from certain requirements. Simplified funding rules based on unit costs and lump sum models have received a positive reception from beneficiary organisations and represent a path to further pursue.
- To foster inclusion, it is recommended to increase the possibilities for exceptional costs in the Erasmus+ Youth Programme. Although the system of exceptional costs is useful, it does not always suffice to adequately cover the additional expenses related to engaging YPFO.
- Provide user-friendly tools that work. The Application module and the Beneficiary module are not perceived as user-friendly or even as functional.
- Consider short-term and local projects as a stepping stone to internationalisation and possibly other actions with Erasmus+ Youth or ESC. This includes additional support to further follow-up and keep the young people involved in a short-term project engaged.
- To foster inclusion by the facilitation of YPFO participation it is recommended to develop a strategy to address potential issues with residence permits and visas. A clearer statute, official letters of support from the European Commission and increased awareness of the European Youth projects at embassies and foreign affairs departments could be helpful.
- Consider revising age limits to foster inclusion through facilitating YPFO participation. Although there is much understanding for Erasmus+ Youth to be a Youth Programme, the age-limits are often problematic for particular categories of YPFO. People with a mental disability are often over 30 years old when they would

be ready to engage in an international project. For young people that are NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) the minimum age of 18 can be an obstacle.

- Maintain opportunities for collaboration with non-associated third countries. This is important for both Flemish youth work and organisations in the countries concerned.
- To intensify support to the monitoring of the ESC:
 - o By increasing efforts to collect valid and complete data on relevant indicators across all program actions.
 - o By equipping the NA and NAU with well-functioning, reliable monitoring systems (EC Dashboards) attending the NAs and NAUs data monitoring needs.
 - o To embrace and support the NA network's complementary initiative to monitor the effects and impact of Erasmus+ Youth via the RAY network
 - o By setting clear indicators that are measurable and in line with the budget and budgetary rules of the programme.
 - o To develop a monitoring approach where measurement of indicators is not restricted to those project activities and participants to which funding is attributed. This budget-driven approach proves to be limiting and distorting a clear picture. For some indicators, such as those related to YPFO, a more content-oriented monitoring approach would offer a clear and complete picture.
- To foster the indirect management system for Erasmus+ Youth, and to strengthen NAs in fulfilling their position as intermediate support structure, among others by equipping them with adequate resources to develop their supportive approach to beneficiaries.
- To establish a dedicated Programme Committee for youth affairs, as a place for consultation for the European Commission, the Member States and the NA's on specific youth affairs.
- Recognise and ensure the coherence between the two programs, Erasmus+ Youth and ESC. A separate approach stands in contradiction to their integrated nature in implementation in practice. Typically, beneficiaries do not distinguish between the programmes in conversations, as both are seen as integral components of the same framework. Furthermore, distinguishing between them in data and numerical analysis poses challenges, especially considering that certain ESC initiatives were previously existing under the Erasmus+ umbrella. Also staff members of the NA often do not distinguish between actions of the two programmes and rather consider the different actions as belonging to the same tool-box.

Suggestions to the National Agency and the National Authority

- To monitor and support the further development of the Erasmus+ Accreditation.
- Instead of expecting individual organisations working with YPFO to apply for and manage the whole project cycle, it could be more realistic to invest in organisations that already have the necessary expertise and that can support YPFO organisations or organise and follow up on the whole.
- Continue to build and gather expertise as a NA, as this enhances the implementation of the program. Consider less obvious areas such as insurance or residency documents, as these are also topics that concern organisations and (potential) participants.
- Extend the strategies for communication with and support of organisations embedded in the local Flemish context, including informal groups, small non-profit organisations, youth organisations that work with many volunteers etc.

VII. References

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VIII. Tables & Graphs

Table 1: Overview 2014_2020 Erasmus+ Youth - number of projects, budget, number of organisations and participants per Key Action

Key Action	Action	Received projects	Awarded projects	Success rate	Grant Amount Awarded (EUR)	Budget Share per key action	Organisations involved in awarded projects	Participants in Awarded Projects		
								Total	With SN*	With FO**
KA1 - Learning Mobility of Individuals	Youth mobility (KA105)	921	652	70,79%	€ 13.686.657,89	92,98%	3364	19677	572	4981
	Strategic EVS (KA135)	4	2	50,00%	€ 333.414,88	2,26%	2	118	0	85
	Volunteering Projects (KA125)	30	28	93,33%	€ 700.415,0	4,76%	124	98	15	16
	Sub-total Key Action 1	955	682	71,41%	€ 14.720.487,77	100,00%	3490	19893	587	5082
KA2 - Cooperation for innovation - exchange good practices	Strategic Partnerships addressing more than one field practices (KA200)	1	1	100,00%	€ 85.402,00	1,99%	4	113		
	Strategic Partnerships for youth (KA205)	168	54	32,14%	€ 3.623.030,86	84,31%	245	4348		
	Partnerships for Creativity (KA227)	11	6	54,55%	€ 589.089,0	13,71%	37	610		
	Sub-total Key Action 2	180	61	33,89%	€ 4.297.521,86	100,00%	286	5071		
KA3 - Support for policy reform	Dialogue between young people and policy makers (KA347)	27	17	62,96%	€ 580.365,0	71,29%	238	2553	78	187
	Youth Dialogue Projects (KA347)	9	5	55,56%	€ 233.708,0	28,71%	51	1374	6	29
	Sub-total Key Action 3	36	22	61,11%	€ 814.073,0	100,00%	289	3927	84	216
TOTAL E+		1171	765	65,33%	€ 19.832.082,63	100,00%	4065	28891	671	5298

(source: Dashboard 2. Budget E+ & ESC 2014-2023) * Special Needs, ** Fewer Opportunities

Table 2: Projects 2021_2023 Erasmus+ Youth

Call Year	Field Name	Action Code - Name	Submitted Projects	Received Projects	Awarded Projects	Succes rate	Awarded Grants (€)	Awarded participants	Participant Share YPFO	Awarded participants YPFO
2021	Youth	KA151 - Mobility of young people for accredited organisations	5	5	5	100,00%	€ 359.000,00	330	52,78%	174
2021	Youth	KA152 - Mobility of young people	33	33	16	48,48%	€ 542.016,00	706	32,40%	229
2021	Youth	KA153 - Mobility of youth workers	27	27	23	85,19%	€ 651.894,00	751	n.a	n.a
2021	Youth	KA154 - Youth participation activities	11	11	8	72,73%	€ 279.488,00	1285	4,28%	55
2021	Youth	KA154 - Youth participation activities without events						136	40,44%	55
2021	Youth	KA210 - Small-scale partnerships	12	12	7	58,33%	€ 420.000,00	n.a	n.a	n.a
2021	Youth	KA220 - Cooperation partnerships	24	23	6	26,09%	€ 1.150.096,00	n.a	n.a	n.a
2022	Youth	KA151 - Mobility of young people for accredited organisations	7	7	7	100,00%	€ 614.295,00	610	26,85%	164
2022	Youth	KA152 - Mobility of young people	58	57	34	59,65%	€ 1.136.902,94	1528	29,44%	450
2022	Youth	KA153 - Mobility of youth workers	30	29	18	62,07%	€ 515.379,31	590	n.a	n.a
2022	Youth	KA154 - Youth participation activities	29	29	19	65,52%	€ 839.441,00	5307	3,75%	199
2022	Youth	KA154 - Youth participation activities without events						845	23,55%	199

2022	Youth	KA155 - DiscoverEU inclusion action	10	10	9	90,00%	€ 267.730,58	124	100,00%	124
2022	Youth	KA210 - Small-scale partnerships	17	17	7	41,18%	€ 420.000,00	n.a	n.a	n.a
2022	Youth	KA220 - Cooperation partnerships	19	19	4	21,05%	€ 740.000,00	n.a.	n.a	n.a
2023	Youth	KA151 - Mobility of young people for accredited organisations	9	9	8	88,89%	€ 1.002.960,00	816	41,70%	340
2023	Youth	KA152 - Mobility of young people	102	96	32	33,33%	€ 1.258.044,00	1605	43,51%	698
2023	Youth	KA153 - Mobility of youth workers	46	46	17	36,96%	€ 481.342,00	576	n.a	n.a
2023	Youth	KA154 - Youth participation activities	39	39	19	48,72%	€ 792.540,00	5168	1,63%	84
2023	Youth	KA154 - Youth participation activities without events						254	19,60%	50
2023	Youth	KA155 - DiscoverEU inclusion action	2	2	2	100,00%	€ 24.816,00	10	100,00%	10
2023	Youth	KA210 - Small-scale partnerships	39	39	6	15,38%	€ 360.000,00	n.a.	n.a	n.a
2023	Youth	KA220 - Cooperation partnerships	38	38	7	18,42%	€ 1.490.000,00	n.a.	n.a	n.a
		E+ TOTAL	557	548	254	46,35%	€ 13.345.944,83	20641	13,72%	2831

(source: Dashboard 2. Budget E+ & ESC 2014_2023)

Table 3: Self-reported skills development (N=109)

Through the project I learned about...	%	marked
cooperating with others	77,06%	84
expressing ideas creatively	70,64%	77
developing arguments	54,13%	59
dealing with complexity	53,21%	58
acting upon opportunities	51,38%	56
expressing myself with empathy	50,46%	55
using different languages for communication	46,79%	51
applying logical thinking	46,79%	51
using digital technologies	25,69%	28

(source: RAY MON PP Q33, Q41 2021_2023)

Table 4: Self-reported skills development

Competences (Through my participation in this project I improved my ability ...)	2015- 2016	2017- 2018	2019- 2020
to say what I think with conviction in discussions	85,40%	82,50%	83,20%
to communicate with people who speak another language	96,10%	94,90%	94,10%
to cooperate in a team	93,10%	92,20%	91,10%
to produce media content on my own (printed, audio-visual, electronic)	50,70%	50,40%	53,50%
to develop an idea and put it into practice	84,70%	82,30%	82,20%
to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints	92,20%	89,50%	88,60%
to achieve something in the interests of the community or society	88,00%	84,00%	86,70%
to think logically and draw conclusions	72,50%	74,30%	74,90%
to identify opportunities for my personal or professional development	84,60%	71,20%	82,50%
to learn or to have more fun when learning	78,80%	79,60%	81,80%
to discuss political topics seriously	68,80%	63,40%	67,80%
to plan and carry out my learning independently	68,40%	70,20%	74,20%
to express myself creatively or artistically	73,20%	73,60%	72,40%
to get along with people who have a different cultural background	94,70%	94,40%	93,30%

(source: Stevens & Desnerck, 2021, p. 64)

Table 5: Self-reported skills among youth worker participants in percentages (n=183)

	disagree strongly	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	agree strongly	total	agree (strongly)
Through the project...							
My networks have extended meaningfully.	2,4	1,2	15,2	48,2	32,9	100,0	81
I have become aware which of my competences I want to develop further.	1,2	0	14,5	57,6	26,7	100,0	84
I have learned more about fostering non-formal learning in youth work.	1,2	0,6	12,8	55,5	29,9	100,0	85
I have learned more about strengthening youth-led youth work.	1,8	0	13,4	57,9	26,8	100,0	85
I am better able to strengthen international dimensions in my youth work.	1,2	0,6	17,8	52,1	28,2	100,0	80
I am better able to strengthen diversity in youth work	1,2	0,6	17,0	53,3	27,9	100,0	81
I am better able to deal with ambiguity and tensions in my youth work.	1,2	1,8	23,2	50,0	23,8	100,0	74

(source RAY MON YMW Q35-Q41 2021_2023)

Table 6: Self-reported changes in youthwork competences participants – comparison 2015-2020 – percentages of respondents that (strongly) agree

	2015-2016 (n=143)	2017-2018 (N=112)	2019-2020 (n=179)
I now have a network that enables future projects	84.1	83.8	76.1
I plan to develop my youth work skills through training and education	74.4	79.2	80.7
I now understand better how formal, non-formal and informal learning relate to each other	84,2	77,5	85,5
I learned how to better involve young people in the preparation and implementation of projects	84.4	76.5	82.1
When relevant, I now try to integrate an international dimension in my work with young people	89.0	83.7	81.6
I have learnt to cooperate better in an international team	86.3	93.8	87.3
I am better able to deal with uncertainties and tensions in my commitment to youth work	74.3	76.1	97.1

(source: Stevens & Desnerck, 2021, p. 83 Table 100)

Table 7: Self-reported effects members project teams (n=58)

RAY MON PT 21-23	disagree strongly	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	agree strongly	total	(strongly) agree in %
After the project, I feel that I am more self-confident.	0,00	0,00	15,79	35,09	49,12	100	84,21
After the project, I feel that I am more autonomous.	0,00	0,00	22,41	41,38	36,21	100	77,59
After the project, I feel that I am better at empathising with others.	0,00	3,45	15,52	39,66	41,38	100	81,03
I have become aware which of my competences I want to develop further.	0,00	1,85	11,11	57,41	29,63	100	87,04
I have learned more about fostering non-formal learning in youth work.	0,00	0,00	5,5	50,9	43,6	100	94,55
I have learned more about strengthening youth-led youth work.	0,00	1,85	11,11	51,85	35,19	100	87,04

(source: RAY MON PT Q49, Q50, Q51, Q56, Q62, Q64 2021_2023)

Table 8 : Self-reported effects members project teams – percentage that (strongly) agrees

Improvements through my involvement in the project...	2015-2016	2017-2018	2019-2020
Saying what I think with conviction in discussions	86.2	89.9	89.2
I know which competences I want to develop further	90.0	87.6	85.5
I now know my weaknesses and strengths better	90.0	86.9	91.9
I have learned how to apply non-formal learning in youth work	84.2	90.2	93.6

(source: Stevens & Desnerck, 2021 Tables 124, 130, 132 - Pages 105, 110, 114)

Table 9: Effects E+ on attitudes towards diversity

After the project/activity, I actively support diversity ...	Frequency	Percent
less than before the activity	1	1,52%
to the same extent	30	45,45%
more than before the project	35	53,03%
Total Q	66	100,00%
Not applicable/question not received	304	
Total dataset	370	

(source: RAY MON PP&YWM Q18 2021_23)

Table 10: Effects E+ on diversity according to project team members

	After the project/activity, participants are better able to actively support diversity.		After the project, participants are better able to stand up against discrimination and intolerance.	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
disagree or strongly disagree	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
neither agree nor disagree	3	10,00%	7	23,33%
agree	15	50,00%	14	46,67%
agree strongly	12	40,00%	9	30,00%
Total Q	30	100,00%	30	100,00%
Not applicable/question not received	105		105	
Total dataset	135		135	

(source: RAY MON PT Q23, Q24 2021_23)

Table 11: Effects E+ on digital competences

After the project, I am competent in using digital technologies...	Frequency	Percent
less than before the activity	2	2,94%
to the same extent	49	72,06%
more than before the activity	17	25,00%
Total Q	68	100,00%
Not applicable/question not received	302	
Total dataset	370	

(source: RAY MON PP_YWMQ24 2021_23)

Table 12: Effects E+ on contributions to environmental sustainability

After the project, I actively contribute to environmental sustainability in my everyday life ...	Frequency	Percent
less than before the activity	3	4,23%
to the same extent	48	67,61%
more than before the activity	20	28,17%
Total Q	71	100,00%
Not applicable/question not received	299	
Total dataset	370	

(source: RAY MON PP & YWM Q30 2021_23)

Table 13: Effects E+ on contributions to environmental sustainability according to project teams members

After the project, participants are better able to contribute to more environmental sustainability in their everyday life.	Frequency	Percent
disagree	2	6,45%
neither agree nor disagree	11	35,48%
agree	11	35,48%
agree strongly	7	22,58%
Total Q	31	100,00%
Not applicable/question not received	104	
Total dataset	135	

(source: RAY MON PT Q41 2021_2023)

Table 14: Effects E+ on engagement in civil society

After the project, I engage in civil society...	Frequency	Percent
less than before the activity	0	0,00%
to the same extent	34	57,63%
more than before the activity	25	42,37%
Total Q	59	100,00%
Not applicable/question not received	310	
Total dataset	370	

(source: RAY MON PP & YWM Q9 2021_2023)

Table 15 : Effects E+ on engagement in civil society according to project teams members

After the project, participants are better able to actively engage in civil society.	Frequency	Percent
disagree	1	3,33%
neither agree nor disagree	5	16,67%
agree	15	50,00%
agree strongly	9	30,00%
Total Q	30	100,00%
Not applicable/question not received	105	
Total dataset	135	

(source : RAY MON PT Q14 2021_2023)

Table 16: Indicated topics of awarded E+ projects in 2021-2023 (n= 223)

* Each project could select up to 3 topics.

** The selection of topics concerns projects that were not submitted through an accreditation (n=20) nor as an DiscoverEU inclusion project (n=11).

Topic Name	Awarded Erasmus+ Youth Projects
Creativity, arts and culture	59
Inclusion of marginalised young people	51
Bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divide	46
Physical and mental health, well-being	45
Community development	23
Democracy and inclusive democratic participation	38
European identity, citizenship and values	37
Quality and innovation of youth work	33
Environment and climate change	25
Key competences development	16
Green skills	17
Promotion of alternative forms of participation	15
Reaching the policy level/dialogue with decision makers	19
Digital skills and competences	13
Entrepreneurial learning - entrepreneurship education	13
Preventing racism and discrimination	14
Human rights and rule of law	12

New learning and teaching methods and approaches	14
Digital youth work	11
Reception and integration of refugees and migrants	4
Awareness about the European Union	9
Promoting LGBT+ equality	6
Youth employability	9
Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination	9
Disabilities	7
International relations and development cooperation	8
Media literacy and tackling disinformation	7
Promoting gender equality	5
Roma and/or other minorities	7
Youth policy development	6
Development of training courses	6
Preventing radicalisation	4
Prevention of conflicts, post-conflict rehabilitation	6
Digital content, technologies and practices	5
Employability	4
Cultural heritage	4
Research and innovation	4
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	3
Creating new, innovative or joint curricula or courses	3
Digital safety	2

Information and communication technologies (ICT)	3
Inter-regional cooperation	3
Preventing early school leaving and failure in education	2
Development of disadvantaged rural and urban areas	2
Equal access and transition to labour market	2
Pedagogy and didactics	2
Prevention of bullying	2
Tackling geographical remoteness and involving rural areas	2
Disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery	1
Green transport and mobility	1
Recognition, transparency, certification	
Social innovation	1
Soft skills	1
Total number of projects	254
Total number of projects for which themes were filled in.	223
Total number of times priority has been checked.	641
Average number of checked priorities per project	2,9

(source: Dashboard)

Table 17: E+ meaningfulness - assessment by participants (n=316)

How meaningful was the project/activity?	Frequency	Percent
0 Not at all	2	0,63%
1	1	0,32%
2	1	0,32%
3	0	0,00%
4	3	0,95%
5	12	3,80%
6	25	7,91%
7	38	12,03%
8	47	14,87%
9	60	18,99%
10 Very meaningful	127	40,19%
Total Q	316	100,00%
Not applicable	54	
Total dataset	370	

(source: RAY MON PP & YWM Q53 2021_2023)

Table 18: Closeness to Europe before the project

(BEFORE)		
How close to Europe before the activity/project		
	Frequency	Percent
0	5	1,61%
1	5	1,61%
2	12	3,86%
3	11	3,54%
4	24	7,72%
5	42	13,50%
6	49	15,76%
7	46	14,79%
8	39	12,54%
9	33	10,61%
10	45	14,47%
Total Q	311	100,00%
Missing	59	
Total dataset	370	

(source: RAY MON YWM Q51 & PP Q54 2021_2023)

Table 19: Closeness to Europe after the project

(AFTER)		
How close to Europe after the activity/project		
Scale	Frequency	Percent
0	1	0,32%
1	1	0,32%
2	5	1,59%
3	5	1,59%
4	7	2,23%
5	20	6,37%
6	28	8,92%
7	51	16,24%
8	74	23,57%
9	53	16,88%
10	69	21,97%
Total Q	314	100,00%
Missing	56	
Total dataset	370	

(source: RAY data YWM Q52 & PP Q52, Q55 2021_2023)

Table 20: The questions from the EC's guidance note to evaluate Erasmus+ Youth with indication of the questions addressed in the evaluation report

<i>Evaluation Questions per evaluation criterium</i>	<i>Question in report</i>
<i>Effectiveness</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have the various programme fields both within Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 delivered the expected outputs, results and impacts in your country? What negative and positive factors seem to be influencing outputs, results and impacts? Do you consider that certain actions are more effective than others? Are there differences across fields? What are the determining factors for making these actions of the programme more effective? 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the results and long-term impact of Erasmus+ 2014-2020 in your country? We are interested in the impact of all actions/elements of Erasmus+ 2014-2020, and with special attention to those actions/elements that are continued in Erasmus+ 2021-2027. We are also interested in the impact of actions/elements that have been discontinued to the extent that it might help design the future programme. What is your assessment of the quality of applications received in your country, and what measures could be taken to improve the quality of applications and awarded projects in your country taking into account the doubling of budget for the 2021-2027 programme cycle? 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please identify, describe and quantify (if possible) the spill-over effects between various actions (clusters of actions) of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 in your country, as described in the intervention logic. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has Erasmus+ 2021-2027 had a transformative effect in your country on systems, values and norms, in particular with respect to the four horizontal priorities of the programme: inclusion and diversity – digital transformation – green transition (environment and fight against climate change) – participation in democratic life and civic engagement? Could you identify the horizontal priorities the programme had the highest impact on through its actions? 	3

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the differences in impact of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 actions in your country on hard-to-reach groups, people with fewer opportunities or specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational or international activities as compared to other groups that benefit from the programme? We are interested in the evaluation of the first effects of the Framework of Inclusion Measures and of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy on promoting accessibility to funding for a wider range of organisations, and to better reach out to more participants with fewer opportunities. 	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do the actions/activities/projects supported by Erasmus+ 2021-2027 contribute to mainstreaming climate and environment actions and to achieving the climate and environment objectives, including those intended to reduce the environmental impact of the programme, in your country? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have the forms of cooperation and the types of actions under Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 influenced policy developments in the fields of education and training, youth and sport in your country? Which actions of the programmes are the most effective considering the needs of your country? Are there marked differences between the different fields? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific approaches (such as co-financing, promotion or others) have you taken in order to try to enhance the effects of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 in your country? To what extent have these approaches been effective? Can any particular points for improvement be identified? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the results of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 adequately being disseminated and exploited in your country? Where can you see the possibilities for improvements? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the effects likely to last in your country after the intervention ends, both cumulatively and the level of each implemented grant? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What if the Erasmus+ programme had not existed? Would the relevant sectors (higher education, school education, adult education, vocational education and training, youth and sport) in your country be supported in the same way and to a comparable extent? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the Covid-19 pandemic impact the implementation of the two generations of the programme in your country, and what was the effect of the measures taken to react to the consequences of the pandemic? 	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the effect in your country of the measures taken in the frame of the programme implementation to provide a reaction to the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine? 	7
Efficiency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the cost-effectiveness of various actions (clusters of actions) of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 in your country? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent, compared to the previous programme, is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what Erasmus+ 2021-2027 is set out to achieve? To what extent is the distribution of funds across the programme fields and key actions appropriate in relation to their level of effectiveness and utility? 	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How efficient is the cooperation between the different actors involved in the implementation and supervision of the programme (Commission services – Erasmus+ Committee – Executive Agency – National Authorities – National Agencies – Independent Audit Bodies – International Organisations²) from the point of view of your country, and to what extent does the Commission fulfil its guiding role in the process? How has this changed between the two programming periods? What are the reasons for potential changes? What are the areas for possible improvement in the implementation of Erasmus 2021-2027 or a successor programme? 	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the measures applied by your National Agency/ies for monitoring and supporting applicants, beneficiaries (including small and newcomer organisations) and participants 	10

² Some (limited) actions of the programme are implemented under indirect management by pillar assessed international organisations (ex: OECD, Council of Europe, etc.). The Pillar Assessment aims to assess the organisation's compliance with the EC's requirements and to guarantee a level of protection of the EU's financial interests equivalent to that required under the Financial Regulations.

effective and proportionate? What are the areas for improvement/simplification, considering the need for a smooth and effective implementation of the programme?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have simplification measures put in place, such as the system of simplified grants and accreditation system, resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies, programme beneficiaries and participants? Are there differences across actions or fields? What elements of the programme could be changed to further reduce the administrative burden and simplify the programme's management and implementation, without unduly compromising its sound management, results and impact? 	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent do the indicators identified for the programme in the Regulation³ correspond to the monitoring purposes at national level? How could the overall management and monitoring system be improved? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the new management support tools⁴ consistent with the Erasmus+ programme needs and architecture? Which additional features would you recommend for future developments? 	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have the antifraud measures allowed for the prevention and timely detection of fraud in your country? 	
Relevance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent do the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 objectives as set up in Article 3.1 and 3.2 of the Erasmus+ regulation, in link with the EU policy agendas in the fields of education and training, youth and sport, continue to address the needs or challenges they are meant to help with? Are these needs or challenges (still) relevant in the context of your country? Have the needs or challenges evolved in such a way that 	13

³ To be completed during the first half of 2023 by the Erasmus+ monitoring and evaluation framework.

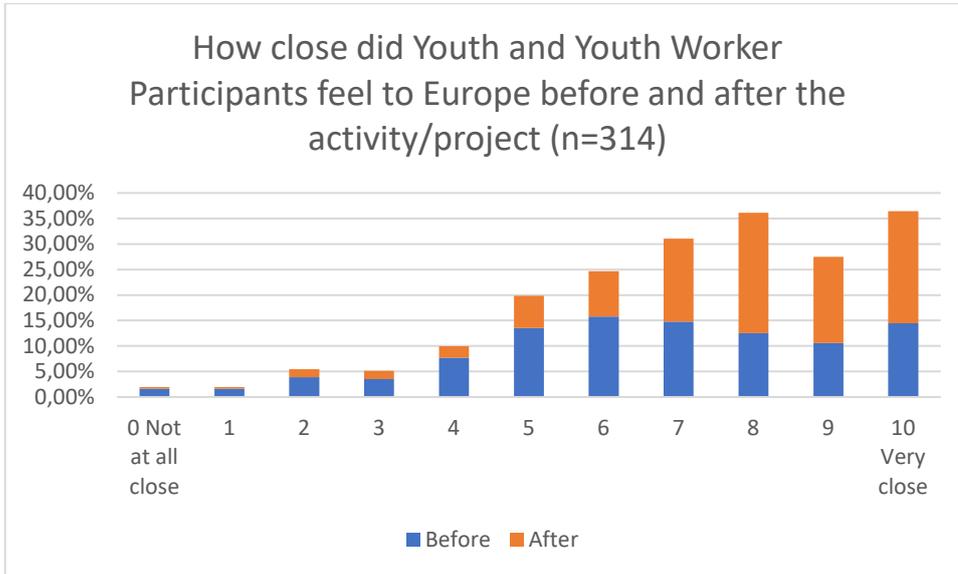
⁴ A new IT landscape has been rolled out for the new programme generation replacing the previous tools to adapt to up-to-date technology and new needs. .

<p>the objectives of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 or its successor programme need to be adjusted?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the needs of different stakeholders and sectors in your country addressed by the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 objectives? How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope? How well is the Erasmus+ programme known to the education and training, youth and sport communities in your country? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this? What are the reasons of limited participation of certain target groups? Are there target groups who chose not to participate or are there always external factors preventing them? 	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the design of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 oriented and adapted towards the hard-to-reach groups, people with fewer opportunities or specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational or international activities as compared to other groups that benefit from the programme? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached in your country, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this? 	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the needs and challenges linked to Europe's green and digital transitions reflected in the actions/activities of Erasmus+ 2021-2027? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the relevance of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 compared to the relevance of Erasmus+ 2014-2020 from the point of view of your country? Has it been improved in the new programme generation? 	
<p>Coherence</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the objectives of different programme fields within Erasmus+ 2021-2027 consistent and mutually supportive? What evidence exists of cooperation between the different programme fields, including those managed by different National Agencies, and actions? How well do different actions work together? To what extent there exist inconsistencies, overlaps, or other 	

disadvantageous issues between the programme fields and how are they dealt with?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is Erasmus+ 2021-2027 coherent with other national or regional programmes, other forms of EU cooperation (bilateral programmes) as well as international programmes with similar objectives available in your country? Can you identify any inconsistencies, overlaps or other disadvantageous issues with other programmes? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has Erasmus+ 2021-2027 proved to be complementary to other national and international programmes available in your country in the fields of education and training, youth and sport? To what extent is Erasmus+ 2021-2027 building effective synergies or interactions with other programmes at national or regional level and other EU or international programmes with complementary objectives available in your country? What evidence exist of synergies and complementarities between Erasmus+ and other EU, national or regional programmes? Can you identify any inconsistencies, overlaps or other disadvantageous issues with other programmes? Can you compare with the synergies and complementarities developed in the previous Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020? 	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the coherence of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 compared to the coherence of Erasmus+ 2014-2020 from the point of view of your country? Has it been improved in the new programme generation? 	
European added value	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the additional value and benefit resulting from EU activities, compared to what could be achieved by similar actions initiated only at regional or national levels in your country? What does Erasmus+ 2021-2027 offer in addition to other education and training support schemes available at regional or national levels in your country? What possibilities do you see to adjust Erasmus+ or its successor programme in order to increase its European added value? 	17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the Erasmus+ programme contribute to developing knowledge in European integration matters, to raising 	18

awareness about the EU common values and to fostering a European sense of belonging in your country?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does Erasmus+ 2021-2027 promote cooperation between Member States and third countries associated to the programme? And between these countries and third countries not associated to the programme? 	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the benefit and added value of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 for individuals or organisations participating to the programme compared to non-participants in your country? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the results of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 and Erasmus+ 2014-2020 sustainable beyond the projects duration in your country? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would be the most likely consequences in your country if the Erasmus+ programme were possibly to be discontinued? 	

Graphic 1: Participants closeness to Europe before and after



(source: RAY MON YWM Q51, Q52 & PP Q52, Q54, Q55 2021_2023)

IX. Appendix

RAY MON 21-23 datasets

Table: RAY MON survey 21-23 Flanders – share of respondents per funding NA

NA CODE (attr. 2)	PP (n=187)	PT (n=135)	YWM (n=183)
BE05	67,40%	61,50%	77,60%
BE03	4,80%	0,70%	1,60%
BE04	4,80%	6,70%	1,60%
Other	23,00%	31,10%	19,20%

Table: RAY MON survey 21-23 Flanders – share of respondents per sending country

Sending Country (attr. 15)	PP (n=187)	PT (n=135)	YWM (n=183)
Belgium	47,60%	41,50%	36,60%
Other	52,40%	58,50%	63,40%