

Use and impact of the Erasmus+ programme (2021-27) at higher education institutions

Survey report and recommendations

May 2025



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Our thanks also go to the national rectors' conferences and higher education networks, the Erasmus+ National Agencies in Programme and National Erasmus Offices in Partner countries, and the national ministries who helped to promote participation and disseminate the questionnaire.

But first and foremost, our gratitude is extended to the colleagues at those 500 higher education institutions who took the time to fill in the survey. We hope that the results will be of immediate benefit to you in that they share the experience of colleagues across Europe and internationally with the Erasmus+ programme. On our side, the results will help us to make the case for European higher education institutions in the interim review and support the negotiations for the next Erasmus+ programme.

At EUA, the authoring team consisted of Michael Gaebel, Henriette Stoeber, Theodora Famprikezi, Therese Zhang, and Alison Morrisroe. Inès Mezher and Raphaële Fischer-Angoulvent contributed to the graph design and layout.

Executive summary: A programme of high added value

N.B. the recommendations were published and submitted on [15 November 2023](#), as part of EUA's contribution to the European Commission's Erasmus+ interim evaluation. They were updated and enhanced with the publication of this report.

Introduction

Erasmus+ is vitally important to European higher education institutions and their international partners. The programme provides unique opportunities for exchange and collaboration among individuals, institutions, and systems, within Europe and beyond. For many, it is the main funding source for international mobility and education cooperation. In addition to its tangible and long-lasting impact on the higher education sector, Erasmus+ also contributes to uniting Europe, within and beyond the European Union, and enhancing relationships with global partners.

The report and its recommendations are a contribution to the ongoing [interim evaluation of Erasmus+](#) for the period 2021-27, and the discussions on the next generation of the programme.

The negotiations on the next European Union budget fall during difficult times, which require attention to and investment in Europe's competitiveness, the well-being of its societies, but also and related to the green and digital transitions, in a changed geopolitical situation.

It is vital to recall that a proactive response to these challenges is linked to continued investment in higher education and in Erasmus+. In the next Multiannual Financial Framework, the European Union must match its ambitions for Erasmus+ with the appropriate budget.

The present report is based on a broad consultation of higher education institutions and organisations and a survey, carried out in 2022/23, which gathered responses from 500 higher education institutions in 49 Erasmus+ programme and partner countries. Most of the findings are positive – some even very positive – while others are more critical or raise questions rather than providing answers. Overall, however, they confirm that Erasmus+ is a programme of high added value that can and should be further strengthened. In this spirit, the European University Association (EUA) puts forward the following recommendations on behalf of Europe's university sector.

Overall perception of Erasmus+

A programme with high added value in need of enhancement

ERASMUS+ - A PROGRAMME OF HIGH ADDED VALUE

RECOMMENDATION 1

Erasmus+ is highly valuable and provides significant impact for higher education institutions and their members. It is a crucial tool for improving the quality of education and contributing to society, in Europe and internationally. Erasmus+ must be one of the European Union's top priorities for the next multiannual budget.

Higher education institutions across Europe unanimously identify Erasmus+ as the most important European initiative. Its various European and international actions for mobility and cooperation are of high added value, as they enable institutions to enhance and internationalise their educational offers. As such, Erasmus+ is crucial for improving the quality of education and enables mutual learning on a wide range of issues. The programme ably supports institutional and system-level innovation and capacity development across Europe and beyond. The increased investment that the programme has received in 2020 has clearly paid off.

NEXT GENERATION ERASMUS+ - AN IMPORTANT & SAFE INVESTMENT

RECOMMENDATION 2

The next Erasmus+ programme may continue the features of the present one, with only minor adjustments to the design of the actions, and significant improvement of the programme's management. The expectations raised towards the programme in terms of its ability to underpin societal change, and the transformation of higher education institutions and systems would need to be considered in the new budget, in view also of increased prices and costs, and inflation.

Erasmus+ is a key enabler for intra-European and international mobility and cooperation. Higher education institutions almost unanimously agreed that Erasmus+ provides indispensable, high-quality opportunities for mobility (99%), as well as intra-European (98%) and international university collaboration (89%). Many institutions (67%) also value it as a means for collaboration with non-university partners.

However, Erasmus+ needs some enhancement, notably in terms of simplification and improvement of management and digital instruments. The Covid-19 crisis and Russia's war against Ukraine have demonstrated the potential and the limits of Erasmus+ to respond flexibly. Some actions need to be further developed, as they are quite recent, e.g. the European Universities Initiative. Others, such as the programme's contribution to Europe's global partnerships, are yet to receive appropriate attention from policy makers.

Impact of Erasmus+ horizontal priorities

CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN PRIORITIES

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Erasmus+ programme's contribution to inclusion and diversity, democracy and civic engagement, digital transformation, and environment and climate action is of key importance to Europe's societies and higher education sectors. Therefore, related activities need enhancement and thorough impact assessment.

The programme's four horizontal priorities of inclusion and diversity, democracy and civic engagement, digital transformation, and environment and climate action are highly relevant for the higher education sector. Linking these priorities to mobility and interinstitutional collaboration contributes to awareness raising, mutual learning and the transfer of good practice in higher education institutions and societies across Europe and beyond.

Most institutions confirmed that Erasmus+ addresses the priorities of inclusion and diversity, and democratic life, common values and civic engagement well. They also confirmed the presence of related Erasmus+ measures such as strategies and subsequent national action plans for diversity and inclusion, as well as the definitions of "fewer opportunities" to render tangible impacts to be felt at their institutions.

The assessment of concrete Erasmus+ measures supporting the digital transformation priority is less positive than for inclusion, possibly due to the massive difficulties that higher education institutions experience with Erasmus+ digital tools.

The priority of the environment and the fight against climate change helps to raise awareness, but related top-ups are insufficient to ensure greener travel.

Overall, institutions acknowledge that Erasmus+ addresses and contributes to the priorities it sets. However, there is clear scope for enhancement across all four priorities, in particular for climate change and digitalisation.

Erasmus+ management and administration

Has Erasmus+ been simplified?

SIMPLIFICATION AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 4

Erasmus+ needs a systematic approach for simplification and quality enhancement.

Simplification has been a longstanding commitment, and in some areas, there has been progress – for example, most institutions find the application processes have been improved. But more than half of the respondents would contest that the current Erasmus+ programme is easier to implement and has more simplified rules than the previous one. Only 8% of institutions subscribe to the statement “Erasmus+ has no major administrative burden”; this illustrates the need for further simplification, and making this a priority for the next programme, also with due consideration of digital processes. While technical concerns are at the root of this issue, the lack of prior consultation and the untested and unannounced introduction of some of the tools aggravate it.

Funding provision, rules and conditions

MORE EVEN ANNUAL BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR LONGSTANDING ACTIONS

RECOMMENDATION 5

Annual budget allocations for individual actions should be spread more evenly, to avoid under- but also overfunding of specific actions.

Institutions are more positive when it comes to funding rules: more than 70% (fully or to some extent) believe that success rates of applications are acceptable, that grant sizes are appropriate and their use sufficiently flexible, and that funding rules are clear. But there are issues with financial accounting and reporting, including staff time recording.

In addition, the practice of gradual augmentation of annual budgets for the different actions is not useful. Smaller annual budgets and a limited number of grants might be in place for new actions, in order to test uptake and administrative processes. However, there is no good reason to take this approach for actions which are already well established, such as Erasmus+ mobility.

Besides creating an uneven workload for national agencies and institutions from one year to the other, this practice particularly impacts individual beneficiaries: for example, a student applying for mobility had much better chances in 2019 than in 2021. In 2021, this approach led to a shortage of Erasmus+ grants for mobility and collaboration in many institutions, particularly in comparison to the final years of the previous programme with relatively high funding levels. Therefore, EUA has called for a [more even dissemination of funds](#).

Lump sum approach

POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS THE LUMP SUM APPROACH

RECOMMENDATION 6

The new lump sum approach is principally welcome, but requires clearer rules and better guidance and support.

Many institutions welcomed the introduction of a lump sum approach for the KA2 cooperation actions, but because it is quite recent it has not yet been assessed by all the institutions or reviewed over a full project cycle. At present, its rules are not sufficiently clear, and there is a lack of support and advice from the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in this regard.

The important role of the EACEA and National Agencies

DECENTRALISED ACTIONS

RECOMMENDATION 7

In decentralised actions, the programme's rules and procedures across countries should be better aligned. An enhanced data-sharing mechanism must be established between national agencies, the EACEA and the European Commission for swifter communication of selection results.

Most institutions are satisfied with the support provided by their National Agencies (55% fully, 30% to some extent). While many institutions appear quite pleased with the present state of programme decentralisation, there is concern that this results in considerable levels of diversity in selection and management by the National Agencies. In addition, information and data on the selection results of decentralised programmes arrive late. This negatively impacts programme monitoring and planning, and also hinders synergies and collaboration among Erasmus+ projects on similar topics.

A mechanism must be established for swifter communication of selection results between national agencies, national Erasmus offices and contact points in partner countries, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the Commission. This is important for the quality management of Erasmus+, but also provides important information for the policy level and the higher education sector, in terms of synergies and collaboration. Generally, cooperation programmes should be selected and administered centrally, for quality reasons, and also to strengthen their European impact and visibility.

STRENGTHEN CAPACITY & PROFICIENCY OF THE EACEA

RECOMMENDATION 8

Sufficient attention should be given to the further development of the EACEA, enabling a shift towards a service-oriented culture, and ensuring capacity, visibility and recognition. The agency needs to be better equipped to exercise its role as the steward and guardian of the Erasmus+ programme and to interact proactively and swiftly with beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Generally an appeal should be made to the EACEA and National Agencies to assess and improve the quality of their information provision. Across countries and programmes, overall satisfaction with the management of the EACEA is on average lower than for the national agencies. Institutions are critical about the EACEA's performance in specific areas (lump sum approach, project management). Overall, around 40% fully acknowledged the support provided as useful and prompt, and roughly another 40% to some extent. For some actions, programme participants report considerable delays in the publication of information. Final versions of guidelines and templates are published late, often just a few days before submission deadlines. Information is not always clearly worded and transparent; at times it is contradictory. Inquiries are answered with considerable delays, not at all, or are worded ambiguously and in highly legalistic language, thereby not helping to clarify the rules.

The EACEA may not have sufficient and sufficiently qualified staff to carry out the required administration and management. Staff numbers should be enhanced and thorough training needs to be in place, especially in areas where performance is assessed as low. A shift from the present bureaucratic culture to a more service-oriented culture should be considered in staff training and other measures. Inspiration and good practice can certainly be found within the EACEA, but also among national agency administrations. Expected benefits are enhanced quality and satisfaction among both stakeholders and the EACEA staff, as well as cost- and time-savings.

Enhancement of Erasmus+ should tap the sector's experience

PROPER CONSULTATION OF THE SECTOR

RECOMMENDATION 9

Consultations should be carried out properly, and outcomes should be shared and followed up. How to make use of existing senior expertise at higher education institutions should be considered.

More and better consultation is needed on the major steps, as already underlined in EUA's recommendations for Erasmus+ in 2017 with regard to its features and processes as well as its general strategy.¹ Changes such as the introduction of a lump sum approach and of digital tools (e.g. the beneficiary module), would benefit from proper consultation, but also from testing in a pilot with a smaller group of higher education institutions. While the sector is formally consulted on parts of the programme, this often takes place at a late stage, leaving it open as to whether and how results are taken into consideration. Many professionals at higher education institutions and national agencies can provide useful advice, in particular, but not exclusively, with regard to the mobility actions. Thus far, the longstanding knowledge and experience of the Erasmus+ community remains largely untapped.

¹ ERASMUS+ mid-term review: EUA's recommendations, February 2017 <https://www.eua.eu/downloads/ERASMUS.mid.term.review.pdf>

Erasmus+ tools

Problems with the digital Erasmus+ tools

URGENT NEED TO IMPROVE ERASMUS+ TOOLS

RECOMMENDATION 10

Some of the Erasmus+ programme's digital tools cause major problems and require urgent revision and enhancement. Until these issues are resolved, flexibility on all sides and non-detrimental approaches are required. Conducting proper testing and consultations with institutions and National Agencies could help to avoid similar problems in the future. To solve the present problems and avoid future ones, the European Commission (EC) and the EACEA may consider establishing an advisory group comprising experienced staff from universities and National Agencies.

Digital tools are the biggest issue of the Erasmus+ programme. More than half of the institutions (57%) stated that the Erasmus+ tools are neither robust nor reliable and only a relatively small number of respondents were fully satisfied (between 9% and 21%). The Beneficiary Module, in particular, was assessed as not fit for purpose by every second institution. Furthermore, while 67% of institutions acknowledged and appreciated the efforts of National Agencies to enable the use of the tools, only 44% positively rated the support of the EACEA and EC. Apart from solving the technical problems, the EACEA and National Agencies need to communicate with the institutions and take immediate measures to mitigate negative impact, for example by granting more staff time for the increased workload and more flexibility regarding deadlines. But digital tools are not static in nature; they continue to evolve and change. Therefore, it is important that Erasmus+ develops a robust and transparent approach to the introduction of new, and the enhancement of existing, tools, with proper consultation, testing and piloting, involving the EACEA, National Agencies and educational institutions in a meaningful way.

European Student Card Initiative

The European Student Card Initiative (ESCI) includes the European Student Card (ESC) itself, Erasmus without Papers (EWP) and the Erasmus+ app. Only 13% of the responding institutions use the ESC, which is fairly representative of its use throughout the European HE sector; and of them, only about a third could already report tangible benefits. But 71% of institutions, regardless of whether or not they actually use it, confirmed that the ESC is a necessary initiative which is expected to bring tangible benefits. The range of services offered by the EWP is currently still limited, and its interoperability with institutional databases and commercial solutions does not work well. Only a third of the institutions reported positive feedback from students on the Erasmus+ app.

Online Learning Agreements

While four out of five respondents confirmed the Online Learning Agreements as a useful addition to the Erasmus+ administration toolkit, one in two found that it does fulfil its actual purpose of facilitating recognition of mobility periods.

Online Linguistic Support

About every second institution found that the Online Linguistic Support tool provided good quality language training (16% fully, 32% to some extent) and a reliable assessment of language skills. This is a positive result compared to other digital tools, but leaves scope for enhancement. The relatively low score is likely due to its recent move to a new platform and its offer restricted to certain languages.

Erasmus Charter for Higher Education

About 20% of institutions did not find the Erasmus Charter useful for themselves, as they were already quality assured. But another 60% saw its benefits for raising awareness and enhancing quality within their institutions. This is an example of the value that longstanding, well-communicated European tools can render.

Responses to crises

IMPROVE CRISIS RESILIENCE AND RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION 11

Based on the lessons learnt from recent crises, the Erasmus+ programme's resilience and capacity to respond should be systematically enhanced. This could also contribute to the general improvement of the programme in terms of simplification. In addition to the measures taken for establishing a European programme for supporting scholars at risk, a dedicated action to support at-risk students should be explored.

Covid-19

Many institutions praised their National Agencies for supporting them during the Covid-19 pandemic through flexible use of their mobility programmes. Feedback was less positive regarding the management of the cooperation actions.

Support for Ukraine

The EC and the EACEA adjusted the rules of Erasmus+ funding to better respond to the needs of students and staff from Ukraine and their hosting institutions. But rather than generating ad-hoc solutions, Erasmus+ should include a dedicated action for students and academics who are at risk or who come from crisis regions.

Mobility actions

HIGH APPRECIATION, AND NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 12

Mobility actions are popular and receive positive feedback on most aspects, but there is an urgent need to improve the clarity of funding rules and to enhance the programme management, especially regarding digital tools.

Higher education institutions assess the Erasmus+ programme's mobility actions positively, both for intra-European and third country exchanges (International Credit Mobility). After the Covid-19 crisis, interest in physical mobility seems to have fully recovered and enjoys high popularity and demand. Furthermore, institutions indicate that they will continue to use the new virtual exchange opportunities as an additional feature, rather than as a replacement for physical mobility.

Approximately every second institution pointed to major problems in the implementation of the mobility actions, mainly concerning aspects of programme management. But these seem to relate to the above-mentioned problems with digital tools – in particular the Beneficiary Module, which almost three-quarters of the institutions reviewed negatively. This proportion is even higher in certain countries, reaching 86%. Immediate solutions must be found to ensure smoother management and further simplified administration of the mobility actions. The European Commission may consider the establishment of a dedicated task force, involving experienced colleagues from higher education institutions and national agencies. About one fifth of institutions also report issues related to funding: rules are not sufficiently clear and travel cost ceilings are too low or rigid.

International Credit Mobility

INTERNATIONAL CREDIT MOBILITY

RECOMMENDATION 13

The regional envelopes for International Credit Mobility need to be adapted to actual student and staff demand, in addition to the international policy interests of the Union.

While institutions reviewed the International Credit Mobility quite positively, the problems they face regarding management, and specifically the Beneficiary Module, are the same as for intra-European mobility. The International Credit Mobility likely contributes to promoting inclusion and equity with respect to existing and emerging institutional and national policies in programme and partner countries. Most institutions are reasonably satisfied with the management of the International Credit Mobility scheme. As for other actions, the main problem is the Beneficiary Module.

Institutions are generally pleased with the funding level and rules provided by the International Credit Mobility scheme. One problem is that costs prior to the mobility stay (such as travel to apply for a visa) are often to be advanced or even paid by the students.

Short-term mobility for doctoral candidates

The vast majority of the institutions that had experience with the short-term doctoral mobility find it useful, despite some concerns about the high administrative efforts involved, level of funding and limited duration.

Staff mobility – opportunities for teaching and administrative staff

Institutions confirmed a positive experience with staff mobility (over 90%) for both teaching and administrative staff, and expressed their intention to continue participating in this action (98%). Also, it was felt that it enables staff development (93%), while longitudinal data suggests that its use for private sector exchanges has significantly increased. Institutions seem to experience no major challenge with the applications for and administration of staff mobility. Funding volume and grant sizes were assessed as appropriate, and the required co-funding by the institution seems not to pose any problems. Only about 16% pointed out that they receive significantly more requests than they can award.

Blended and virtual formats as part of Erasmus+ mobility

VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

RECOMMENDATION 14

Virtual exchanges should be further explored as a supplement to staff and student exchanges, in due recognition of added value and workload.

The majority of institutions find blended mobilities and the blended intensive programmes (BIPs) useful, for students, but also for staff. But of concern is that these actions cause high workloads for academics and administrators, which is not reflected in the grant sizes.

Only about one third of respondents reported a positive experience in using Erasmus+ virtual exchange with third country partners, with 37% not having used it so far. Given the growing importance of virtual exchanges and internationalisation at home in European higher education, whether this simply reflects a gradual increase over time or is the result of other obstacles should be explored.

Erasmus+ Master Loan Guarantee Facility

STUDENT LOAN FACILITY

RECOMMENDATION 15

The impact and added value of the EU guaranteed Study Loans Facility should be properly assessed.

The Erasmus+ Master Loan Scheme, financed via the Student Loan Guarantee Facility, needs to be properly assessed. Since 2020, it has been continued outside of the Erasmus+ programme, but is still funded with European taxpayers' money, despite the fact that even the European Commission's own reports confirm a lack of take-up and impact.

Therefore, EUA can only reiterate its reservations and concerns regarding the Loan Facility. There should be a proper assessment to consider its overall impact and cost-benefit, given that the loans thus far enjoy very limited uptake across European countries. Do they really contribute to enabling study participation, and how inclusive and fair is this measure, given that students take loans at a relatively high interest rate from for-profit bank institutions?

A question is whether European taxpayers' money is not better invested in other ways. EUA has proposed a [European study trust fund](#), open to public and private (industry, foundations) contributions. This would be a more visible measure, within and beyond Europe. It would also better suit the European Union and might become a versatile and future-oriented instrument. Similar trust funds have already been used by the EU in other contexts.

Cooperation actions

COOPERATION ACTIONS ARE KEY FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATION 16

The intra-European and international cooperation actions are a valuable means for cross-border exchange and collaboration, between universities and with society, and for institutional, system- and European-level development and reform. More synergies among projects and further simplification could help to maximise their impact. The approach taken towards the European Universities alliances illustrates what can be done.

According to data collected by EUA, practically all institutions confirm the added value of KA2 cooperation partnerships and capacity building and that they will continue using such collaboration opportunities. These actions should remain flexible, while contributing to the programme's horizontal priorities of inclusion and diversity, democracy and civic engagement, digital transformation and environment and climate action, to allow institutions and their members to work with diverse partners in- and outside of higher education, in Europe and internationally.

The different Erasmus+ cooperation actions offer higher education institutions a range of well-appreciated opportunities for engagement with other institutions, and with society and economy partners, within and outside of Europe. They contribute to the development and innovation potential of the individual institutions, as well as to system-level development and the implementation of the European Education Area and the European Higher Education Area. But this impact could be enhanced: apart from further simplification, more synergies among the projects and with policy initiatives should be in place. The decentralised management structure does presently not support this. Project participants often only learn about the existence of other projects on the same or similar topics at a late stage. Prompter communication of selection results is needed. The Commission should organise meetings of project participants, considering not only management, but also content. This could create important synergies and enhance the policy and general societal impact. The attention given to the European Universities Initiative showcases what can be done.

Partnerships for Cooperation

All the institutions that responded to this part of the survey use Partnerships for Cooperation as an attractive opportunity to engage with other European higher education institutions (80% fully, 20% to some extent), with most of them also forging links with non-education partners (e.g. NGOs, industry; 52% fully, 43% to some extent). While these partnerships are designed for intra-European collaboration, many institutions also involve their international higher education partners (49% fully, 33% to some extent).

The management and administration of the Partnerships for Cooperation should be enhanced, in particular with regard to the action's flexibility and application and reporting requirements. As for other actions, the challenges experienced here are also at least partly due to dysfunctional digital tools. One third would prefer this action to be administered by the EACEA ("centralised"), whereas 43% want it to stay with the National Agencies ("decentralised").

Only 13% of respondents would fully subscribe to the view that it is worth preparing an application in terms of likely success rates. About one third experienced problems with the out-phasing unit-based approach. But less than a quarter reported problems with the new lump sum approach, mainly due to lack of clarity of the rules, whereas its capacity to cover costs was well appreciated.

Partnerships for Cooperation for European NGOs

Cooperation Partnerships for European NGOs are an important feature of the Erasmus+ Cooperation actions, as their rules take into account the specific situation of European networks and associations, and underline the importance of their role. All but one respondent confirmed their satisfaction with and the relevance of this action. But there were similar concerns about the lump sum approach to those raised for the Cooperation Partnerships.

Erasmus Mundus Actions

Only 7% of institutions answered the section of the survey on the Erasmus Mundus Actions – a reminder that joint programmes, while their core purposes are appreciated and of strategic value, are not massive in numbers. This makes it a small, but certainly important action for Europe's internationalisation. Those institutions who use the actions confirmed their high value for the learning mobility of European and in particular international students. They also supported exchange and learning among higher education institutions, and, scoring slightly lower, with their non-university partners. Application requirements, success rates, administration and funding, while they probably could be enhanced, all seem to be appropriate.

Capacity Building

Almost all the institutions which shared their views on the Capacity Building action evaluated it as a highly attractive opportunity for collaboration with international (100%) and European partner institutions (99%), and will continue to apply for projects in this area (95%). Grant size, application process and project management rules were not seen as a challenge, but there is some scope for improvement when it comes to flexibility (22%) and the financial rules (19%).

European Universities Initiative

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE

RECOMMENDATION 17

The European Universities Initiative and the alliances are more than a project. Its continuation under the next Multiannual Financial Framework needs a holistic reflection on all relevant dimensions to ensure long-term sustainability and success. While serving as a testbed for higher education policies and practices, individual alliances should not be overburdened with objectives.

The European Universities Initiative (EUI) has been strongly welcomed by the institutions already involved and those still intending to apply. Institutions supported the overall political goals of the European Commission for this action, but also commented that there are too many. Achieving participation of staff and students beyond those directly involved is challenging. The respondents would welcome better opportunities for involving other cooperation partners from third countries. This could also lessen concerns that the focus on the alliance negatively impacts other collaboration relations. Despite these challenges and concerns about insufficient resources, most institutions see their alliance as a strategic approach towards the future (38% fully, 44% to some extent).

Processes for the management of EUI alliances are still relatively recent and may require enhancement, more practice and learning, on the side of both the EACEA and the beneficiaries.

Institutions are divided in their assessment of the amount of grant: some state that it is insufficient to realise the many diverse activities of their alliance; others seem to look at the EUI grant more as seed funding, or as an operational base grant. All alliances require complementary funding sources.

1. Introduction

The Erasmus+ Programme, the European Union's flagship funding programme for education, is of major importance for universities and their staff and students, as it fosters European and international mobility and collaboration, and contributes to the development of higher education systems and institutions.

It is hard, if not impossible, to imagine how European and international higher education exchange and cooperation would function, but also what European higher education policy would look like, without the opportunities that Erasmus+ offers. But beyond its importance for higher education and other education sectors, Erasmus+ creates long-term value for Europe, its identity and international visibility.

Therefore, Erasmus+ is a high priority for the members of the European University Association (EUA). As the representative body of more than 800 individual universities and 37 national rectors' conferences, EUA monitors the programme closely, and provides recommendations for its enhancement (see Annex 1 for previous reports and recommendations).

The present report is based on the responses of 500 higher education institutions in 49 programme and partner countries to an online survey conducted in 2023. It illustrates how Erasmus+ is received by the higher education institutions, what they find useful, what works well, the challenges they face and their suggestions for improvements. It covers the major programme actions in the field of higher education and also highlights various horizontal issues, such as the programme's overarching priorities regarding content (e.g. inclusion, greening and digitalisation) and organisation (e.g. streamlined structures and simplification). As the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's war against Ukraine fall within the monitoring period, the report also analyses the programme's ability to respond to sudden change and crises, and also illustrates its potential to contribute to Europe's competitiveness.

The survey results provided the basis for [EUA's 2023 recommendations](#) for the European Commission's interim review of Erasmus+ 2021-2027, which are included in this report, sharpened and underpinned by detailed data and analysis on how Erasmus+ and its various actions are perceived by the European higher education sector and its international partners. Most of the report's findings are positive – some even very positive – while others are more critical or raise questions rather than providing answers. Overall, however, they confirm that Erasmus+ is a programme of high added value that can and should be further strengthened. In this spirit, the European University Association (EUA) puts forward the following recommendations on behalf of Europe's university sector.

The report and recommendations also provide a solid basis for the upcoming discussions on priorities and the volume of investment for the future Erasmus+ 2028, under the new Multiannual Budget. We very much hope that this contributes to the enhancement of what is already an outstanding programme.

1.1 Study approach

Between December 2022 and February 2023, EUA ran a survey targeted at higher education institutions who participate in the Erasmus+ programme. Five hundred valid responses were received, a record number for an EUA survey, confirming the continued high level of interest of higher education institutions in the programme. The vast majority of responses came from higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), both in programme and partner countries.

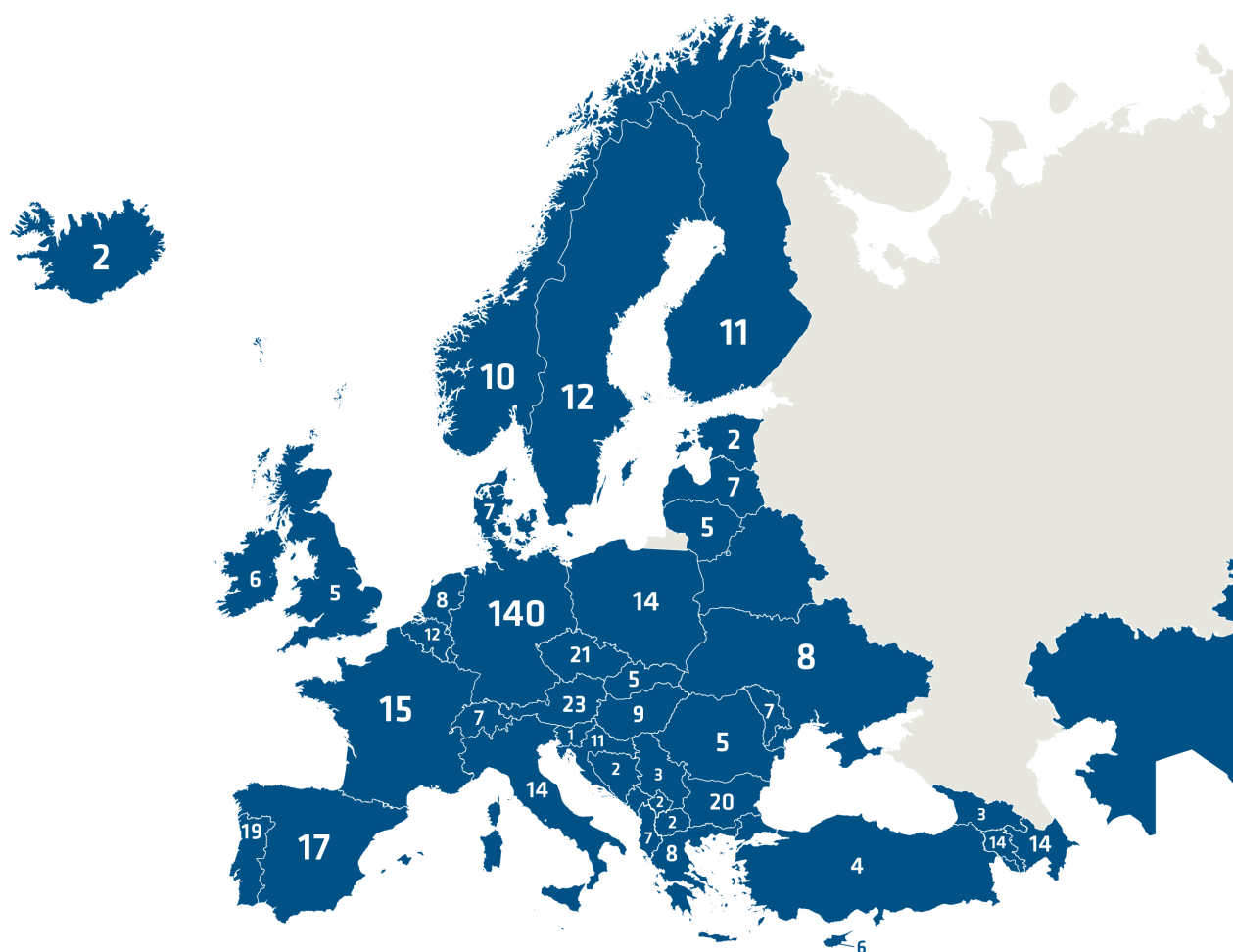
Sections 1 to 5 are based on the main questionnaire² regarding the institutions' general experience with Erasmus+, including its ability to cope with crises. Sections 6 and 7 focus on Key Action 1 Mobility and Key Action 2 Cooperation, based on data resulting from additional questionnaire modules on the different Erasmus+ actions and programmes. Survey respondents were able to select (or skip) the modules based on their expertise and experience with specific parts of the programme.

² The questionnaire, which has been modularised, is available [here](#).

1.2 The sample

Figure 1: Response distribution by countries

Question 3.1. Please select your country and institution from the drop-down menu below (n=500)



Five hundred higher education institutions from 49 countries participated in the survey³. A very high number of responses was received from Germany (140)⁴, followed by Austria (23), Czechia (20) and Bulgaria (20). The sample contains institutions from 31 programme countries (EU or third countries associated with the programme), and 18 partner countries (non-associated third countries that can take part in certain actions of the programme, subject to specific criteria)⁵ (see Figure 1).

Partner countries include Switzerland and the United Kingdom, which ceased to be programme countries in 2014 and 2021 respectively. UK Higher education institutions have mostly responded on the basis of their current status and regarding those Erasmus+ actions that are open to institutions or individuals from third countries from all over the world: the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters, Jean Monnet activities and other initiatives for higher education and vocational education mobility.⁶

³ Please refer to annex 3 for a list of institutions participating in the survey.

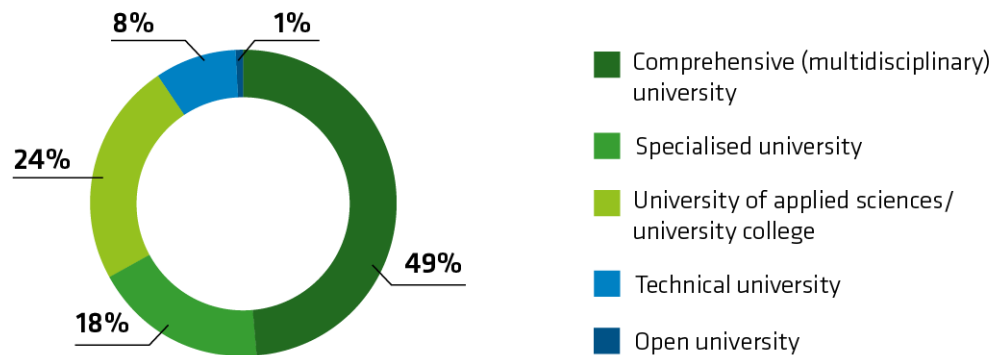
⁴ As this comprised more than a quarter of the total sample, data analysis compared the German sample with all the other survey results and found no significant differences. Hence, the overrepresentation of German institutions did not lead to any distortion of the results.

⁵ For a list of eligible countries for the Erasmus+ programme please visit: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/eligible-countries>

⁶ For further information please visit <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/the-uk-and-erasmus>

Figure 2: Respondent type of institutions

Question 4. Type of institution? (Please select one option) (n=500)



Each institution gave one response; most frequently, these were provided by international office staff (80%).

Comprehensive universities made up half of the sample, a quarter were universities of applied sciences or colleges, and 18% were specialised universities (see Figure 2).

Interestingly, in the context of this survey, the type of institution and its mission had only a small if any impact on response patterns. However, institutional size did: smaller institutions were more likely to indicate lack of capacity and work overload in dealing with the Erasmus+ programme – among them a high proportion of universities of applied sciences and specialised universities.

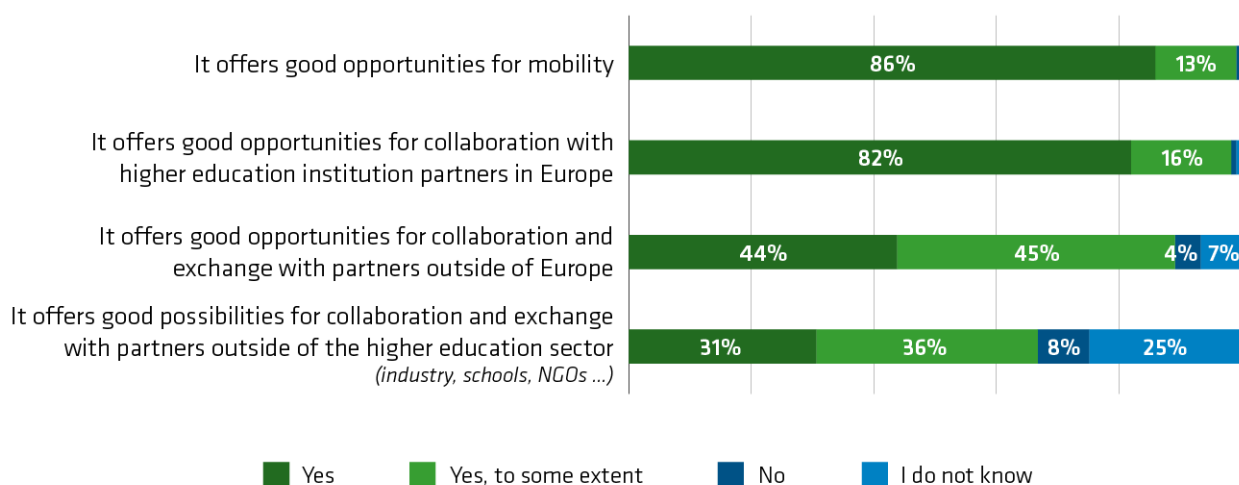
2. Overall perception of Erasmus+

2.1 A programme of high added value in need of enhancement

Erasmus+ is a key enabler for intra-European and international mobility and cooperation. Higher education institutions almost unanimously agreed that Erasmus+ provides indispensable, high-quality opportunities for mobility (99%), as well as intra-European (98%) and international university collaboration (89%). Many institutions (67%) also value it as a means for collaboration with non-university partners.

Figure 3: Erasmus+ opportunities

Question 7.1. How would you assess the Erasmus+ programme? (Please choose one option for each item) – Opportunities and support for the institution (n=500)



ERASMUS+ – A PROGRAMME OF HIGH ADDED VALUE

RECOMMENDATION 1

Erasmus+ is highly valuable and provides significant impact for higher education institutions and their members. It is a crucial tool for improving the quality of education and contributing to society, in Europe and internationally. Erasmus+ must be one of the European Union's top priorities for the next multiannual budget.

The Erasmus+ programme provides ample opportunities for higher education institutions and their students and staff. In terms of offering opportunities for mobility, this was fully confirmed by 86% of the respondents, and to some extent by another 13%. Findings are similar for cooperation actions, at least as far as intra-European cooperation is concerned (82% fully, 16% to some extent) (see also Figure 3).

Erasmus+ cooperation actions with international higher education partners were also assessed positively overall, but with a much higher number of “to some extent” responses (45%). This might be due to the lower number of grants available or to greater complexities in the management of these programmes (see also section 7).

Many institutions found Erasmus+ to be an important means of collaboration with non-higher education partners (31% fully, 36% to some extent). The few responses that did not confirm any such benefits (8% “no”, 25% “do not know”) were evenly spread in terms of countries and regions, but more frequent among universities of applied sciences. The assumption is that due to their closeness to industry and society, these types of institutions rely on other collaboration channels and means than Erasmus+, which might be easier to access and manage, as well as more attractive from a funding perspective.

NEXT GENERATION ERASMUS+ – AN IMPORTANT & SAFE INVESTMENT

RECOMMENDATION 2

The next Erasmus+ programme may continue the features of the present one, with only minor adjustments to the design of the actions, and significant improvement of the programme's management. The expectations raised towards the programme – in terms of its ability to underpin societal change, and the transformation of higher education institutions and systems would need to be considered in the new budget, in view also of increased prices and costs, and inflation.

The survey results confirm the success and the added value of the Erasmus+ programme and all its actions. For the next programme generation, rather than a complete overhaul, a process of enhancement and refinement is suggested. The Covid-19 crisis and Russia's war against Ukraine have demonstrated the potential, but also the limits of Erasmus+ to respond flexibly to external events. Some more recent actions, such as the European Universities Initiative need further development; others, such as the programme's contribution to Europe's global partnerships, would benefit from more recognition and strategic attention from policy makers, as a means of exercising tactical internationalisation and soft diplomacy. Major improvement however is required in the management of the programme, in terms of simplification and the digital tools it uses.

2.2 Impact of Erasmus+ horizontal priorities

The programme's four horizontal priorities of inclusion and diversity, democracy and civic engagement, digital transformation, and environment and climate action are highly relevant for the higher education sector. Linking these priorities to mobility and interinstitutional collaboration contributes to awareness raising, mutual learning and the transfer of good practice in higher education institutions and societies across Europe and beyond.

The Erasmus+ programme has always been more than a funding instrument for mobility. It enables exchange and collaboration in education, sports and culture across Europe, and increasingly also globally.

CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN PRIORITIES

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Erasmus+ programme's contribution to inclusion and diversity, democracy and civic engagement, digital transformation, and environment and climate action is of key importance to Europe's societies and higher education sectors. Therefore, related activities need enhancement and thorough impact assessment.

The present Erasmus+ programme generation has adopted four horizontal priorities⁷ that are considered in the allocation of funding. Most higher education institutions found that two of these priorities were at least to some extent successfully addressed; namely inclusion and diversity (90%) and participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement (82%). The same levels of satisfaction with the other two priorities – environment (69%) and digital transformation (66%) – were considerably lower, with 25% and 30% respectively stating that they are not well-addressed by Erasmus+ (Figure 4).

⁷ The priorities of the Erasmus+ programme can be found at the official European Commission website of the Erasmus+ Programme Guide: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>.

Figure 4: Erasmus+ horizontal priorities

Question 13. Do you think the Erasmus+ programme succeeds in addressing the key priorities it has set for itself? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=496)

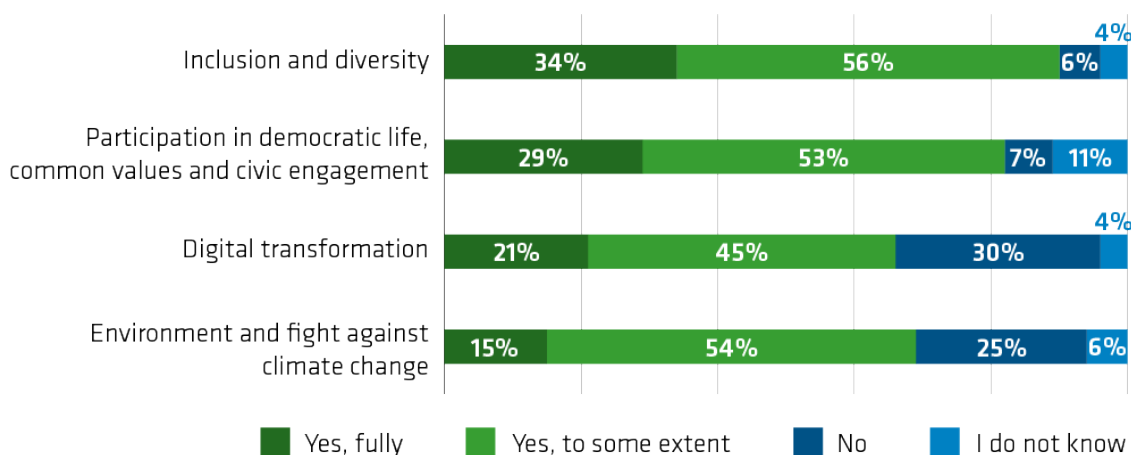
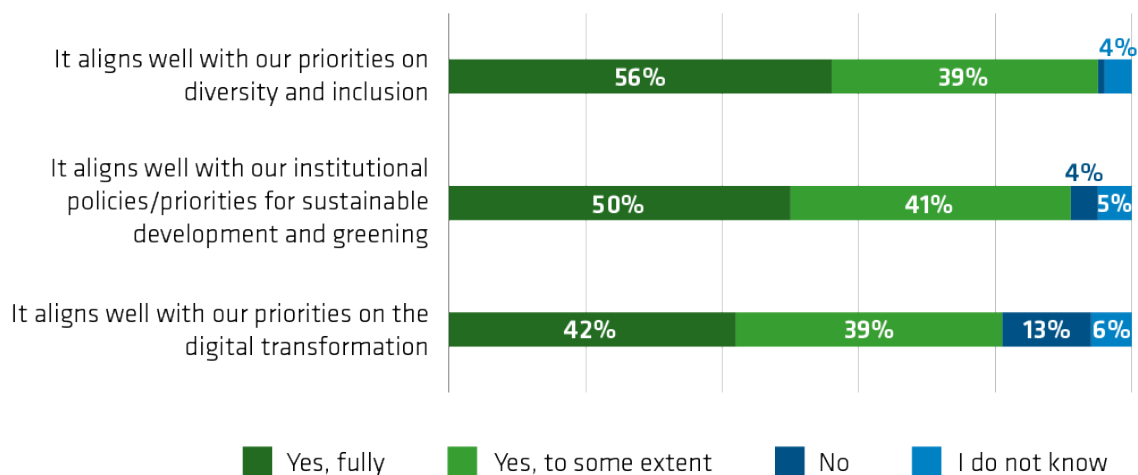


Figure 5: Alignment of Erasmus+ priorities with the priorities of higher education institutions

Question 7.1. How would you assess the Erasmus+ programme? (Please choose one option for each item) – Opportunities and support for the institution (n=500)



Slightly in contrast to these findings, higher education institutions nevertheless confirm that Erasmus+ contributes to and aligns well with their institutional priorities, in particular in terms of diversity and inclusion, and also here slightly lower for sustainable development and greening, and the digital transformation (Figure 5).

But with only a few outright negative responses (between 1% and 13%), there are considerable differences between the different priorities: half or more of the institutions fully agreed that the Erasmus+ diversity and inclusion priority (56% yes, 39% to some extent), and the environmental sustainability priority (50% yes, 41% to some extent) aligns well with their own. However, the programme's contribution to digitalisation is less well acknowledged (42% yes, 39% to some extent, 13% no). This is despite, or because of, the political emphasis on the topic at many national levels, the EU's Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, and the fast-tracked digitalisation institutions experienced due to Covid-19.

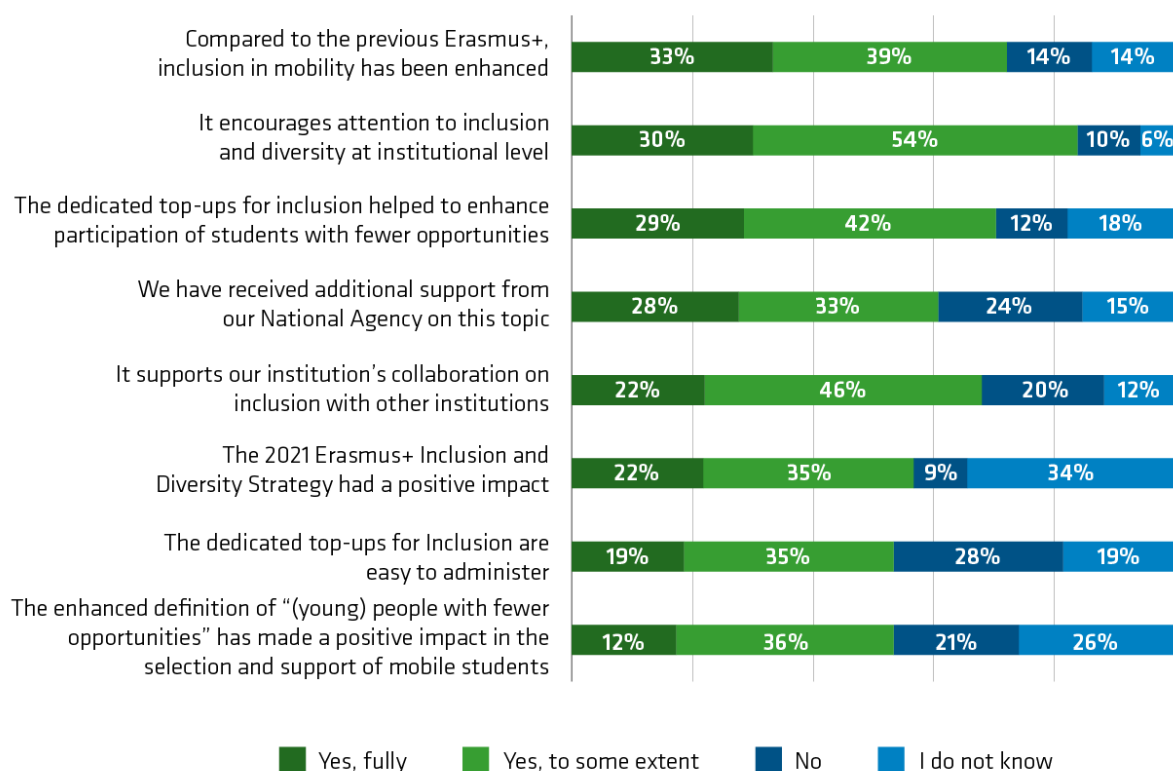
2.2.1 Diversity, equity and inclusion

Most institutions confirmed that Erasmus+ addresses the priorities of inclusion and diversity, and democratic life, common values and civic engagement well. They also confirmed the presence of related Erasmus+ measures such as strategies and subsequent national action plans for diversity and inclusion, as well as the definitions of “fewer opportunities” to render tangible impacts to be felt at their institutions.

Already under the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme, equity and inclusion have become a horizontal priority. In the current programme generation, an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy⁸ and a framework on inclusion measures⁹ have been developed covering all programme fields, with the aim of widening access for participants with fewer opportunities. The definition of students with “fewer opportunities” has been enhanced and includes students facing barriers due to disabilities and health issues, as well as barriers linked to education and training systems, cultural differences, social and economic factors, geographical remoteness, and issues of discrimination, among others. The Erasmus+ Users Guide presents a “list of potential barriers” that “is not exhaustive and is meant to provide a reference in taking action ...”, and underlines that National Agencies are to play an important role in ensuring that Erasmus+ measures are as inclusive and diverse as possible. National Agencies were invited to enhance these definitions and establish foci for their national context. While the definitions of barriers are the basis for students’ access to mobility inclusion top-up, no Europe-wide overview or comparison of the national approaches is available.¹⁰

Figure 6: Impact on equity & inclusion

Question 24. Has Erasmus+ contributed to enhancing attention to equity and inclusion at your institution? (Please choose one option for each item)



⁸ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity-strategy>

⁹ See the [Commission Implementing Decision - framework of inclusion measures of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps 2021-27](#).

¹⁰ For further elaboration on those categories, see Part A of the Programme Guide (EC, 2025): <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>. The weblinks to the national strategies have been accessible since January 2025, thanks to the SALTO Centre for Diversity and Inclusion <https://saltoinclusion.eu/resources/national-strategies/>.

Higher education institutions have a predominantly positive perception of the inclusion priority of Erasmus+. Eighty-four per cent of respondents agreed that this measure has increased overall institutional attention to inclusion and diversity (30% yes, 54% to some extent). Two-thirds (22% yes, 46% to some extent) reported enhanced collaboration on inclusion with other institutions (Figure 6).

More than half of the respondents also acknowledged the positive impact of the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (22% yes, 35% to some extent). This might increase over time, as only 9% disagreed but one third seemed not to know about the strategy, which was probably also still relatively recent when the survey was conducted.

Almost half of the survey participants confirmed their national definitions for “fewer opportunities” to be impactful, a fifth disagreed (21%) and a quarter did not know (26%), suggesting a need for enhancement. Sixty-one per cent of survey respondents confirmed that they had received additional support on inclusion from National Agencies, but about a quarter had not, and 15% did not know.

In their comments, respondents pointed to problems in implementing the definitions: they felt that identifying eligible students was not easy and needs some improvement. Also mentioned was the lack of communication and promotion materials to promote Erasmus+ inclusion opportunities amongst the target group.

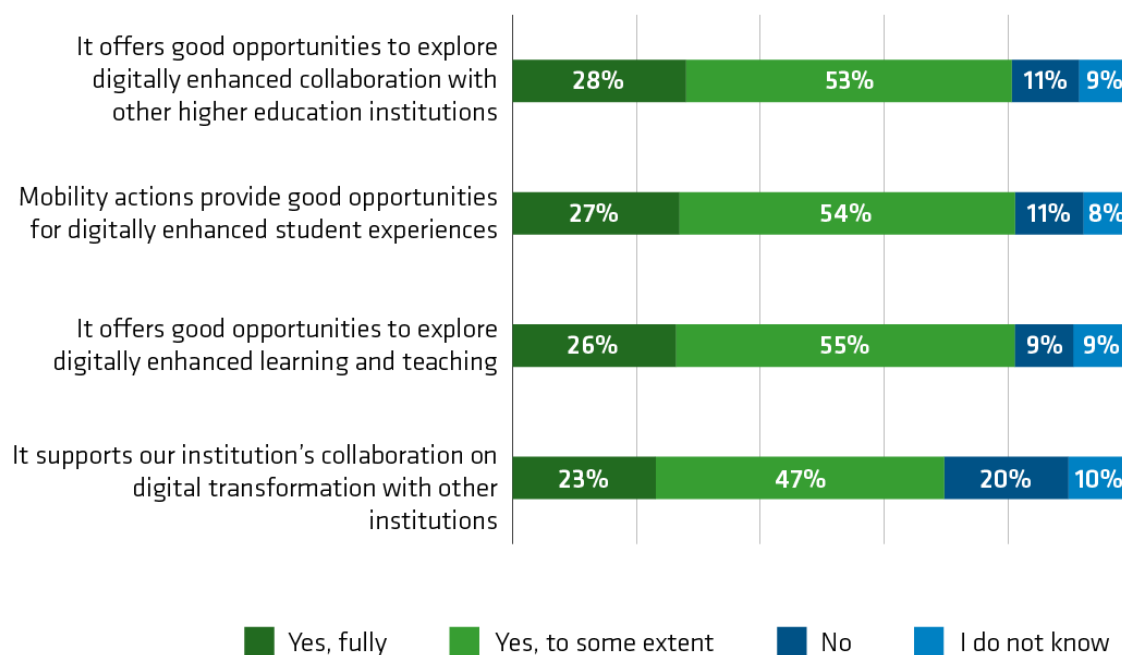
Top-ups for students with fewer opportunities had partially commenced already under the previous programme, and have been even more mainstreamed in the present programme – apparently with some success: 72% of institutions acknowledged a tangible difference for the mobility actions (33% yes, 39% to some extent), with 71% confirming that the top-ups for students with fewer opportunities do have an impact (29% yes, 42% to some extent). More than 50% found the top-up easy to handle (19% yes, 35% to some extent), but almost a third contested this (28%), and a fifth did not know (19%).

2.2.2 Digital transformation

The assessment of concrete Erasmus+ measures supporting the digital transformation priority is less positive than for inclusion, possibly due to the massive difficulties that higher education institutions experience with Erasmus+ digital tools.

Figure 7: Attention to digital transformation

Question 15. Do you think Erasmus+ provides sufficient attention to the digital transformation of higher education institutions, in terms of learning and teaching, international exchange and cooperation? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=498)



While 30% of respondents think Erasmus+ is not successful in addressing the digital transformation as a priority, 81% (28% fully, 53% to some extent) agree nevertheless that Erasmus+ offers good opportunities for digitally enhanced collaboration with other higher education institutions and that it provides good opportunities for digitally enhanced student experiences (27% fully, 54% to some extent) and for exploring digitally enhanced learning and teaching (26% fully, 55% to some extent) (Figure 7). However, in their comments, respondents pointed to problems related to the programme's digital management and its online tools (see sections 3 and 4).

Comments also referred to the Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs). These are short, intensive courses that employ innovative ways of learning and teaching, including the use of online cooperation.¹¹ While the action as such has been taken up very positively, institutions lament the fact that the high administrative and organisational efforts that BIPs require are not reflected in the size of the grants. Smaller institutions, in particular, would prefer to have a dedicated fund for virtual exchanges, rather than having to organise the resource-intensive BIPs. "Higher education institutions would appreciate it very much if a separate budget could also be provided for digital mobilities, without the pressure of organising a BIP which requires extra administration and [is] thus impractical for small higher education institutions" (a small institution in Austria).

¹¹ See also Part B of the Erasmus+ guide: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/mobility-projects-for-higher-education-students-and-staff#:~:text=a%20blended%20mobility-,Blended%20intensive%20programmes,the%20use%20of%20online%20cooperation.>

2.2.3 Environment and the fight against climate change

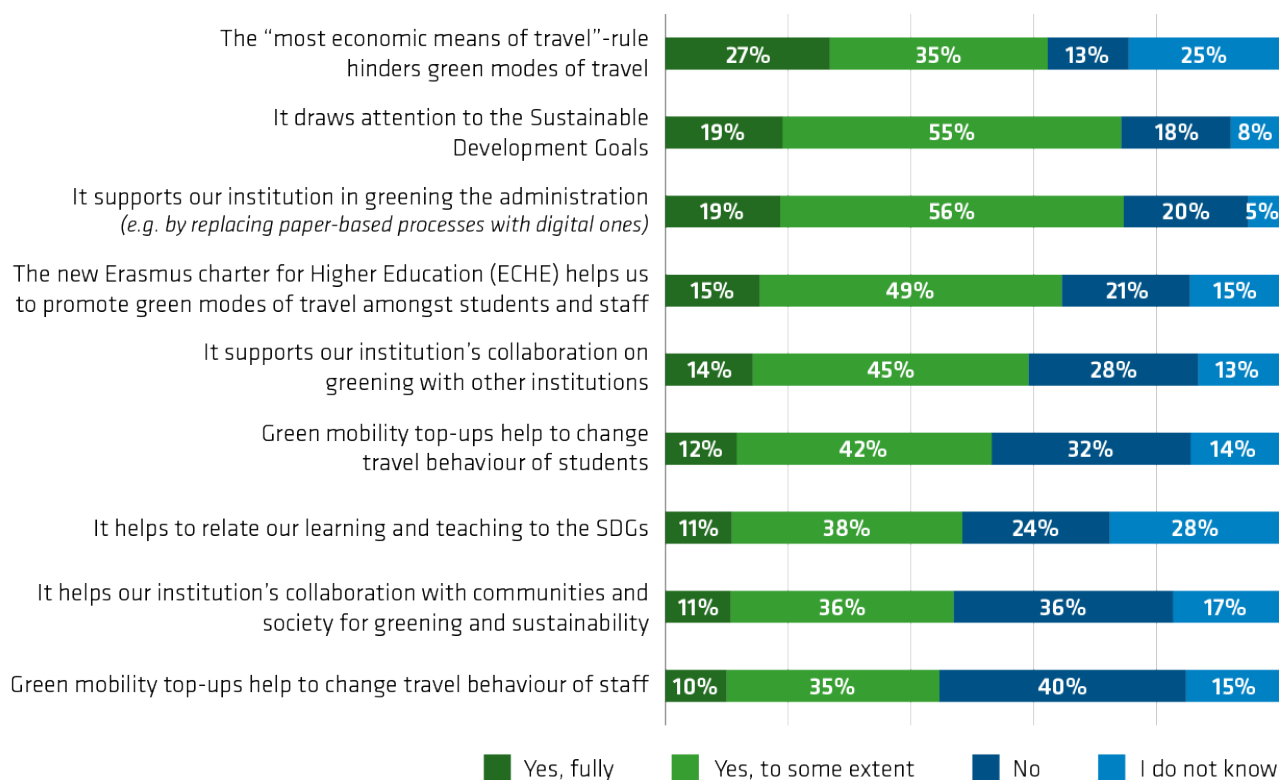
The priority of the environment and the fight against climate change helps to raise awareness, but related top-ups are insufficient to ensure greener travel.

Environmental sustainability and the fight against climate change is one of the Erasmus programme's horizontal priorities, and also – under the Green Deal – one of the European Commission's six recent overarching priorities (2019-2024).¹² Greening and sustainability are also high on the agenda of European higher education institutions.¹³

The Erasmus+ horizontal priority on the environment and the fight against climate change is therefore a welcome addition to the programme's objectives. It is reflected in the selection of Erasmus+ projects (prioritising for example those that aim to develop green competencies). In addition, a top-up is provided to programme participants if they choose a greener means of travel.¹⁴ Despite the best intentions, incentives for green mobility have had little impact so far. In view of the higher and rising prices for more sustainable travel options, the mobility top-ups are too low to result in major changes in travel behaviour. Many respondents called for higher levels of support or alternative means to promote the greening of the Erasmus+ programme.

Figure 8: Impact on greening and sustainability

Question 22. Has Erasmus+ contributed to enhancing attention to greening and sustainable development at your institution (n=498)



The green mobility top-up was evaluated as the least impactful measure related to the greening priority: a large share

¹² The 2019-24 European Commission's priorities: Keeping our promise to Europe https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024_en

¹³ E.g. Henriette Stoeber, Michael Gaebel and Alison Morrisroe, September 2021: Greening in European higher education institutions, EUA survey data: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/982:greening-in-european-higher-education-institutions.html>

¹⁴ Students receive a bonus for using environmentally friendly, sustainable means of transport for travelling to host countries. This includes travel by train, bus or the use of carpooling. At the time of data collection the top-up amount was 50 euro. This has been updated in 2025 to a top-up of 28 to 208 euro, depending on the distance travelled. See also Part B of the Erasmus+ guide: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/mobility-projects-for-higher-education-students-and-staff>

of responding institutions reported that it did not change the travel behaviour of students (32%) and staff (40%). At the time of data collection, the green mobility top-up was set at 50 euro. This was found to be inadequate to cover the additional costs of sustainable travel given the comparatively high prices for long-distance trains. In 2025 top-ups range from 28 euro (up to 100km) to 208 euro (3,000 to 4,000 km), hence it remains questionable whether they can have a true impact. Some respondents report that the green top-up creates more issues than it solves, that it takes funds of the overall budget while failing to bring meaningful change.

On a more positive note, survey respondents note that the horizontal priority on environment and the fight against climate change overall raises awareness of the topic, for instance by drawing attention to the sustainable development goals (19% fully, 55% to some extent), by supporting institutional efforts in greening administrative processes (19% fully, 56% to some extent), and by supporting collaboration with other institutions on this topic (14% fully, 45% to some extent). Overall, survey results indicate that there is a need for a thorough impact assessment, and a revision of the Erasmus+ measures to foster real change in this area.

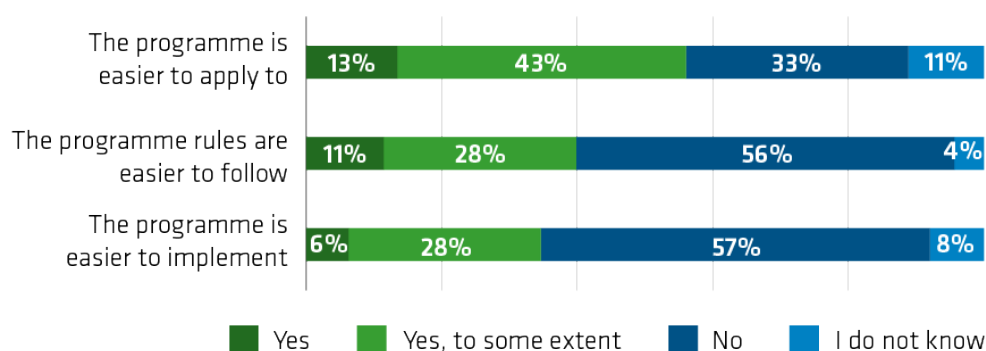
3. Erasmus+ management and administration

3.1 Has Erasmus+ been simplified?

Simplification has been a longstanding commitment, and in some areas, there has been progress – for example, most institutions find the application processes have been improved. But more than half of the respondents would contest that the current Erasmus+ programme is easier to implement and has more simplified rules than the previous one. Only 8% of institutions subscribe to the statement “Erasmus+ has no major administrative burden”; this illustrates the need for further simplification, and making this a priority for the next programme, also with due consideration of digital processes.

Figure 9: Erasmus+ programme management – compared to the previous programme

Question 7.1. How would you assess the Erasmus+ programme? (Please choose one option for each item) – Programme management aspects (n=500)



Only around one third of survey respondents reported major improvements in the programme rules (11% fully, 28% to some extent) and their implementation (6% fully, 28% to some extent) (Figure 9). However, more than half of the respondents find the application process easier (13% fully, 43% to some extent).

SIMPLIFICATION AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 4

Erasmus+ needs a systematic approach for simplification and quality enhancement.

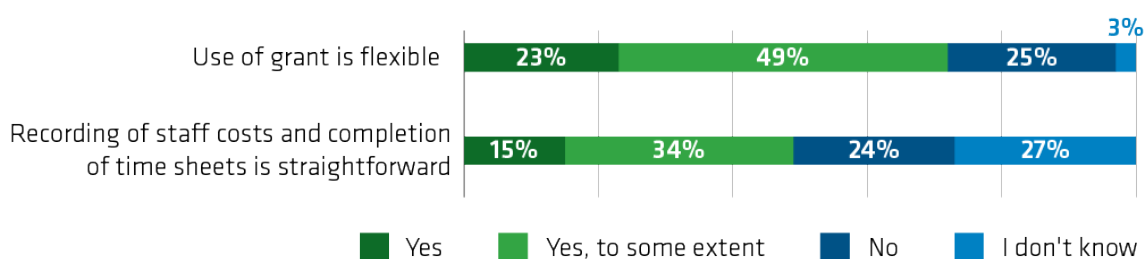
Cooperation projects and mobility grants require solid processes and procedures in terms of application, grant management and administration. In the survey, only 8% of respondents fully subscribed to the statement that the Erasmus+ creates no major administrative burden. The majority (67%) therefore thinks it does, with an even higher percentage taking this view among the universities of applied sciences (84%), perhaps due to their smaller size, comparatively limited resources and having smaller teams to implement the programme. By contrast, the “do not know” responses were dominated by comprehensive universities, probably because they can rely on task sharing with larger support teams, including units at faculty and department levels – whose levels of satisfaction may not have been fully captured by the survey. Roughly every second institution (46%) also reported issues around financial reporting and accounting.

3.2 Funding provision, rules and conditions

Institutions are more positive when it comes to funding rules: more than 70% (fully or to some extent) believe that success rates of applications are acceptable, that grant sizes are appropriate and their use sufficiently flexible, and that funding rules are clear. But there are issues with financial accounting and reporting, including staff time recording. The gradual augmentation of annual budgets should be reconsidered, at least for already well established actions, such as Erasmus+ mobility.

Figure 10: Funding and financial administration

Question 7.1: How would you assess the Erasmus+ programme?* (please choose one option for each item) – Financial administration (n=500)



The Erasmus+ funding provision, rules and conditions were assessed rather positively: around three-quarters found the application success rates appropriate (31% fully, 45% to some extent), and also rated the grant sizes (30% fully, 44% to some extent) and their flexibility (23% fully, 49% to some extent) positively. In addition, 78% found funding rules sufficiently clear (40% fully, 38% to some extent). This represents an improvement compared to the previous programme, where low success rates, insufficient cost coverage and inflexibility of funding were major complaints.

MORE EVEN ANNUAL BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR LONGSTANDING ACTIONS, KEEP THE ANNUAL BUDGET

RECOMMENDATION 5

Annual budget allocations for individual actions should be spread more evenly, to avoid under- but also overfunding of specific actions.

Another issue that caused problems, at least in some countries and institutions, was the gradual augmentation of annual budgets for specific actions: in the first years of the programme this can result in underfunding and in later years overfunding. Furthermore, this practice creates an uneven workload for national agencies and institutions from one year to the next, but also impacts individual beneficiaries: for example, a student applying for a mobility grant had much better chances in 2019 (the last year under the 2014 Erasmus+ programme) than in 2021. In 2021, the approach of gradual increases led to a shortage of Erasmus+ grants for mobility and collaboration in many institutions, particularly in comparison to the final years of the previous programme that had relatively high funding levels. Smaller annual budgets and a limited number of grants might be in place for new actions, in order to test uptake and administrative processes.

However, there is no good reason to take this approach for actions that are already well established, such as Erasmus+ mobility. Therefore, EUA has called for a more even dissemination of funds.¹⁵

The survey does not reflect growing concerns about rising costs and inflation, and how they impact international exchange and collaboration in medium to long term. This will need careful consideration in the next round of the programme, with regards to grant sizes, and spending ceilings.

3.3 Lump sum approach

Many institutions welcomed the introduction of a lump sum approach for the KA2 cooperation actions, but because it is quite recent it has not yet been assessed by all the institutions or reviewed over a full project cycle. At present, its rules are not sufficiently clear, and there is a lack of support and advice from the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in this regard.

POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS THE LUMP SUM APPROACH

RECOMMENDATION 6

The new lump sum approach is principally welcome, but requires clearer rules and better guidance and support.

The 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme used a unit cost approach in the KA2 cooperation actions. In its 2016 Recommendations for the Erasmus+ midterm review, EUA called for a reconsideration of “The present unit cost approach of some actions [...], as it effectively results in higher co-funding contributions and in uncertainties for budget planning” (EUA, 2016, p. 3).

Under the present programme, cooperation actions have been gradually moved from the unit-based to a lump sum approach.¹⁶ Grants are now provided in a single fixed amount, covering the costs of all eligible activities linked to the project’s implementation.¹⁷ The promise is that this will make administration easier for grant-takers and especially for the EACEA and National Agencies.

To our knowledge, the approach has been rolled out without any piloting and without much consultation, after only a very brief presentation in the official consultation group of the European Commission.

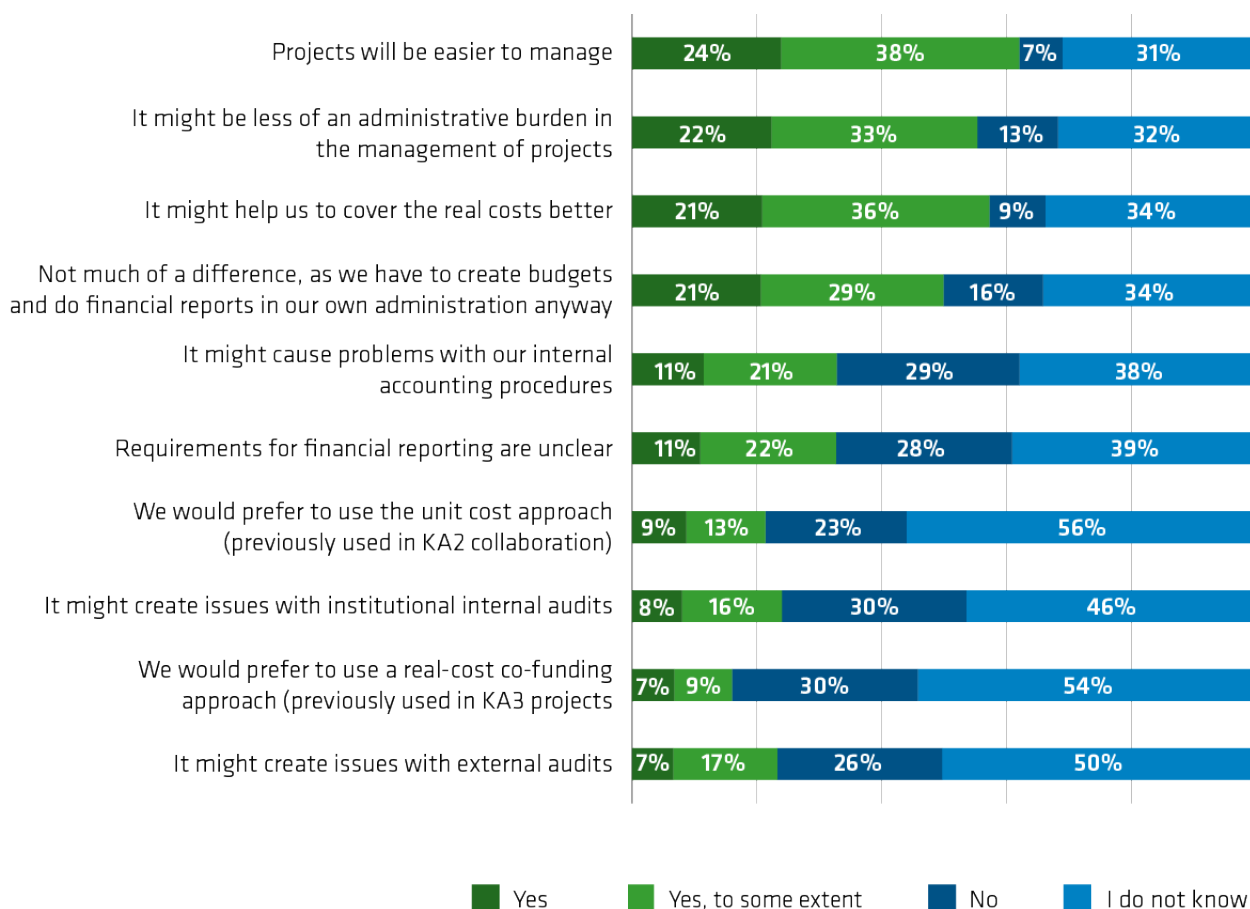
¹⁵ <https://www.eua.eu/news/eua-news/eua-calls-for-more-even-funding-distribution-for-erasmus.html>

¹⁶ The European Commission’s decision authorising the use of lump sums and unit costs under the Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/erasmus/guidance/lump-sum-and-unit-cost-decision_erasmus_en.pdf

¹⁷ A Handbook published by the EAC B.4 (January 2023) on the lump sum funding model for KA2 – Partnerships for cooperation can be found here: <https://www.erasmusplus.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Handbook-on-KA2-lump-sum-2023.pdf>

Figure 11: Feedback on the lump sum approach

Question 11. What is your assessment or expectation towards the lump sum funding approach in Erasmus+ cooperation and capacity building projects? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=490)



That lump sum approach had been introduced quite recently at the time of data collection, and not yet for all programme actions. This explains the high number of “I do not know” responses (between 31% and 56%). For instance, in the question on whether institutions prefer lump sums over the unit cost approach feedback was split, with about a fifth of respondents stating “yes” (9% fully, 13% to some extent) or no (23%), and more than half simply not knowing (56%) (Figure 11).

Written comments confirmed that it might be too early to properly assess the functionality and impact of the approach because of the respondents’ limited experience with lump sums. Programme participants would need to wait for the project to complete its full cycle. Some also commented that they had responded based on their expectations and the financial rules. But despite the challenges and lack of hands-on experience, overall the tone was positive: more than half of the higher education institutions expected the lump sum approach to ease project management, make the administration less burdensome, and offer a better coverage of real costs – provided of course that the scheme was further enhanced, and its rules clarified.

“The unclear rules for reporting and financial audit [are] very problematic. The lump-sum model has a lot of potential, which won’t be realised before these rules have been clarified.”

Norwegian university of applied sciences

Problems include a lack of support from the EACEA and that the guidance provided is in parts ambiguous or even contradictory. To illustrate this in a concrete example: in its 2023 version, the Erasmus+ programme guide referred alternately to “co-funding” and “co-financing”, leaving it open as to whether these are the same. It also remains unclear what this means in a lump sum context. For instance, while the programme guide states in one section that there is no need to provide information on co-funding in the project application, another section mentions that co-funding is mandatory, but without any indication of the percentage of co-funding actually required or how this would impact assessment and selection, or, practically, how this would be evidenced in the budget template.¹⁸ Although there is a helpline, many applicants, including the EUA, did not receive any response to their queries about co-funding.

Institutional and national accounting approaches influence whether the current lack of clarity and guidance is perceived as a concern. About the same number of institutions responded “yes” and “no” regarding whether the rules for financial reporting under the lump sums are sufficiently clear and whether the lump sum approach would cause problems with the institution’s own accounting systems and its internal or external audits. This introduces another aspect that may need some consideration: in order to be successful, the lump sum approach requires transparent national and institutional accountancy systems.

¹⁸ While the [Erasmus+ programme guide \(2022\)](#) states: “applicants do not have to provide information about sources of funding other than the EU grant ...” (p. 415), a few pages down it reads: “The applicant must indicate in the application form the contribution from sources other than the EU grant. External co-financing may take the form of the beneficiary’s own resources, financial contributions from third parties or income generated by the project” (p. 418).

3.4 The important role of the EACEA and National Agencies

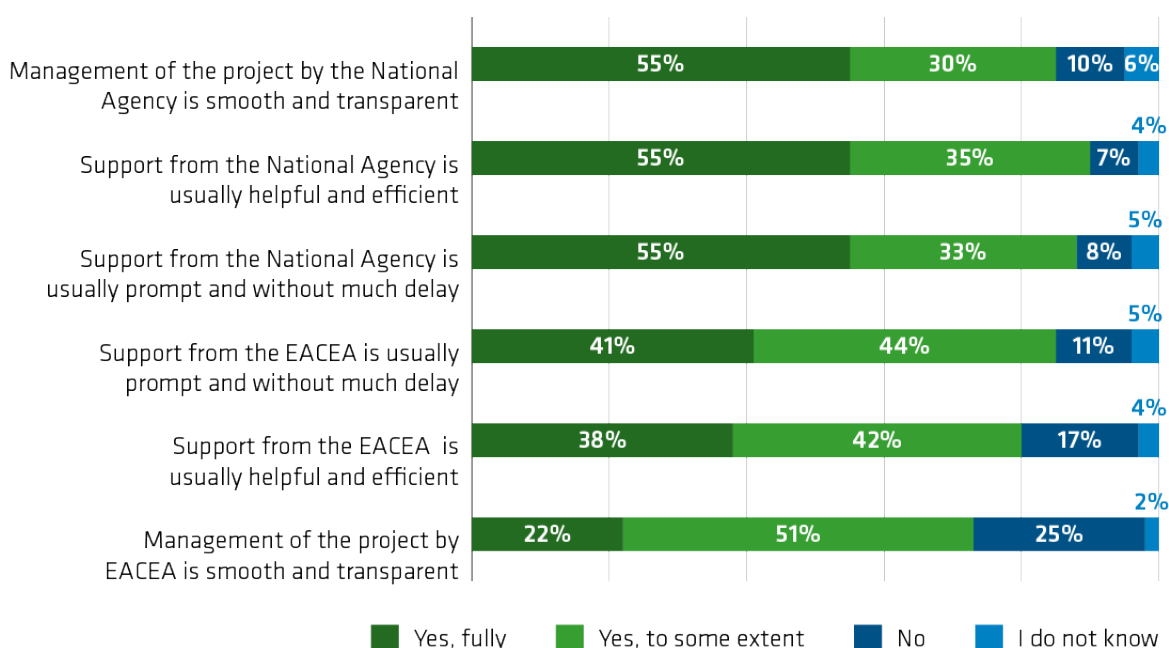
Most institutions are satisfied with the support provided by their National Agencies (55% fully, 30% to some extent). While many institutions appear quite pleased with the present state of programme decentralisation, there is concern that this results in considerable levels of diversity in selection and management by the National Agencies.

Institutions are critical about the EACEA's performance in specific areas (lump sum approach, project management). Overall, around 40% fully acknowledged the support provided as useful and prompt, and roughly another 40% to some extent. Hence an appeal should be made to the EACEA and National Agencies to assess and improve the quality of their information provision. Generally, cooperation programmes should be selected and administered centrally, for quality reasons, and also to strengthen their European impact and visibility.

The EACEA may not have sufficient and sufficiently qualified staff to carry out the required administration and management. Staff numbers should be enhanced and thorough training needs to be in place, especially in areas where performance is assessed as low. In terms of programme decentralisation, the diverse approaches by National Agencies also require particular attention.

Figure 12: Feedback on programme management with the National Agencies and the EACEA

Question 9. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the project management? (n=500)



Most institutions are satisfied with their National Agencies. With no significant difference between countries, higher education institutions confirmed that the project management by the National Agencies is smooth and transparent (55% fully, 30% to some extent), their support is helpful and efficient (55% fully, 35% to some extent), and usually provided without delay (55% fully, 33% to some extent) (Figure 12).

DECENTRALISED ACTIONS

RECOMMENDATION 7

In decentralised actions, the programme's rules and procedures across countries should be better aligned. An enhanced data-sharing mechanism must be established between national agencies, the EACEA and the European Commission for swifter communication of selection results.

As some of the Erasmus+ actions are decentralised, i.e. entirely managed by the National Agencies, this of course offers opportunities for consideration of national demand and conditions. Respondents also mentioned this as problem or concern, in that rules are interpreted differently and variation also occurs in the understanding of and approaches for selection, implementation assessment and financial management. This had already been raised as an issue in EUA's 2017 report,¹⁹ but emerged more prominently this time, probably also due to a more systematic scrutiny by the members of the European alliance consortia, which submit applications for additional mobility and cooperation funding. At programme level, a drawback of the decentralisation is that information and data on the selection results arrive late. This negatively impacts programme monitoring and planning, but it also hinders synergies and collaboration among Erasmus+ projects on similar topics. It is important for the EACEA and the National Agencies to consider how these issues could be solved, or at least improved.

STRENGTHEN CAPACITY & PROFICIENCY OF THE EACEA

RECOMMENDATION 8

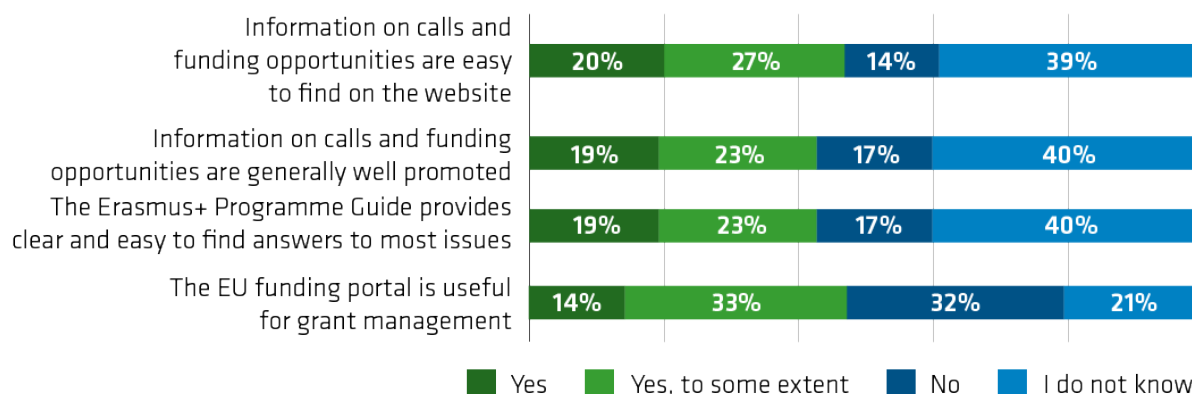
Sufficient attention should be given to the further development of the EACEA, enabling a shift towards a service-oriented culture, and ensuring capacity, visibility and recognition. The agency needs to be better equipped to exercise its role as the steward and guardian of the Erasmus+ programme and to interact proactively and swiftly with beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Services provided by the EACEA are also positively assessed, albeit scoring slightly lower than those provided by the National Agencies. Enhancement of the EACEA's project management might be required as a quarter of the institutions did not find it smooth and transparent, and 51% only to some extent (Figure 12).

¹⁹ EUA: Annual Report, 2017

Figure 13: Programme guidance

Question 9. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the project management? (n=500)



Only one out of five institutions were fully satisfied with the promotion of calls and funding opportunities (19% agreeing fully, 23% to some extent), their dissemination through websites (20% fully, 27% to some extent) and with the information provision of the Erasmus+ Programme Guide (19% fully, 23% to some extent) (Figure 13). Interestingly, on all three issues, the percentage of “unsatisfied” is actually under 20%, whereas around 40% state that they “do not know”. This should be looked into further and possibly followed up through the enhancement of services offered by the EACEA and the National Agencies.

The usefulness of the EU funding portal in supporting grant management was confirmed by 47% of the respondents (14% fully, 33% to some extent), whereas 32% respond with no, and 21% did not know, probably because they were not the ones actively using the portal within their institutions (see Figure 13). This aligns with the responses received also on other more recent Erasmus+ platforms and instruments, which tend to receive scant acclaim by users (see also section 4 on Erasmus tools).

3.5 Enhancement of Erasmus+ should tap the sector's experience

Throughout different Erasmus+ actions, it appears that many of the challenges that occur are due to a lack of proper consultation, planning and testing.

PROPER CONSULTATION OF THE SECTOR

RECOMMENDATION 9

Consultations should be carried out properly, and outcomes should be shared and followed up. How to make use of existing senior expertise at higher education institutions should be considered.

More and better consultation is needed on the major steps, as already underlined in EUA's recommendations for Erasmus+ in 2017 with regard to its features and processes as well as its general strategy.²⁰ Changes such as the introduction of a lump sum approach and of digital tools (e.g. the beneficiary module), would benefit from proper consultation, but also from testing in a pilot with a smaller group of higher education institutions.

If consultations take place, they often appear to be a tick box exercise, conducted at a late stage and with no real evidence on whether and how results are taken into consideration.

The knowledge and experience of the Erasmus+ community remains largely untapped. Many professionals at higher education institutions and National Agencies have longstanding experience and profound knowledge of the programme. They can provide useful advice, in particular, but not exclusively, with regard to the mobility actions and digital tools. This would also help to enhance ownership, facilitate communication with the EACEA and National Agencies, and improve implementation and outcomes.

²⁰ ERASMUS+ mid-term review: EUA's recommendations, February 2017 <https://www.eua.eu/downloads/ERASMUS.mid.term.review.pdf>

4. Erasmus+ tools

4.1 Problems with the digital Erasmus+ tools

Digital tools are the biggest issue of the Erasmus+ programme. More than half of the institutions (57%) stated that the Erasmus+ tools are neither robust nor reliable and only a relatively small number of respondents were fully satisfied (between 9% and 21%). The Beneficiary Module, in particular, was assessed as not fit for purpose by every second institution. Furthermore, while 67% of institutions acknowledged and appreciated the efforts of National Agencies to enable the use of the tools, only 44% positively rated the support of the EACEA and EC. Apart from solving the technical problems, the EACEA and National Agencies need to communicate with the institutions and take immediate measures to mitigate negative impact, for example by granting more staff time for the increased workload and more flexibility regarding deadlines. But digital tools are not static in nature; they continue to evolve and change. Therefore, it is important that Erasmus+ develops a robust and transparent approach to the introduction of new, and the enhancement of existing, tools, with proper consultation, testing and piloting, involving the EACEA, National Agencies and educational institutions in a meaningful way.

Only around half of the institutions found that Erasmus+ digital tools work relatively well (11% fully, 38% to some extent), but the other half (44%) would contradict this. At the same time, about one third thought that Erasmus+ digital tools were sufficiently robust and reliable, whereas more than half (57%) believed they were not (Figure 14). Many institutions (40%) also did not see a gradual improvement over time and stated that they had not been (sufficiently) consulted on the development of tools (45%). This is concerning because it is likely to undermine trust and could – if not soon improved – result in negative attitudes and damage to the otherwise positive reputation of the Erasmus+ programme.

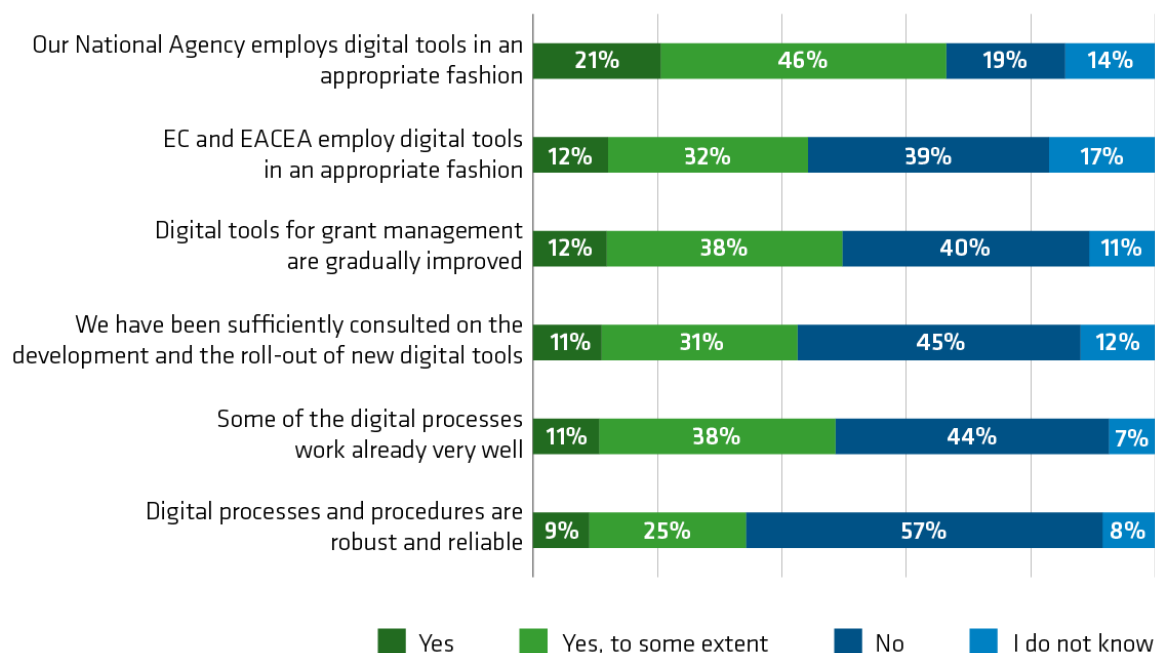
URGENT NEED TO IMPROVE ERASMUS+ TOOLS

RECOMMENDATION 10

Some of the Erasmus+ programme's digital tools cause major digital problems and require urgent revision and enhancement. Until these issues are resolved, flexibility on all sides and non-detrimental approaches are required. Conducting proper testing and consultations with institutions and National Agencies could help to avoid similar problems in the future. To solve the present problems and avoid future ones, the European Commission (EC) and the EACEA may consider establishing an advisory group comprising experienced staff from universities and National Agencies.

Figure 14: Digital tools

Question 17: How would you assess the digital tools in the Erasmus+ programme management? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=498)



The most positive response related to the use of digital tools by the National Agencies, which 67% of institutions found appropriate (21% fully, 46% to some extent). By comparison, on the same issue, with a score of 44%, the EACEA rated significantly lower (12% fully endorsed their employment of digital tools, 32% to some extent).

“The tools we are obliged to apply additionally complicate our activities”

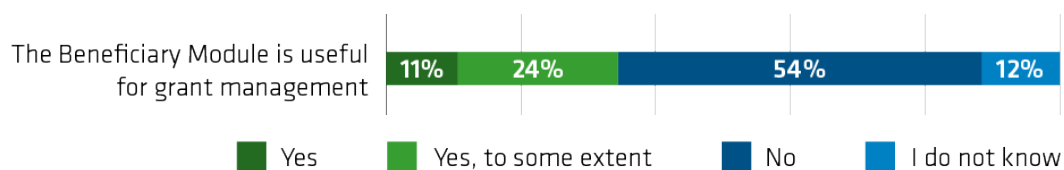
Polish University

In the short term, more flexible deadlines and additional funding would help. This is not a new problem, and as there seems to have been no major improvement over the years, these issues are likely to continue.

None of the tools is assessed entirely positively, but there are significant differences. Feedback on the Beneficiary Module is particularly negative. The web-based database is mandatory for the administration of Erasmus+ mobility projects. It replaced the Mobility Tool, which was still in use for projects up to the 2020 Call. Higher education institutions report technical problems with the tool across different programme actions.

Figure 15.1: Beneficiary Module

Question 9: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the project management?

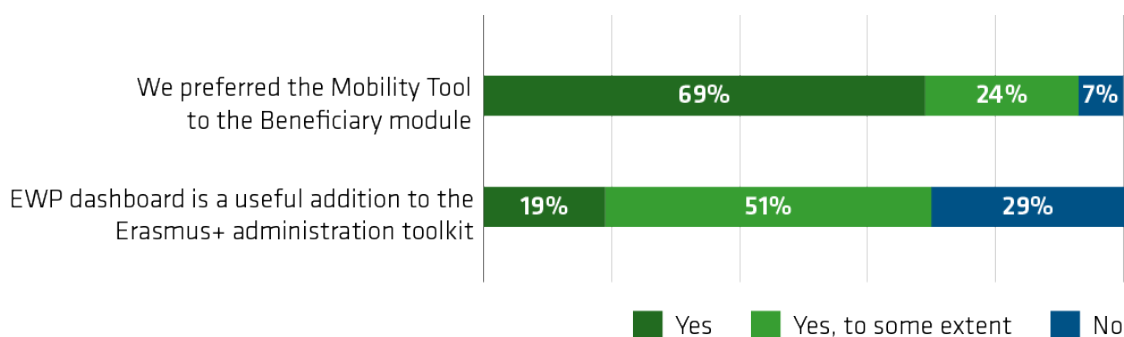


Only 35% of respondents (11% fully, 24% to some extent, 54% no) found the Beneficiary Module useful. As the tool is used for different mobility actions of the Erasmus+ programme, it has been addressed in different parts of the survey. All the responses confirmed technical problems, which seem to be a major liability when it comes to managing mobilities. This issue is exacerbated by the lack of interoperability between different tools and systems. A frequent comment has been that Inter-institutional agreements and Learning Agreements could not be exchanged, causing duplication of work and delays.

While the Beneficiary Module is only one of many issues addressed in the survey, complaints about its shortcomings and malfunctions comprise one-fifth of the total written comments received. Not surprisingly, at this stage, only 7% preferred the Beneficiary Module over its out-phasing predecessor, the Mobility Tool. The latter, while probably technically outdated, appears to be more reliable.

Figure 15.2: Beneficiary Module, Mobility Tool, and Dashboard

Question 18: Please provide feedback on the following online tools. In case your institution is not (yet) using the tool, please click not applicable. (Please choose one option for each item) (n=410)



There is a sense of déjà vu here: under the previous programme, the Mobility Tool was introduced without proper prior consultation with and testing by actual users, and caused major problems for higher education institutions and their members (see also EUA, 2017).

4.2 European Student Card Initiative

The European Student Card Initiative (ESCI)²¹ includes the European Student Card (ESC) itself, Erasmus Without Papers (EWP) and the Erasmus+ app. Only 13% of the responding institutions use the ESC, which is fairly representative of its use throughout the European HE sector; and of them, only about a third could already report tangible benefits. But 71% of institutions, regardless of whether or not they actually use it, confirmed that the ESC is a necessary initiative which is expected to bring tangible benefits. The range of services offered by EWP is currently still limited, and its interoperability with institutional databases and commercial solutions does not work well. Only a third of the institutions reported positive feedback from students on the Erasmus+ app.

The European Student Card Initiative (ESCI)²² includes the card itself, the Erasmus+ app, as well as Erasmus Without Papers (EWP).

4.2.1 Erasmus Without Papers & Erasmus+ app

Erasmus Without Papers (EWP) enables institutions to exchange data with each other. Normally, EWP should be interoperable with the institutions' databases, which are mostly provided by commercial third parties but also at times use the higher education institutions' own systems. While in general, EWP has been welcomed by the sector as part of the drive for simplification, it is still subject to major problems and restrictions, as well as malfunctions, as reflected in many of the comments.

“There seemed to be no coordination on the implementation of the interface with the individual software providers.”

German university of applied sciences

There was relatively positive feedback in the survey on the EWP Dashboard (see Figure 15), which offers an alternative to those institutions that cannot connect via their own or commercial systems: 70% of the respondents assessed it positively (19% yes, 51% to some extent). But at the time of data collection the Dashboard was limited to the exchange of Inter-institutional agreements and Learning Agreements, with project nominations, applications and exchange of transcripts of records likely to be added in the near future. Therefore, mobility management still requires major “offline” work via manual exchanges of scans, PDFs and Excel files. This is still far away from the EWP's promise of automated seamless data exchange.

The added value of the Erasmus+ app has so far not been overly positive: only 27% (10% yes, 17% to some extent) indicated having received positive feedback from students on the app.²³

Importantly, the Erasmus+ app might only reach its full potential when integrated with the Erasmus Student Card, which few institutions currently use.

²¹ For further information see <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/european-student-card-initiative>

²² For further information see <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/european-student-card-initiative>

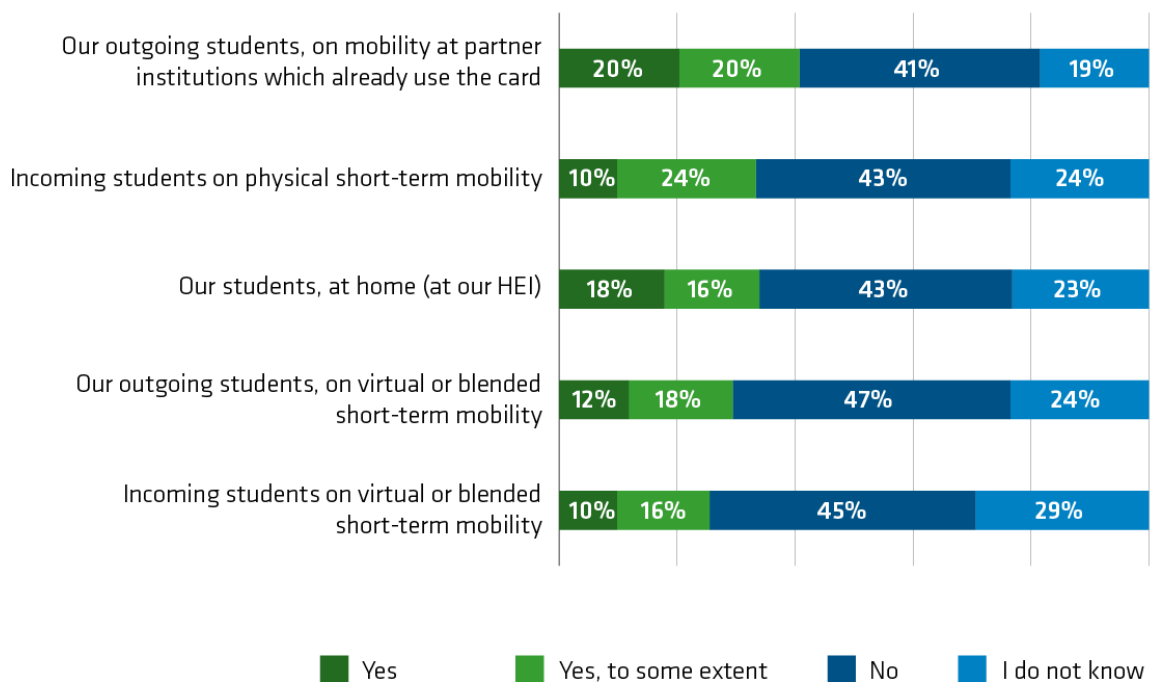
²³ The fact that 73% of institutions responded “no” leaves the question of whether students provided negative or no feedback open, as they may not be using the app.

4.2.2 European Student Card

The European Student Card (ESC) is part of the European Student Card Initiative and promises to simplify the administrative work around student exchanges, with students enjoying seamless access during their mobilities at their host institutions and countries. It is not actually a physical card, but a platform for storing and exchanging students' data. Once an institution signs up, its student cards are granted ESC status.

Figure 16: European Student Card (i)

Question 19.1. If yes, does the ESC bring advantages for: (n=56)



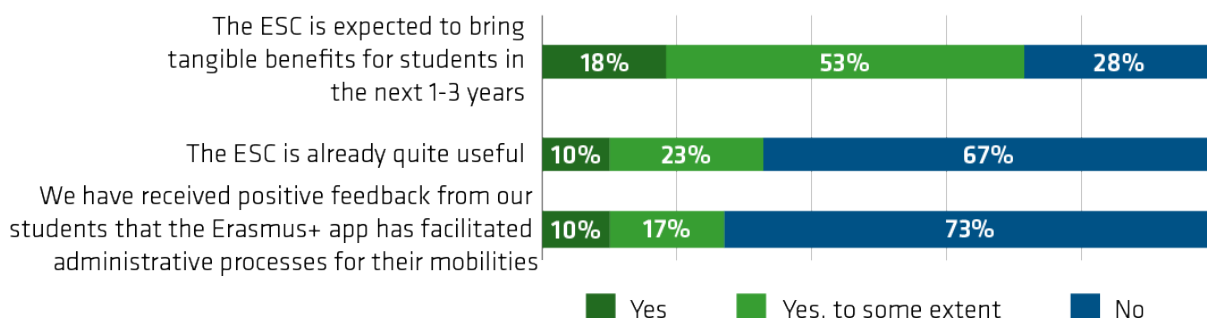
But the European Student Card is still at an emerging stage, which also explains why most higher education institutions cannot yet confirm its usefulness: only 56 of the 436 responding institutions use the card.

Of this small number, about every third institution confirmed tangible benefits for outgoing student mobility (20% fully, 20% to some extent), incoming student mobility (10% fully, 24% to some extent) and students at the home institution (18% fully, 16% to some extent) (Figure 16); but another 41-47% have yet to experience benefits.

This aligns with the fact that the majority of institutions, regardless of whether or not they actually use it, confirm the need for the ESC and are confident that it will bring tangible benefits in the next one to three years (18% yes, 53% to some extent) (Figure 17).

Figure 17: European Student Card (ii)

Question 18: Please provide feedback on the following online tools. In case your institution is not (yet) using the tool, please click not applicable. (Please choose one option for each item) (n=410)



Overall this confirms the need for such a card. One can only hope that the problems experienced at the time of data collection can be solved soon, so that the ESC will deliver on its promises.

Besides the card's own functionality, there are several other open issues: How will it interoperate with the other two ESCI elements – EWP and the Erasmus+ app? Can it integrate with other Erasmus+ tools such as the Beneficiary Module, or at least interoperate with them? How will ESC align with other card models already in use, some linked to national wallets? Can it relate to the [European Digital Identity](#)?

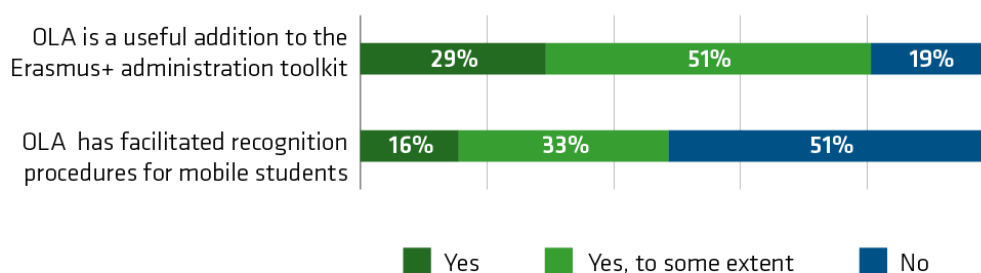
4.3 Online Learning Agreements

While four out of five respondents confirmed the Online Learning Agreements as a useful addition to the Erasmus+ administration toolkit, one in two found that it does fulfil its actual purpose of facilitating recognition of mobility periods.

The majority of institutions acknowledged the Online Learning Agreements (OLA) as a principally useful addition to the administration toolkit, with 80% agreeing (29% fully, 51% to some extent, against 19% no). But less than half of the respondents confirmed that it fulfils its actual purpose of facilitating recognition for students (16% yes, 33% to some extent, and 51% no) (Figure 18). This however does not reflect a shortcoming of the tool itself, but probably rather its lax use in interinstitutional exchanges, as also confirmed in the 2024 Trends report (EUA 2024). But the ongoing discussions on future mobility enhancement in view of the failed EU and EHEA benchmarks may also consider how Erasmus+ could contribute.

Figure 18: Online Learning Agreement

Question 18. Please provide feedback on the following online tools. In case your institution is not (yet) using the tool, please click not applicable. (Please choose one option for each item) (n=410)



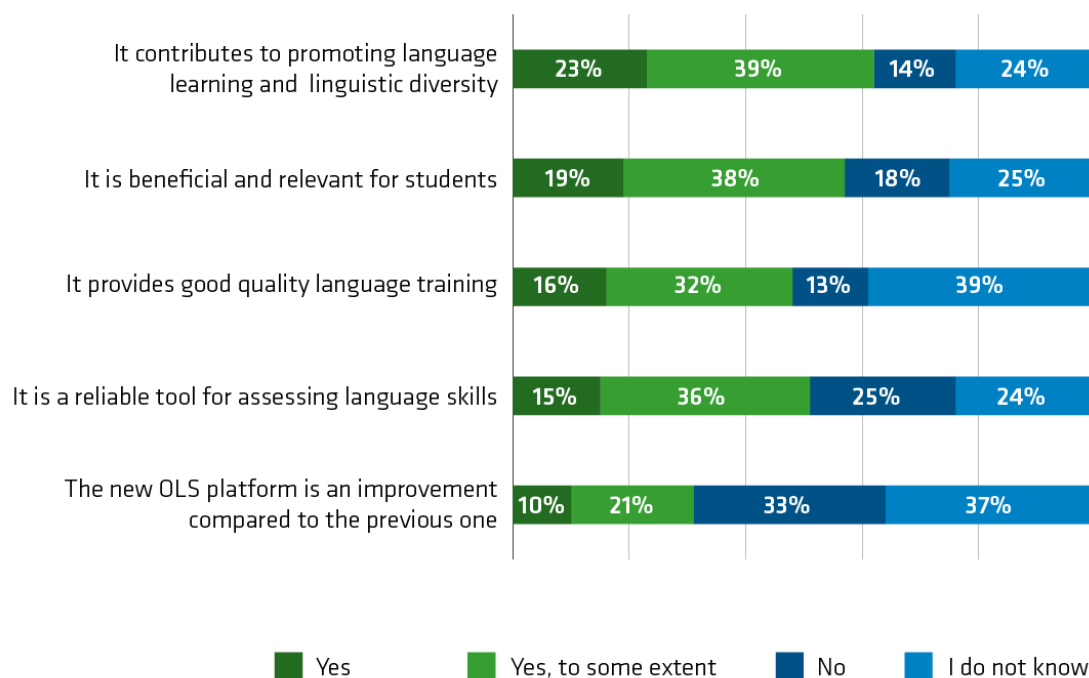
4.4 Online Linguistic Support

About every second institution found that the Online Linguistic Support tool provided good quality language training (16% fully, 32% to some extent) and a reliable assessment of language skills. This is a positive result compared to other digital tools, but leaves scope for enhancement. The relatively low score is likely due to its recent move to a new platform and its offer restricted to certain languages.

The Online Linguistic Support Tool (OLS) is accessible for almost all mobile Erasmus+ students.²⁴ It offers them an assessment of their language skills and language training opportunities.

Figure 19: Online Linguistic Support

Question 20. How useful is the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) tool in its present form? (n=497)



Roughly every second institution found that the OLS provided good quality language training (16% fully, 32% to some extent) and a reliable assessment of language skills (15% fully, 36% to some extent) (Figure 19). While compared with other digital tools this is a relatively positive result, it is a bit disappointing given the fact that the OLS has existed for some time. This may have to do with the fact that it has recently been moved to a new platform. Respondents were divided on whether this has been an improvement: one third thought it was, another third it was not, and the last third did not know.

At the time the survey was conducted, the new platform supported testing and training opportunities in only six EU languages: English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish. While these might be the languages most in demand in the context of Erasmus+ exchanges, this still falls far short of the ambition to provide for all EU languages. Eventually, OLS will be available in all official languages of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programme countries.

²⁴ With mobilities longer than 14 days.

4.5 Erasmus Charter for Higher Education

About 20% of institutions did not find the Erasmus Charter useful for themselves, as they were already quality assured. But another 60% saw its benefits for raising awareness and enhancing quality within their institutions. This is an example of the value that longstanding, well-communicated European tools can render.

The Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) provides the general quality framework for European and international cooperation activities. Higher education institutions in programme countries need to comply with it in order to participate in any of the Erasmus+ actions. This is not a requirement for higher education institutions in partner countries, as the application of the quality framework is ensured through the inter-institutional agreement with programme country higher education institutions.²⁵

Figure 20: Erasmus Charter for Higher Education

Question 26. Do you think that the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) is useful for enhancing the quality of your institution's internationalisation activities? (Please select one option)



Sixty per cent of the survey participants found that the ECHE had improved the quality of their institution's internationalisation activities. On the other hand, 16% indicated that they "do not know", which may suggest a lack of understanding or awareness about the purpose and potential benefits of the ECHE. A fifth of respondents did not see any impact from ECHE on the quality of their internationalisation activities (21%), stating that they were already quality assured, but they believed that the ECHE could be useful in other situations for some institutions, but not necessarily for all (Figure 20).

²⁵ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/erasmus-charter-for-higher-education>

5. Responses to crises

The present Erasmus+ programme had to respond to two major crises, the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, events which constituted a stress test for the programme itself, the EACEA and the National Agencies, as well as the beneficiaries.

5.1 Covid-19

Many institutions praised their National Agencies for supporting them during the pandemic through flexible use of their mobility programmes. Feedback was less positive regarding the management of the cooperation actions.

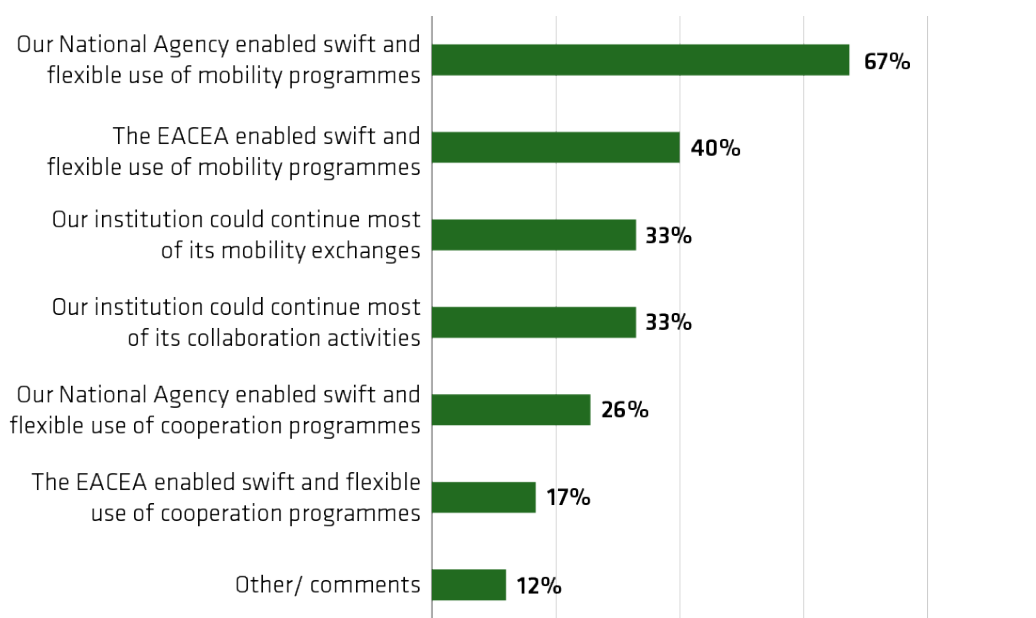
The Covid-19 pandemic put parts of the programme temporarily on hold, resulting in cancellations and the re-planning and repurposing of projects and mobilities, including pivoting to online and blended approaches. All this has been a major challenge for the institutions and their members, as well as for the EACEA and the National Agencies.

5.1.1 Mobility

National Agencies and the EACEA allowed for some flexibility, so that mobilities could be rescheduled or moved online. Nevertheless, the number of mobilities, which since the programme's inception had been continuously growing, decreased for the first time. With the end of the pandemic, the numbers started to rise again. But in 2022 (the latest figures available at the time of data collection) neither student nor staff mobility had reached pre-pandemic levels.²⁶

Figure 21: Reaction of the Erasmus+ programme to Covid-19

Question 27. How did the Erasmus+ programmes react to the Covid pandemic? (please select all that apply) (n=492)



²⁶ European Commission: ERASMUS+ Council Recommendation "Europe on the Move" (proposal), November 2023 <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/proposal-for-a-council-recommendation-europe-on-the-move-learning-mobility-for-everyone>

Two-thirds of participants praised the National Agencies for enabling swift and flexible use of the mobility programmes during the Covid-19 pandemic (67%). Feedback on the EACEA in this regard was somewhat less positive (40%) (Figure 21).

Overall, only a third of the institutions indicated that they could continue most of their mobility exchanges and cooperation activities. Many respondents reported that mobilities were rescheduled, cancelled or moved online. Changes in the national situation and in the instructions issued by National Agencies made continuation complicated, if not impossible.

Some institutions reported that the agencies' sharing of information for mobilities inside the EU was faster than for mobilities outside Europe, but also that some activities were deliberately suspended, due to the different pandemic rules among programme countries.

“For KA1: we had our own travel policy and could have some flexibility because of this. The NA and the EACEA did allow some flexibility but it wasn't swift, nor without challenges.”

Belgian university

Outside Europe mobilities (KA 171) were also canceled by participants due to the uncertainty of the healthcare situation in the countries of destination, which then also led to difficulties in executing the KA1711 projects.

5.1.2 Cooperation actions

Less flexibility was granted under the cooperation actions: only a quarter of institutions stated that their National Agency provided a swift and flexible response to the crisis, while for the EACEA this figure was 17% (Figure 21). The concrete examples provided by participants showing lack of flexibility were mainly related to budget reallocations in light of the fact that activities moved online.

“We were told that although activities were moving online, we'd have no flexibility on the budget”

Portuguese university

“... there was no way to spend the budget allocated for meetings”

German specialised institution

5.2 Support for Ukraine

The EC and the EACEA adjusted the rules of Erasmus+ funding to better respond to the needs of students and staff from Ukraine and their hosting institutions. But rather than generating ad-hoc solutions, Erasmus+ should include a dedicated action for students and academics who are at risk or who come from crisis regions.

IMPROVE CRISIS RESILIENCE AND RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION 11

Based on the lessons learnt from recent crises, the Erasmus+ programme's resilience and capacity to respond should be systematically enhanced. This could also contribute to the general improvement of the programme in terms of simplification. In addition to the measures taken for establishing a European programme for supporting scholars at risk, a dedicated action to support at-risk students should be explored.

Russia's war against Ukraine, which commenced in February 2022, also had implications for Erasmus+: with regard to Russia and Belarus, as part of the sanctions, the discontinuation of any collaboration with official institutions was required, while maintaining incoming individual mobilities from these two countries. In addition, outgoing mobility to these two countries, at least for students, and also for many staff, was interrupted.

In terms of Ukraine, the European Commission advocated "the greatest flexibility possible in implementing projects towards Ukrainian students and higher education staff",²⁷ and soon also announced measures to enhance support. As a result of the war, the Ukrainian population has been displaced, with many fleeing to Europe, among them thousands of students and academics. Some were able to continue their studies and academic careers with at least partial support from Erasmus+. This was due to frontloaded and reallocated budgets, as well as additional funding as part of a broader support package, in addition to greater flexibility given to National Agencies and HEIs to use parts of the existing programme to support the Ukrainian higher education community.²⁸

Table 1: Erasmus+ funding to host students from Ukraine

Question 28a. How many students from Ukraine are you receiving in 2022 through Erasmus+ mobility actions? Please provide an estimate, if you do not know the exact figure.

	1-5 students	6-10 students	11-20 students	20-50 students	50+ students
Number of institutions using Erasmus+ funding to host Ukraine students	73	34	27	24	4

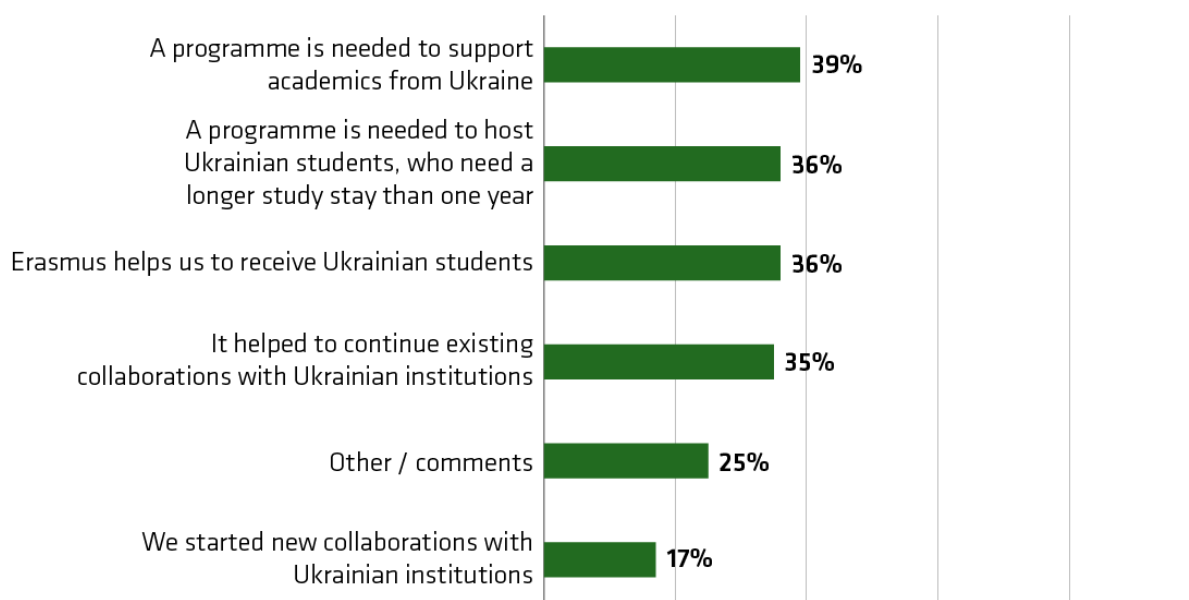
²⁷ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-stands-with-ukraine>

²⁸ See for instance: [EUA's April 2022 briefing](https://www.esn.org/news/adapting-erasmus-support-ukrainian-students-and-staff#:~:text=The%20Erasmus%2B%20programme%20can%20channel,International%20Cooperation%20Instrument%20%E2%80%93%20Global%20Europe) and the ESN article on "Adapting Erasmus+ to support Ukrainian students and staff", available here: <https://www.esn.org/news/adapting-erasmus-support-ukrainian-students-and-staff#:~:text=The%20Erasmus%2B%20programme%20can%20channel,International%20Cooperation%20Instrument%20%E2%80%93%20Global%20Europe>

Among the institutions that participated in the survey, about one third (32%) across 28 countries made use of the Erasmus+ funding to support students from Ukraine, some just a few, others larger numbers (see Table 1). Within each country, the numbers varied greatly among institutions, and there were also significant differences between countries: Finland, Ireland and Sweden received relatively high numbers of Ukrainian students supported by Erasmus+. Geographical closeness to Ukraine contributed to the extensive deployment of Erasmus+ funding in Czechia, Lithuania and Slovakia, but, on the other hand, not so much in Poland and Romania.²⁹ It can be noted that the use of Erasmus+ grants is indicative of university engagement. In the survey, institutions cited various reasons for not using this funding, including the availability of more generous and easier-to-handle national funds (e.g., Austria, Germany, Poland and Norway). In addition, other issues may have prevented stronger participation: for example, in Denmark, national authorities insisted on reciprocity of exchanges, and German universities mentioned losing places for outgoing students as a motive not to participate, or at least not to commit too many places.

Figure 22: Support for Ukrainian higher education sector

Question 28. How does the Erasmus+ programme help to support Ukrainian universities and students from Ukraine? (Please select all that apply) (n=463)



Overall, the feedback regarding the Erasmus+ programme's support to Ukrainian students was positive, and institutions were grateful for the opportunities it provided. Many wish to see more: 36% of respondents would like to see a long-term action to host Ukrainian students who would need more than a year to complete their studies, and another 39% of the respondents called for a dedicated programme to support academics from Ukraine. A third of institutions (35%) were also positive about the Erasmus+ support for collaboration with Ukrainian institutions, and for some (17%) this was even has been an opportunity to establish new collaborations.³⁰

²⁹ EUA Trends (EUA, 2024 <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/trends-2024.html>) shows that two out of three institutions across Europe host Ukrainian students.

³⁰ In the survey for the [Trends 2024 study](#), conducted a few months after the Erasmus+ survey, among the almost 500 responding HEIs, 29% reported enhancement of their existing partnerships with Ukrainian institutions, while another 28% had forged new ones – however, without specifying the funding sources.

6. Mobility actions

6.1 An attractive opportunity for students

Most institutions find the Erasmus+ mobility actions attractive for in- and outgoing students, are reasonably satisfied with their features and conditions, and remain committed to continue using them.

HIGH APPRECIATION, AND NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT

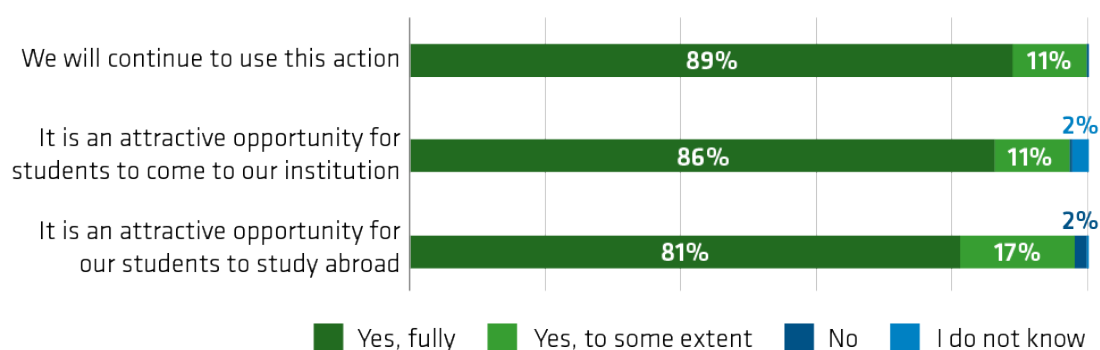
RECOMMENDATION 12

Mobility actions are popular and receive positive feedback on most aspects, but there is an urgent need to improve the clarity of funding rules and to enhance the programme management, especially regarding digital tools.

Mobility is the most popular and emblematic action of the Erasmus+ programme. Since the inception of the Erasmus mobility scheme almost 40 years ago, generations of European students have benefited from opportunities for personal and professional growth through study stays and traineeships abroad – for many a life-changing experience. Around 9% of European graduates have been mobile on at least one occasion. In 2021, 61% of Bachelor and 46% of Masters students received EU support for their credit mobility.³¹ For higher education staff, beyond the actual mobility, the Erasmus+ programme enables peer learning and networking. Beyond the benefits it brings to individuals, mobility has been a driver for fostering cross-cultural exchange and promoting academic collaboration. From 2015 on, this scheme has been taken to the global level, by adding programme actions for student and staff mobility between programme and partner countries.

Figure 23: KA1 Student mobility opportunities

Question 31. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ student mobility? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=284)



Institutions virtually unanimously confirmed Erasmus+ student mobility as an attractive opportunity for their own outgoing students (100%) as well as for incoming students (98%). Therefore, almost all institutions are resolved to continue participating in the KA1 actions (only 2% “do not know”) (Figure 23).

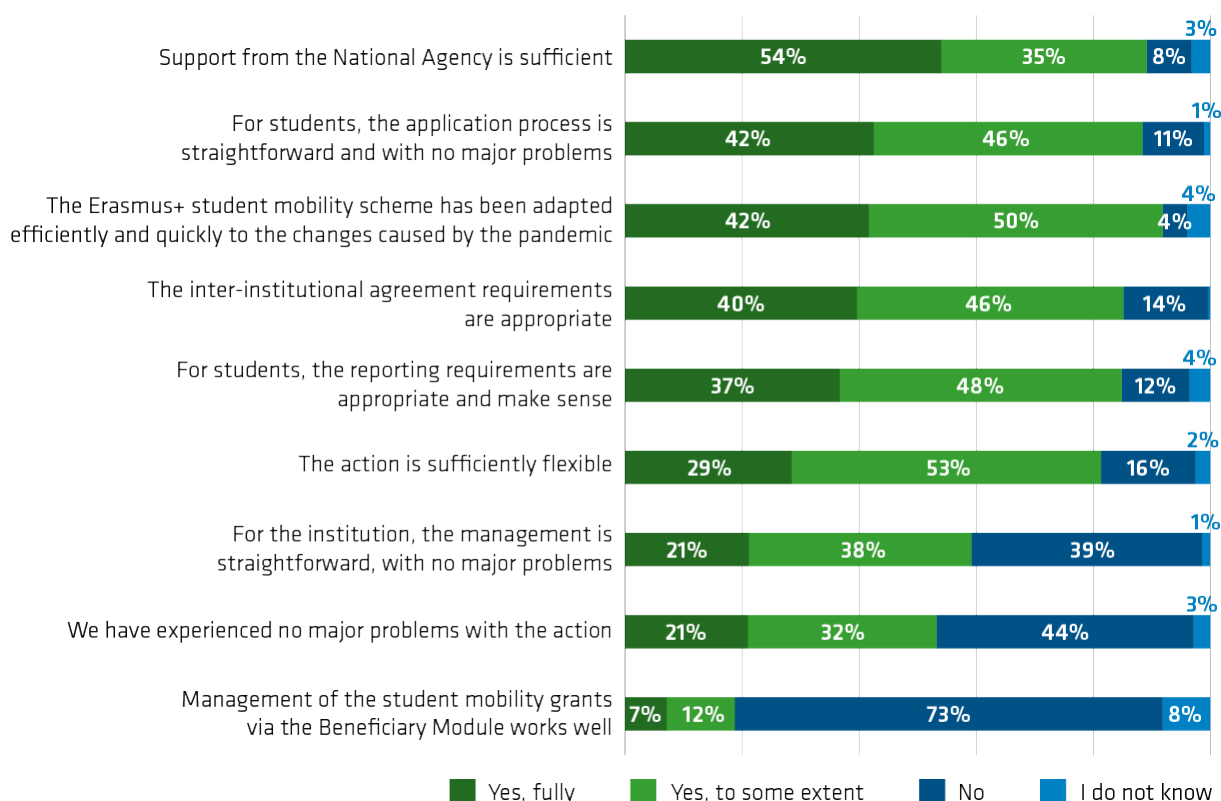
³¹ European Commission: Commission staff working document accompanying the document Proposal for a Council Recommendation “Europe on the Move” – learning mobility opportunities for everyone, 2023 <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/proposal-for-a-council-recommendation-europe-on-the-move-learning-mobility-for-everyone>

6.2 Management of the mobility actions

Approximately every second institution pointed to major problems in the implementation of the mobility actions, mainly concerning aspects of programme management. But these seem to relate to the above-mentioned problems with digital tools – in particular the Beneficiary Module, which almost three-quarters of the institutions reviewed negatively.

Figure 24: KA1 Student mobility management

Question 31. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ student mobility? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=284)



Almost half of the institutions (44%) reported major problems with the action, and among smaller institutions the number is even higher, likely due to limited resources. However, it is important here to differentiate that the problems occur mainly in the institutional grant management and are related to digital tools: almost three-quarters of institutions (73%) find the use of the Beneficiary Module challenging (Figure 24), which confirms and illustrates the general feedback on this and other online tools (see section 4).

While this is a serious problem that causes considerable challenges, all the other findings on mobility management issues show relatively high satisfaction levels (80-90%, at least to some extent), for example regarding the process of students' applications and reporting, as well as Inter-institutional agreement requirements, which are all seen as appropriate. The mobility actions are seen as sufficiently flexible in general (29% fully, 53% to some extent), and even more so in their reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic (42% fully, 50% to some extent; see also section 5). Again, the varying levels of satisfaction between fully and to some extent, indicates scope for some enhancement.

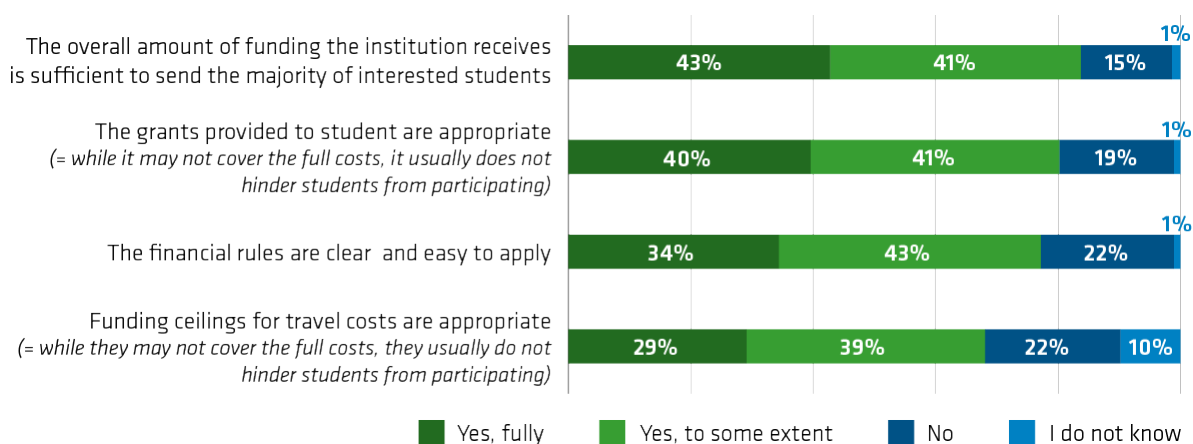
Eighty-nine per cent (54% fully, 35% to some extent) also confirmed that they received sufficient support from their National Agencies, with no major differences across countries – which is a very positive result.

6.3 Funding and conditions for student mobility

About one fifth Of the participants expressed issues related to funding: rules are not sufficiently clear, travel cost ceilings are too low or rigid, and student grants do not cover the full costs. In the comments section respondents stressed that this is making the programme still socially exclusive.

Figure 25: KA1 Student mobility funding

Question 31. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ student mobility? (please choose one option for each item) (n=284)



Regarding funding rules and levels, the results can be interpreted as showing that the majority of institutions (78-84%) are at least partially satisfied, or that around 60% of institutions are only partially or not at all satisfied.

In more detail: 43% are fully satisfied with overall funding, allowing them to send most of the students who are interested in a mobility stay. Forty per cent also report that grant levels are sufficient, since, while not covering the full cost, they would not impede students from participating in mobility (Figure 25). This statement is to be read with some caution, as institutions may only be aware of those students who, due to their socio-economic background, are able to afford Erasmus participation, even if with challenges. But they might not be aware of those who would not even consider applying, given their financial situation. In addition, apart from the students' own financial means, participation may rely on the availability of top-up grants from their home institution, country or region. Yet another aspect are the general cost and income level differences between home and host countries: while Erasmus+ grants have started to take this into account, moving from a high-price level north-western European country to a low-price level south-eastern destination is still much easier than the other way round.

Institutions confirmed lack of funding ("students cannot afford it" EUA Trends, 2024, p. 76) as the most common challenge for students wishing to participate in mobility. A large survey conducted by the Erasmus Student Network specifically on Erasmus+ confirms this, but also points to housing, which is of course a major cost item during a mobility stay (Joint EUA-ESN webinar, 14 Sept 2023). Hence, preferential access to student accommodation, or other innovative solutions for accessing affordable accommodation can make a major difference.

The fact that the grants are not intended to fully cover the costs students face has been an issue of debate since the launch of Erasmus. There has been some improvement over the years: overall grant levels have been raised, more consideration is given to the difference in living costs in destination countries, and top-ups for students with "fewer opportunities" are provided (see also section 2.2.1).³²

Finally, participants reported problems with the overall financial rules: only one third found them sufficiently clear and easy to apply (34%). While this might be due to recent changes in the rules, it is nevertheless concerning for a programme which has been running for so many years.

³² A coalition of the European Students Union, the European Students Network and the European University Foundation provided recommendations for further enhancement <https://www.esn.org/news/euf-esu-esn-launch-erasmus-review-2122-report>

6.4 International Credit Mobility

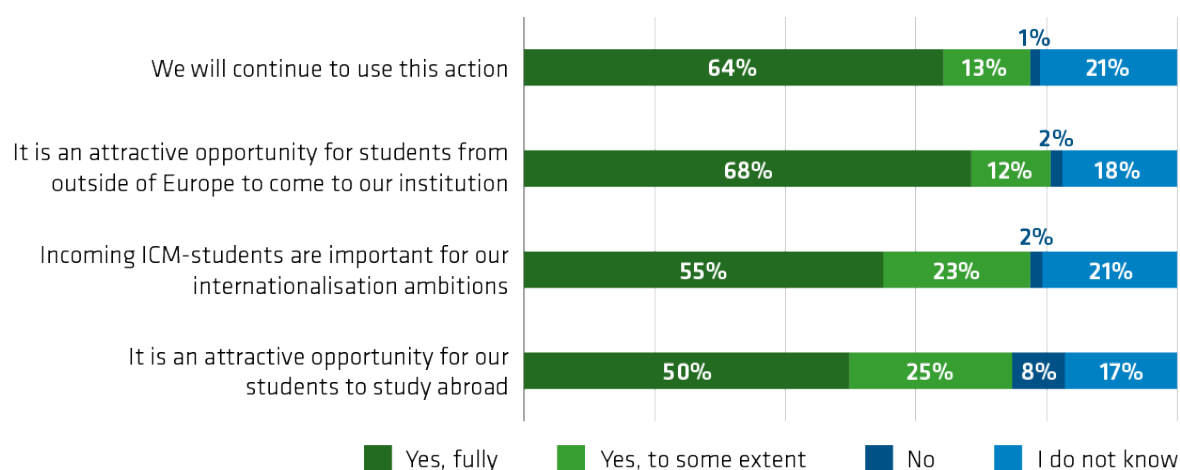
While institutions reviewed the International Credit Mobility quite positively, the problems they face regarding management, and specifically the Beneficiary Module, are the same as for intra-European mobility.

Whereas intra-European Erasmus mobility (KA131) has been around for more than three decades, International Credit Mobility (ICM – KA171) was only launched in 2015. Since then it has extended support for mobility and lately also for traineeship exchanges to partner countries. The EU budget for this action is split into 12 discrete “envelopes” for different world regions.³³ The budget allocations relate to the size of the regions, the potential interest, and the EU’s external policy priorities – which for the period of reporting put an emphasis on the Western Balkans and Africa.

For three out of four institutions International Credit Mobility (ICM) represents an attractive opportunity for their own outgoing students (50% fully, 25% to some extent), while an even greater percentage gave it a positive rating for incoming students from partner countries (68% fully, 12% to some extent), with only 2% not supporting this statement. Overall, 77% (64% fully, 13% to some extent) stated that they will continue to use this action (Figure 26). While these figures appear lower than those for intra-European KA131 mobility, they are actually at the same level if one deducts the 17-24% who stated they had no opinion (“I don’t know”).

Figure 26: International Credit Mobility (KA171) opportunities

Question 33. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (KA171)? (Please choose one option for each item (n=273))



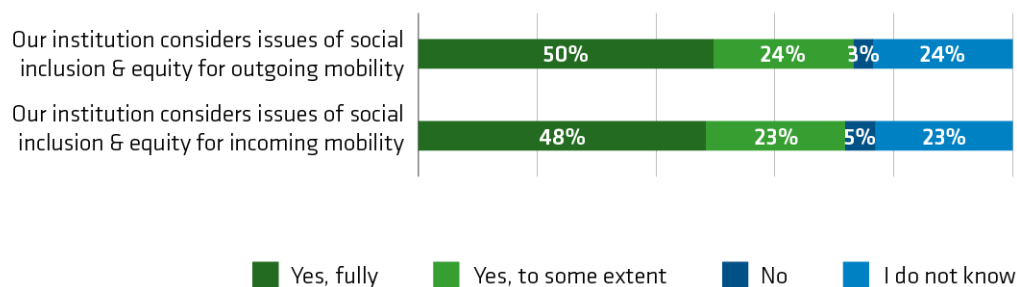
³³ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/erasmus-international-credit-mobility>

6.5 Equity and inclusion in international mobility

The International Credit Mobility likely contributes to promoting inclusion and equity with respect to existing and emerging institutional and national policies in programme and partner countries.

Figure 27: Equity and inclusion in international mobility

Question 33. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (KA171)? (Please choose one option for each item (n=273))



More than 70% of institutions indicated that they have taken measures to enhance equity and inclusion under the ICM for outgoing students, with a slightly lower percentage in the case of incoming students. Deducting again the more than 20% which did not know, this might be seen as a considerable change in comparison to the previous programme. A 2020 study carried out for the European Commission found that, at least among partner countries in the European Neighbourhood Region, the Erasmus+ definitions of “fewer opportunities” were not commonly known, often also not recognised at national levels, and therefore usually not considered in the mobility arrangement between partner and programme countries. Regarding inclusive mobility in intra-European exchanges, the study found little evidence that this had been taken up systematically.³⁴ This situation may have changed through the Erasmus+ priority of inclusion and the top-ups for students with fewer opportunities, which support and encourage existing and emerging institutional and national inclusion and equity policies and measures, and also turns this into a topic for transnational exchanges between universities in programme and partner countries.

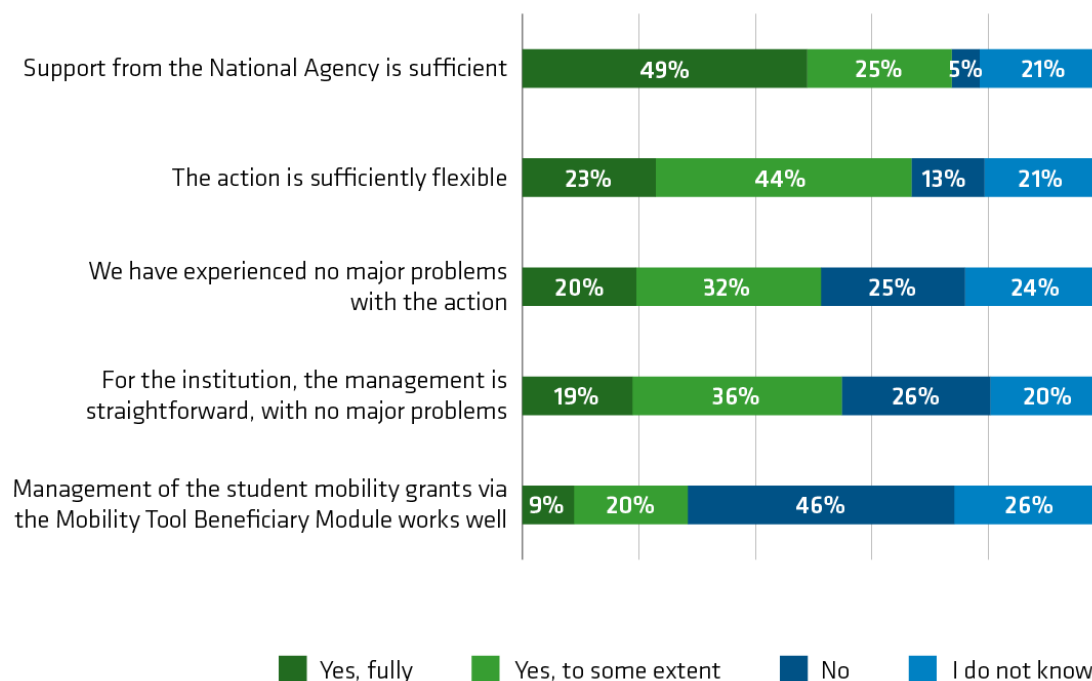
³⁴ Support to Higher Education Reform Experts (SPHERE): ERASMUS+ International Credit Mobility – a study of the mobility of disadvantaged students from Partner Countries, by Luisa Bunescu, Howard Davies, Michael Gaebel, January 2020 https://www.eua.eu/downloads/news/sphere%20icm%20report_final.pdf

6.6 Management of International Credit Mobility

Most institutions are reasonably satisfied with the management of the International Credit Mobility scheme. As for other actions, the main problem is the Beneficiary Module.

Figure 28: ICM management

Question 33. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (KA171)? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=273)



Respondents were mostly satisfied with the support they received from the National Agencies in the context of the ICM (49% fully, 25% to some extent) and find the action sufficiently flexible (23% fully, 44% to some extent). Most institutions had no major problems with the action (20% fully, 32% to some extent) and found its management straightforward (19% fully, 36% to some extent) (Figure 28).

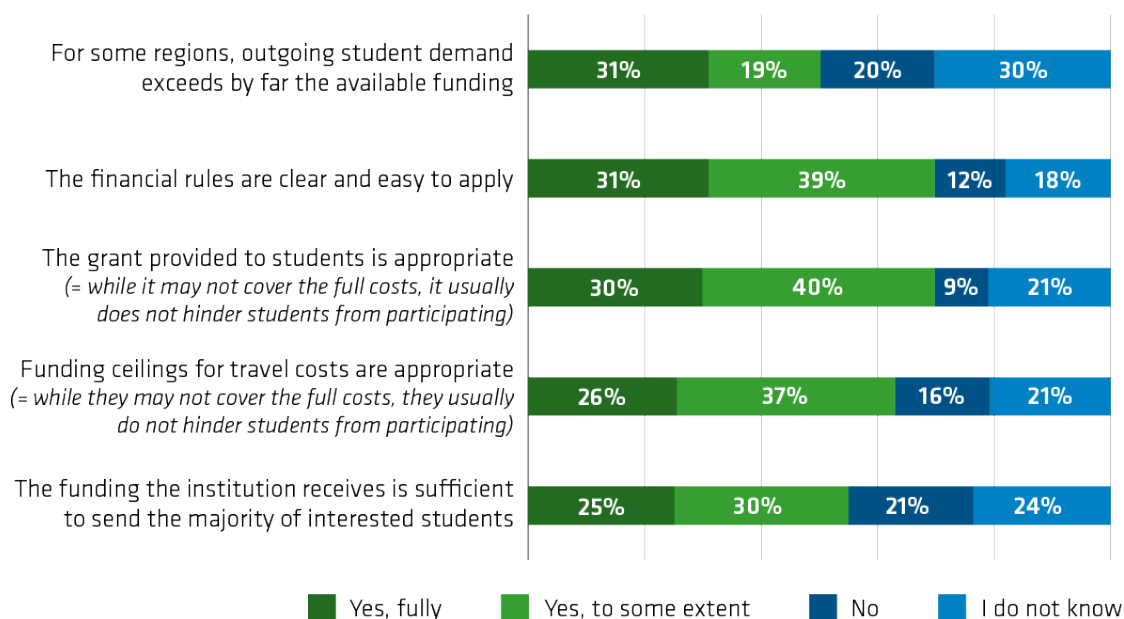
But as for other actions, also for the ICM: 46% of institutions faced problems with the Beneficiary Module, which seems to work well for only 9%, and for 20% to some extent.

6.7 Funding of International Credit Mobility

Institutions are generally pleased with the funding level and rules provided by the International Credit Mobility scheme. One problem is that costs prior to the mobility stay (such as travel to apply for a visa) are often to be advanced or even paid by the students.

Figure 29: ICM funding

Question 33. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (KA171)? (Please choose one option for each item). (n=273)



Seventy per cent of respondents agreed that the ICM funding and financial rules are clear and easy to apply (31% fully, 39% to some extent). Institutions also agreed that the grants provided to students are sufficient (30% fully, 40% to some extent) and the funding ceilings for travel costs appropriate (26% fully, 37% to some extent) and they would not hinder students from participating (Figure 29). This is not too surprising as the ICM provides higher remunerated grants compared to the intra-European mobility scheme.

INTERNATIONAL CREDIT MOBILITY

RECOMMENDATION 13

The regional envelopes for International Credit Mobility need to be adapted to actual student and staff demand, in addition to the international policy interests of the Union.

Roughly two thirds of the institutions stated that the overall available funding matched the outgoing student demand, but half specified that, for some regions, demand of outgoing students far exceeds the funding available (Figure 29). As the European Commission places a strong emphasis on higher education exchange and cooperation in Africa and the Western Balkans, this has resulted in smaller envelopes being available for other world regions. How to achieve a better balance between political interests and the actual mobility demands of institutions, students and staff should be reconsidered.

Some Partner Country universities also pointed to the obstacles that students face in obtaining visas, such as long waiting times, additional travel within their homeland or to a neighbouring country, the absence of a consulate, or alternative online/postal procedures. This is, of course, a particular obstacle for students from low economic backgrounds. Again, the above-mentioned study on inclusive mobility explores this and other barriers in more detail.³⁵

“The major problem with student mobility programs is that in case of the absence of certain Embassies in our country, students are forced to fly abroad to obtain visas which is an additional financial burden, very often not reimbursable.”

Armenian university

6.8 Short-term mobility for doctoral candidates

The vast majority of the institutions that had experience with the short-term doctoral mobility find it useful, despite some concerns about the high administrative efforts involved, level of funding and limited duration.

More than half of the institutions considered the short-term mobility for doctoral candidates as a good opportunity (33% fully, 23% to some extent). While only 6% disagreed, a significant 39% had no opinion. This leaves some room for interpretation: it could be that either the institutions consider it is too early to make an assessment – the scheme was introduced in 2021 – or they do not use this option, possibly also because they do not offer doctorates.

The management and administration of this action were assessed relatively positively: 37% evaluated it as straightforward (15% fully, 22% to some extent), with 15% disagreeing, but again, almost half (48%) had no opinion, either because the programme is new, or respondents have no experience of it. Some institutions complained in their comments about the administrative burden, the short duration, and insufficient funding, which would make it difficult for them to use the programme.

³⁵ Support to Higher Education Reform Experts (SPHERE): ERASMUS+ International Credit Mobility – a study of the mobility of disadvantaged students from Partner Countries, by Luisa Bunesco, Howard Davies, Michael Gaebel, January 2020 https://www.eua.eu/downloads/news/sphere%20icm%20report_final.pdf

6.9 Staff mobility

6.9.1 Opportunities for teaching and administrative staff

Institutions confirmed a positive experience with staff mobility (over 90%) for both teaching and administrative staff, and expressed their intention to continue participating in this action (98%). Also, it was felt that it enables staff development (93%), while longitudinal data suggests that its use for private sector exchanges has significantly increased.

While its importance for students is widely recognised, one should not forget that Erasmus+ mobility is also an important and versatile means to promote higher education staff development, enabling networking and peer learning on almost all issues that matter for higher education institutions.

Institutions reported high levels of satisfaction with Erasmus+ staff mobility (90%+ fully or to some extent) for both incoming and outgoing teaching and administrative staff. Even though only half of the institutions use it for exchanges with private enterprise, this represents an increase compared to the response in the EUA 2016 midterm review.³⁶

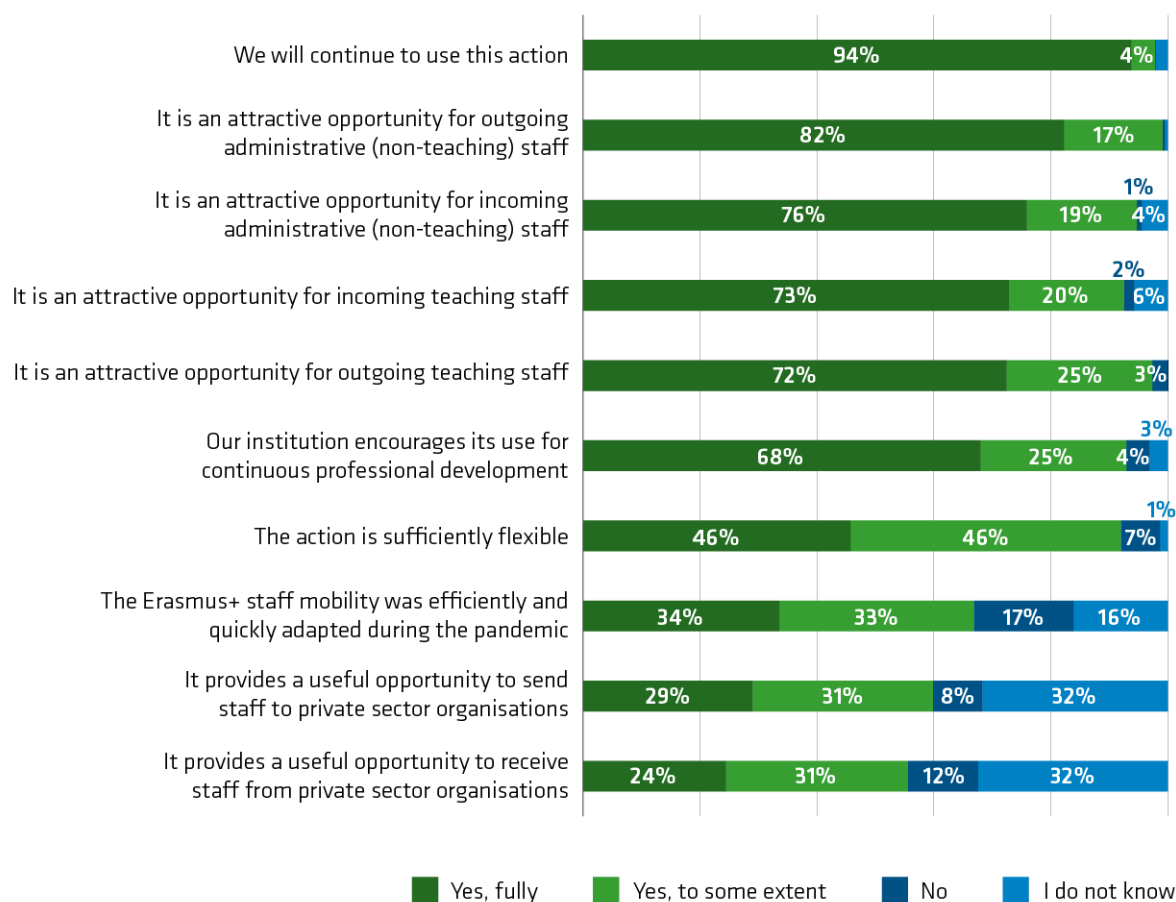
Surprisingly, only about half of the institutions responded to the questionnaire section on staff mobility, possibly because they do not use it and may access other mobility funding opportunities (e.g. through research funding).

But those institutions that did respond provided quite positive feedback, with “no” and “do not know” responses well under 10%, and almost all the institutions want to continue using this action (94% fully, 4% to some extent). Ninety-three per cent (68% fully, 25% to some extent) encourage its use for continuous professional development (Figure 30).

³⁶ Michael Gaebel, Henriette Stoeber: EUA Membership Consultation 2016: a contribution to the Erasmus+ Mid-term review, November 2016 <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/353:eua-membership-consultation-2016-mid-term-review-of-erasmus.html>.

Figure 30: Staff mobility opportunities

Question 36. KA1 – Staff Mobility – Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ staff mobility? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=225)



The surveyed institutions perceived staff mobility as an attractive opportunity for outgoing (82% fully, 17% to some extent) and incoming (76% fully, 19% to some extent) administrative staff, with slightly lower levels recorded for outgoing (fully 72%, to some extent 25%) and incoming teaching staff (fully 73%; to some extent 20%) (Figure 30). Responses for administrative and teaching staff resembled each other. A relatively high number of respondents (32%) did not express any opinion on exchanges with private sector organisations. As the same question in the 2016 EUA Membership consultation³⁷ saw 47% of respondents giving the “do not know” answer, this actually suggests an increased use of this programme feature.³⁸ Most institutions find the action sufficiently flexible (46% agreeing fully, 46% to some extent).

³⁷ Ibid. p.60

³⁸ Ibid. p.60

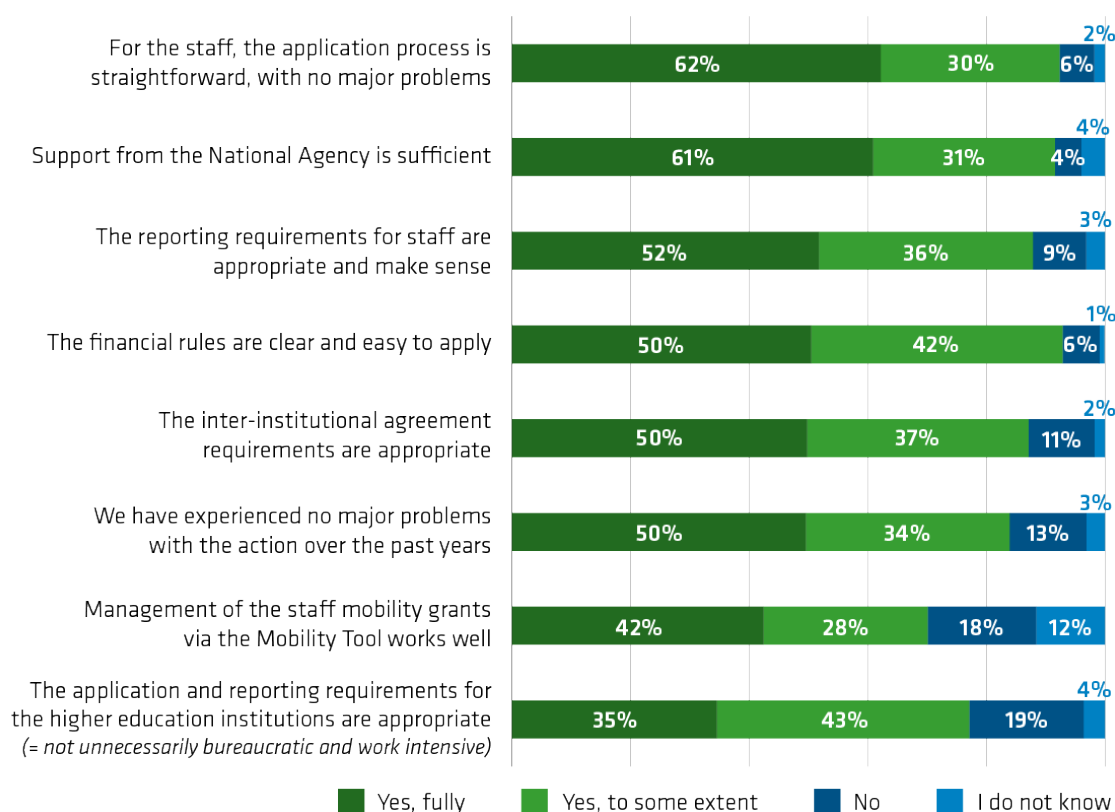
6.9.2 Staff mobility administration and funding

Institutions seem to experience no major challenge with the applications for and administration of staff mobility. Funding volume and grant sizes were assessed as appropriate, and the required co-funding by the institution seems not to pose any problems. Only about 16% pointed out that they receive significantly more requests than they can award.

Compared to other mobility actions, staff mobility experiences fewer administrative problems.

Figure 31: Staff mobility administration

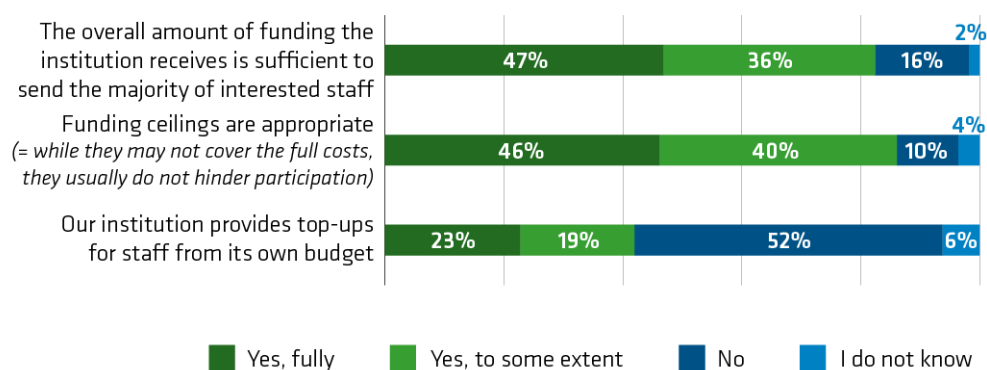
Question 36. KA1 – Staff Mobility. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ staff mobility? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=225)



For most of the answer options, institutions responded positively to questions on the administration of staff mobility: most experience no major problems (50% fully, 34% to some extent), and find the application process straightforward (62% fully, 30% to some extent). Financial rules were considered clear and easy to apply (50% fully, 42% to some extent), and Inter-institutional agreement requirements were seen as appropriate (50% fully, 37% to some extent). The application requirements for the higher education institutions were also considered appropriate and not unnecessarily bureaucratic, but by a slighter lower percentage (35% fully, 43% to some extent), with the same applying for the Mobility Tool (42% agree fully, 28% to some extent) (Figure 31).

Figure 32: Staff mobility funding

Question 36. KA1 - Staff Mobility. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ staff mobility?
(Please choose one option for each item) (n=225)



Most institutions believe that the grant ceilings are appropriate (46% fully, 40% to some extent), and do not hinder participation, with only 10% disagreeing. As grants do not fully cover mobility costs, 42% of the institutions (23% fully, 19% to some extent) provide top-ups from their own budgets (Figure 32).

On average almost half of the institutions assessed the overall amount of funding available for staff mobility as fully sufficient (47%), with another third rating it as sufficient at least to some extent (36%). Only 16% disagreed, as they receive more staff requests for mobility than they can award. This is particularly the case in Belgium (40%), Czechia (71%), Ireland (50%) and Türkiye (100%).

6.10 Blended and virtual formats as part of Erasmus+ mobility

6.10.1 Blended mobility and blended intensive programmes

The majority of institutions find blended mobilities and the blended intensive programmes (BIPs) useful, for students, but also for staff. But of concern is that these actions cause high workloads for academics and administrators, which is not reflected in the grant sizes.

VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

RECOMMENDATION 14

Virtual exchanges should be further explored as a supplement to staff and student exchanges, in due recognition of added value and workload.

The Covid-19 crisis brought a mainstreaming of virtual exchange formats into higher education institutions, as, for a while, this was the only opportunity to have an international experience. In response, from 2020 on, Erasmus+ rules allowed part of a mobility stay to be conducted online or virtually, but only in combination with a physical mobility taking place before or after. Students receive ECTS for the virtual period, but the grant only for the physical period. However, the institution receives the overhead funding for the entire period, including the virtual exchange.

This feature has been gradually enhanced,³⁹ and virtual exchanges have become a regular feature of Erasmus+: in principle, all mobilities can be organised as a combination of physical mobility and online learning, before or after the physical part.⁴⁰ This option provides the means to make mobilities more flexible, for example in cases of differences in the study year or examinations at the home university, but also where personal circumstances, such as work or caring duties, prevent the students from being physically present or financial restrictions mean they are unable to stay abroad for longer periods.

That purely virtual exchanges or “virtual mobilities” (without any physical component) remain ineligible under the Erasmus+ mobility actions for higher education⁴¹ should dampen concerns that “virtual” could gradually replace the physical mobility. In a 2020 briefing European Parliament’s CULT Committee emphasised the importance of maintaining physical mobility, and this seems to mirror also the broad consensus of the European higher education sector.⁴²

But the adoption of the new mobility benchmark of 23% of graduates having had an international learning or training experience brought with it a new definition of learning mobility, which explicitly includes “blended mobility (including its virtual components)”. This means that virtual exchanges are now counted in the measurement of “learning mobility”.⁴³ This is yet another example how Erasmus+ contributes to transformations in higher education, and it also helps to set the stage for a continued exploration of and debate on the internationalisation of learning and teaching.

39 The 2021 Erasmus+ call announced additional new opportunities for student and staff mobility to allow for more flexibility and accessibility, such as “Blended mobility, Blended intensive programmes, International mobility, Doctoral mobility, Digital skills mobility for staff” as well as “collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork” in: European Commission: Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027 Call 2021 Erasmus+ Higher Education Mobility Handbook for Beneficiaries <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/spaces/NAITDOC/pages/33530413/Higher+Education+Mobility+Handbook>

40 Ibid., p. 4.

41 Note that the ECTS User Guide also refers to virtual mobilities, which may be eligible with regard to other sectors or also for higher education as part of a project, under the Cooperation actions.

42 European Parliament: Briefing requested by the CULT Committee “Research for CULT Committee-Virtual formats versus physical mobility”, by Bert-Jan Buiskool, Marye Hudepohl, March 2020 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/629217/IPOL_BRI\(2020\)629217_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/629217/IPOL_BRI(2020)629217_EN.pdf)

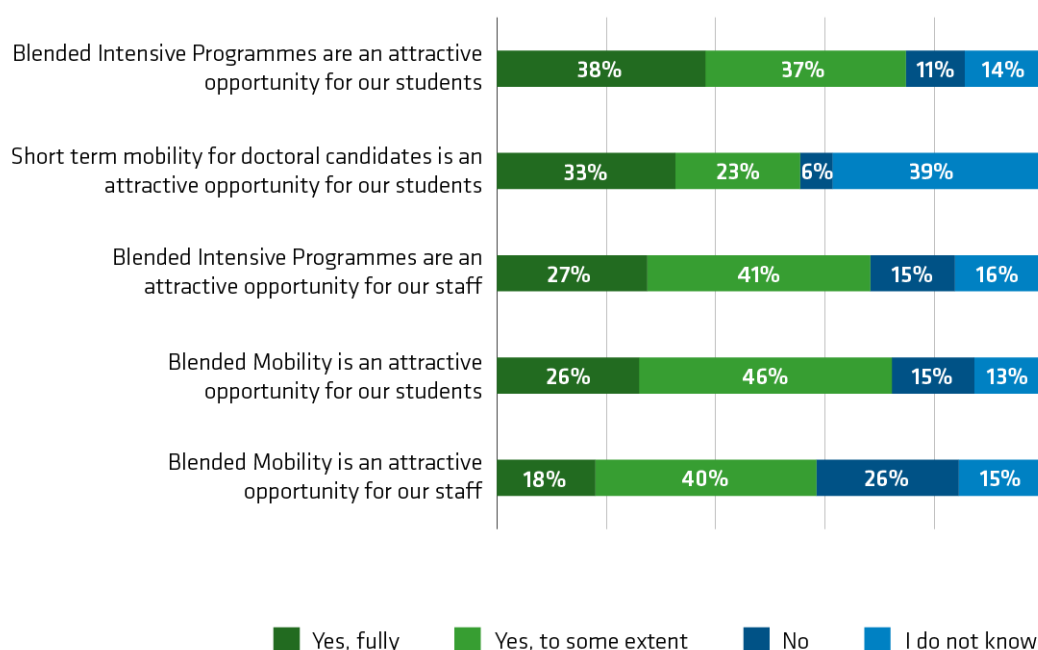
43 Council Recommendation: “Europe on the Move”, 13 May 2024 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202403364

Virtual exchanges and also blended mobility are not new to higher education, but have been used for many years as an established practice of “internationalisation at home”.⁴⁴ However, before the Covid-19 pandemic they were certainly not widely used, having no strategic importance and only limited visibility and impact.

Data from a 2021 survey on digital learning confirms the growing interest in virtual exchanges (EUA, 2021),⁴⁵ and a 2024 study confirms that change has taken place: of 54% of institutions that indicated the use of virtual exchanges, only 12% employed them before the Covid-19 pandemic. Erasmus+ certainly played a major role in this change, and also as reflected in the fact that another 20% of respondents indicated they would start virtual exchanges in the near future.⁴⁶ In addition, institutions participating in the European Universities Initiative committed to making half of their students mobile – which for financial, organisational and also environmental reasons may not be achievable only via conventional formats.

Figure 33 Opportunities offered by new formats of Erasmus+ mobility

Question 32. Do you agree with the following statements regarding new formats offered under the Erasmus+ mobility? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=284)



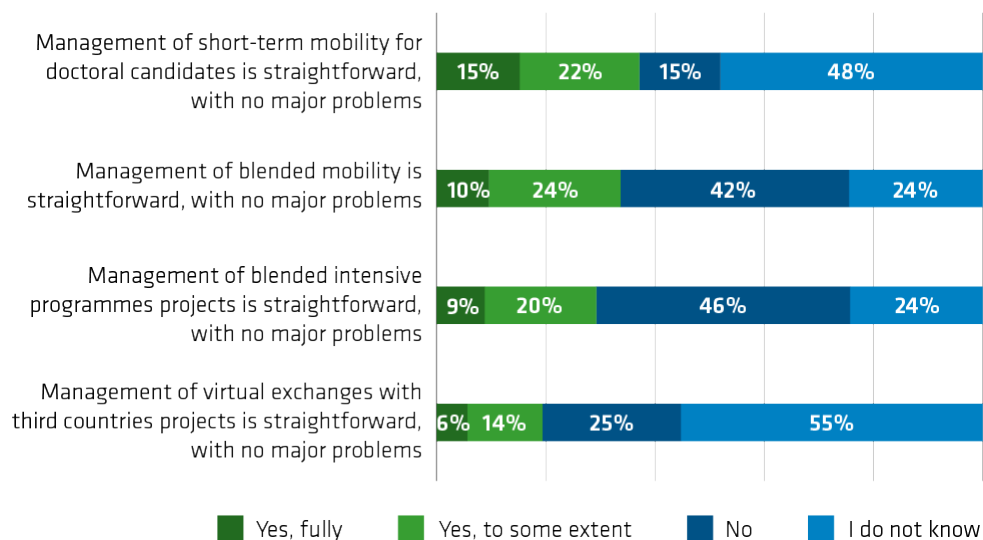
⁴⁴ For example, Joan-Thomas Pujolà: Collaborative teaching across borders: Breaking down barriers with Virtual Exchange, EUA Expert voice, December 2022 <https://www.eua.eu/our-work/expert-voices/collaborative-teaching-across-borders-breaking-down-barriers-with-virtual-exchange.html>

⁴⁵ EUA, 2021, pp. 19, 24, <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/digitally-enhanced-learning-and-teaching-in-european-higher-education-institutions.html>

⁴⁶ Michael Gaebel, Thérèse Zhang, Henriette Stoeber: European higher education institutions in times of transition, TRENDS 2024, July 2024 <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/trends-2024.html>

Figure 34: Managing new formats of Erasmus+ mobility

Question 32. Do you agree with the following statements regarding new formats offered under the Erasmus+ mobility? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=284)



For all these reasons, the take-up of the virtual exchange opportunities Erasmus+ offers has been quite positive. Respondents generally find the blended intensive programmes (BIPs) to present an attractive opportunity for students (38% fully, 37% to some extent), and for staff (27% fully, 41% to some extent). Similar responses were received for the blended mobilities: overall these were perceived as welcome opportunities for students (26% fully, 46% to some extent) and for staff (18% fully, 40% to some extent) (Figure 33).

However, institutions were not fully happy with the administration and management of both blended mobility and BIPs, with 42% and 46% respectively stating that they had encountered major problems in these areas (Figure 34). Comments provided by the respondents underlined the high administrative effort required for implementing blended mobilities and BIPs, and for the latter also the issues of insufficient funding and the scheme being seen as somehow too prescriptive.

6.10.2 Virtual exchanges with third countries

Only about one third of respondents reported a positive experience in using Erasmus+ virtual exchange with third country partners, with 37% not having used it so far. Given the growing importance of virtual exchanges and internationalisation at home in European higher education, whether this simply reflects a gradual increase over time or is the result of other obstacles should be explored.

Given the growing importance of globalisation, and of students and staff reaping the benefits of international exposure, intercontinental online seminars and working groups are an exciting prospect, but not yet a living reality. Just over a third of respondents evaluated virtual exchanges with third countries as an attractive opportunity for their students (13% yes, 23% to some extent), while more than a quarter concluded that they were not (27%). The remaining third (37%) did not, or not yet, have any experience in this field.

This may be due to the fact that the scheme is still relatively new, and many institutions might prefer to first explore virtual exchanges with their European neighbours before they approach partners around the globe. Different time zones might pose challenges for the virtual part, with bigger distances, higher costs and visa requirements creating problems in relation to physical mobility. The survey also shows that only 6% of institutions found the management of virtual exchanges easy and straightforward, with another 14% finding them manageable to some extent; more than half of respondents could not yet provide an assessment (55% “I don’t know”).

This action deserves further assessment and monitoring, given the potential that it holds for internationalisation at home and inter-institutional collaboration.

6.11 Erasmus+ Master Loan Guarantee Facility

The Erasmus+ Master Loan Scheme, financed via the Student Loan Guarantee Facility, needs to be properly assessed. Since 2020, it has been continued outside of the Erasmus+ programme, but is still funded with European taxpayers’ money, despite the fact that even the European Commission’s own reports confirm a lack of take-up and impact.

The Erasmus+ Master Student Loan Guarantee Facility was launched in 2015 as part of the Erasmus+ programme, and remained part of it until 2020. [Analysis conducted by EUA](#) highlighted a lack of take-up and impact.⁴⁷ The approach as such raised many questions, which was also confirmed by the European Commission’s 2018 interim evaluation report and the related staff working paper.

As far as data is available, the approach has had limited success, which looks more like a failure in concept and approach than a problem to be solved through gradual enhancement and upscaling: According to the [European Commission’s 2017 evaluation report](#), while 75% of the first loan takers (109 students) confirmed they would not have had an alternative way of financing their studies abroad, the total number of takers remains low: by the end of 2017, only **428 students** had opted for the scheme. This can be partly explained by a lack of a tradition of study loans and their low popularity in some countries, in particular in Southern and Eastern Europe, and the existence of more attractive national student loan schemes in others, mainly in Northern Europe. Therefore, the European Commission’s 2017 evaluation report concluded that the scheme “would address a market gap rather in Southern European and Central and Eastern European countries, while being less relevant in Northern and Western Europe.”⁴⁸ It would be unlikely that the scheme reached the ambitious goal set in 2015, to provide 200,000 loans by 2020. The scheme was barely known and used only in a few European countries.

However, the scheme is still continued, though apparently outside of Erasmus+, as it is not mentioned on the Erasmus+ website or in the programme guides. A 2022 report by the European Investment Bank mentions the “**Erasmus+ Master Loan Scheme**, as an EU initiative managed and implemented by the EIF [European Investment Fund], on behalf of DG Education and Culture through the **Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF)**”.⁴⁹ According to the report, the scheme is provided by financial intermediaries in 10 countries: for incoming in three, outgoing in four and both in three countries.

47 Luisa Bunesco, Michael Gaebel: EU-guaranteed student loans: A means to enhance international degree mobility? EUA Expert Voice, 2020 <https://www.eua.eu/our-work/expert-voices/eu-guaranteed-student-loans-a-means-to-enhance-international-degree-mobility.html>

48 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and ICF, Combined evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes – Final report – Evaluation of the student loan guarantee facility (Volume 2), Publications Office, 2017 <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/2>

49 European Commission: Financial instruments for education and learning, September 2022. https://www.fi-compass.eu/sites/default/files/publications/ESF_Financial_instruments_for_education_and_learning.pdf

STUDENT LOAN FACILITY

RECOMMENDATION 15

The impact and added value of the EU guaranteed Study Loans Facility should be properly assessed.

Table 2: Provision of Master Loans by intermediaries in 10 European countries

based on information provided in: European Commission: Financial instruments for education and learning, September 2022.

Country	Bank/Institution	Mobility type
Spain	Nuevo MicroBank	Both
Italy (Emilia Romagna)	Emil Banca Credito Cooperativo	Outgoing
Turkey	QNB Finansbank	Outgoing
Romania	FINS (Educativa Group)	Outgoing
Croatia	PBZ - Privredna Banka Zagreb	Outgoing
France	BPCE Sa (BPCE Group)	Both
Ireland	Future Finance Loan Corporation	Both
Luxembourg	University of Luxembourg	Incoming only
Republic of Cyprus	University of Cyprus	Incoming only

The report mentions that students are offered favourable interest rates, which would be an improvement compared to the first years. But it still bears the question of how inclusive the scheme is, also as interest rates for student loans vary significantly between institutions and countries.⁵⁰ There is no information about the number and background of students supported. Compared to various national schemes mentioned in the report, the loan scheme is quite limited, as it is only Master studies, with a maximum 12000 EUR for one, 18000 EUR for two years, which might not be sufficient for covering living and study costs. While the loans should be accessible for students from all European member states, there is no central website promoting the scheme.

Therefore, EUA can only reiterate its reservations and concerns regarding the Erasmus+ Master Loan Guarantee Facility. There needs to be a proper assessment to consider the scheme's overall impact as well as a cost-benefit analysis, given that the loans have thus far enjoyed very limited uptake across European countries. Do they really contribute to enabling study participation, and how inclusive and fair is this measure, given that students take out loans at a relatively high interest rate from for-profit bank institutions?

One question is whether European taxpayers' money would not be better invested in other ways. EUA has proposed a European study trust fund,⁵¹ open to public and private (industry, foundations) contributions. This would be a more visible measure, within and beyond Europe. It would also better suit the European Union and might become a versatile and future-oriented instrument. Similar trust funds have already been used by the EU in other contexts.

⁵⁰ The report mentions for existing national loan schemes annual interest rates between 1% or less, for example in Denmark, Finland, and France, and over 20%, as in Turkey.

⁵¹ Luisa Bunesco, Michael Gaebel: EU-guaranteed student loans: A means to enhance international degree mobility? EUA Expert Voice, 2020 <https://www.eua.eu/our-work/expert-voices/eu-guaranteed-student-loans-a-means-to-enhance-international-degree-mobility.html>

7. Cooperation actions

The different Erasmus+ cooperation actions offer higher education institutions a range of well-appreciated opportunities for engagement with other institutions, and with society and economy partners, within and outside of Europe. They contribute to the development and innovation potential of the individual institutions, as well as to system-level development and the implementation of the European Education Area and the European Higher Education Area. But this impact could be enhanced: apart from further simplification, more synergies among the projects and with policy initiatives should be in place. The decentralised management structure does presently not support this.

COOPERATION ACTIONS ARE KEY FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATION 16

The intra-European and international cooperation actions are a valuable means for cross-border exchange and collaboration, between universities and with society, and for institutional, system- and European-level development and reform. More synergies among projects and further simplification could help to maximise their impact. The approach taken towards the European Universities alliances illustrates what can be done.

Erasmus+ provides a range of different cooperation actions, which differ in purpose and target, for example: Cooperation Partnerships for intra-European cooperation, capacity building actions with partners in emerging countries and Joint Masters, which promotes cooperation with business and industry, among others. The most recent addition are the European Universities alliances, which provide a framework for extensive interinstitutional cooperation of larger consortia. Some actions are centralised, i.e. managed by the EACEA, others are decentralised and implemented by the National Agencies.

According to data collected by EUA, almost all institutions endorse the added value of Erasmus+ transnational cooperation and confirm that they will continue using these collaboration opportunities. Cooperation partnerships and capacity building have a positive and long-lasting impact on the direct and indirect beneficiaries – people and organisations – and also contribute to the horizontal priorities of the programme as well as to European and national policy development and implementation. For instance, Erasmus+ projects have been a major driver for the exploration and implementation of the goals and instruments of the EHEA and the EEA.

These actions should remain flexible, while contributing to the programme's horizontal priorities of inclusion and diversity, democracy and civic engagement, digital transformation, and environment and climate action, to allow institutions and their members to work with diverse partners both inside and outside of higher education, in Europe and internationally.

More could be done to enhance synergies and cooperation between projects. Participants often only learn about the existence of other projects on the same or similar topics at a late stage. Selection results need to be communicated more promptly. The Commission should organise meetings of project participants, considering not only management, but also content. This could create important synergies and enhance any policy and general societal impact. The attention given to the European Universities Initiative showcases what can be done.

The response rates in this section were relatively low.⁵²

⁵² Survey participants were able to select questionnaire modules and themes that they were most familiar with. Unlike for mobility actions, central units such as international offices may not be involved at all institutions in implementing the cooperation actions: they are often applied for and managed directly by individual staff or academics and their departments.

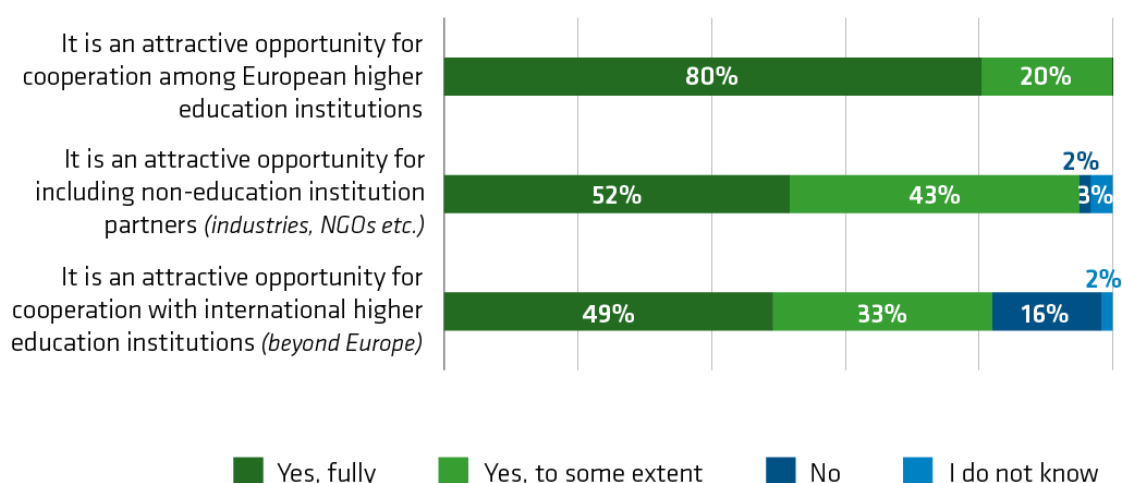
7.1 Partnerships for Cooperation

All the institutions that responded to this part of the survey use Partnerships for Cooperation as an attractive opportunity to engage with other European higher education institutions (80% fully, 20% to some extent), with most of them also forging links with non-education partners (e.g. NGOs, industry; 52% fully, 43% to some extent). While these partnerships are designed for intra-European collaboration, many institutions also involve their international higher education partners (49% fully, 33% to some extent).

Cooperation Partnerships are expected to result in the development, transfer and implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national or European levels. This action is decentralised and managed by the National Agencies.

Figure 35: Partnerships for Cooperation

Question 38. KA2: Cooperation Partnerships in the field of education and training (decentralised) Do you agree with the following statements regarding Cooperation Projects (decentralised)? (please choose one option for each item) (n=61)



All the participating institutions confirmed that Partnerships for Cooperation present an attractive opportunity for intra-European inter-university cooperation within Europe (80% fully, 20% to some extent). Their ability to contribute to society through exchange and collaboration beyond the sector and with non-education institution partners (i.e. with industries, NGOs, etc.) was seen positively by 95% of respondents (52% fully, 43% to some extent).

In addition, half of the institutions (49%) agreed fully and another third to some extent that this action offers also attractive opportunities for cooperation with international higher education institutions beyond Europe. This is interesting, as institutions from partner countries can participate, but not benefit from the budget.⁵³ That actions focused on European (programme country) collaboration also have a wider international impact can also be observed for some other cooperation actions, such as for example the European Universities Initiative.

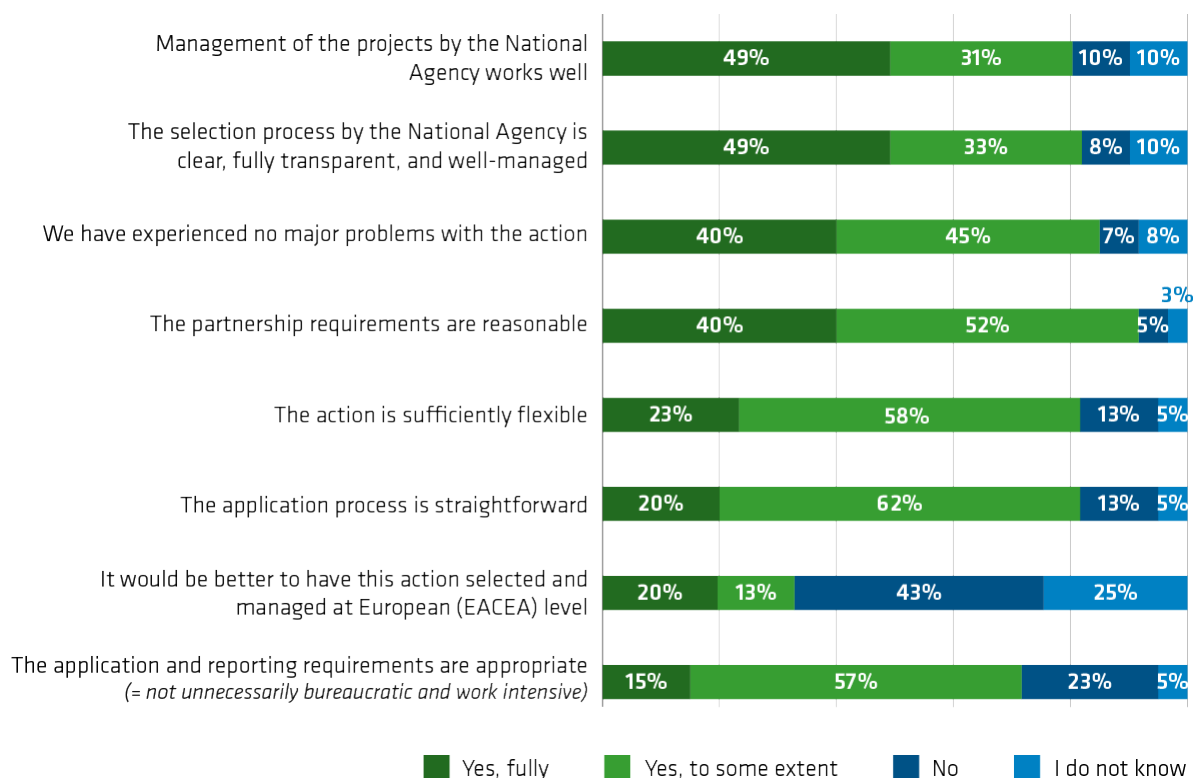
⁵³ So far, institutions from partner countries are only eligible under the capacity- building measures.

7.1.1 Management of Partnerships for Cooperation

The management and administration of the Partnerships for Cooperation should be enhanced, in particular with regard to the action's flexibility and application and reporting requirements. As for other actions, the challenges experienced here are also at least partly due to dysfunctional digital tools. One third would prefer this action to be administered by the EACEA ("centralised"), whereas 43% want it to stay with the National Agencies ("decentralised").

Figure 36: Management of Partnerships for Cooperation

Question 38. KA2 – Cooperation Partnerships in the field of education and training (decentralised). Do you agree with the following statements regarding Collaboration Projects (decentralised)? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=61)



Partnerships for Cooperation were among the actions which were devolved in 2014, i.e. the National Agencies are in charge of their selection, management and support. This naturally resulted in some diversity in how the programme is handled, not always to the satisfaction of the institutions. This might explain why in the survey around one third of institutions (20% fully, 13% to some extent) expressed a wish to have the Partnerships for Cooperation managed at the European level (centralised). However, an even higher number (43%) preferred the present national-level management approach (Figure 36).

This is also reflected in the general satisfaction with the management of the projects through the National Agencies (49% fully, 31% to some extent) as well as with the selection process, which was assessed as transparent and well-managed (49% fully, 33% to some extent).

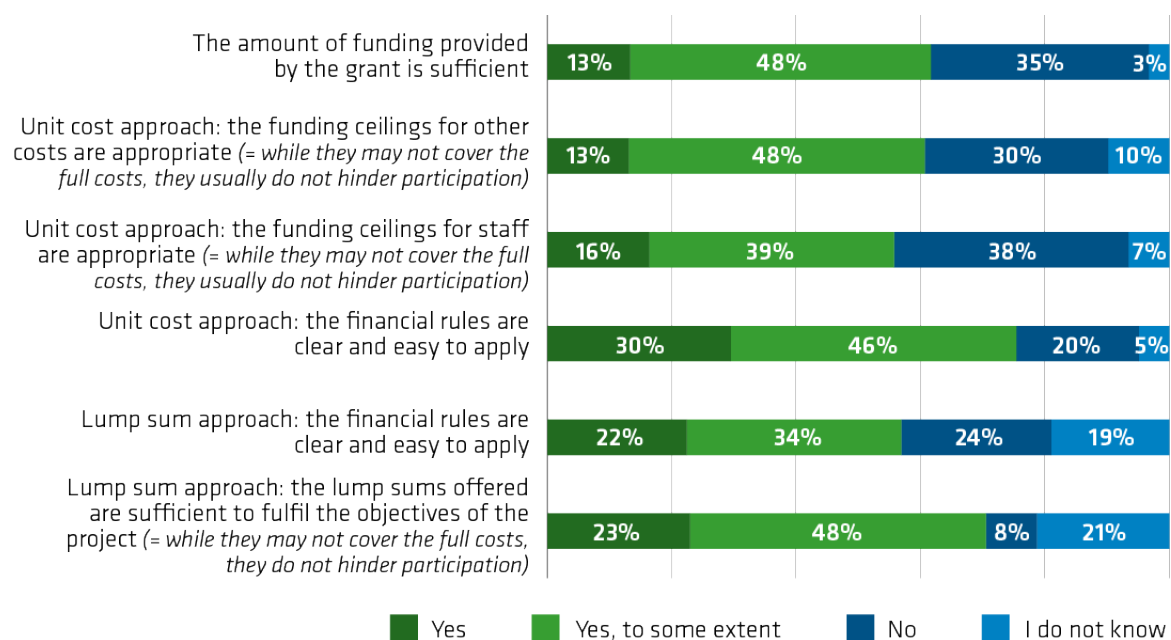
In slight contrast, just 20% were fully, and 62% to some extent, satisfied with the application process. Similarly, 15% provided fully positive feedback on the application and reporting requirements, while a majority of 57% agreed to some extent. The prevalence of "to some extent" responses suggests room for improvement, although the majority of participants (40% fully, 45% to some extent) indicated no major problems with the action.

7.1.2 Funding of Partnerships for Cooperation

Only 13% of respondents would fully subscribe to the view that it is worth preparing an application in terms of likely success rates. About one third experienced problems with the out-phasing unit-based approach. But less than a quarter reported problems with the new lump sum approach, mainly due to lack of clarity of the rules, whereas its capacity to cover costs was well appreciated.

Figure 37: Cooperation Partnership funding

Question 38. KA2 – Cooperation Partnerships in the field of education and training (decentralised). Do you agree with the following statements regarding Collaboration Projects (decentralised)? (Please choose one option for each item) (n=61)



Funding methods, conditions and rules of the Cooperation Partnerships were assessed positively by a majority of respondents, though again mostly only “to some extent” (34-48%). In combination with varying percentages of “no” (8-38%) and “do not know” (3-21%), this might indicate scope for improvement. In addition, just 13% of respondents stated outright that making a project application was worthwhile, while for 62% this was only true to some extent (Figure 37).

The unit cost approach – no longer in use for this action – worked for most, but not all institutions: although only every fifth institution did not find the financial rules clear and easy, about one third found the funding ceilings for staff (38%) and for “other costs” (30%) too low.

Is the new lump sum approach, which replaced the unit cost, better? The ability of lump sum grants to support the project goals was assessed rather positively, with only 8% responding negatively and 21% declaring they did not yet know.

However, the clarity of the financial rules was seen less positively than for the unit cost approach: only 56% of respondents found them straightforward (22% fully, 34% to some extent) and 24% provided negative feedback. The fact that it has been launched quite recently, and that 19% opted for “do not know” suggests that it might be too early to fully assess the lump sum approach.

While the lump sum approach cannot fully solve the problem of insufficient grant sizes, indicated by about one third of the institutions (35%), an end to the rigid ceilings and other budget rules might be helpful in producing enhanced flexibility (see also section 3.3 on the lump sum approach).

Some comments expressed the concern that lump sums might cause an increase in workload, especially at the reporting stage. The regular reporting will require more attention to project content rather than budgets. Yet at the same time, most project participants will have to continue their accounting and financial reporting at least for internal purposes, even if they do not have to submit this to the National Agency. As the project can no longer rely on a reporting approach prescribed by Erasmus+, project partners will need to find solutions for dealing with the diversity of rules and approaches, due to different institutions and countries. It is also still unclear what all this means for the closing of the project, and particularly in the case of potential audits.

7.2 Partnerships for Cooperation for European NGOs

Cooperation Partnerships for European NGOs are an important feature of the Erasmus+ Cooperation actions, as their rules take into account the specific situation of European networks and associations, and underline the importance of their role. All but one respondent confirmed their satisfaction with and the relevance of this action. But there were similar concerns about the lump sum approach to those raised for the Cooperation Partnerships.

A special call is issued annually for Cooperation Partnerships implemented by European NGOs (ENGOS) active in the field of education, training or youth, provided they operate under a formally recognised European body or secretariat,⁵⁴ and are legally established in a Programme Country and an associated Partner Country. Only 15 respondents replied to this survey module, likely because the call is limited to a special type of organisation, but also because the action is rather new – thus the following evidence is rather anecdotal.

Cooperation Partnerships for ENGOS were reported to present an attractive opportunity among European higher education institutions and organisations: all but one of the 15 respondents to this survey section agreed with this statement, at least to some extent, stating that they will continue to apply for these projects.

Responses also indicated positive feedback on ENGO project management, with the vast majority agreeing that partnership requirements are reasonable and that they so far faced no major problems with the application process.

Most also considered the lump sums offered to be adequate to fulfil the project objectives (29% fully, 50% to some extent). On the other hand, financial rules as well as the flexibility of the action received less positive feedback, again likely due to uncertainties with the new lump sum approach, as elaborated in the previous section.

⁵⁴ See Part D of the Programme Guide for ENGOS: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-d/glossary-common-terms>

7.3 Erasmus Mundus Action

Only 7% of institutions answered the section of the survey on the Erasmus Mundus Actions – a reminder that joint programmes, while their core purposes are appreciated and of strategic value, are not massive in numbers. This makes it a small, but certainly important action for Europe’s internationalisation. Those institutions who use the actions confirmed their high value for the learning mobility of European and in particular international students. They also supported exchange and learning among higher education institutions, and, scoring slightly lower, with their non-university partners. Application requirements, success rates, administration and funding, while they probably could be enhanced, all seem to be appropriate.

Erasmus Mundus Actions comprise the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters (EMJM) and the Erasmus Mundus Design Measures (EMDM). These actions aim at fostering excellence and the internationalisation of HEIs via study programmes at Masters level that are jointly recognised and delivered by HEIs in Europe, and open to other countries of the world.

The following section is based on anecdotal evidence, as only 7% (37 institutions) of the sample responded in relation to the EMJM and 5% (23 institutions) to the EMDM, which reflects the fact that not many institutions have extensive experience with these programmes. A reason for the relatively low participation is likely that not every institution is ready to engage into the development and offer of a joint programme, which is a major long-term investment. But importantly, the actions were assessed very positively by those institutions that make the effort, and are seen as attractive opportunities.

7.3.1 Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters

The Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters (EMJM), a longstanding measure of Erasmus+, supports integrated transnational study programmes at Masters level delivered by European higher education institutions and their international partners. These partners can include other educational and/or non-educational bodies with specific expertise and interests in the concerned study areas/professional domains.

The EMJM received overwhelmingly positive feedback from survey respondents. The majority confirmed it to be an attractive opportunity for international students (86% fully), for European students (59% fully), for teaching staff (57% fully), and for cooperation with European institutions (78% fully). Most institutions stated that the partnership requirements are reasonable (57% fully, 32% to some extent), financial rules are clear and easy for most (30% fully, 46% to some extent), and also that the amount of funding provided is sufficient (27% fully, 54% to some extent). Funding ceilings were seen as appropriate and felt not to hinder participation (30% yes fully, 51% yes, to some extent).

Interestingly, the challenges institutions experience with the EMJM are legal and social rather than financial or administrative – which is different from other actions. Amongst them there are also issues that are not caused by Erasmus+, such as issues with visas, which most non-EU students require to participate.

Most institutions intend to continue applying to the EMJM (73% fully, 16% to some extent). The sustainability prospects for the resulting joint programmes are reasonable, with 58% of institutions indicating that they would continue them even after the end of project funding (49% to some extent and 9% fully).

7.3.2 Erasmus Mundus Design Measures

Erasmus Mundus Design Measures (EMDM) focus on the capacities of universities to modernise and internationalise their curricula and teaching practices, pool resources and develop common mechanisms related to quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of degrees.

Feedback on EMDM was very positive, with 91% of respondents agreeing fully or to some extent that this action poses an attractive opportunity for cooperation with international (43% fully, 48% to some extent) and especially with European HEIs (61% fully, 30% to some extent). Also positively assessed, though by comparison rated slightly lower, was cooperation with non-education partners such as industries or NGOs (30% fully, 43% to some extent).

About three quarters of respondents also found the financial rules clear and easy to apply (43% fully, 35% to some extent), the lump sums sufficient (26% fully, 43% to some extent) and the application process straightforward (35% fully, 39% to some extent). Slightly fewer institutions, but still a sound majority, confirmed that the success rates justified the time and effort spent on preparing the application (26% fully, 43% to some extent).

7.4 Capacity Building

Almost all the institutions which shared their views on the Capacity Building action evaluated it as a highly attractive opportunity for collaboration with international (100%) and European partner institutions (99%), and will continue to apply for projects in this area (95%). Grant size, application process and project management rules were not seen as a challenge, but there is some scope for improvement when it comes to flexibility (22%) and the financial rules (19%).

Capacity Building enables Europe's universities to undertake projects with partner institutions from countries eligible under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – “Global Europe”, therefore excluding industrialised countries. The main aim is capacity building, but of course the actual motives for engaging in transnational collaboration are also, and in particular, enhancing internationalisation, forging strategic partnerships and creating mutual learning opportunities.

Figure 38: Capacity Building opportunities

Question 50. KA2 – Capacity building in Higher Education. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Capacity Building? (Please choose one for each item) (n=59)

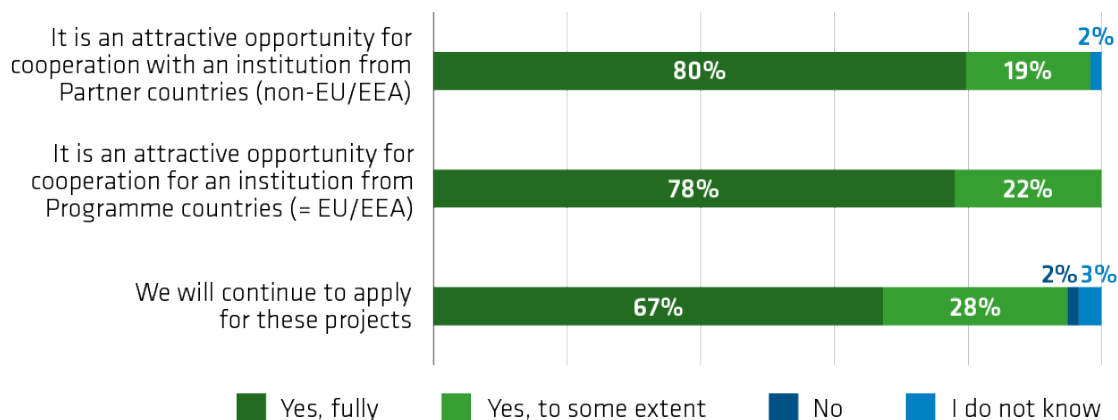
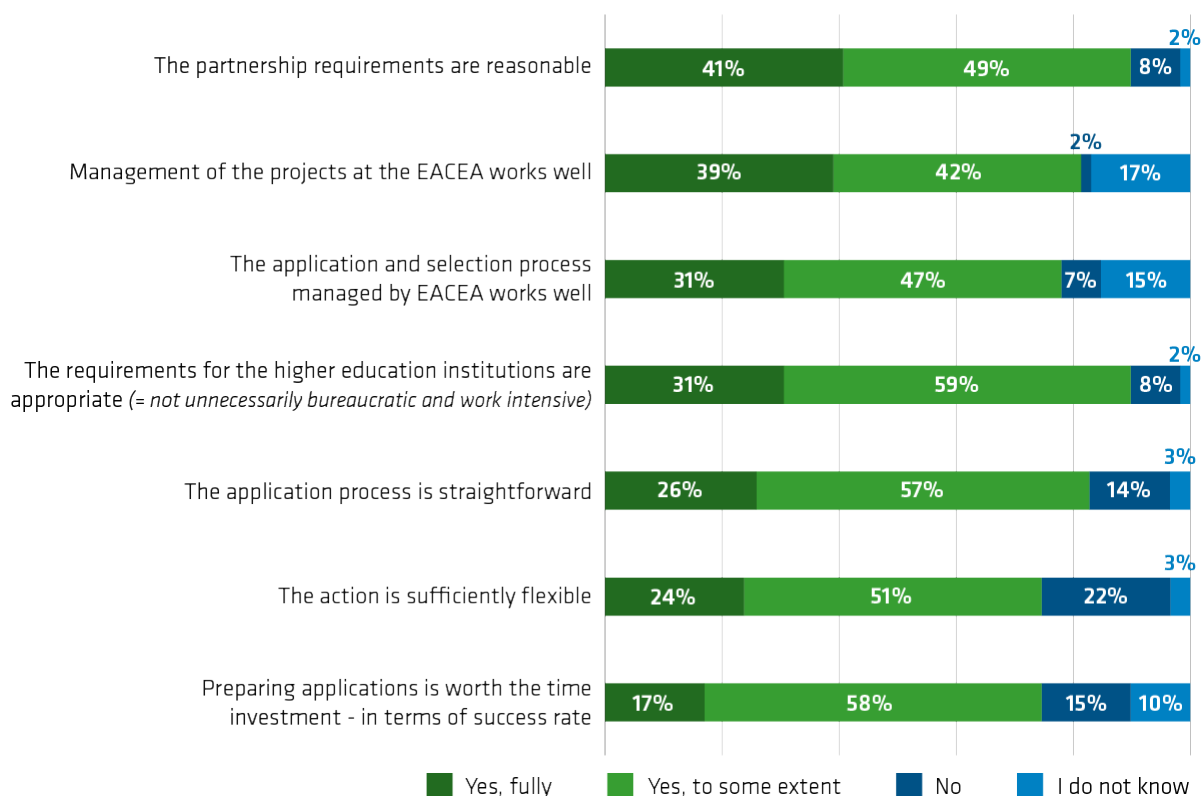


Figure 39: Capacity Building management

Question 50. KA2 – Capacity building in Higher Education. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Capacity Building? (Please choose one for each item) (n=59)

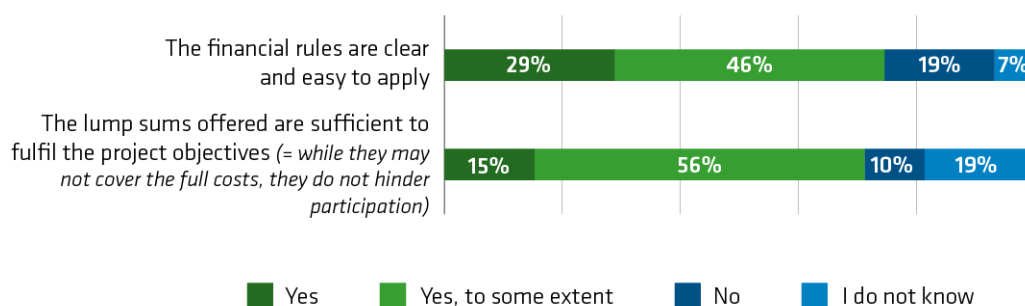


The vast majority of respondents evaluated Capacity Building as an attractive opportunity for cooperation with institutions from both partner countries (80% fully) and programme countries (78% fully). Therefore, most institutions (67% fully, 28% to some extent) were planning to continue to apply for this action (Figure 38).

At least three quarters of institutions thought that the management and administration of the Capacity Building action works relatively well – but with a relatively large share of “to some extent” (42-59%). For example, only a quarter fully agreed that the action is sufficiently flexible (24%) and that the application process is straightforward (26%), and only a third that project requirements are appropriate and not unnecessarily bureaucratic (31%) (Figure 39).

Figure 40: Capacity Building funding

Question 50. KA2 – Capacity building in Higher Education. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Capacity Building? (Please choose one for each item) (n=59)



The same goes for the lump sum approach: three quarters found the financial rules clear and easy to apply, but with a relatively high number of “to some extent” responses (46%). As for the other actions, this might also be due to the fact that the approach has been introduced only recently. This also explains why 19% did not know whether the grant would be sufficient to fulfil the project objectives, whereas the majority thought it was, but again mostly “to some extent” (15% fully, 56% to some extent). All this suggests that there is scope for improvement, and that the EACEA may want to assess whether the limited satisfaction revealed in the survey could be enhanced through simplification, better communication or more support for applicants and project owners.

7.5 European Universities Initiative

Launched in 2018 as a pilot, in 2021 the European Universities Initiative (EUI) became a regular action of Erasmus+. Larger transnational university consortia establish themselves in alliances to explore continuous multi-layered collaboration and mobility exchanges.

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE

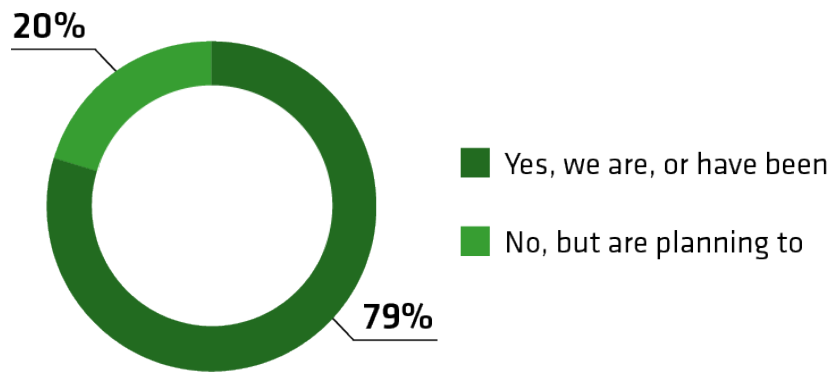
RECOMMENDATION 17

The European Universities Initiative and the alliances are more than a project. Its continuation under the next Multiannual Financial Framework needs a holistic reflection on all relevant dimensions to ensure long-term sustainability and success. While serving as a testbed for higher education policies and practices, individual alliances should not be overburdened with objectives.

The measure has been welcomed by the higher education sector, as it draws attention to the university as an institution with multiple missions, highlighting transnational cooperation in learning and teaching as well as in other fields. It has stimulated institutional and system-level reflection on the implementation of higher education reform in the context of the European Education Area and the European Higher Education Area. In the interim, these are promising developments which call for continuation and further enhancement.

Figure 41: Respondents’ participation in a European University alliance

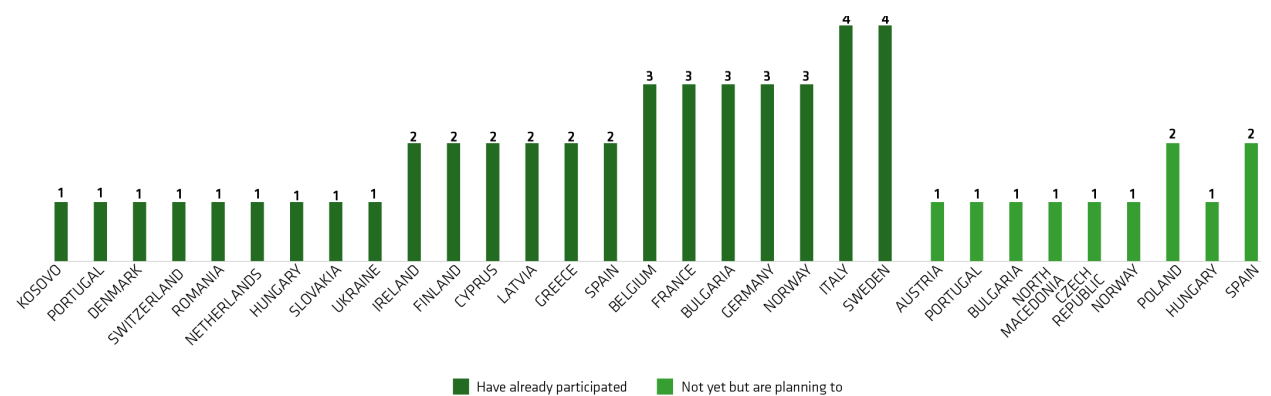
Question 42. KA2 – Partnerships for Excellence. European Universities – Is your higher education institution part of a European University alliance consortium? (n=55)



Fifty-five institutions, all but two from programme countries,⁵⁵ responded to this section of the questionnaire. All were either part of an alliance (79%) or plan to apply (20%) (Figure 41 & 42).

Figure 42: Respondents’ participation in a European University alliance – by country

Question 42. KA2 – Partnerships for Excellence. European Universities – Is your higher education institution part of a European University alliance consortium? (n=55)



In the survey higher education institutions confirmed continued interest and enthusiasm in the measure, but also reported concerns and challenges, such as the need for continuous high investment, and the presence of high external policy pressures.

⁵⁵ The two non-programme countries were Kosovo and Ukraine.

7.6 Experiences and challenges

The European Universities initiative (EUI) has been strongly welcomed by the institutions already involved and those still intending to apply. Institutions supported the overall political goals of the European Commission for this action, but also commented that there are too many. Achieving participation of staff and students beyond those directly involved is challenging. The respondents would welcome better opportunities for involving other cooperation partners from third countries. This could also lessen concerns that the focus on the alliance negatively impacts their other collaboration relations. Despite these challenges and concerns about insufficient resources, most institutions see their alliance as a strategic approach towards the future (38% fully, 44% to some extent).

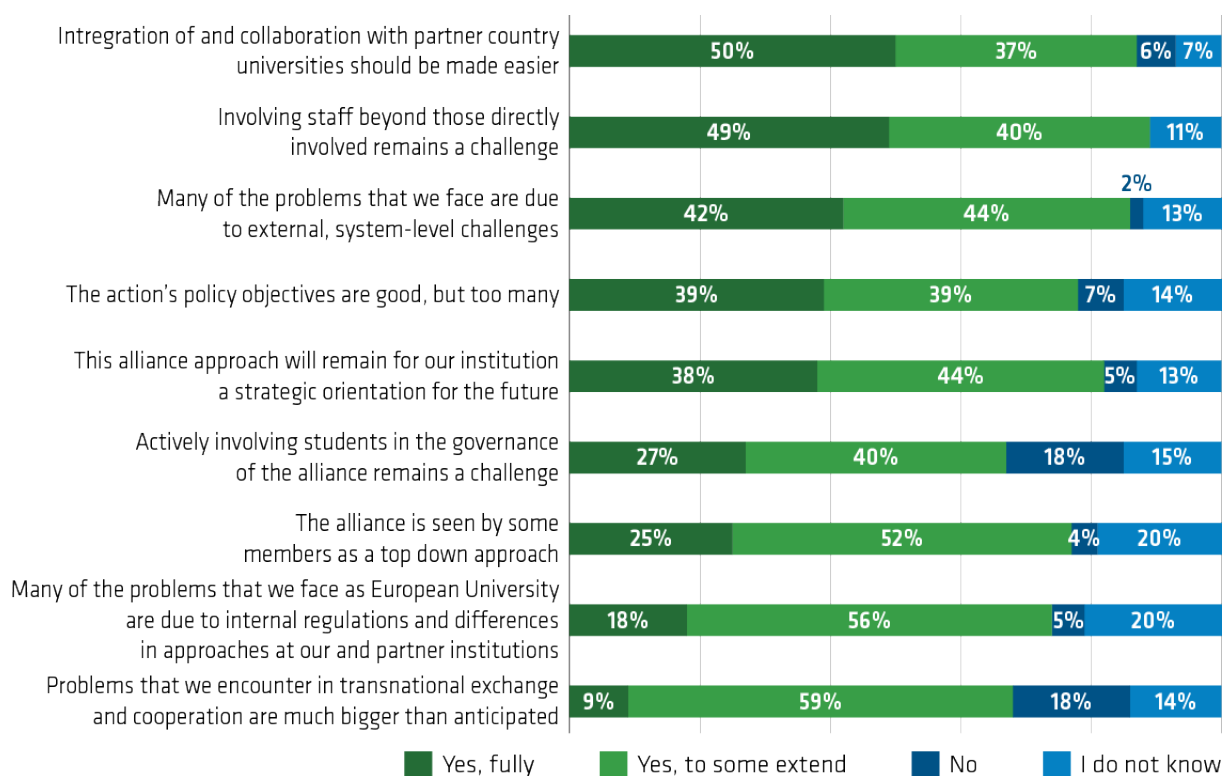
Practically all the institutions (79% fully, 20% to some extent) agreed that the EUI is an attractive action and that they will continue to apply (78% fully, 13% to some extent). They consider the action worth the effort, but also in some respects challenging (59% fully agree and 36% to some extent).

A core goal and purpose of the EUI is the enhancement of transnational exchange and cooperation among universities, and the identification and elimination of related obstacles. But most institutions felt that these problems were slightly bigger than they would have anticipated (9% fully, 59% to some extent). Most institutions (42% fully, 44% to some extent) indicated that these problems are mainly due to external, system-level conditions, such as national regulations, external quality assurance, national funding rules, etc. But many acknowledge that there are also internal challenges (18% fully agree; 56% to some extent).

Seventy-eight per cent (39% fully, 39% to some extent) stated that the policy objectives set by the European Commission for this action are important, but simply too numerous. Nevertheless, one third fully subscribed to the statement that the action is sufficiently flexible and allows them to develop and implement measures according to their own vision, while another 50% supported this at least to some extent.

Figure 43: Challenges in implementing a European University alliance

Question 44. Which of the following statements would you support? (n=56)



Only a small number of institutions found their staff (16%) and students (11%) highly interested in the alliance and its activities. Almost all (49% fully, 40% to some extent) confirmed difficulties in involving staff who were not already directly engaged in the alliance's activities. Another common problem was the involvement of students in alliance governance (27% fully agree; 40% to some extent). More than three quarters also observed that some members of their institution see the alliance as a top-down approach. While this contradicts the actual ambition of transforming the entire institution, one could argue that the alliances are relatively recent, still under construction and yet to achieve their full potential.

The latter view is supported by the fact that most institutions confirmed the alliance as their strategic approach for the future (38% fully, 44% to some extent), despite the high attention and maintenance it requires. However, one concrete concern is that this focus might be detrimental to other forms of transnational cooperation – unless of course, the alliances become the driver and umbrella for other, more diversified, cooperation relations. Most institutions (50% fully, 37% to some extent) would welcome a better means of including universities from partner countries into the alliances.

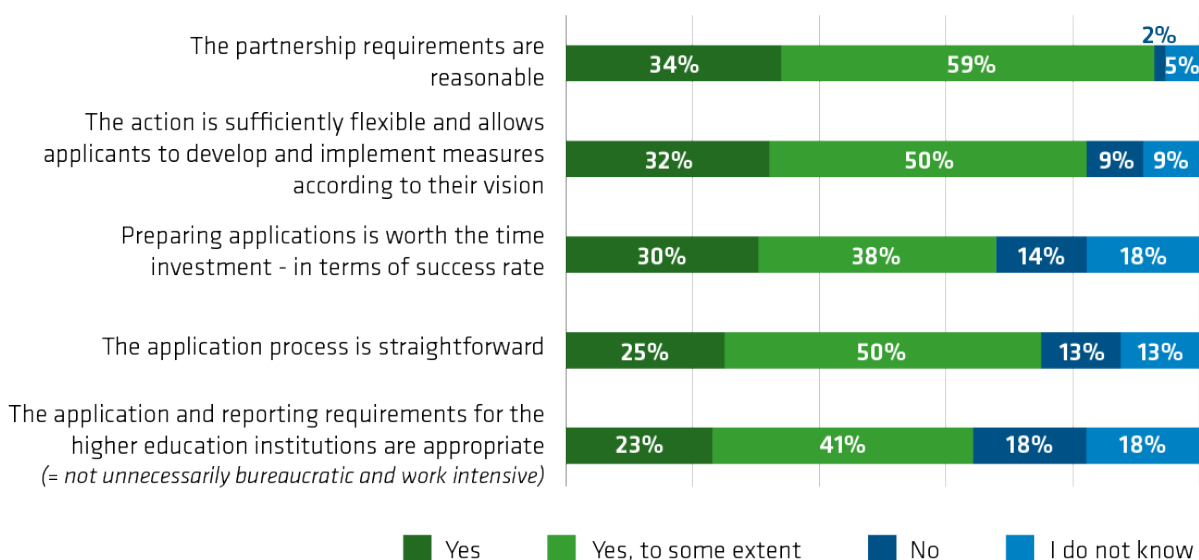
7.7 Management and funding

Processes for the management of EUI alliances are still relatively recent and may require enhancement, more practice and learning, on the side of both the EACEA and the beneficiaries.

Institutions are divided in their assessment of the amount of grant: some state that it is insufficient to realise the many diverse activities of their alliance; others seem to look at the EUI grant more as seed funding, or as an operational base grant. All alliances require complementary funding sources.

Figure 44: European University alliance management

Question 43. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ “European Universities”? (Please select one option for each item) (n=56)



Feedback on the management and administration of the alliances show a relatively high percentage of “to some extent”, for example half or more of the institutions agreed to some extent that the application process is straightforward (50%) and that the partner requirements are reasonable (59%) (Figure 44). This could also be due to the fact that the action is relatively new: there might be scope for enhancement, and both the EACEA and the beneficiaries need to develop their experience and capacities for it. Yet another factor is that the action is very ambitious, and intends to bring about innovation and transformation. It is yet to be seen to what extent this will become reality and what the actual benefits for the institutions may be, and thus whether the efforts will ultimately be worth the achievements.

Respondents were divided on whether the grant is sufficient: 41% stated that it is not, but 21% found it fully and 25% to some extent sufficient. However, almost all the institutions use complementary funding to sustain alliance activities: for example for a project activity such as the development of joint programmes, almost all respondents stated that they were deploying complementary funding (65% agree fully, 24% agree to some extent). Most of them also use the regular Erasmus+ Key Action 1 budget to support the mobility exchanges foreseen in the alliance.

Interestingly, some respondents suggested they would continue their alliance even without European funding (20% agree fully, 36% to some extent agree), possibly with adapted goals and activities. But for a fifth (18%), European funding is absolutely crucial to continue.

7.8 The EUI under the next Multiannual Framework Programme

Although the European Universities Initiative (EUI) has been underway for half a decade, it is still in its early stages relative to its ambitious goals. Unlike other Erasmus+ cooperation actions, which follow a project-based model with defined timelines and deliverables, the European University alliances are designed to extend well beyond the typical three-to-five-year cycle. As such, their actions and objectives are more holistic and long-term in nature.

Initial experiences highlight promising successes, but also show that building effective collaboration, as well as shared management and governance structures, takes time⁵⁶. Each alliance has its own mission and goals, yet they are also expected to contribute to broader European policy developments—most notably the European Degree and the European University Status. At the present stage, both remain conceptual and are still evolving through ongoing discussions and design processes.

It has also been pointed out that a university’s mission extends beyond education to include research and innovation. Moreover, the European Commission, alongside member states and other stakeholders, increasingly views the alliances as instruments to address wider societal challenges and advance strategic policy priorities⁵⁷. In this context, the European University Association (EUA) has emphasised that while the alliances can contribute to many of Europe’s priorities, but also that they should not be regarded as representative of the sector as a whole, nor be overburdened with external expectations, and they need sustainable funding.⁵⁸ It is therefore significant that the European Commission has launched an initiative to explore a future investment pathway, as whatever shape the EUI and its alliances take under the next generation of the Erasmus+ programme, it is clear that – for various aspects – they will require more and more sustainable funding for a wider range of purposes, than Erasmus+ can provide. This investment is even more urgent at a time of fiscal austerity and competing political and social priorities.

56 Thomas Estermann, Enora Bennot Pruvot and Hristiyana Stoyanova: The governance models of the European University Alliances. Evolving models of university governance I, March 2021 https://www.eua.eu/images/publications/Publication_PDFs/eui_governance_paper_new.pdf

57 See for example the European Commission’s Union of Skills: “European Universities alliances are also excellent vehicles for stimulating private sector investment in developing future-oriented skill” and to provide “joint micro-credentials ... to increase their business use in recruitment and career promotion, focusing in particular on strategic sectors” https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/915b147d-c5af-44bb-9820-c252d872fd31_en?filename=Communication%20-%20Union%20of%20Skills.pdf and even more detailed and expanded in the STEM Education Strategic Plan <https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/stem-education-strategic-plan-legal-document> - both March 2025

58 Early on in EUA: The future of the European Universities Initiative. The sector’s perspective, April 2020 https://www.eua.eu/images/publications/Publication_PDFs/eua_council_position_on_future_of_eui.pdf and more recently in EUA: The next leap forward for transnational cooperation, June 2024 <https://www.eua.eu/publications/positions/the-next-leap-forward-for-transnational-cooperation.html>



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Annex 2 – EUA Erasmus+ survey questionnaire



**THE FULL SURVEY
QUESTIONNAIRE IS
AVAILABLE VIA THIS
QR CODE**

Annex 3 – List of institutions participating in EUA's Erasmus+ survey

Institutions were asked in the questionnaire on whether they agreed to be named.
The list below shows only those who did.

ALBANIA	
• University of New York Tirana	• European University of Tirana
• University College of Business	• Albanian University
• Polytechnic University of Tirana	• Eqrem Cabej University of Gjirokaster
• University College LOGOS	

ARGENTINA	
• Argentina Universidad de Belgrano	

ARMENIA	
• Armenian State University of Economics	• Yerevan State University
• M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak Foundation	• Brusov State University
• Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport	• European University of Armenia
• National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia	• Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia
• Goris State University	• Gavar State University
• Khachatur Abovyan Armenian State Pedagogical University	• Vanadzor State University after H. Tumanyan Foundation
• National Polytechnic University of Armenia	• State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia

AUSTRIA	
• Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz	• Johannes Kepler University of Linz
• University of Applied Sciences Burgenland	• JAM MUSIC LAB Private University for Jazz and Popular Music Vienna
• Vienna University of Economics and Business	• Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences
• Paracelsus Medical University, Salzburg	• University of Applied Sciences BFI Vienna
• FH Campus Wien	• New Design University Privatuniversität GesmbH, St. Pölten
• University of Graz	• Pädagogische Hochschule Steiermark
• University of Innsbruck	• Modul University Vienna
• MCI Management Center Innsbruck	• University for Continuing Education Krems
• Central European University Private University	

AZERBAIJAN	
• Azerbaijan University of Languages	• Azerbaijan State University of Economics
• Baku Music Academy named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli	• Azerbaijan Technical University
• Nakhchivan State University	• Baku Slavic University
• Lankaran State University	• Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Arts
• Azerbaijan State Academy of Physical Education and Sport	• Western Caspian University
• Mingachevir State University	• Baku State University
• ADA University	

BELGIUM	
• Université Libre de Bruxelles	• Artevelde University of Applied Sciences
• KU Leuven	• LUCA School of Arts
• AP Hogeschool Antwerpen	• Ghent University
• Free University Brussels	• Odisee
• Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts	• HOGENT University of Applied Sciences and Arts

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	
• Herzegovina University	• University of Sarajevo

ARMENIA	
• National Academy of Music, Sofia	• Higher institute of insurance and finance
• Technical University of Gabrovo	• Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts Plovdiv Bulgaria
• University of National and World Economy – Sofia	• Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy
• University of Veliko Turnovo	• Vasil Levski National Military University
• International Business School	• University of Economics – Varna
• Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski	• Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv
• Yerevan State Medical University after M. Heratsi, Yerevan	• New Bulgarian University
• Medical University of Plovdiv	• Varna Free University
• European Polytechnical University	• University of Library Studies and Information Technologies
• Medical University – Plovdiv	

COLOMBIA	
• Universidad del Quindío	• Universidad del Quindio
• Universidad Nacional de Colombia	• Universidad del Norte

CROATIA	
• University of Zagreb	• University of Split
• Visoko Evandeosko Teolosko Uciliste	• Zagreb University of Applied Sciences
• University of Zadar	• University of Dubrovnik
• University of Slavonski Brod	• Josip Juraj Strossmayer University
• University of Rijeka	• RRiF College of Financial Management

CYPRUS	
• University of Nicosia	• G. Takkas Educational College Ltd – InterNapa College
• Alexander College	• Frederick University
• University of Cyprus	

CZECH REPUBLIC

• Medical College Prague (Vysoká škola zdravotnická, Praha)	• VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava
• Technical University of Liberec	• Masaryk University
• University of Pardubice	• Czech Technical University in Prague
• Charles University	• Institute of Technology and Business in Ceske Budejovice
• Moravian Business College Olomouc	• Palacký University Olomouc
• Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem	• Silesian University in Opava
• Janáček Academy of Performing Arts	• Prague University of Economics and Business
• College of Logistics, Prerov	• University of Veterinary Sciences Brno

DENMARK

• Technical University of Denmark	• Aarhus University
• Copenhagen Business School	• University of Copenhagen
• Aalborg University	

ESTONIA

• University of Tartu	• Tallinn University
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FINLAND

• Tampere University	• University of the Arts Helsinki
• Karelia University of Applied Sciences	• Häme University of Applied Sciences
• University of Jyväskylä	• University of Oulu
• Aalto University	• Åbo Akademi University
• University of Helsinki	• Laurea University of Applied Sciences

FRANCE

• Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris	• Grenoble INP-UGA
• Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris-Saclay	• University of Lorraine
• University of Evry	• Claude Bernard Lyon 1 University
• University of Franche-Comté	• University of Bordeaux
• Université Toulouse Capitole	• Université de Corse Pascal Paoli
• Artois University	• University Strasbourg
• University Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint Denis	• Nantes University

GEORGIA

• Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy	• Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
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GERMANY

• Musikhochschule Lübeck	• Europäische Fachhochschule Rhein/Erft
• Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences	• European University Viadrina Frankfurt
• Technische Hochschule Bingen	• hochschule 21 Buxtehude
• Hochschule Niederrhein, University of Applied Sciences	• Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg
• University of Cologne	• Julius-Maximilians University of Würzburg
• Portucalense University	• Europa-Universität Flensburg
• Bielefeld University	• Bonn-Rhine-Sieg University of Applied Sciences
• Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Umwelt Nürtingen-Geislingen	• University of Stuttgart
• Catholic University of Applied Sciences Mainz	• University of Regensburg
• HBK Braunschweig	• Ruhr University Bochum
• Pforzheim University	• Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt am Main
• Witten/Herdecke University	• Hochschule für Musik Freiburg
• Technische Hochschule Ulm	• University of Siegen
• Burg Giebichenstein Kunsthochschule Halle	• Berlin University of the Arts
• Catholic University of Applied Sciences Freiburg	• RWTH Aachen University
• University of Kiel	• Coburg University of Applied Sciences Arts
• Center for Higher Education Development	• University of Kaiserslautern

GERMANY	
• Duesseldorf University of Applied Sciences	• SRH Berlin University of Applied Sciences
• Free University Berlin	• Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen
• Hamm-Lippstadt University of Applied Sciences	• HAWK University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Hildesheim/Holzminden/Goettingen
• Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences	• Mannheim University of Applied Sciences
• Evangelische Hochschule Ludwigsburg	• University of Greifswald
• TH Aschaffenburg – University of Applied Science	• Germany – West Coast University of Applied Sciences (FH Westküste)
• Hochschule Hannover – University of Applied Sciences and Arts	• Aachen University of Applied Sciences
• Muthesius Kunsthochschule	• Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
• Reutlingen University	• University of Applied Sciences for Police and Public Administration in North Rhine – Westphalia
• Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung Eberswalde	• Furtwangen University
• University of Wuppertal	• Weißensee School of Art Berlin
• Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg	• Saarland University
• Otto von Guericke University of Magdeburg	• University of Bayreuth
• Frankfurt School of Finance & Management	• College of Music Dresden
• Regensburg University of Applied Sciences	• Technische Hochschule Brandenburg
• Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts	• Kaiserslautern University of Applied Sciences (D Kaisers02)
• University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover (DHannove03)	• Sprachen und Dolmetscher Institut München EV
• Evangelische Hochschule Freiburg	• Hochschule fuer Musik und Tanz Koeln
• Technische Universität Ilmenau	• Fachhochschule der Diakonie
• SRH Hochschule Heidelberg	• University of Teacher Education Lucerne
• HfM Trossingen	• Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development
• Technische Universität Dresden	• Kempten University of Applied Sciences
• Friedrich Schiller University of Jena	• Hochschule für Musik und Theater Leipzig

GREECE

• Greece Technical University of Crete	• National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
• University of Western Macedonia	• Democritus University of Thrace
• Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences	• Greece Diethnes Panepistimio Ellados (International Hellenic University)
• Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	

HUNGARY

• University of Public Service	• Budapest University of Technology and Economics
• Soproni Egyetem – University of Sopron	• University of Miskolc

ICELAND

• University of Akureyri	• University of Iceland
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IRELAND

• Dublin City University	• Maynooth University
• Technological University Dublin	• Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

ITALY

• Music Conservatory “N. Piccinni” of Bari	• Università degli studi Magna Graecia di Catanzaro
• University of Milan	• University of Bologna
• University of Pisa	• International University of Languages and Communication
• Ca' Foscari University of Venice	• University of Padua
• University of Pavia	• University of Macerata
• Conservatorio di musica “A. Corelli” Messina	• Scuola del Teatro Musicale
• Sapienza University of Rome	

KOSOVO

• University “Ukshin Hoti” Prizren	• University of Mitrovica
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KYRGYZSTAN

- Adam University (Bishkek Academy of Finance and Economics)

LATVIA

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| • Rezekne Academy of Technologies | • Riga Technical University |
| • Daugavpils University | • Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies |
| • EKA University of Applied Sciences | • University of Latvia |

LIBYA

- Bani Waleed University

LITHUANIA

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Kaunas University of Technology | • Mykolas Romeris University |
| • Vytautas Magnus University | |

MAURITANIE

- Université de Nouakchott

MEXICO

- Universidad de Colima

NETHERLANDS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • University of Twente | • Leiden University |
| • Radboud University | • Universities of the Netherlands |
| • Erasmus University Rotterdam | |

NORTH MACEDONIA

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| • University St Kliment Ohridski Bitola | • Goce Delchev University – Stip |
|---|----------------------------------|

NORWAY	
• VID Specialized University	• University of Bergen
• University of South-Eastern Norway	• University of Oslo
• Oslo Metropolitan University	• Nord University
• University of Stavanger	• University of Agder
• Western Norway University of Applied Sciences	

PALESTINE	
• An-Najah National University	

POLAND	
• Opole University of Technology	• University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw
• Gdańsk University of Technology	• University of Łódź
• West Pomeranian University of Technology	• University of Warsaw
• Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences	• Warsaw University of Technology
• Wrocław University of Economics and Business	• WSAiB University of Business and Administration in Gdynia
• The Jagiellonian University	

PORTUGAL	
• NOVA University of Lisbon	• Academia Nacional Superior de Orquestra
• Instituto Piaget CRL	• Egas Moniz School of Health & Science
• University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro	• E.I.A. SA – Atlântica – Instituto Universitário
• ESHTe – Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies	• University of Madeira
• Nursing School of Coimbra	• Autonomous University of Lisbon
• University of Coimbra	• Escola Superior de Actividades Imobiliárias
• Catholic University of Portugal	• Escola Superior Náutica Infante D. Henrique
• Universidade Portucalense Infante D. Henrique	• University of Lisbon
• University of Évora	• ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon
• University of Porto	

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

• University of European Political and Economic Studies ~Constantin Stere~	• Cahul State University “Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu”
• Ion Creanga State Pedagogical University of Chisinau	• Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova
• Trade Co-operative University of Moldova	• Technical University of Moldova
• Free International University of Moldova	

ROMANIA

• University of Craiova	• West University of Timișoara
• Politehnica University of Timisoara	• Ovidius University of Constantza
• Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad	• “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava

SERBIA

• University of Belgrade	• University of Nis
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SLOVAKIA

• University of Presov	• Technical University in Zvolen
• Alexander Dubcek University, Trencin	• Comenius University In Bratislava

SLOVENIA

• Slovenian Rectors’ Conference

SPAIN

• International University of Catalonia	• Oviedo University
• Salamanca University	• Pompeu Fabra University
• University of Barcelona	• Loyola University Andalusia
• Conservatori Superior de Música “Joaquin Rodrigo” de Valencia	• Rovira i Virgili University
• University of Balearic Islands	• Navarra University
• Rey Juan Carlos University	• University of Girona
• Open University of Catalonia	• Comillas Pontifical University
• University of Alcalá	• Las Palmas University

SWEDEN	
• University of Gothenburg	• Dalarna University
• University West	• Karolinska Institute
• Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	• Lund University
• Umea University	• Linnaeus University

SWITZERLAND	
• University of Teacher Education, Luzern	• University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland
• Zurich University of the Arts	• ETH Zurich
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