LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM
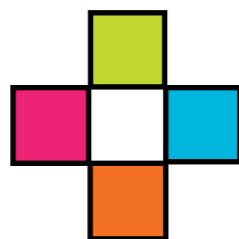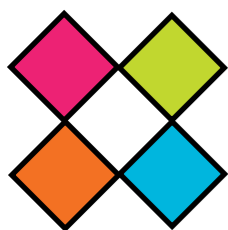
EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

ERASMUS+ IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY RESULTS - 2017

INTRODUCTION

Following the success of the 2014 broad public consultation and the 2015 and 2016 Erasmus+ implementation surveys, the Lifelong Learning Platform ran its latest Erasmus+ Implementation Survey from April to September 2017.

The survey collected a total of 65 responses from a mix of European/international, national and local civil society organisations from 27 countries – all of the EU Member States, excluding Cyprus, Slovakia and Latvia – as well as Iceland and Turkey. The number of responses appears considerably reduced compared to previous years (+700 respondents) because this year the survey adopted a more targeted approach – to gather the views of network organisations with a high-level of expertise, the capacity to compare across Member States, and who represent the voice of many diverse national and local organisations directly involved in all sectors and actions of the Erasmus+ programme. This is the added value that our consultation brings in taking stock of the programme's implementation.

Focus of the report

The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the experience of beneficiaries in the fourth round of applications for the Erasmus+ programme. As the programme has now reached its mid-term point, with the European Commission's mid-term evaluation report due in the coming weeks and negotiations for the successor programme likely to start by this summer, the importance of taking into account the views of experienced beneficiaries has never been greater. From that perspective, this report seeks to provide decision-makers with an evaluation from direct beneficiaries on what is working well, what could be improved and what is lacking in the programme. It likewise presents the views of respondents on the future of the programme.

The Lifelong Learning Platform hopes that the survey results will guide decision-makers in finding solutions to improve the programme considered by many as a success story for EU citizens. Respondents' satisfaction has indeed improved in a number of areas over the years, although this is also due to their own growing experience with the programme's structure and procedures.

MAIN FINDINGS

- 75% of respondents have 5 or more years of experience (32% have 10 years or more) working with Erasmus+ and/or the previous Lifelong Learning Programme, which shows their views are based in a deep understanding of the overall programme.
- Key Actions attracting the most applications from respondents are KA2 – Strategic partnerships in the field of education, training and youth (38%), followed closely by KA1 – Learning Mobility of individuals in the field of education and training (36%). This can be regarded as a consequence of decentralisation where KA2 has become more accessible to organisations at national level.
- Regular partners (50%) and EU networks/organisations (46%) are identified as the most common ways for respondents to build consortium or find project partners, thus highlighting the importance of established contacts and difficulties newcomers may face in accessing the programme if they are not part of these networks.
- Less than a quarter (23%) of respondents who applied through more than one NA think that the programme rules are applied fully or mostly in the same way.
- A substantial proportion (36%) of respondents feel that it took them too much to prepare the application, while another 50% still consider it fairly time-consuming
- Just slightly less than half of the respondents (46%) report encountering some kind of bureacratic difficulty in implementing a project. Administrative burden is reported as a particular barrier for first time applicants.
- Respondents are largely satisfied with the relevance and extensiveness of the Programme Guide, but many remain doubtful about its user-friendliness.
- A majority of respondents (90%) believe that the objectives and actions of the Erasmus+ programme are well aligned with policy priorities in their field of work, although some respondents think the objectives are sometimes too narrowly defined.
- Just under half of the respondents (49%) do not think the funding available to them is sufficient to cover their real needs.
- Respondents report a generally good level of satisfaction with the evaluation process, but room for improvement remains.
- Future priorities for the programme identified by respondents are social inclusion, citizenship education and support for innovation in education.
- A high number of respondents (40%) do not think the overall financial support for the programme is sufficient to meet its objectives.

CONTENTS

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Type of organisation

Of the 65 answers received, the respondents are almost evenly divided between European (30.77%), national (35.38%) and local (35.38%) civil society organisations. This is a clear contrast with last year's survey when this type of organisation (civil society) overall accounted for 14% of responses, the rest being in large par from educational institutions (68.63%).

Q2 Type of organisation
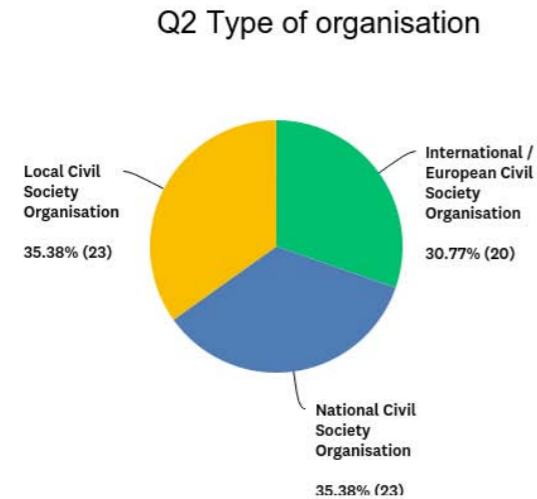
Field of specialisation

With the exception of sports (3.08%) and early childhood (6.15%), the answers to this question show a fairly balanced mix in specialisation between different sectors among the respondents. Vocational education and training is the most prominent sector, accounting for 32.31% of respondents, followed consecutively by non-formal education (30.77%), higher education and youth (both 26.15%) and school education (21.54%).

Q3 Which field or education sector do you primarily specialise in:
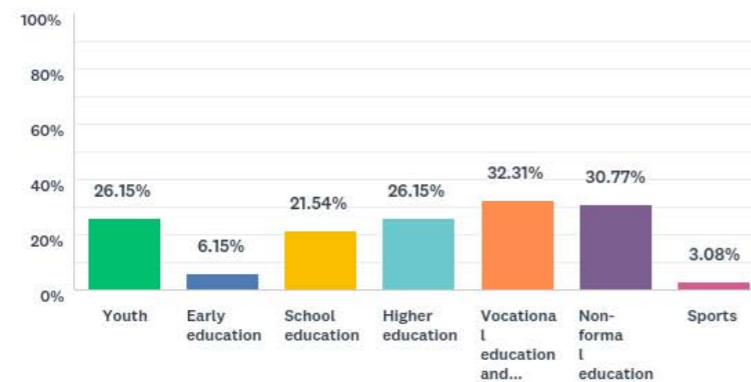
Respondents' experience with Erasmus+ and/or previous Lifelong Learning Programme

This was not asked in previous years but was considered important in order to help gauge the respondents' experience in dealing with the programme. As the chart below reveals, most respondents have considerable experience with the Erasmus+ and/or previous Lifelong Learning Programme, with 32.31% having 10 or more years of experience and another 42.62% having 5-9 years of experience. It can thus be inferred that many of the responses gathered in this survey are rooted in familiarity with how the programme operates.

Q4 Your experience with Erasmus+ and/or previous Lifelong Learning Programme?
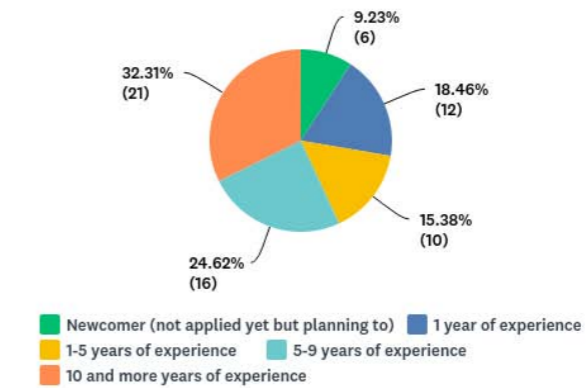
Respondents' role in Erasmus+ and/or previous Lifelong Learning Programme

A significant proportion of the survey respondents (38.46%) have experience as both a coordinator and partner in the programme. Only as a partner represents 20% of the responses, while only as a coordinator accounts for 15.38%. The remaining respondents identified as none or other. This reflects a shift with the programme's decentralisation where civil society's role in Erasmus+ projects has increasingly moved from coordinator to partner organisation, leaving space for local or individual organisations and institutions to be the main beneficiaries.

Q5 Your experience with Erasmus+ and/or previous Lifelong Learning Programme was:
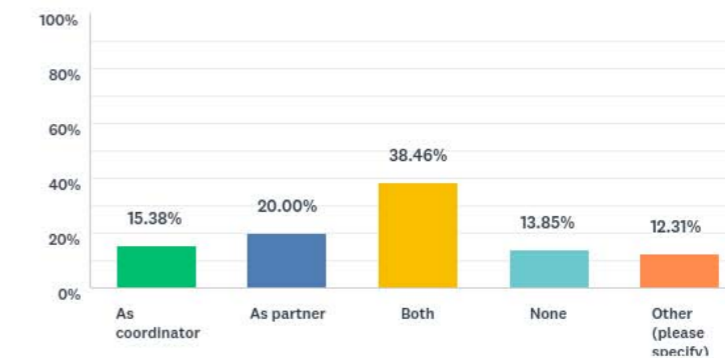
Respondents receiving operating grant from Erasmus+

This question revealed that a majority of the responses (61.54%) come from organisations receiving an operating grant from the Erasmus+ programme. Those organisations not receiving such a grant account for 29.23% of responses, while 9.23% state that they are planning to apply for an operating grant.

Q6 Do you receive an operating grant from Erasmus+?

Planning to apply
9.23% (6)
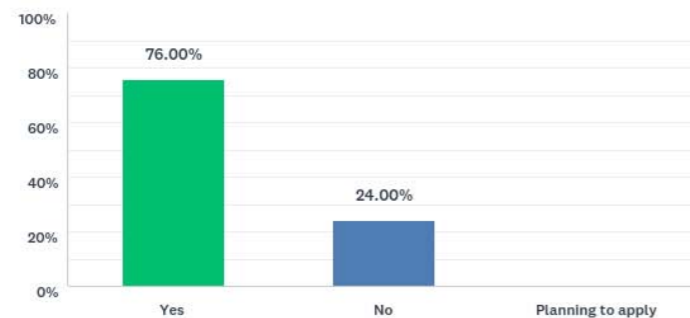
No
29.23% (19)

Yes
61.54% (40)
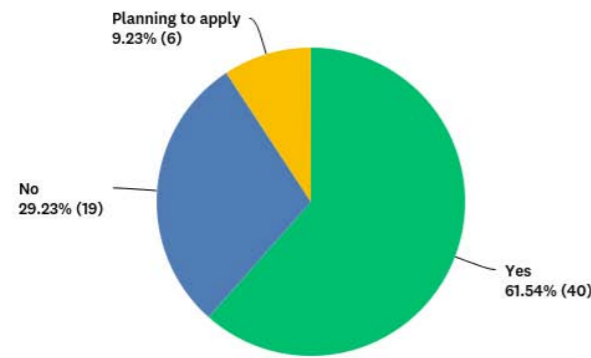
GENERAL INFORMATION

Application for 2016-17 Erasmus+ Calls for proposals

A clear majority of respondents to this question (76%) applied for the latest Erasmus+ Calls for proposals, while around a quarter (24%) did not apply.

Q7 Did you apply for any of the 2016-17 Erasmus+ Calls for proposals?

76.00%   Yes
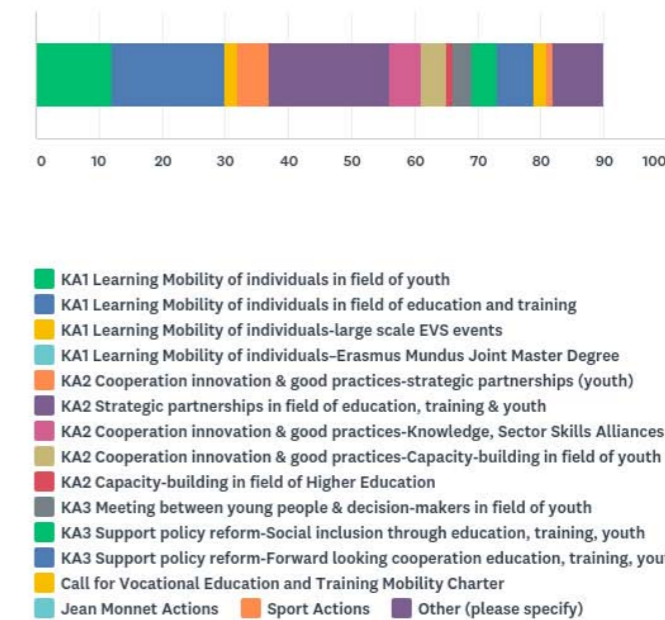24.00%   No
          Planning to apply

Key Action(s) to which respondents applied

The respondents to the consultation applied for a broad range of Erasmus+ actions and almost all of them are represented in the survey. The most popular action in the responses is **Key Action 2 – Strategic partnerships in the field of education, training and youth (38%)**, followed closely by **Key Action 1 – Learning Mobility of individuals in the field of education and training (36%)**. Other notable actions in terms of responses include

Key Action 1 – Learning Mobility of individuals in the field of youth (24%) and Key Action 3 – Support for policy reform – Forward looking cooperation through education, training and youth (12%). The high rate for KA2 can be seen as a consequence of decentralisation whereby this action has become more accessible to organisations at national level. The low rate for KA3, which mostly represents operating grants for civil society organisations, may be explained by the fact this action overall accounts for a much smaller budget than the other actions.

Q8 For which Erasmus+ Action(s) did you apply?

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

■ KA1 Learning Mobility of individuals in field of youth
■ KA1 Learning Mobility of individuals in field of education and training
■ KA1 Learning Mobility of individuals-large scale EVS events
■ KA1 Learning Mobility of individuals–Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree
■ KA2 Cooperation innovation & good practices-strategic partnerships (youth)
■ KA2 Strategic partnerships in field of education, training & youth
■ KA2 Cooperation innovation & good practices-Knowledge, Sector Skills Alliances
■ KA2 Cooperation innovation & good practices-Capacity-building in field of youth
■ KA2 Capacity-building in field of Higher Education
■ KA3 Meeting between young people & decision-makers in field of youth
■ KA3 Support policy reform-Social inclusion through education, training, youth
■ KA3 Support policy reform-Forward looking cooperation education, training, yout
■ Call for Vocational Education and Training Mobility Charter
■ Jean Monnet Actions   ■ Sport Actions   ■ Other (please specify)

Compared to last year's survey which had a high number of responses (68.63%) from educational institutions, there are no responses for Key Action 1 – Learning Mobility of individuals – Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree and Jean Monnet Actions because all respondents come from the NGO sector. This also goes towards explaining why the number of responses for Key Action 1 – Learning Mobility of individuals in the field of education and training has fallen from 65.8% last year to 36%.

Respondents' role in project applications

A considerable proportion of responses (36%) come from organisations who submitted applications as both a partner and applicant, while only as a partner accounts for 26% and only as an applicant for 24%. Please note that this refers only to submitted applications and it is not known if they were ultimately awarded.

Q9 Did you submit project applications as:

24.00%   Applicant
26.00%   Partner
36.00%   Both
10.00%   None
4.00%   Other (please specify)
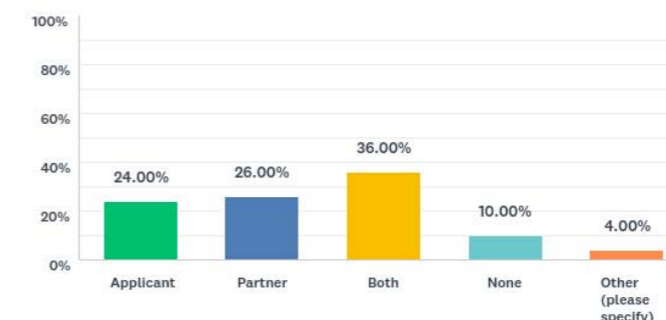
Success rate for respondents applying in 2016

For those respondents applying for the 2016 Erasmus+ Calls for Proposals, a clear majority (76%) made successful applications, while the applications of the remaining 24% were not selected. This success rate is similar to what was reported in last year's survey, when the figure for successful applications reached 80%. This very high success rate shows that the respondents of our survey are on the whole experienced users of the Erasmus+ programme.

Q10 In case you applied in 2016, were any of your applications successful?
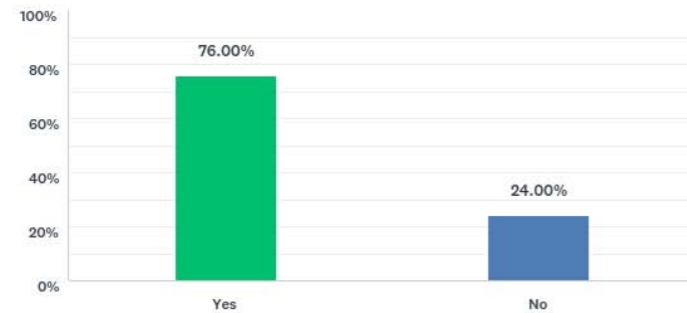
Building consortia[1]

Regular partners (50%) and EU networks/organisations (46%) represent the most common ways for the respondents to build consortium or find project partners. This is followed by the responding organisations' own members (22%), National Agency databases (8%) and info days (6%). This data suggests that organisations with established contacts find it much easier to create partnerships when applying for Erasmus+ calls, which puts newcomers somewhat at a disadvantage. This echoes the findings of last year's survey where EU networks were again considered the most useful way to find partners – 51.3% of respondents awarded a score of 4 or 5 (1 = low, 5 = high) to the relevance of these networks, much more than any other category.

Q11 From your experience, what was the easiest way to find project partners or build a consortium?

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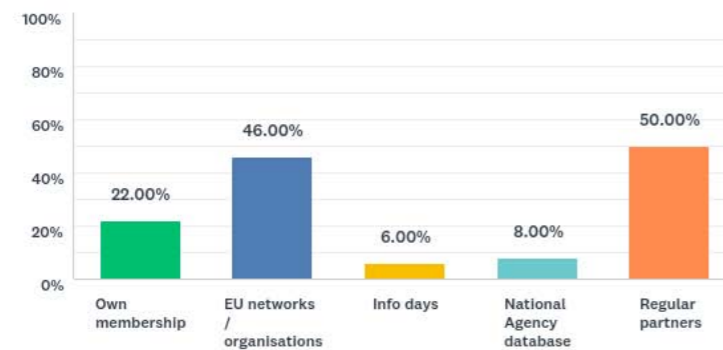
1   Respondents could choose more than one option

APPLICATION PROCESS

Geographical coverage

Regarding the countries where the survey respondents applied for Erasmus+, Spain is the country with the most applications (20.45%), closely followed by Belgium and Denmark (both 18.18%) and Italy and the Netherlands (both 15.91%). 18.18% of respondents submitted their application to the Executive Agency for Civil Society Cooperation, and 20.45% for other centralised calls.

From LLLP's internal consultations with members this data confirms the effects of decentralisation where civil society organisations with members and partners around Europe could choose and apply in different countries thanks to their membership, thus explaining the shift of their role from coordinators to partner organisations.

The proportion of applications according to country has changed markedly compared to last year when respondents applied mostly in Portugal (27.49%), Spain (23.48%) and Germany (12.09%). The most significant increases are seen in the cases of Italy (6.22 to 15.91%), the Netherlands (3.31 to 15.91%), Belgium (3.04 to 18.18%) and Denmark (0.97 to 18.18%).

Implementation of programme rules by National Agencies

Concerning how the programme rules are applied by different NAs, **less than a quarter - only 22.73% - of respondents who applied through more than one NA feel that the programme rules are applied fully or mostly in the same way**. This poor result shows that the uniform application of rules by the NAs continues to be a major problem.

Q13 If you applied through more than one NA, do you think the programme rules were applied in the same way?
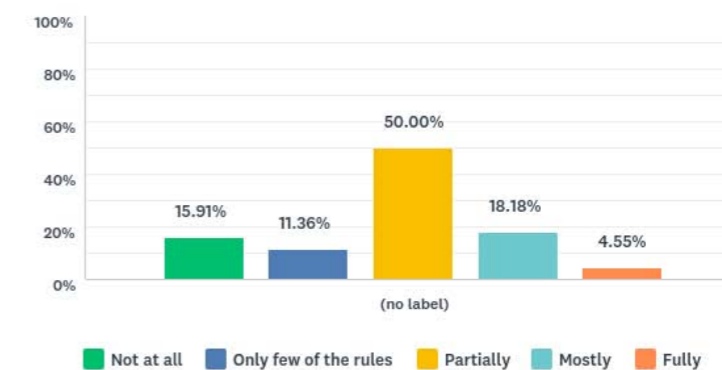

Erasmus+ programme user guide

Respondents were asked to rate a number of descriptions of the Erasmus+ programme guide, with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest. As shown by the graph below, the relevance of the guide is particularly appreciated, as the percentage of respondents providing a score of 4 or 5 reaches 66.28%. However, **respondents doubt that the guide is user-friendly,** as this receives a score of 4 or 5 from only 26.19% of

them. Moreover, **the clarity of the guide is somewhat questionable**, as this receives a score of 4 or 5 from 39.02% which is low compared to relevant, extensive (60%) and realistic (47.5%).

Q14 Did you find the Erasmus+ programme guide: (1 low - 5 high)
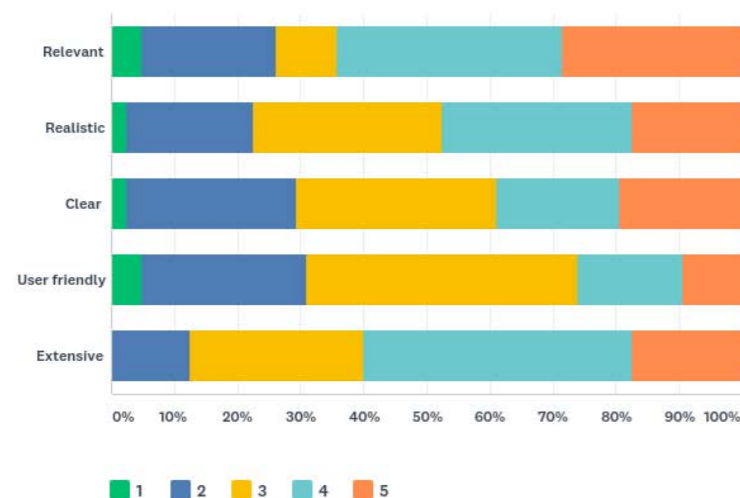
This overall assessment of the programme guide is consistent with the findings of last year's survey, where 42.5% of respondents thought that there was room for improvement concerning how clear and user-friendly the programme guide is.

NAs and EACEA support to applicants

There is a reasonably good level of satisfaction with the support provided by NAs and EACEA in the application process, with 65.91% of respondents stating that this was sufficient. Those replying that it was not sufficient nevertheless reach a substantial figure (34.09%), so there clearly remains room for improvement. The comments from respondents also underlined that the sufficiency of supports varies from one NA to another.

Q15 Have NAs and/or EACEA provided sufficient support/assistance?
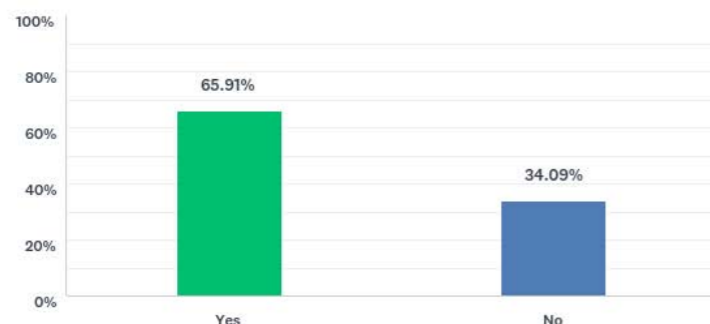
Application forms

Respondents were asked to rate a number of descriptions of the Erasmus+ application forms, with 1 being the lowest score and five being the highest. The responses suggest that the application forms are rather reliable, comprehensive and bug-free, with the scores of 4 or 5 in these categories exceeding 50%. However, they are considered coherent and, particularly, user-friendly to a lesser extent. Indeed, a score of 3 or less is awarded by 60.47% of respondents for user-friendliness, which, while not a bad performance per se, suggests **some potential for improvement**. This mirrors the results of last year's survey where 53% of respondents suggested

there could be room for improvement in the user-friendless of the application forms. An additional factor to bear in mind is that, although the overall scores appear somewhat satisfactory, this can also be understood as the perception of highly experienced applicants who, year by year, get more familiar with the application process.

Q16 How would you rate the application form(s)? (1 low - 5 high)
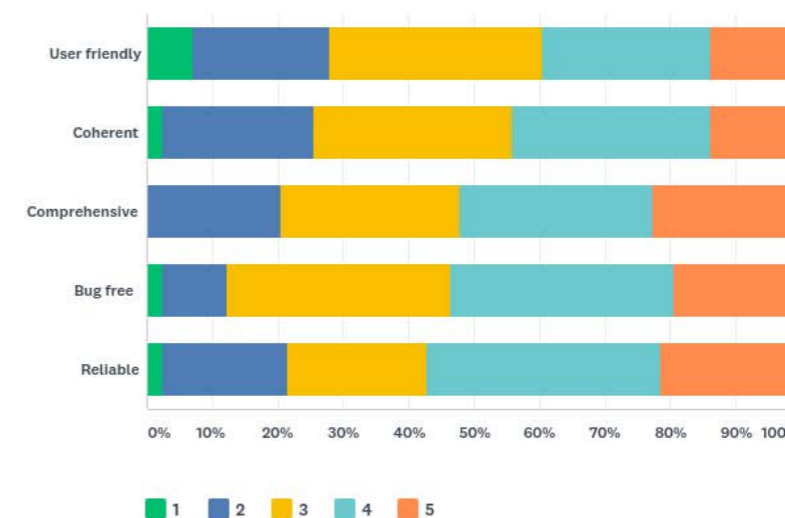
Individual parts of application form

Respondents were asked about the level of difficulty of the different parts of the application process, with 1 being the least difficult and five being the most difficult. The graph below suggests that the partners' description and budget are the most straightforward phases of the application, with responses awarding a score of 1 or 2 reaching 33.34% and 34.09% in both categories respectively. However, the responses giving a score of 4 or 5 in all categories were around 40% – 45% in the case of dissemination – which indicates that there is still much room for improvement when it comes simplifying all parts of the application procedure. In particular, responses for sustainability failed to gather a high level of satisfaction, with scores of 1 or 2 reaching only 16.28%.

Q17 Rate from 1 to 5 the application (s) parts according to their level of difficulty? (1 low - 5 high)
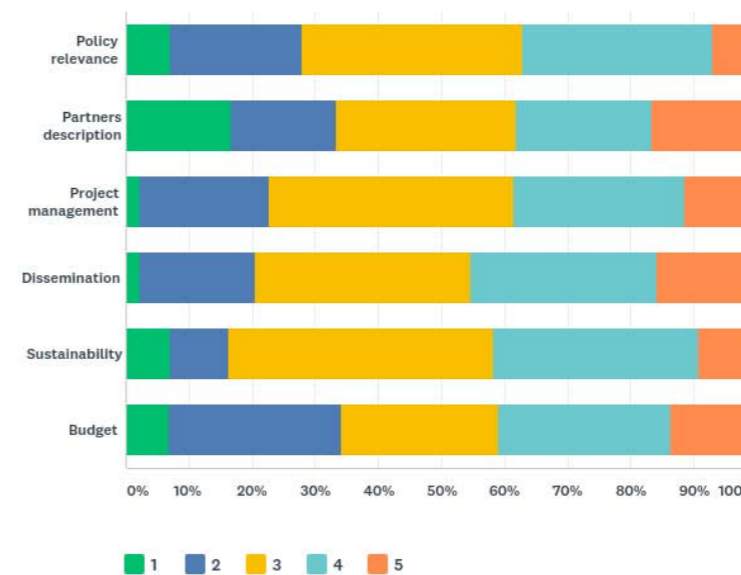
Application stages

Here respondents were asked to rate the different aspects of the application stage according to their level of difficulty, with 1 being the least difficult and 5 being the most difficult. The responses indicate that the level of difficulty is highest for the budget part, where 40.91% of respondents provide a score of 4 or 5. Indeed, over 30% of respondents give such a score for supporting documents and usability of application forms as well, indicating that all aspects of the application procedure remain somewhat complex overall.

Q18 Rate from 1 to 5 the aspects of the application stage according to their level of difficulty? (1 low - 5 high)
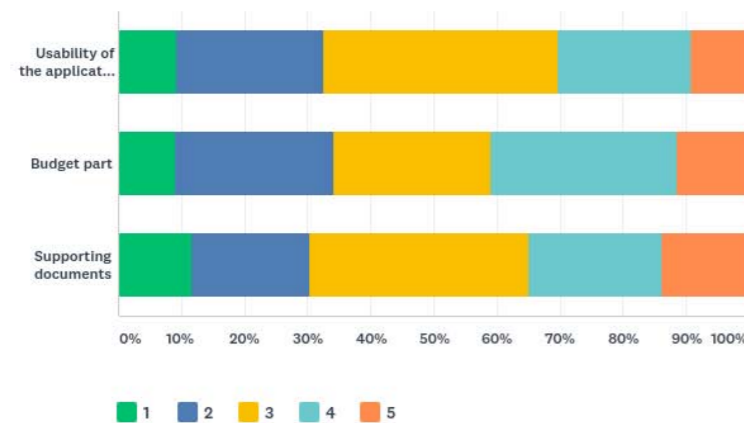
Time commitment to preparing applications

A substantial proportion (36%) of respondents feel that it took them too much to prepare the application, while another 50% still consider it fairly time-consuming. Although it is understandable that the process of making an application involves a certain time commitment, this data shows that for many organisations responding to the survey, who in large part already have many years of experience with the programme, the project application could be considerably simplified.

Q19 How much time did you spend preparing the project application?
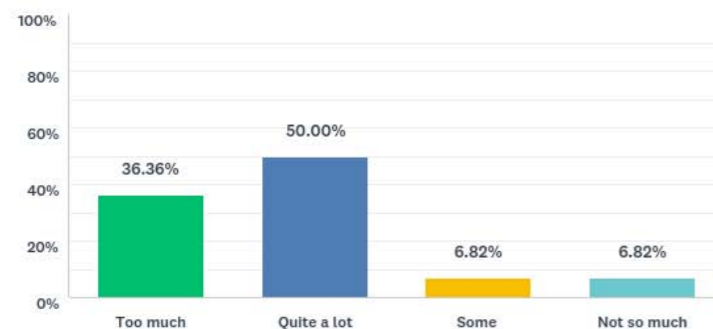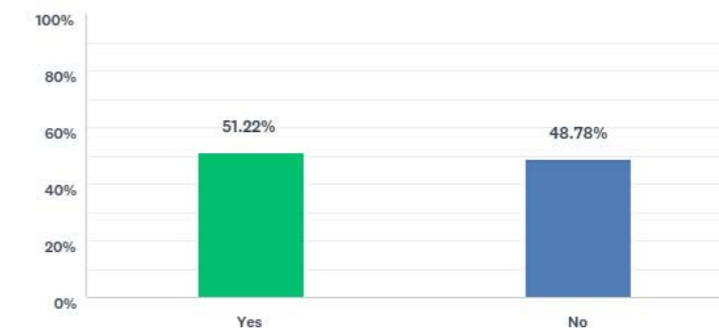

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Administrative burden

Respondent were asked about administrative hurdles in the process of project implementation. **Just slightly less than half of the respondents (46.43%) encountered some kind of bureacratic difficulty in implementing a project**. While implementation is unlikely to ever be a completely smooth process, the high percentage reporting difficulties is nevertheless striking. In their comments respondents mentioned the administrative problems encountered in the case of specific NAs, namely in Italy, Greece and Hungary.
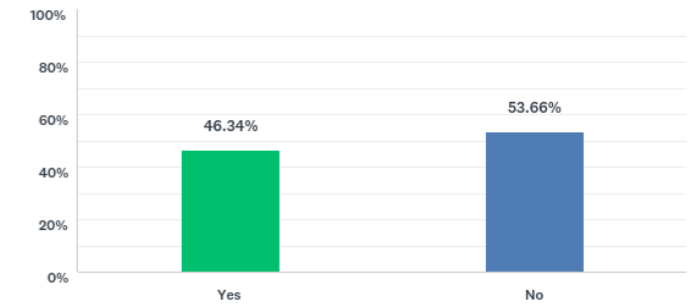
Budget

The respondents are around evenly split between those considering the programme funding sufficient and able to cover real needs (51.22%) and those who did not (48.78%). Although appeals for more funding will always exist, it is indeed striking that half of the respondents do not find the financing sufficient to cover their real needs. This is line with the findings of our previous consultations where the adequancy of funding has consistently been highlighted as a matter of concern. In their comments respondents indicated, for example, that the funding available is often too low to motivate students to commit to a period of mobility, and that the cost of living according to the host country is also a factor.

Q21 Do you consider the funding sufficient and able to cover the real needs?


Centralised management

A clear majority (75.61%) of respondents give a positive assessment of EACEA's implementation and management of centralised actions. This corresponds with the result of last year's findings where 75% of respondents said that they appreciated EACEA's availability and helpfulness. This year respondents nevertheless give some recommendations for improvements. One comment stated that the EACEA "should be closer to the reality of beneficiaries to better design the calls and the application forms". Another comment underlined that "more accurate assistance should be provided by the related project officers".

Q22 Based on your 2016/2017 experience with Erasmus+ funded projects, do you think that the implementation and management of centralised actions by the EACEA is functioning well?
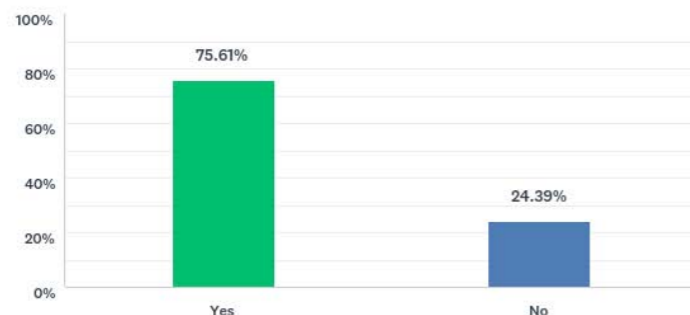
Lump sum system

Concerning respondents' views on the lump sum system, the graph below indicates a generally good level of satisfaction, with 75-90% of respondents claiming that the system is, or to some extent, accurate, adequate, simplified and sufficient. The most impressive result is for simplified with attracted a 'yes' from 42.5% of respondents. This echoes the result of last year's survey where 69.62% of respondents said that the lump sum system indeed made calculations easier. However, **the sufficiency of the lump sum is somewhat questionable, given that only around a quarter – 25.64% - of responses indicated that it was sufficient**. This again reiterates the message from last year's results where 21.09% of respondents replied 'no' to whether or not the lump sum amounts were sufficient.

Q23 In your experience, the lump sum system is:
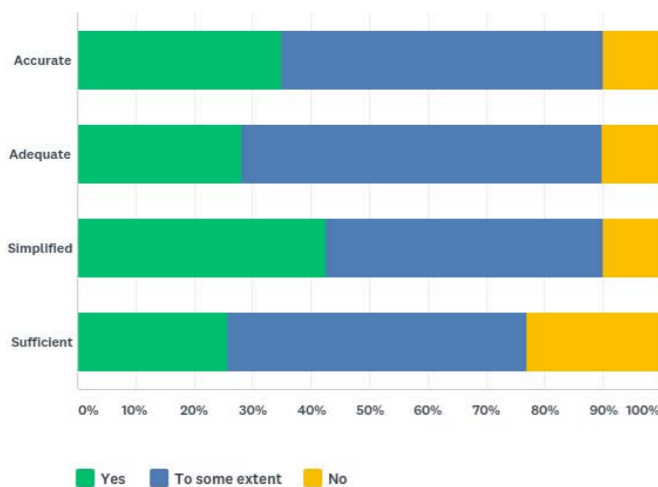
Administrative support

While 70.73% of respondents receiving the administrative and financial handbook is a clear majority, the fact that around 30% were not provided with it is worrying given its importance as a reference point for applicants.

Administrative and financial handbook

Respondents were asked about their ease of understanding of the administrative and financial handbook, with a score of 1 being the lowest and a score of 5 being the highest. The fact that no aspect of the handbook received a score of 1 or 2 from greater than 30% of respondents can be considered a positive sign. The supporting documents part appears to be a particular success, with 48.79% of respondents providing a score of 4 or 5. The ratings for the other parts of the handbook, in comparison, are not so satisfactory and suggest some room for improvement.

## Q25 How well do you understand the 'administrative and financial handbook'? (1 low - 5 high)
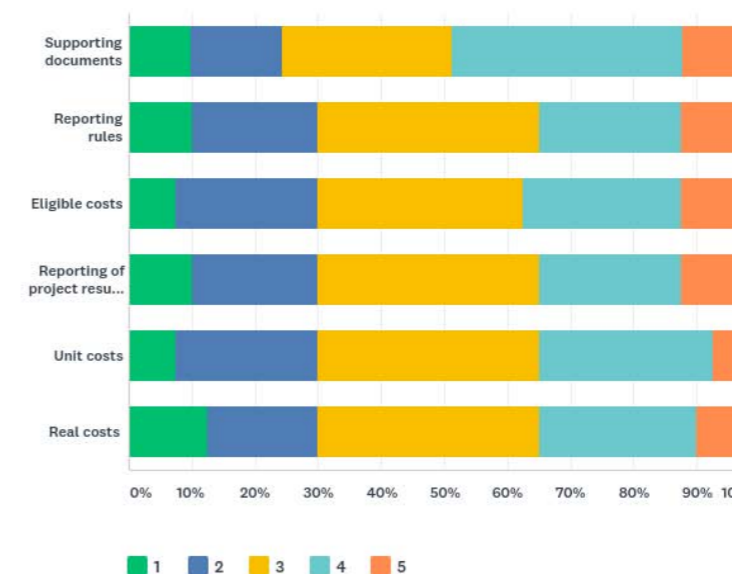
Procedures for project implementation

Here respondents were asked about the clarity of procedures at the NA and EACEA levels. The graph below seems to indicate a fairly divided picture for the NA procedures, with 20% of respondents giving a score of 5, which means that they find them very clear, but also with 22.5% giving a score of 1, meaning that they find them not unclear at all. This diversity in views can most likely be attributed to the differing interpretation of or approaches towards the procedures in each country.

As for EACEA, the percentage of respondents providing a top score of 5 for clarity of procedures amounts to 7.69%, which is poor compared to the NA level. The largest proportion of respondents award a score of 3 (41.03%), indicating that they find them to be clear to only an average degree.

Q26 If you have implemented projects please rate the following statements: (1 low - 5 high)
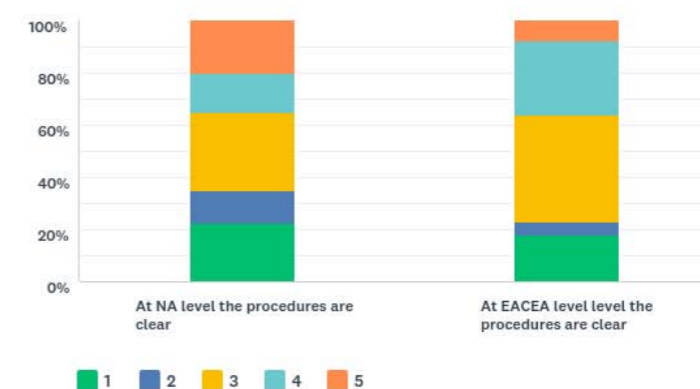
PROGRAMME RELEVANCE

Programme objectives and policy priorities

Responses here reveal that the clear majority of respondents (89.74%) believe that the objectives and actions of the Erasmus+ programme are well aligned with policy priorities in their field of work. This is a positive signal about the relevance of the programme to the main concerns of its stakeholders. This is consistent with the results of last year's survey where 95% of respondents felt that the objectives and important features of the programme were adapted to their reality.
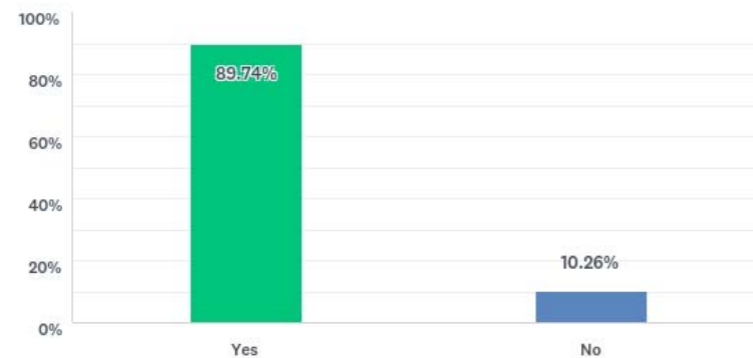

Given the option to elaborate their answer, a few respondents this year nevertheless remarked that the programme objectives are at times too narrowly defined and may vary according to the context.

Social dimension of the programme

With the percentage of 'yes' responses here reaching 74.36%, respondents give an overall positive assessment of the programme's consideration of individuals' socio-economic needs and the needs of different learners. However, a quarter of respondents are of the opposite view, which is not an insignificant proportion especially in light of the political debate about how the programme may better contribute to social inclusion.

In their comments a number of respondents highlight the difficulty that adults face in accessing the programme, for example, if they are unemployed, self-employed or volunteering on their own without belonging to an

organisation. Remarks are also made about the sufficiency of the funding for vulnerable individuals who cannot afford to cover extra costs. One respondent also raises the issue of pupil mobility, pointing out that this is only available to those pupils fortunate enough to study in a school with the capacity to manage an Erasmus+ project.
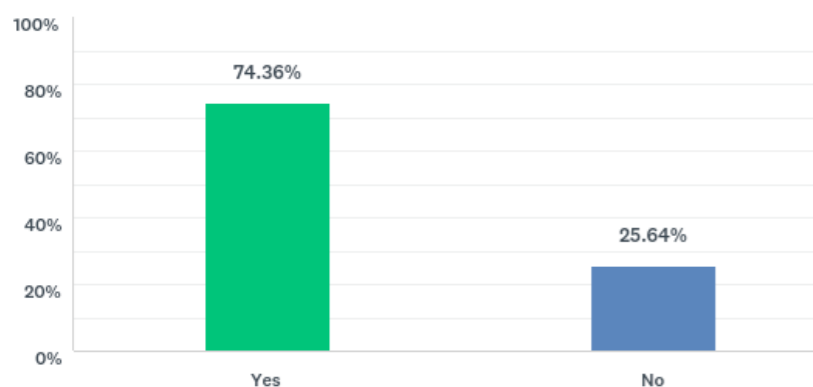
Overlaps with national/regional programmes

A slight majority of respondents (56.41%) feel that overlaps exist among similar types of actions under the Erasmus+ programme and other national/regional programmes in their field of work. This suggests that it could be fruitful to pursue greater synergies between Erasmus+ and other initiatives in the programme countries, depending, evidently, on the sector. In this respect, it would be useful for future editions of this
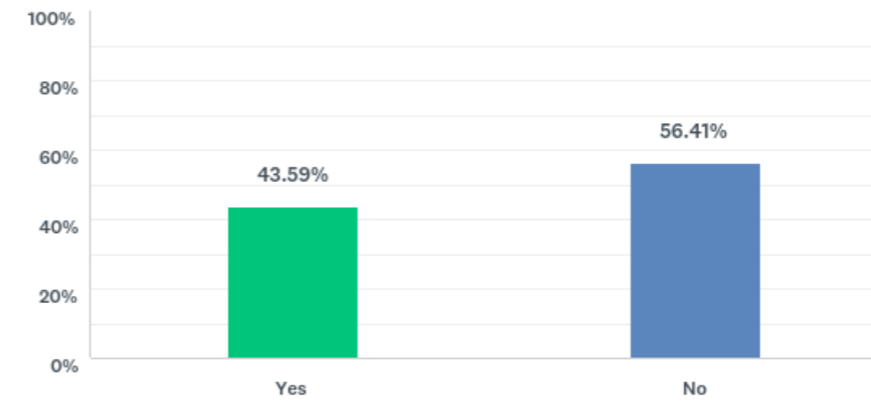

survey to quiz participants further on the issue, to identify which sectors in particular it applies to. Elaborating on their answer, one respondent suggests development projects as an area where overlaps exist.

Cross-sector cooperation

When asked about their understanding of cross-sector cooperation in the programme, the largest proportion of respondents (56.41%) interpret this as applying to a diverse range of organisations – civil society organisation, public body, private company, and so on. A substantial number of responses (30.77%) view it as cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education providers. The remaining 12.82% have an alternative understanding, for example, interpreting it as both of the above or as cooperation between organisations from different sectors (e.g. education, employment, innovation).

Q30 What is your understanding of "cross-sector" cooperation in Erasmus+?
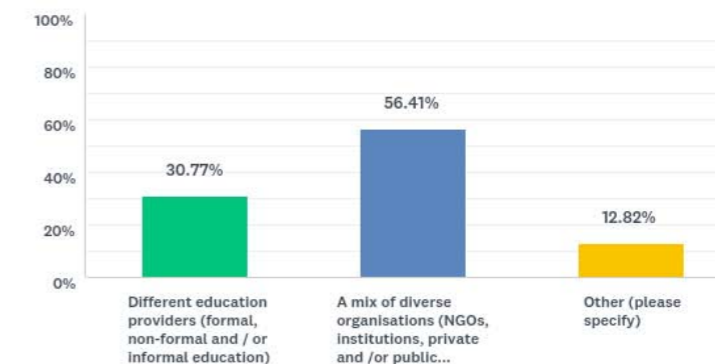
Implementation of cross-sector cooperation projects

A clear majority of respondents (82.05%) believe that Erasmus+ enables them to implement cross-sector cooperation projects, while a rather small 17.95% does not think that it allows them to implement such projects. This, evidently, depends on the respondents' understanding of what constitutes cross-sector cooperation. Hence, while it could be the case that cooperation projects between public bodies and civil society organisations are possible to implement, this may be less true for cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal learning.
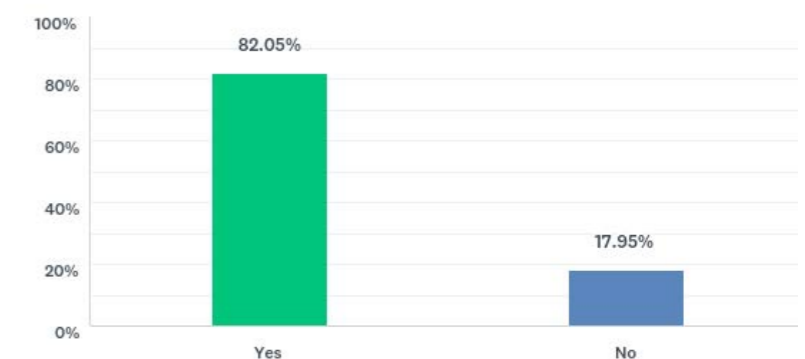
EVALUATION PROCESS

Feedback on project applications

Respondents were asked for their opinion about the sufficiency of the feedback that they were given on their project application, if applicable. For the NAs, just under a quarter of respondents (24.32%) give the top score of 5, indicating that the feedback received was indeed very much sufficient. A further 18.92% award a score of 4. These results would appear to suggest a generally high level of satisfaction with feedback from NAs on project applications. That said, the fact that 40% of respondents provide a score of 3 or less highlights that there **is still potential for making improvements to the feedback system**.

For EACEA, the findings also indicate that the feedback on project applications can be considered satisfactory overall, with 39.39% of responses awarding a score of 4 or 5, but again with the caveat that the other ratings highlight the **need to continue efforts for improving the process**.
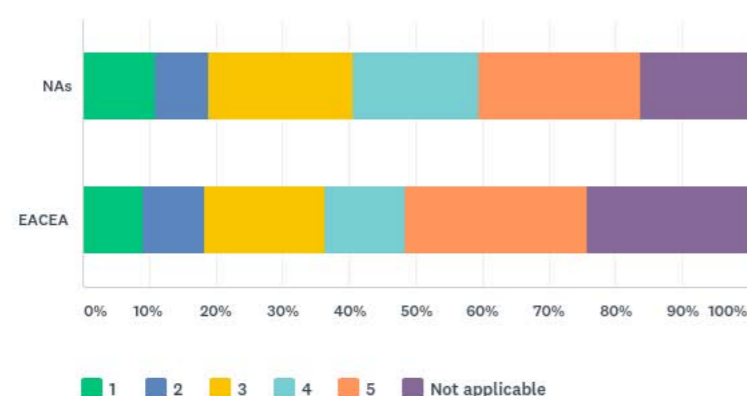
Feedback on completed projects

The responses show a generally high level of satisfaction with how sufficient the evaluation of or feedback on completed projects is, with 45.95% of respondents awarding a score of 4 or 5. Indeed, the top score of 5 is given by 29.73% of responses. Nevertheless, a not insignificant 18.92% award the bottom score of 1, which shows that for some beneficiaries the feedback is not at all perceived as sufficient. Regardless, the fact that a score of 3 or less is awarded by 54.06% of respondents highlights **clear room for improvement to the feedback process for completed projects.**

Q33 Did you receive sufficient evaluation/feedback on completed project(s)? (Rate from 1 not at all - 5 definitely yes)
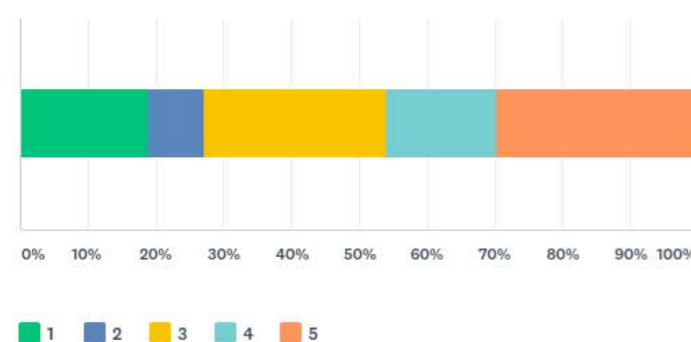
Overall satisfaction with evaluation report

Concerning the evaluation report provided by the NAs or EACEA, a considerable 45.95% of respondents award a score of 4 or 5, meaning that they were rather satisfied with the evaluation. Responses providing a score of 3 or less amount to 54.05%, suggesting that further efforts to optimise the quality of the evaluation are nevertheless required.

Q34 How satisfied were you with the evaluation report provided by the NA(s)/EACEA? (Rate from 1 not at all - 5 definitely yes)
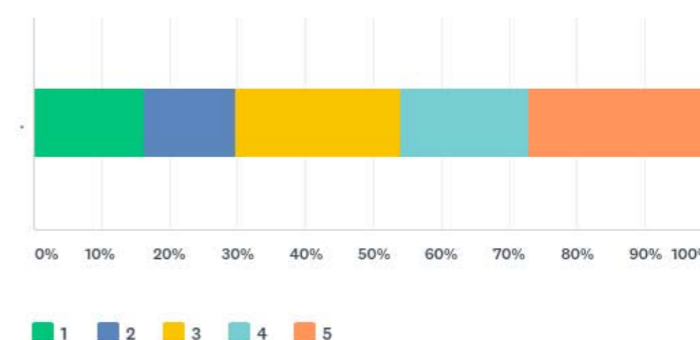
Main reasons for dissatisfaction

Among the points raised, respondents suggest that the feedback on project applications can sometimes reveal pre-existing prejudices about the organisation applying. Divergence in the quality of the evaluation provided by the different NAs is also flagged as a matter of concern. A further reason is the fact that the remarks given by the evaluators appear to be standarised or generic. This is also a point that emerged from last year's survey. Indeed, this year's findings likewise echo comments made in previous years about the contradiction in feedback from the two evaluators and the need to make the evaluation criteria more transparent in order to improve trust in the process.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

Priorities for future programme

Concerning what the priorities of the Erasmus+ successor programme should be, respondents mention a variety of issues but there are some common points. The strongest priority is by far **social inclusion**, particularly the need to give students from disadvantaged backgrounds the possibility to undertake a period of mobility. **Citizenship education** is another area which many respondents feel the next programme could focus on, in other words, helping people to participate in democratic life and learn how to live together. Moreover, supporting **innovation in education** is highlighted as a priority, for example, experimenting with new teaching and learning methods. Further issues which the survey responses emphasise are how the programme could **better include adults and refugees and promote the development of transversal skills.**

Structure of the programme

Regarding how the programme's structure can be improved, a clear message that emerges from an analysis of the responses is the need to **reduce bureaucracy and make the application process less intensive.** A few respondents also stress that it **should be made easier for adults to take part in the programme.** Other individual respondents recommend a more rapid payment of the lump sum instalments, the appointment of a 'virtual agent' online who can help answer all questions related to the Programme Guide, and flexibility for NAs to move funds between actions according to their needs.

Accessibility for newcomers

Recommendations provided by respondents on how the programme could be made more accessible to newcomers include some kind of easily accessible Q&A, intelligence gathering by NAs where they survey first time applicants to identify which questions in the application were the most difficult, or the organisation of specific training seminars for newcomers by the NAs. While many claim that the application process is already accessible enough, some remark that it could be s**implified for smaller organisations which do not have the required expertise if they have not previously worked at the EU level**.

Financial support

Concerning the views of respondents on the sufficiency of funding, **a striking 40% do not think the overall financial support is sufficient to meet the programme objectives, while 31.43% think it is and 28.57% are not sure.** These figures are more or less consistent with the results of last year's survey, although the proportion of respondents that consider the level of funding sufficient has decreased slightly - down from 36%. Indeed, the fact that **just under a third of respondents think the overall funding is sufficient constitutes a cause for concern**, especially for a programme which is often heralded by politicians as a success story for European citizens.

Q39 Do you think the overall financial support of the programme for the different key actions for the 2014-2020 period is sufficient to meet its objectives?
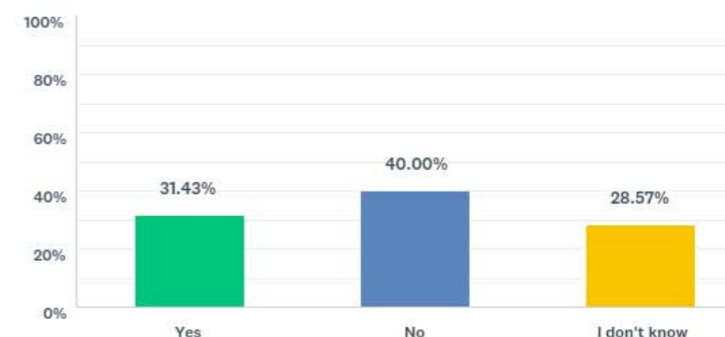
Key action budget allocation

A majority of respondents (65.71%) believe that there is a good balance in the budget allocation to the programme's different key actions, while 34.29% are of the opposing view. Comments by respondents point to the fact that c**ertain actions are under pressure due to a very high rejection rate and that funds should be allocated on the basis of beneficiary demand**. A few respondents put particular emphasis on the need for additional funds for Key Action 2 – Strategic Partnerships. One respondent proposes that a detailed breakdown should be done for each key action, with an explanation on what type of project it has funded, in order to get a better understanding of the balance between them.
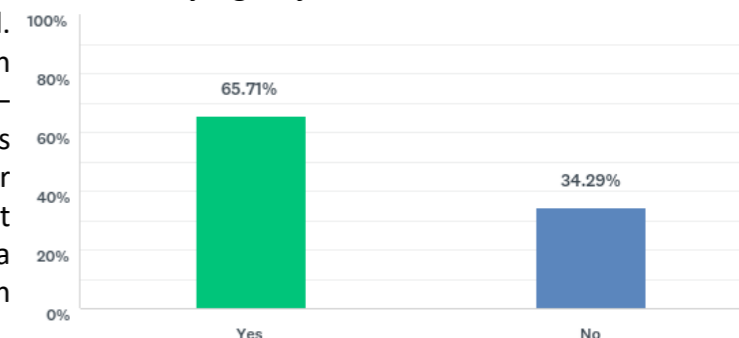
Synergies with Creative Europe

The responses to this question show that **almost a half of those surveyed (48.57%) feel Erasmus+ would benefit from closer synergies with Creative Europe**, while 42.86% think that it possibly would and 8.57% do not think it would. The impressive proportion of 'yes' responses provides food for thought on how both programme could complement each other, and indeed the high number of 'maybe' responses is more likely related to a lack of knowledge about Creative Europe than an unwillingness to seek synergies. Overall, there is a clear openness to the idea that the Erasmus+ programme could be enhanced through closer cooperation with its sister programme in the cultural sector.

Q41 Do you think the Erasmus+ programme would benefit from closer synergies with Creative Europe programme?
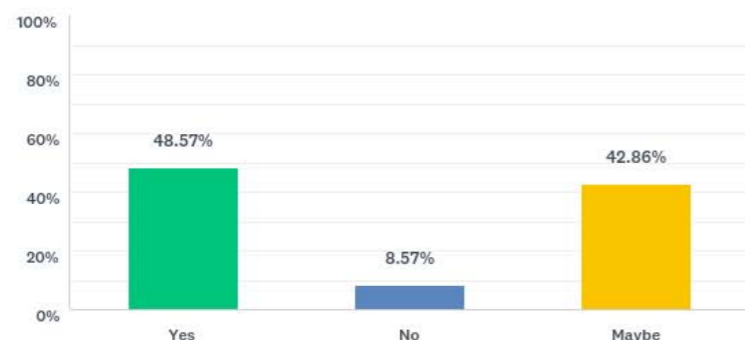
Synergies with Europe for Citizens

As is the case for Creative Europe, **an impressive number of respondents – 51.43% –** are of the view that Erasmus+ would benefit from closer collaboration with the Europe for Citizens programme, with 14.29% holding the contrary view and 34.29% expressing uncertainty. This overall positive response is particularly interesting in view of the responses to the question about future priorities stressing the potential role of Erasmus+ in promoting active citizenship and citizenship education. Elaborating on their answers, one respondent believes that the process of forging closer synergies between both programmes would help promote a **'knowledge-based' society,** while another suggests that it could help ensure the better inclusion of young people and educational aspects in the town twinning action.

Q42 Do you think the Erasmus+ programme would benefit from closer synergies with Europe for Citizens programme?
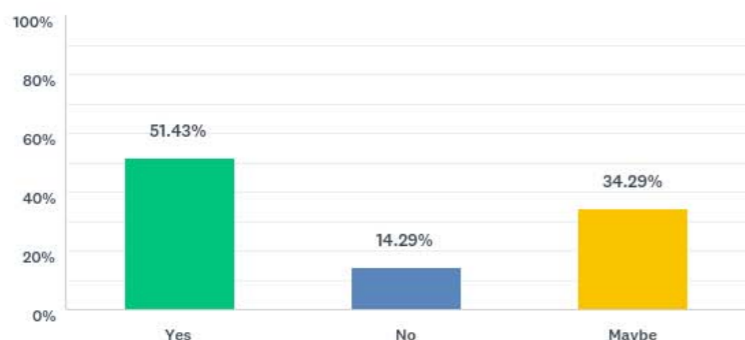
CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above findings, the Lifelong Learning Platform comes to the following conclusions on steps required to optimise the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme:

Guidance
- Provide a clear Programme Guide written in more user-friendly language
- Provide a detailed breakdown of information for each Key Action, e.g. budget, what types of project it has funded

Simplification
- Step up efforts to streamline and simplify all aspects of the application procedure and reduce bureaucracy
- Make application forms more user-friendly

Coordination between NAs
- Improve communication between NAs in order to favour a common understanding of how to implement programme rules

Decentralisation
- Recognise and support the role of European-level civil society organisations as a facilitator of project cooperation across countries

Budget
- Increase lump sum funding to ensure real needs of beneficiaries are provided for, particularly with a view to enhancing participation of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Ensure higher overall budget for the programme so that it has sufficient resources to meet its objectives

Evaluation
- Enhance transparency in the evaluation process
- Improve training process for evaluators with harmonised standards so that beneficiaries can be guaranteed high quality evaluation no matter to which NA they apply
- Ensure evaluators have adequate level of knowledge of the sector for which they are evaluating projects

Future priorities
- Make the programme more inclusive by improving access to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Strengthen the focus on citizenship education and innovation in education
- Pursue synergies with the Europe for Citizens and Creative Europe programmes

LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

The Lifelong Learning Platform is an umbrella association that gathers 41 European organisations active in the field of education and training, coming from all EU Member States and beyond. Currently these networks represent more than 50 000 educational institutions (schools, universities, adult education and youth centres, etc.) or associations (involving students, teachers and trainers, parents, HRD professionals, etc.) covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Their members reach out to several millions of beneficiaries.

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