



EDUCATION EXCHANGES SUPPORT FOUNDATION

# ERASMUS+ INTELLECTUAL OUTPUTS

## SUSTAINABILITY

- How are outputs used after the completion of the projects (in Lithuania)?
- What promotes sustainability of those outputs?
- Evaluation of Erasmus+ strategic partnership projects funded in 2014-2016

# FINAL REPORT

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# SUMMARY

Lithuanian National Agency of Erasmus+ became increasingly aware that the major focus of Strategic Partnerships fell on the implementation of the projects and much less attention was paid to long term sustainability of the projects. Therefore, we have conducted an evaluation to find (1) how well intellectual outputs (IOs) of Erasmus+ are generating their intended benefits (in Lithuania) after their completion and (2) what factors promote the sustainability of Erasmus+ IOs. To answer these questions, we evaluated the sustainability of 41 Erasmus+ projects that had created IOs and were completed at least one year ago. This report was developed mainly through desk research, semi-structured interviews with the coordinators of completed projects, and analysis of the final reports of those projects. We conducted 44 interviews and developed 10 case studies that illustrate how various IOs are used in a sustainable manner after the completion of the project.

The evaluation revealed that 26 out of 41 of the IOs of Strategic Partnership projects could be classified as "sustainable" (regularly used, institutionalized), 12 IOs were "partly sustainable" (irregularly used, not institutionalized) and the remaining 3 were "not sustainable" (no longer used after the project completion). The evaluation revealed that even after the withdrawal of the Erasmus+ assistance, 1 out of 10 IOs has a large-scale impact (national or sectoral). 1 out of 3 IOs has an organisational impact because they have created a visible value for the project coordinator's organisation and/or other organisations. Every second IO has a small-scale impact because they affect just a few individuals who were the members of the project team. Most IOs have the potential for a wider use and application; however, the interviews revealed that the project coordinators lacked motivation of trying to increase the sustainability of their IOs.

We have learned that project coordinators who creates a sustainable IOs (1) have a well-defined problem for the IO to solve, (2) gain support from potential stakeholders at an early stage, (3) make partnerships with experienced organisations and (4) involve end users in the creation process of the IO. Finally (5), sustainability of IO requires focusing on the long-term targets.

# INTRODUCTION

The evaluation draws attention to a critical, yet little-explored, field of Strategic Partnerships of the programme Erasmus+ – *sustainability*. The most considerable effort is made during the funding stage of the projects but very little is known about the use of intellectual outputs after the projects have been completed. The outputs are only a part of the project results but they were selected as a *subject* of the analysis for a number of reasons: (1) the outputs constitute a significant share of the budget, they are allocated almost 50% of the grants for Strategic Partnerships, (2) sustainability of the outputs has never been assessed before, (3) the outputs are tangible, therefore they are prone to better conditions for analysis (compared to knowledge and skills). *Better understanding of sustainability and its factors is important so that the future projects of Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships are planned and implemented in a responsible manner in pursuit of long-term benefits for education.*

The expectation of sustainability of the outputs in the field of Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships is of high importance. It consists of *two parts*. *The first part* entails that the created intellectual outputs will be used after the completion of the project, i.e. they will be freely accessible, viewed and read. It cannot be stated, however, that the user views alone are enough for sustainability of the outputs. Here comes the *second* part of sustainability – the outputs need to help achieve the Erasmus+ goals related to the change of the educational organisations and impact on the learners. The definition of sustainability is associated with a longer term after the end of the project, therefore we assessed the “oldest” Strategic Partnership projects of the programme Erasmus+ *implemented in Lithuania*. The total of 41 projects completed at least a year ago were analysed in detail. Those projects had already undergone the entire cycle of Strategic Partnership – from application to completion. These projects constitute some one fifth of Strategic Partnerships funded in Lithuania to date, as the majority of Strategic Partnerships are still under implementation.

During the analysis, *44 interviews* with the project coordinators were conducted. The interviews aimed at trying to understand how the outputs were used after the completion of the project, and whether or not the use of those outputs facilitated the implementation of organisational or systemic changes. The aim was also to see which practical solutions of the project enabled assuring the sustainability of the outputs and generate higher added value. For this reason, this report is mainly the synthesis of the interviews with the project coordinators supplemented with the facts from the project applications, reports and European Commission’s data system.

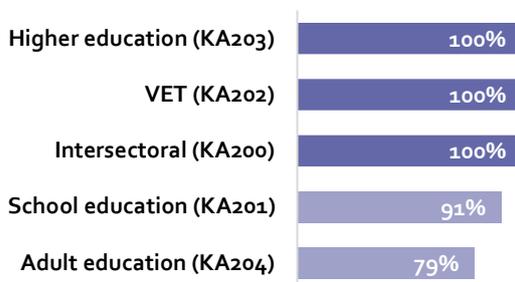
The first part of the report presents the evaluation methodology (“Methodology”), the second part provides the review of created outputs (“Output Presentation”), the third part assesses the use of the outputs (“Sustainability Evaluation”), the fourth part deals with the use for drivers (“Sustainability Factors”), and, finally, the fifth part describes the cases of sustainable use of the outputs in Lithuania (“Sustainability Examples”). The evaluation results are summarised in the last section “Conclusions”.

# 1. METHODOLOGY

## Purpose of evaluation

The essence of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership projects is to enable organisations to cooperate at an international level for the purpose of better provision of educational and training services. Those projects receive increasingly more investments. Since 2014, the amount of EUR 27.4 million has so far been invested in 188 projects in Lithuania<sup>1</sup>. Some half of this budget is allocated to create and promote intellectual outputs – training methodologies, programmes, instruments, surveys, etc <sup>2</sup>. Absolute majority of the projects choose to create intellectual outputs (Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1. Share of strategic partnerships (2014-2018) creating outputs**



Source: "Erasmus+" Dashboard, 5 March 2019.

The development of intellectual outputs is therefore an integral part of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships. It is a unique opportunity to influence a larger target group. Moreover, the development of the outputs allows the project coordinators to access more substantial resources of Erasmus+, i.e. to receive additional funding for employees who create the outputs and for multiplier events. The project coordinators are free to decide whether or not to create those outputs, they also choose the strategies for dissemination and use of the outputs.

Although the quality of the Strategic Partnership projects and outputs merits great attention, very little is known about the use of intellectual outputs after the projects have been completed. Sustainability of the Strategic Partnership outputs has never been explored before. This means that a clear concept of the output sustainability was missing as well as the specific practical advice as to how to ensure the use of the outputs when planning and implementing the Strategic Partnership projects. *The purpose of evaluation is therefore to assess the use of the outputs in Lithuania after the completion of the projects and identify the determinants of the output sustainability.*

Tasks of the evaluation: (1) assess the use of intellectual outputs after the completion of the projects, (2) identify the main determinants of the output sustainability, (3) provide recommendations with regard to a better use of the outputs. The outputs are used in the other countries of the programme as well, as they are developed in the partnership with the foreign organisations, but the use of those outputs is assessed *in Lithuania only*.

<sup>1</sup> "Erasmus+" Dashboard, 5 March 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Based on the data of the analysis of the final reports on the projects completed by 31 October 2018.

## Subject of evaluation

Strategic partnerships are divided into two groups. The first one refers to the *innovation projects*. They are designed to develop innovative intellectual outputs used in the field of education and training or apply and disseminate the existing innovations of education and training. The second group covers the *projects supporting exchange of good practices*. The main goal of such projects is to enhance the organisations' capacity to operate at an international level, share, and familiarise with the ideas and practice applied in the field of education and training. The subject of this evaluation is *intellectual outputs* which may be developed by the projects (*supporting innovations*) of the first group.

The output is the creation of the project whose use is not defined by time or place. In other words, the output may be re-used at any time. For example:

- description of a training method;
- training programme;
- training material, tool;
- virtual learning environment;
- study, analysis report;
- description of good practice;
- strategic document;
- audio-visual material.

The attributes or types of the outputs are not defined in detail in the funding conditions but the outputs, when assessing the application, are applied three key criteria: innovation, effectiveness and use beyond the project's lifetime. The programme guide also says that "*The outputs should be substantial in quality and quantity. The outputs should prove their potential for wider use and exploitation, as well as for impact.*"<sup>3</sup>

Intellectual outputs are not compulsory but, as mentioned above, the majority of Strategic Partnership project coordinators choose to create them (Fig. 1, p. 5). Since 2014, as many as 370 Erasmus+ intellectual outputs and 411 multiplier events have been funded in Lithuania<sup>4</sup>. The development of intellectual outputs alone is allocated some 43% of the Strategic Partnership budget<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 2). In practice, the outputs fall within the definition of education content provided in the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania: "The education content shall consist of what is taught and studied, how it is taught and studied, how the progress and achievements of learners, what teaching and learning aids are used". Thus, the outputs of Erasmus+ enable updating and adjusting the education content at the organisational and personal level. The structure of the outputs themselves is not defined – the project coordinators may develop one output or break it down into several outputs (e.g. the output is provided as a single methodology or it is divided into several outputs – analysis, recommendations to teachers, lesson plans, etc.). Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis the outputs developed during one project are assessed as a whole irrespective of the fact that there might be several outputs, as they are generally closely connected.

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<sup>3</sup> "Erasmus+" Programme Guide, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> "Erasmus+" Dashboard, 5 March 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the analysis of the final reports on the projects completed by 31 October 2018.

## Evaluation criteria and questions

Sustainability is the main criterion of the evaluation. It consists of two parts. The first part entails that *the outputs should be used beyond the project's lifetime*, i.e. they are freely accessible, viewed, read or used otherwise. It cannot be stated, however, that the user views and attention alone are enough for sustainability of the outputs. The second aspect of sustainability is whether or not the *outputs help achieve certain goals* related to the organisational change and target group. Sustainability means the outputs being useful after the conclusion of the project<sup>6</sup>. Sustainability is a process of change where the resources, investment direction and changes are compatible with the future and present needs<sup>7</sup>. To sum up, it may be stated that sustainability means that the project met not only the needs of the relevant period but also the future needs. Those needs may extend for at least five years as sustainability relates to a long-term benefit<sup>8</sup>.

There is a scientific consensus on the theoretical concept of sustainability, whereas there is no consistent view with regard to the practical criteria of evaluation of the project sustainability<sup>9</sup>. Academic literature refers to at least two evaluation perspectives: firstly, the fact that the project outputs are beneficial beyond the project's lifetime, and secondly, whether or not the outputs were institutionalised<sup>10</sup>.

The evaluation aims at answering two groups of the questions.

### *I. What is the use of the outputs after the completion of the project?*

1. Are the outputs used after the completion of the project?
2. Who uses the outputs used after the completion of the project and how? Were the outputs institutionalised, are they beneficial?
3. How are the output sustainability plans provided for in the application (and/or final project report) implemented?
4. What is the output availability after the completion of the project (to the persons other than the project coordinators and partners)?

### *II. Which factors improve sustainability of the outputs?*

5. Which personal factors improve sustainability of the outputs? These are the skills, experience, beliefs and values of the project team.
6. Which organisational factors improve sustainability of the outputs? These are the factors related to the project organisation.
7. Which institutional factors improve sustainability of the outputs? These are the factors related to the project promoter's institution and education system.

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<sup>6</sup> Bamber, M. and Cheema, S. Case Studies of Projects Sustainability: Implications for Policy and Operations from Asian Experience. Washington DC. The World Bank, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Mihelcic, J. R. et al, Sustainability science and engineering: emergence of a new multidiscipline. Environmental Science & Technology, 37 (23), 5314-5324, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, Evaluation Methods for the European Union's External Assistance, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Julia E. Moore, Developing a Comprehensive Definition Of Sustainability, Implement Sci. 12: 110. 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Aga D.A. et al., Project Beneficiary Participation and Behavioural Intentions Promoting Project Sustainability: The Mediating Role of Psychological Ownership, Development Policy Review, 21-1, 2017.

## Evaluation methods

In the programme Erasmus+, sustainability is the capacity of the project to continue and use its results beyond the end of the funding period<sup>11</sup>. Since the definition of sustainability itself relates to the experience after the project, 50 “oldest” projects were selected for this analysis (KA200, KA201, KA202, KA203 and KA204). These projects were implemented between 2014 and 2018; 1-3 years have passed after the completion of those projects. The data on 41 projects were collected – 7 project coordinators did not provide the information, the coordinators of two more projects were not developing the outputs, therefore they were not included in the analysis.

**Table 1. Projects analysed by the year of completion**

Years after the end of the project	Number of projects
3 years (completed by 31 October 2016)	12
2 years (completed by 31 October 2017)	21
1 year (completed by 30 September 2018)	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

The evaluation methods were the following.

**Analysis of funding documents and legal acts.** This approach is required when assessing the formal provisions and objectives of sustainability as well as the context of educational projects in Lithuania. The main documents are the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, National Education Strategy for 2013-2022, Programme for Development of Studies and R&D (social, cultural) for 2013-2020, Good School Concept, Non-Formal Adult Education and Continuing Learning Development Programme for 2016-2023.

**Interviews.** Semi-structured, open-question interviews stand for the main source of information. 44 interviews with the project coordinators, who were the coordinators or managers of the Strategic Partnership projects, were conducted over the phone. This interview programme involved 44 Lithuanian KA200, KA201, KA202, KA203 and KA204 project coordinators and, in some cases, partners, where the projects were completed more than a year ago. The interviews were carried out between June and September in 2019.

**Case studies.** 10 case studies were carried out which enable a better understanding of the circumstances and factors subject to the use of the outputs. Those are also practical examples of a successful use of the outputs. The interviews, project final reports and publicly available information on the projects and their organisations on the Internet were the sources of the case studies. The case studies reflect the main types of the outputs and all education sectors. Three case studies were subject to school education, two of them related to vocational education, four studies analysed higher education and one of them dealt with the adult education sector outputs. Case studies are presented in the fifth part of the report “Examples of Sustainability”.

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<sup>11</sup> “Erasmus+” Programme Guide, 2019, version 2

**Comparison.** The outputs were analysed applying the comparative approach – by encoding their attributes (e.g. whether or not the target group was involved in the development of the output) and comparing their sustainability (sustainable/not sustainable). The results of the comparative analysis are illustrated by the so-called quadrants, where the outputs are divided into four groups, for comparison purposes, by means of two criteria which have two values each.

**Analysis of the content of reports and applications.** The project applications or project final reports, especially the content in relation to the obligations to maintain the sustainability of the outputs, were analysed. The financial and other data of the intellectual outputs presented in the European Commission information system were analysed as well.

**Infographics.** To summarize the answers to the questionnaire, the report provides 3 infographics (see “Summary of the section”). The first infographic presents the outputs, the second introduces the results of sustainability, and the third one provides the sustainability factors. The infographics are suitable for the dissemination of the survey results to a wider audience and for drawing the potential project coordinators’ attention to the opportunities and restrictions related to the subject of the analysis.

## 2. INTELLECTUAL OUTPUTS

*The outputs of Erasmus+ enable updating the education content by means of good practices.*

During the survey, 41 out of 49 projects the implementation whereof involved the development of the outputs were assessed. The scope of sectoral evaluation is provided in Table 2. The sectoral attribution was carried out by sectoral group the outputs were assigned to, rather than based on the sector of the project coordinator's organisation. The majority of the outputs were created for the sectors of school education and vocational education.

**Table 2. Outputs assessed by sectors**

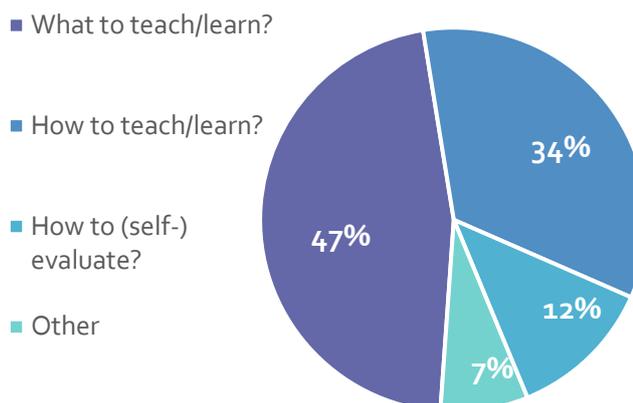
Education sector	Assessed sustainability of the outputs	Non-assessed sustainability of the outputs
Pre-school, pre-primary education	2	0
School education	12	2
Vocational education and training	12	2
Higher education	4	4
Adult education	11	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>8</b>

The majority of the assessed outputs may be described as the innovative content of teaching/learning and/or methods which were developed or applied on the foreign experience. A major part (2/3) of the outputs reflects the following specific topics: application of information and communications technology in education (e.g. virtual mobility, remote learning, open educational resources), social integration (e.g. of immigrants and the unemployed), education of children with special needs (e.g. of the disabled or able children), harmonisation of the needs of education and labour market (e.g. career consulting, apprenticeship development) as well as active citizenship and entrepreneurship (e.g. volunteering at schools, promotion of entrepreneurship of the elderly), recognition of knowledge, skills and competence (e.g. acquired at the workplace or during mobility for learning purposes). Those topics comply with the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme for 2014-2016 because it was namely that period when the outputs in question were funded.

All outputs of Erasmus+ are developed using good practices (generally, foreign ones). They are tested in practice in Lithuania and/or partners' countries and are assessed taking the results of practical application in account. Testing in Lithuania is typically performed in one or several organisations. The interviews with persons, who were using the outputs, or the comparison of pre- and post-use achievements were employed as the tools for evaluation. This means that the project participants, having tested the output, gain a qualification required for its application and assess the results of the use of the output. Finally, the outputs are always presented to a wider audience during the conferences or other events. The outputs of one project are generally presented to a target group of 70-200 members in Lithuania.

A typical output of Strategic Partnerships usually falls under the *definition of the education content*: “The education content shall consist of what is taught and studied, how it is taught and studied, how the progress and achievements of learners, what teaching and learning aids are used”<sup>12</sup>. Thus, almost half of the outputs answer the question “what is taught/learned?” – these are mainly the material designed for the development or update of the study programmes, training modules, courses or subjects. One third of the products – “how do they teach/learn?” – is generally comprised of the descriptions of education and training methods (e.g. Integrated education, experiential education, problem-based learning). Nearly one sixth of the outputs answer the question “what is the (self-) evaluation?” and relate to the evaluation of the learners’ knowledge and skills (e.g. dynamic tool for assessing the pupils’ skills, application for assessing the competences of the unemployed).

**Fig. 3. Breakdown of the outputs by the question of the education content they answer (N=41)**



Thus, the intellectual outputs of Erasmus+ are characteristic of two essential features which affect their use. Firstly, they supplement the education content with new and innovative resources. Secondly, they are tested in practice, i.e. tested with a target group in Lithuania, assessed in terms of results and publicly presented.

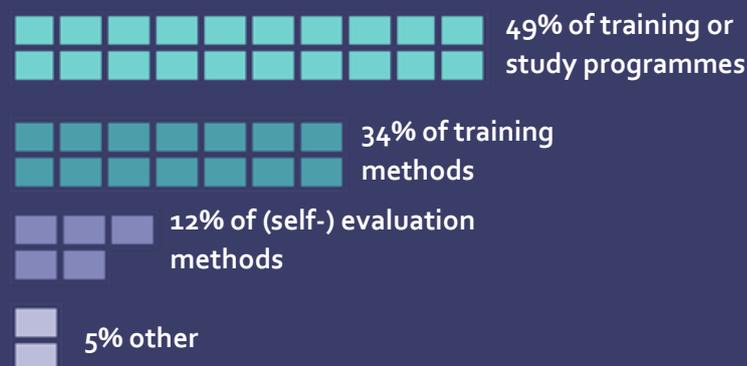
<sup>12</sup>Republic of Lithuania Law on Amending the Law on Education, 17 March 2011, No. XI-128.

# ERASMUS+ INTELLECTUAL OUTPUTS ANALYSED

## NUMBER OF OUTPUTS

Pre-school, pre-primary education	2
School education	12
Vocational education and training	12
Higher education	4
Adult education	11
<i>Total outputs analysed</i>	<i>41</i>

## TYPE OF OUTPUTS



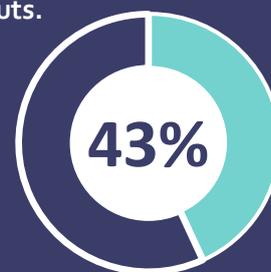
## AVERAGE BUDGET

€ 72 000

This is an average grant for the development of the intellectual outputs of one project. The median is, accordingly, € 45 000

## % OF THE BUDGET

This is a share of the budget of the analysed projects for the development of the outputs.



## MOST POPULAR TOPICS OF THE OUTPUTS



Innovative training programmes and methods



Application of information and communications technology

## TIME CRITERION APPLIED TO THE OUTPUTS

> 1 year

Projects during which the outputs in were developed, concluded by 30 September 2018.

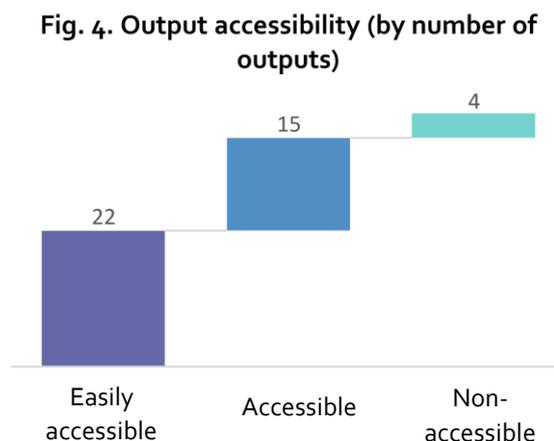
# 3. SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The “stories” of sustainability of all outputs differ greatly, therefore four levels of sustainability have been formulated in order to assess them better. They are appropriate for all Strategic Partnership projects irrespective of their type, topic or sector. The requirements for the levels are formulated on the requirements for the intellectual outputs of Erasmus+ Guide and Guide for Experts on Application Evaluation<sup>13</sup>. It may therefore be stated that those levels correspond to the main Erasmus+ expectations for sustainability.

## First level – accessibility of the outputs after the end of the project

*Are the Erasmus+ outputs accessible to everyone?*

One of the conditions for sustainability of the Erasmus+ outputs is their accessibility to potential users. During the analysis, 90% of the outputs were publicly available on the Internet, i.e. 37 project outputs out of 41 were presented on the Erasmus+ programme result platform<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, 54% (22) of the project outputs were additionally presented on a specific project website. 10% of the outputs (4 outputs) were not available in the open sources during the analysis. Diagram 4 represents the accessibility of the outputs in absolute values. Easily accessible outputs mean the outputs on the Erasmus+ result database and on a specific project website; accessible outputs mean the outputs in the Erasmus+ result database; non accessible outputs mean the outputs which are not in the Erasmus+ result database and do not have a specific project website.



The specific project websites were funded during the implementation of as many as 27 projects. One of the objectives of such websites was to improve the output accessibility. Those websites are different in their functionality – from purely informative to interactive virtual learning websites. All those websites (except for one) were no longer updated after the completion of the project (based on the date of the last entry under “News” section). Consequently, they are designed for passive information and storage of the outputs. The interviews with the project coordinators illustrate that the coordinators indicate the addresses of those websites to the potential users but it is very rarely the case when the project coordinator is contacted with regard to the project outputs. Publicly presented contacts do not increase accessibility in a significant way as well. On the other hand, the

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, Guide for Experts on Quality Assessment, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Erasmus+ result platform: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

absolute majority of the interview participants indicate that their outputs may be used without additional clarification, therefore the outputs are likely to be used without notifying the coordinators.

To sum up, it can be stated that public accessibility of the outputs is good, and the outputs may be generally used without additional clarification. On the other hand, the project websites are no longer updated after the completion of the project. This means that the attendance rate is not systematically increased.

## Second level – use of the outputs after the end of the project

*How actively are the Erasmus+ outputs used after the completion of the project?*

Another expectation established in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide concerns the practical use of the outputs beyond the project's lifetime. Based on the interviews, it is apparent that 93% of the outputs attract attention in 1-3 years after the end of the project. **Only 3 outputs (7%) which were no longer used were identified.**

To have better understanding of the use of the outputs, we divided them into actively and passively used ones. The term “actively” means that the output was integrated in the activity of one or several organisations after the completion of the projects and has been used since on a regular basis. As a result, **63% of the interviewees state that at least one output (of their project) is actively used after the completion of the project.**

Cases of active use of intellectual outputs:

- new study/training programmes have been produced on the basis of the outputs (e.g. international vocational training programme for welders, bachelor's degree in landscape architecture, programme of integrated civics, economy and ethics lessons for 5-8 grade pupils);
- study/training programmes, disciplines have been updated on the basis of the outputs (e.g. discipline of the pre-primary and pre-school pedagogical study programme, information technology programme of vocational education);
- programmes or courses for qualification development have been prepared on the outputs (e.g. e-marketing courses for tourism sector enterprises, programme for innovative teacher's qualification development);
- the outputs have helped develop the non-formal education initiatives (e.g. international contest to demonstrate IT excellence for students of vocational schools, volunteer club);
- the outputs have contributed to deployment of new learning forms and methods (e.g. virtual mobility at university, narrative playing and learning spaces in nurseries-kindergartens);
- the outputs have been used to draft the strategic documents (e.g. municipal education plans, action plan on the integration of foreigners into society);
- the outputs have been used when establishing new institutional divisions or enhancing the existing ones (e.g. entrepreneurial academy of the university, game research laboratory).

*29% of the outputs in question are passively used.* These outputs are irregularly used as the personal initiatives as well (e.g. applied in lessons, lectures or courses), but the organisations did not institutionalise their use. This means that outputs inspire individual teachers, instructors or lecturers to apply certain output methods or knowledge but the project organisations are not obliged to use them in their daily activities. The main difference from the active use is the fact that the use of those outputs depends on personal initiatives, but it is not involved in the permanent organisational activity.

**Table 3. Outputs by sectors and use after the end of the project**

Education sector	Actively used	Passively used	Not used
Pre-school, pre-primary education	2	0	0
School education	8	4	0
Vocational education and training	8	3	1
Higher education	4	0	0
Adult education	4	5	2

The evaluation of the use by sectors (Table 3) shows that higher education establishments and pre-school, pre-primary education establishments (when in partnership with higher education establishments) were using the Erasmus+ outputs most actively, whereas adult education organisations were the most passive in terms of the use of the outputs. Time that has elapsed after the project does not affect the use. This means that, in many cases, when a year elapses after the end of the project it can be accurately projected whether or not the output will be used in the next two years. The budget allocated to the output is not associated with the use as well – the larger budget for the output development does not increase active use.

To sum up, it may be concluded that the users are interested in almost all outputs after the completion of the projects. In Lithuania, 63% of the outputs are actively used, 29% of them are used passively, and 7% are no longer used. In terms of sustainability factors (the fourth part of the report), the actively used outputs are considered "sustainable", whereas passively used and non-used outputs are "non-sustainable" for the purpose of better understanding of sustainability.

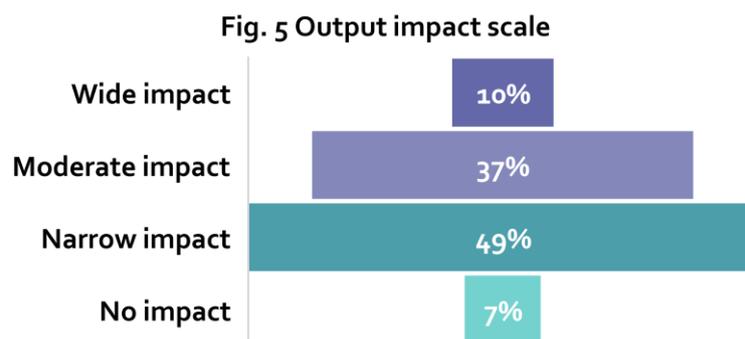
## Third level – extent of the impact after the end of the project

*Have the outputs become the significant innovations of the education sector?*

Sustainability of Erasmus+ intellectual outputs relates not only to the formal use of the outputs. The main feature of sustainability of the outputs is the fact that they help achieve the objectives of education and teaching. Thus, irrespective of the fact that most outputs in question are used beyond the project's lifetime one way or another, a weak point in terms of their use is a relatively low scale of application and changes.

Firstly, the outputs are mainly used in the project (coordinator's, partners') organisations. Although 56% of the outputs were used in other organisations in Lithuania, these were mainly the project partners. The coordinators are not monitoring the use of the outputs in other organisations (with several exceptions). The use of the output in other organisations was established on whether or not the coordinator was aware of at least one "success story" in terms of the use of the output in another organisation. The majority of the project coordinators did not have sufficient motivation to promote the use in other organisations, i.e. the ones which did not take part in the project. The promotion mainly constituted the project publication activities (e.g. events, articles), whereas after the end of the project the outputs were only occasionally presented publicly (e.g. in conferences) and it was often the case when their function was representative only (e.g. a publication as a present to colleagues).

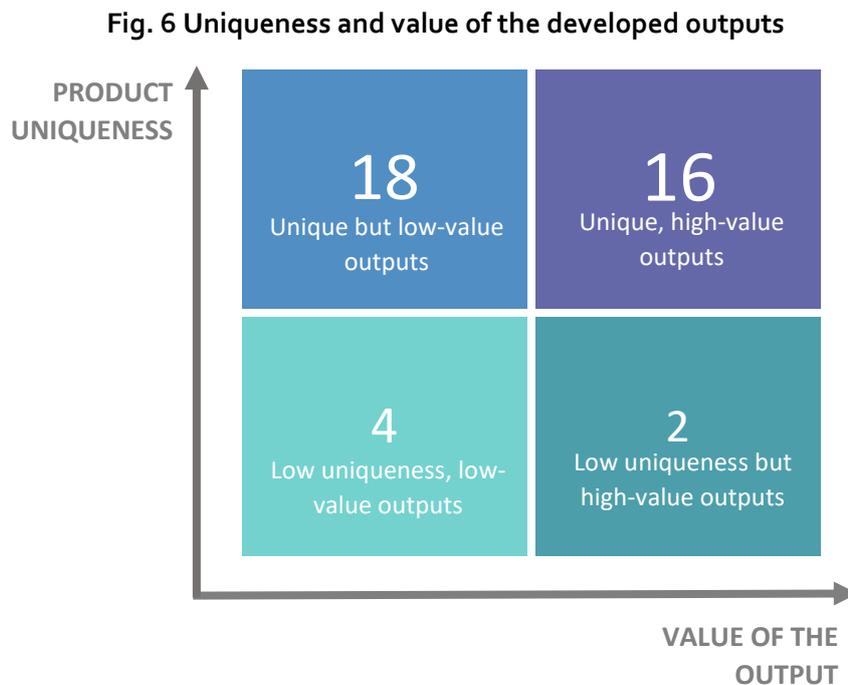
Secondly, the outputs usually result in relatively insignificant changes / impact. Even though the analysis of the outputs demonstrated that the outputs acquired sustainable forms of the use in most organisations, those impact were, however, quite local, i.e. at a level of a single organisation, single division or project team only. In other words, the impact were generally insufficient to become the prevailing innovations in a certain group of organisations, sector, municipality or at a national level. A relatively wide impact at a national or sectoral level is made by 4 (out of 41) project outputs. This means that only one tenth of the projects have the potential to bring significant impact. Almost every third project brings about moderate impact, which means that the project organisation and/or external organisations used the project output. Every second output results in small-scale impact, which means that the project results were used by the project team organisation only (Fig. 5). This scale of the impact has been assessed through the comparative approach based on the number of the representatives of the target group who benefited from the output and the duration of the benefit received. For instance, in terms of this evaluation, the impact of a 4-year study programme on 30 students is presumed to be wider than that on 30 listeners of a 3-hour course. The percentage (Fig. 5) is, however, indicative only as the scale of the impact has been assessed by means of the comparative approach.



To assess the innovation potential of the outputs (how likely their impact is), they were assessed on two criteria: uniqueness and generated value<sup>15</sup>. The uniqueness determines how new and innovative the output is in the education sector. This assessment was based on the interviews, applications and final reports evaluation. The value corresponds to the said impact, i.e. the part of the target group it reached and how long the output was used for (e.g. 3-hour course of the qualification development

<sup>15</sup> According to Guy Kawasaki, The Art of Innovation, speech at TEDxBerkeley, 2014.

or 240 ECTS credit study programme). The rough evaluation of value was based on the interview material. Thus, where the projects are divided into four quadrants based on these two criteria (Fig. 6), it is clear that the main strength of the outputs is uniqueness. The outputs are innovative, they introduce new things to the sector or even Lithuania. These are generally the outputs applied abroad and adapted for the use in Lithuania but sometimes the fully unique outputs are developed. Nevertheless, the weakness of the outputs is the value. High- and low-value projects are distributed almost 50/50.



To sum up, it may be stated that the strength of the outputs lies in their innovation: most outputs introduce unique things to the Lithuanian education and training sector. The weakness of the outputs is the generated value as the use of the outputs is generally related to the project team or project organisations, and the impact are of a local significance.

## Fourth level – long-term interests related to the use of the outputs

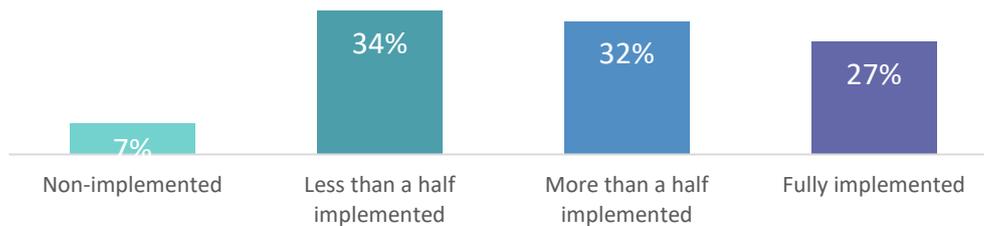
*Are the project coordinators executing the output sustainability plans?*

The final report of the project contains the so-called sustainability part. Here, the project coordinators are prompted to plan the use of the project results and outputs after the completion of the project. During the analysis, it was assessed how the project coordinators managed to execute the sustainability plans related to the use of the outputs in Lithuania.

The material collected during the interviews showed that 7% of the projects failed to execute the output sustainability plans in Lithuania, whereas 27% of the projects managed to execute them by almost 100% (Fig. 7). The main reason for failure to implement the plans is the fact that the output is planned to be used in other organisation of the same education sector (or the coordinators do not the evidence of that use). Another common reason for failure to execute the sustainability plans is failure

to institutionalise the outputs as planned, involve them in the daily activity of the organisation (e.g. register and launch the programme, conduct regular non-formal education training). The sustainability plans were thoroughly implemented by the coordinators who continue the project-related activity through new initiatives (mainly projects). The implementation of the sustainability plans reflects the long-term involvement and interest in the improvement of the outputs.

**Fig. 7. The implementation of the output sustainability plan contained in the final report of the project in 1-3 years after the end of the project**



The main drawbacks in planning the sustainability part and methodological restraints:

- **Vague planning.** The use of the outputs is not typically planned in a quantitative manner – the promoters usually fail to specify the use indicators or the terms. It is therefore impossible to establish the extent to which one or another sustainability statement was implemented (e.g. the output will be used by other Lithuanian vocational schools, example of good planning – every mentor will train at least 10 people per year).
- **Priority to publicity rather than impact.** The dissemination and accessibility on the Internet are usually mentioned as the means to ensure sustainability but the impact and use of the project results (including the outputs) for the purpose of the organisational objectives are rarely planned. This problem still remains relevant. The recent survey of the application evaluation experts<sup>16</sup> and survey of the applicants<sup>17</sup> show that the most complicated part of the Strategic Partnership application is the impact planning.
- **Sustainability is not monitored.** The coordinators are not monitoring the implementation of the sustainability plans and the use of the outputs (save several exceptions). Therefore, the coordinators' knowledge about the use is usually inaccurate. During the interviews, it came to light that the majority of the project coordinators feel as though they do not control the use of the outputs. A relatively large part of the respondents came up with the idea, for the first time during an interview, to assess the use and impact of the output (e.g. whether or not the suggested lesson scenarios help the teachers to increase the pupils' motivation, whether or not the entrepreneurship training programme for adults encouraged them to engage in business).

It may be concluded that 59% of the project coordinators fully or in part implemented the output sustainability plans in Lithuania as intended in the final report of the project. On the other hand, sustainability was often planned to have been ensured by the dissemination of the output rather than the reasonable use for the purpose of the results.

<sup>16</sup> Education Exchanges Support Foundation, "Erasmus+", Survey of KA2 application assessors, 2019.

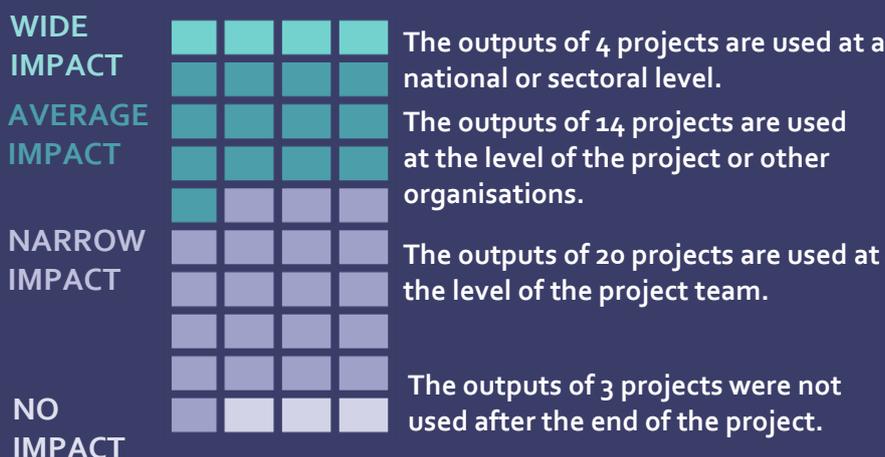
<sup>17</sup> Education Exchanges Support Foundation, "Erasmus+", Survey of KA2 applicants, 2019.

# ERASMUS+ OUTPUT SUSTAINABILITY

## ARE THEY USED BEYOND THE PROJECT'S LIFETIME?



## WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF THE IMPACT?



## ACCESSIBILITY

**90%**

of the outputs are publicly available on the Erasmus+ results portal:

[ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/)

## WHAT IS THE USE BY SECTOR?

### HIGHER EDUCATION

Highest use of the outputs.



### SCHOOL EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Average use of the outputs.



### ADULT EDUCATION

Lowest use of the outputs.



## 4. SUSTAINABILITY FACTORS

What can we learn from sustainable projects of Erasmus+? What did the developers of the successful intellectual outputs of Erasmus+ do differently? These are the main questions to be answered in this part. Five key factors which may enhance the use of the output beyond the project's lifetime are analysed. They have been based on the project coordinators' experience and project management theories as well as the recommendations of the innovation deployment researchers (see "Evaluation criteria and questions" for more information).

### First factor – well-defined problem

*What enables success after the end of the project and motivates to continue the work*

Most coordinators of the sustainable projects had a clear project motivation – they commenced their project from the problem of their team, division or organisation. It was relevant, comprehensible and reasoned. For example, the project coordinators wanted to increase their pupils' motivation, help the children with special needs to integrate in the school education system or satisfy the demand for the lacking specialists. Moreover, not only they were aware of the problem but they also were able to define it more specifically as a difference between the desired and existing situation – by means of quantitative indicators (e.g. based on the data of the national evaluation of student achievements or employer surveys conducted), conclusions of the surveys (e.g. based on the reports of analyses carried out by international or Lithuanian organisations) and/or specialists' statements (e.g. based on teacher meetings, meetings of the members of association).

As demonstrated by the interview, almost over 1/3 of the project coordinators launched the project and development of its outputs because they had the idea of the project instead of a specific problem. For example, to test a new method, improve employees' qualification, implement any Erasmus+ funding priority. The analysis of those project applications also confirms large orientation towards the activities rather than towards the problems and desired outcome. In the applications, the impact of the analysed projects was mostly planned without the desired outcomes or evidence on the existing situation. Finally, this drawback remains relevant for the current projects as well. The survey of the KA2 applicants of the Education Exchanges Support Foundation (EESF) of 2019<sup>18</sup> demonstrates that the most complicated part of the application is the follow-up. This is a part there the applicants describe the desired change. The EESF experts for the application evaluation<sup>19</sup> confirm that impreciseness in planning the change is a considerable drawback.

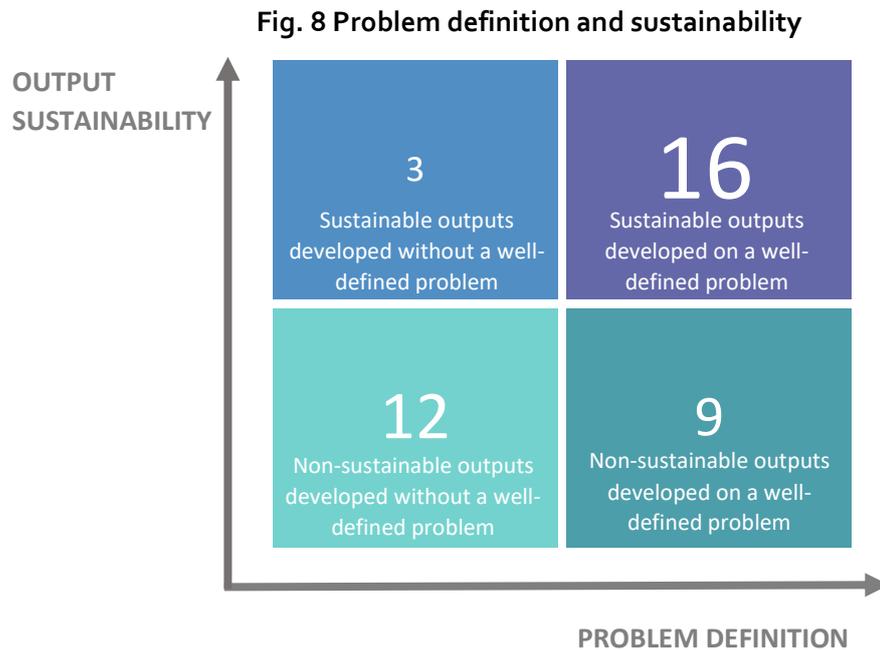
Slightly fewer than 2/3 of the project coordinators initiated the project and outputs because they had a clear problem to be resolved. In other words, they were able to define the problem more clearly during the interview, including whether or not they provided reasonable evidence on the existing and desired situation. For example, the administration of Prienai District Municipality used the following sources of information to define the project problem: pupils' achievement evaluation data, school

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<sup>18</sup> Education Exchanges Support Foundation, "Erasmus+", Survey of KA2 applicants, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Education Exchanges Support Foundation, "Erasmus+", Survey of KA2 application assessors, 2019.

external self-evaluation results, reports on school self-evaluation and progress. It allowed for the good definition of the problem.



Having assessed the interview material and project reports based on this driver (problem definition), all analysed projects may be divided into four quadrants (Fig. 8). They consist of two parameters: output sustainability<sup>20</sup> and problem definition. The quadrant approach illustrates that the problem-oriented outputs were more sustainable (16 sustainable, 9 non-sustainable) than the idea-oriented outputs (3 sustainable, 12 non-sustainable). Nevertheless, there are projects which, even though they do not have a well-defined problem, have developed a sustainable output; in general, however, this group of “non-defined” projects contained a larger number of non-sustainable outputs both in absolute and relative values. The project coordinators, when asked what played an important role in assuring sustainability of the output, usually noted that the output had to be “useful”, “important”, “necessary”, i.e. they emphasised the added value for the organisation and target group. Whereas several project coordinators stated that they had encountered the “projects for the sake of projects”, i.e. unjustified projects which did not solve any problems.

To sum up, it may be stated that the initiators of sustainable outputs were not typically just generators of the project ideas, they tended to solve the problems of their organisation or their target group. Moreover, they knew how to use the evidence to define the problems and used the projects as measures rather than objectives.

<sup>20</sup> For more information about the evaluation of sustainability see sub-section of part 3 “Second level – use of the outputs after the end of the project”.

## Potential to increase this factor

*If a better definition of a problem causes greater sustainability of the projects, who is then able to promote a better definition of the problems at the institutional, project and personal level?*

The restraints of the project output sustainability at the institutional level are first of all derived from the insufficiently developed education monitoring in Lithuania<sup>21 22</sup>. According to the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, monitoring of education and science is organised and carried out at the national and municipal level and at the level of the educational establishment. Thus, the better monitoring of qualitative indicators of education at any level provides the sustainability of education projects with greater opportunities. Another opportunity of a systemic level underlies in the system of qualification improvement. The coordination of working hours with the project activities still remains the challenge for the teacher of school education and vocational schools especially. Therefore, more favourable conditions for the employees to be involved in the projects as a valuable activity for the development of qualification would increase the motivation to solve the education problems through the projects. The conditions for the implementation of the projects are more favourable in the higher education establishments as the solution (research) to a scientific problem is directly related to the higher education activities and career of the higher education employees. The interviews showed that in non-educational establishments (such as municipalities, education support organisations) it was still the directors' attitude on which the promotion of resolving the problems through the projects depended on.

The better justification of the demand for the project and planning of a more specific impact provide the better potential of defining the problem at the project level. The use of the outputs should be planned more concretely not only for the period of the project but also for at least 2 years after its completion (as the projects are of the duration of 2-3 years, therefore 2 additional years after its conclusion constitute the so-called period of average duration for which the project should be planned). After the completion of the project, there is no responsibility to report the use of the outputs but it increases the value of the result monitoring.

At a personal level, the potential of formulating the problems and initiating their solution through Erasmus+ is enhanced by leadership and initiative when solving the problems. The employee involvement in the organisational management and ability to analyse the data and other evidence are also important.

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<sup>21</sup> National Audit Office of Lithuania, National Audit Report "Could Lithuanian Students Perform Better", 2017.

<sup>22</sup> National Audit Office of Lithuania, National Audit Report "Monitoring of Education", 30 November 2016 No. VA-P-50-4-26

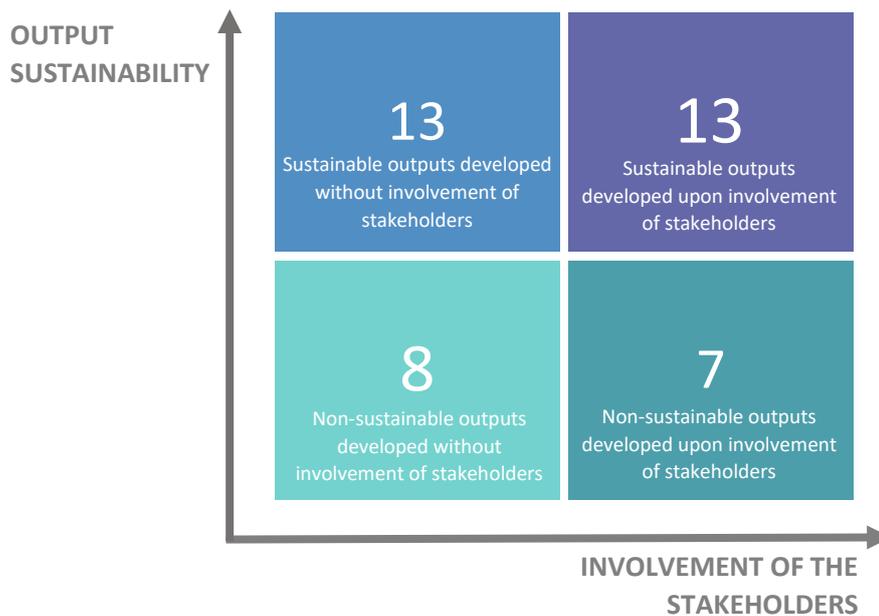
## Second factor – involvement of the stakeholders

*What allows ensuring the support and attention of relevant people after the completion of the project*

When identifying the problem, the coordinators of sustainable projects properly assessed the role of their organisation in a broader context of education. They understood not only their formal functions and strategic objectives but also the more extensive requirements and expectations of the stakeholders. In other words, they raised a question “Who else’s problem is it?”. The interviews with the project coordinators revealed that the stakeholders involved in the project, e.g. heads of the organisation, municipal administration staff, representatives of the ministry supervising that field, members of education assistance organisations, respective associations or committees, were generally providing more sustainability to the project. For example, after the completion of the project the ministry financed the application of the outputs to another target group, the use of the project outputs was established in the municipal education planning documents. It happened for two reasons. Firstly, the stakeholders involved in the project are able to “protect” it, i.e. to ensure that the decisions of those groups will be harmonised with sustainability of the project. Secondly, the involved stakeholders may provide larger resources after the conclusion of the project – from supporting to funding.

One of the most significant reasons leading to non-sustainable projects was that the teams of those projects insufficiently assessed the power of stakeholders related to the project theme. For example, the vocational school developed the methodology for career specialists during the project but, after the completion of the project, the stakeholders cut the positions of career consultants, therefore the methodology was not fully exploited. Other project coordinators drafted the methodology for the evaluation of employees’ qualification but they failed to apply it after the completion of the project as the management of the organisation decided to refrain from allocating the resources for the implementation of the methodology. The situation where the stakeholders avoid being involved in the project is also feasible. In that case, the problem of the project is probably not relevant. The outputs are therefore likely to be less sustainable.

**Fig. 9 Involvement of the stakeholders and sustainability**



Having analysed the interview material and final project reports based on this factor, it may be stated that almost half of the projects involved the stakeholders. Here, they are defined as the involvement of the representatives of other organisations in charge of the education policy making and implementation at the national, local municipal<sup>23</sup> or sectoral level. Involvement means the participation in the project in various formats: both being an official or associated partner and participation in the multiplier events. Having assessed the sustainability of the projects and participation based on the quadrant method, it is apparent that the stakeholders did not help achieve greater sustainability in practice (Fig. 9). The fact that the participation of the stakeholders did not bring results could have resulted from several reasons. Firstly, the participation of the stakeholders was passive – they failed to transfer the expectations of the organisations they represented and the attitude towards the participation in the project was merely formal. Secondly, the project coordinators failed to properly involve the stakeholders – the involvement was one-sided or they were involved only at the end of the project. Thirdly, the project coordinators failed to properly identify the stakeholders – they did involve the ones who could support the project’s theme and sustainability.

To sum up, it may be stated that the proper involvement of the stakeholders., especially in the projects of the school education, vocational education and adult education sectors, is an opportunity for the coordinators to ensure the support of the outputs after the end of the project, and for the stakeholders, it is a tool to improve the conformity of the outputs to the national, municipal or sectoral needs. The absence of the stakeholders means the absence of interest after the completion of the project.

<sup>23</sup> For more information, Eurydice information, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/administration-and-governance-central-and-or-regional-level-44\\_it](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/administration-and-governance-central-and-or-regional-level-44_it)

## Potential to increase this factor

*If better participation of the decision makers causes greater sustainability of the projects, who is then able to promote better participation of the stakeholders at the institutional, project and personal level?*

The involvement of the relevant stakeholders at the institutional level is restricted by the fact that there is no common approach to transnationality of school education, vocational education and adult education (neither in the Law on Education<sup>24</sup> nor the Concept of Good School<sup>25</sup> nor the Guidelines for the Change of General Education Schools<sup>26</sup>). In other words, one may ask – what the role of such international cooperation projects as Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships is: whether it is a temporary project activity only, or a tool for good practice integration and a measure for strategic changes. This uncertainty is reflected in KA1 applications as well as the so-called European plan for development is the most complicated part of the Erasmus+ mobility applications<sup>27</sup>. This aspect is not that relevant for higher education as the transnationality objectives are well defined and established in this education sector<sup>28</sup>. Another opportunity to ensure Erasmus+ sustainability at an institutional level is better strategic planning. A period of 3 years elapses between the beginning and end of the project on average, therefore it is required to plan the education objectives of the average duration (for at least 5 years). The projects in question were funded in 2014–2016, while the priority directions for the improvement of teachers' qualifications were not established at the time<sup>29</sup>. Subsequently, those directions were established for a period of two years<sup>30</sup>. Also, the objectives related to the school progress are not provided for in the strategic planning documents of all municipalities<sup>31</sup>. It aggravates the involvement of the stakeholders, especially those responsible for the implementation of the national or municipal strategic plans, in the international projects.

The involvement of the stakeholders at the project level would be promoted by an opportunity to be involved in the project in more various forms – not only as the formal project partners but also as the associated partners, or participation in the meetings, visits, presentations of the results in other flexible forms. Yet before that the project coordinator should analyse the stakeholder groups, which would help understand the impact and interest of those groups.

At a personal level, the project team members believe that networking and cooperation experience and skills as well as understanding that the projects cannot be carried out in a closed manner are important. The decision-makers find the English (foreign) language and networking significant.

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<sup>24</sup> Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania No. XII-745 "On the Approval of the National Education Strategy for 2013-2022", 23 December 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Order No. V-1308 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Approval of the Concept of Good School", 21 December 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania No. XIII-627 "On the Approval of the Guidelines for the Change of General Education Schools", 11 July 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Education Exchanges Support Foundation, "Erasmus+", Survey of KA1 applicants, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Order No. V-364 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Approval of the Priorities of the Promotion of Transnationality of Higher Education for 2019-2020", 5 April 2019.

<sup>29</sup> National Audit Office of Lithuania, National Audit Report "Qualification Development for Teachers", 10 May 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Order No. V-647 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania "Priorities of Qualification Development for the Directors of the State and Municipal Schools, Deputy Directors of Education, Heads of Departments Organizing Education, Teachers and Pupil Support Specialists for 2017-2019", 25 August 2017

<sup>31</sup> National Audit Office of Lithuania, National Audit Report "Could Lithuanian Students Perform Better", 2017.

## Third factor – competence-based partnership

*What allows the output to maintain its value and uniqueness even beyond the project's lifetime*

In many sustainable projects, a professional team was gathered. Whereas the professionalism and advantage of the team was ensured through the project partners. As Erasmus+ Programme Guide notes<sup>32</sup>, in pursuit of the project results, the partners should provide the advantage which would be otherwise impossible if the project is carried out in one country<sup>33</sup>. The partners selected on competences enabled them to stop reinventing the wheel and start using the successful experience (e.g. the partners for tackling the issues related to integrated education would be generally selected from the Finnish education organisations as it is namely Finland which has the successfully implemented model of integrated education). The competence-based partnerships mean that the partners are closely related to the problem of the project: they were analysing the problem of the project (e.g. Universities, research institutes) or they successfully solved it in practice (e.g. education service providers, education assistance institutions). Thus, the sustainable projects were implemented in the partnership with the project theme experts. Based on the interviews, the most useful role of the coordinator was the “taker”: of knowledge, experience and technologies.

The developers of non-sustainable outputs selected their partners from the organisations they knew. Good experience in managing international projects was also an important criterion for selecting the partners (it is not attributed to the competences in this evaluation as it does not directly relate to the project problem-solving competences). This means that the priority was given to the smooth administration of the project instead of innovative and working methods of problem solving. For example, the project partners from Turkey took only a formal part in the project, the partners contacted through visits but the entire methodological work was performed by the project promoter and Lithuanian partners. It means that the partnership was not exploited when transposing a good practice. The project coordinator applied the existing expertise, therefore his prospects in terms of developing a unique and valuable outputs were considerably lower.

The interview, however, revealed one exception where the competence-based partnership posed a high risk to the output sustainability. These are the projects which were initiated by the partners themselves but not the coordinators (e.g. a consultancy firm suggested implementing a qualification improvement model but it participated in the project as a partner but not as a coordinator). This greatly challenges the project sustainability as that partner usually fails to properly assess the coordinator's needs and context and does not have sufficient motivation to ensure sustainability. Moreover, such a partner usually develops the output autonomously without sufficient involvement of the coordinator and other project participants.

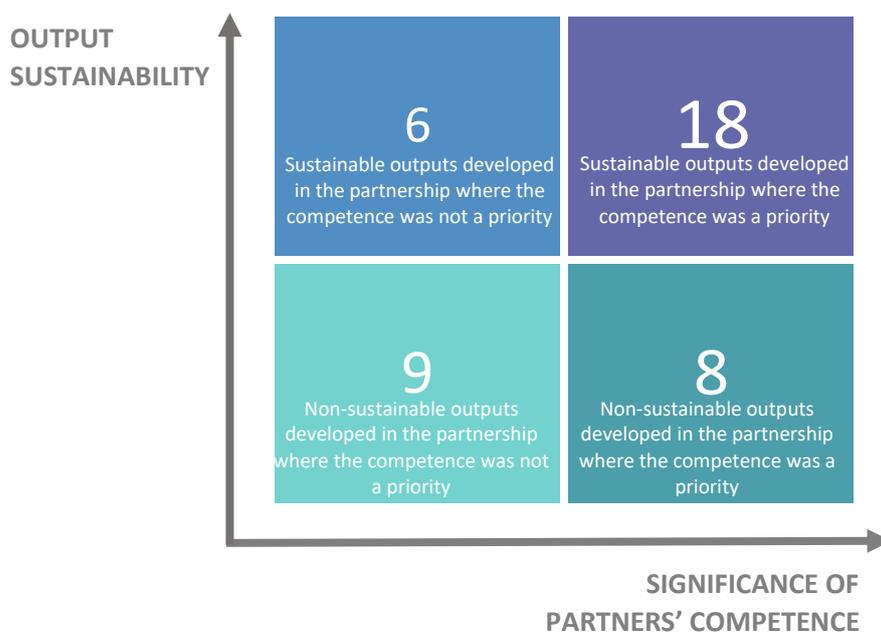
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<sup>32</sup> “Erasmus+” Programme Guide, version 2, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, Guide for Experts on Quality Assessment, 2019.

As the essence of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships is the use of good practices, the coordinators, during the interview, were asked which criteria they were applying when selecting the partners. Slightly fewer than half of the project coordinators selected them based on their competence. The majority of such projects are sustainable (18 sustainable, 8 non-sustainable). A relatively high number of coordinators, however, (at least 13 out of 14) selected the partners because they knew the organisation they had previous cooperation in common. The “connection-based” or other criteria-based projects were less sustainable (6 sustainable, 9 non-sustainable). Other criteria of the partnership were an opportunity to test the outputs, countries, types of organisations, and managerial skills. Nevertheless, the competence-based partnership provided three advantages beneficial to sustainability. Firstly, the project team had common goals. Those objectives were linked not only with the project administration but also with the solution to the problem. Secondly, the organisational culture of the project was prepared for the integration of good practices. Selecting new partners means that the organisation is open to new external ideas and acknowledges that there are better solutions than the existing ones.

**Fig. 10 Partners by competence and sustainability**



It may be concluded that the value and uniqueness of the outputs were created through good practices, and this experience was gained through the project partners. The output sustainability was enhanced by selecting the partners based on the project problem rather than by selecting the problem of the project based on the partners.

### *Potential to increase this factor*

*If competent partners determine greater sustainability of the projects, who is then able to promote the competence-based selection of the partners at the institutional, project and personal level?*

At the institutional level, the selection of the partners with good practices could be promoted by a certain policy based on general agreements of the countries whose results and education values are of a priority and the most suitable for the Lithuanian education system. The efficiency of the good practice integration would be enhanced by a clearer understanding of which European countries have the cultural and social context closest to Lithuania (in terms of education). At the institutional level, the participation of the education organisations in the international education networks, such as "eTwinning", "EPALE" or other networks of sectoral significance, is also important for the quality selection of the partners. The networks enable selecting the partners based on their competence.

A lack of experience in the project administration constitutes unfavourable conditions for sustainability at the project level. Sustainability, however, is also hindered by excessive attention to the project administration (in comparison with the attention to results and their sustainability). This generally encourages to select the partners based on their managerial skills or the partners from the circle of "reliable" connections. Therefore, it is the Strategic Partnership and opportunity to work with the education innovators and best education organisations that should be underlined at the project level instead of the project administration.

At a personal level, the sustainability potential underlies in such qualities as trust and desire to work with the best, professional confidence, interest in the activity of other organisations and openness to interaction with them.

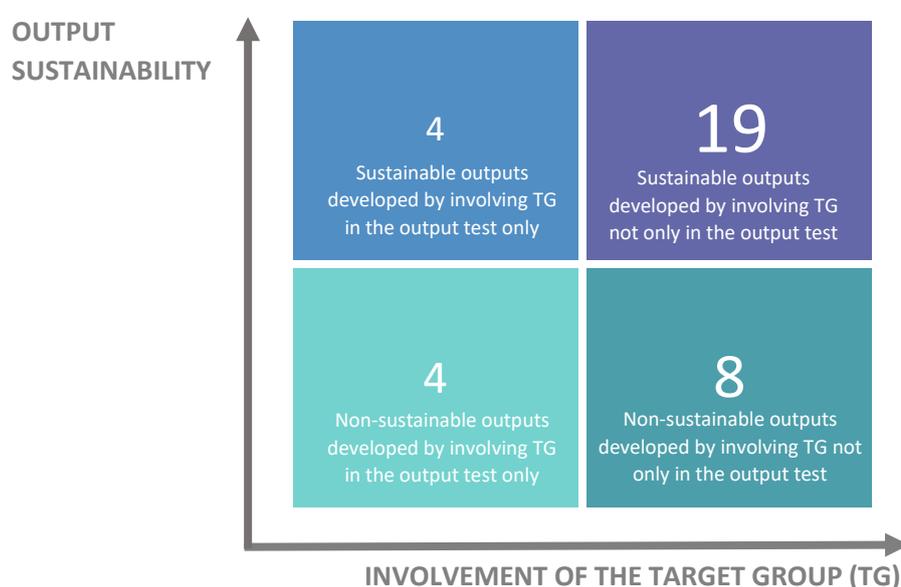
## Fourth factor – close connection with the target group

*What enables the output to earn the long-term loyalty of its users*

“Who is going to use it?” – it was an important question for the sustainable outputs developers. Therefore, they would generally assign the target group not only the role of a tester (at the end of the project) but they would also involve it in the project planning. This allowed the target group to better understand the project problem and contribute to output development. For example, the expert organisation, when developing the text-book for teachers, involved over 30 schools in the project. Although the output was created only by part of the involved teachers, the coordinator was consistently developing the so-called “reception field”, where the output is prepared for its application by gradually increasing the awareness and interest of the target group. By involvement, the coordinators earned the target group’s obligation, pride and care. For example, the municipality administration gathered the teacher team from the school methodological councils and involved them in the development of the output. The teachers provided their input in the methodological publication, therefore their loyalty regarding this output was substantial; the output became the bedside book for many teachers. The coordinators of the sustainable outputs had therefore an exhaustive experience of work with the target group and had earned their trust. The target group differs from the previously analysed stakeholders in that the latter do not apply the outputs directly, they are responsible for the application results (e.g. the municipality administration does not directly apply the education methodologies but it is in charge of the teachers’ qualification development).

One of the reasons leading to non-sustainable projects was that the project coordinator failed to sufficiently cooperate with the target group. Frequently, such projects bring a sense of disappointment, for the target group “failed to understand” the value of the output. For example, the education assistance institution adapted the innovative methodology of evaluation of the pupils’ skills but the output was difficult to use for the lack of knowledge and interest of the target group. Yet another example of a failure – the expert organisation tried to develop the output for schools without any previous experience in school education sector. The work with the schools during the project was fragmented, therefore the teachers’ attention to the output was relatively low in spite of high quality of the output.

**Fig. 11. Involvement of the target group and sustainability**



When assessing the use of the output in other organisations (other than the target groups of the project organisations), the outputs were mainly sustainable in the project organisations only. It was often wrongly assumed that the output dissemination was a sufficient condition itself to use<sup>34</sup> the output in non-project organisations. The data collected during the interviews show that the creation or translation of the output website or translation of the output into the Lithuanian language were not relevant enough in ensuring the use of the output in the target groups which were not involved in the project.

It may be concluded that a direct contact with the users during the project or even the application drafting is very important for the output sustainability. The output dissemination is not a sufficient condition to ensure the exploitation of the output.

### Potential to increase this factor

*If involvement of the target group causes greater sustainability of the projects, who is then able to promote a closer relationship between the group and project coordinators at the institutional, project and personal level?*

At the institutional level, the cooperation between the education service providers in Lithuania enables the sustainability. The interviews showed that the coordinators were often lacking channels and networks to attract the additional organisations of the target group. For example, the vocational schools were carrying out the projects in a contained manner, they hardly cooperated with other vocational schools and did not seek to involve them in the use of the outputs.

At the project level, it is important to ensure as high involvement of the target groups in Lithuania as possible. One third of the projects were carried out without the Lithuanian partners, therefore the outputs of such projects had less potential of being spread in other Lithuanian organisations. Also, when funding the projects, it is important to consider the social and cultural factors, e.g. if the coordinator has a good reputation in the field of the project, what his previous relationships with the potential output users are. The measures which allow the target group to be involved in the whole cycle of the output development should be envisaged when planning the projects.

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<sup>34</sup> Dearing, James W., Dissemination of innovation: the will to change an organization, The Permanente journal vol. 12,3, 2008.

## Fifth factor – long-term involvement

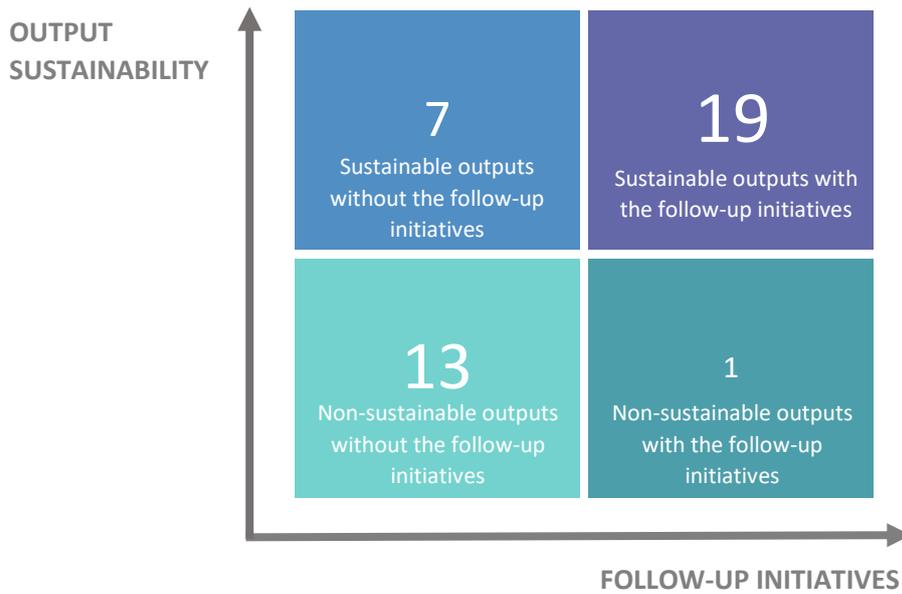
*What provides the preconditions for pursuing the long-term results when using the outputs*

The interviews demonstrate that the coordinators of sustainable projects were motivated by the long-term social changes, resolution of long-term problems, i.e. “life” after the project, as the solved problems open huge activity prospects. For example, launching a new study programme in Lithuania, creating pupil-driving activities, improvement of the municipal education indicators. These project coordinators were also united by the understanding that a single project could not become a reason for much improved results. Therefore, the Strategic Partnerships were only a stage of their consistent activity rather than an exceptional event. Nearly all examples of sustainability (see “Examples of Sustainability”) illustrate that the project coordinators continued the activity in the field of the project beyond its lifetime. The promoters of successful projects also confirm that two or three years are not enough to create an innovation. Prior expertise and/or work after the project are required.

Having assessed the project sustainability and related initiatives based on the quadrant method, it is apparent that many promoters of the sustainable projects were further undertaking the project theme-related initiatives and were additionally working on the same problem. For example, the remote learning website created during the project was supplemented with new learning resources, other follow-up projects were initiated – internal ones or those financed by external organisations. Moreover, the coordinators of sustainable outputs were more involved in the monitoring of the outputs developed during the Strategic Partnership. In other words, they knew how their outputs were used or they were able to name the success stories of how their output (and project) made an impact.

The promoters of non-sustainable projects were no longer developing the theme after the end of the project. The project only reflected a subject of temporary interest. Usually, these project coordinators did not have any feedback from the target group about the use of the output. They did not feel it was necessary to further improve the outputs as well.

**Fig. 12 Initiatives related to the output theme and sustainability**



\*Lack of data from 1 project about the follow-up initiatives.

The weakness of many projects is that the coordinators were no longer checking the effectiveness of the output after the project, although the tools for feedback were generally created during the project (e.g. target group questionnaires). The answer to the question on what results of the use of the outputs (after the project) were by the majority of the respondents was "I don't know". This shows that many coordinators felt no longer responsible for the problem addressed during the project.

It may be concluded that the process of deployment of new outputs or innovations is, in reality, hard and time consuming. People do not want to change; they prefer the old methods and usual ways for addressing the problems. Therefore, the organisations can implement the successful innovation projects only when they are involved in the project theme for a long term.

## Potential to increase this factor

*If the long-term involvement of the project coordinators causes greater sustainability of the projects, who is then able to promote a more intensive involvement of this group in the projects at the institutional, project and personal level?*

At the institutional level, the long-term planning enables the involvement of education and training organisations. It seems, however, that Erasmus+ and municipal and organisational strategic planning cycles do not correspond to each other most frequently. The Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships are the instruments planned for the long period, and the whole cycle of the project implementation lasts for some five years (planning the application and selection – up to a year, project implementation – up to three years, and a period of at least two years after the completion of the project). The municipal and education organisations make their plans for a short term. The significant national planning documents are not always drafted for the long period (e.g. the priorities of the teachers' qualification improvement were planned for a period of two years). Thus, the output sustainability is hindered by the fact that the coordinators, when planning the projects, are not able to know if the output will meet the strategic needs in the long run.

There are few opportunities to ensure the long-term involvement at the project level as there are no obligations to provide information after the completion of the project. It would be beneficial, however, to prompt the project coordinators to plan the output exploitation indicators in the sustainability part of the final project report in more detail (including the terms and desired values). The applicants should be asked, during the submission of the project applications, to better describe the links of the project theme with the institutional, municipal or national plans. When assessing the applications, it would also be beneficial to aim to better assess the social and cultural factors, such as the applicant's reputation and expertise in the field of the project, maturity of the organisation, relationships with the potential output users and sustainability of the previous projects.

The conditions for the long-term involvement at the personal level are quite favourable, i.e. relatively small changes in the staff of the education and training sector (6 out of 41 respondents are no longer working in the project institutions). At this level, a better understanding of the essence of the Strategic Partnership outputs is fundamental – it is the process of innovations which slowly produces the results and is longer than the project itself.

# ERASMUS+ OUTPUT FACTORS

## SUSTAINABILITY

## NON-SUSTAINABILITY

*vice versa*



### PROBLEM

The initiators of sustainable projects were inclined to solve the *problems* of their organisation or the target group. They were able to identify the problems based on evidence.



### SUPPORT

Adequate involvement of the stakeholders is an opportunity to ensure the strategic support of the outputs after the end of the project.



### STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The value and uniqueness of Erasmus+ outputs were usually generated through the project partners – experts of the project theme.



### ATTENTION TO USERS

The users' loyalty is mainly earned through their early involvement in the process of the output development.



### LONG-TERM INVOLVEMENT

The organisations can implement the successful innovation projects when they are involved in the project theme for a long term.



### IDEA

The initiators of non-sustainable projects started with the *idea*. The project was the goal itself rather than a tool for changes or solution to problems.



### AUTONOMY

Carrying out the project in a closed team means that the national, sectoral or wider needs of the organisation will not be sufficiently assessed.



### CONVENIENT PARTNERS

The selection of the project partners based on convenience rather than the competence deprives of an opportunity to create innovations.



### ONLY DISSEMINATION

The output dissemination on the Internet is not a sufficient condition to ensure the exploitation of the output.



### SHORT-TERM ATTENTION

The period of the project (2-3 years) is typically not enough to develop and empower the outputs.

# EXAMPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY

These outputs were planned and financed between 2014 and 2018. Did they meet the needs at the time? Are they are still useful?

The examples of sustainable exploitation of intellectual outputs are described below. They have been prepared on the interviews with the project managers and/or coordinators (additional sources are provided separately). The examples are grouped on a type of organisations which implemented the projects or experienced the impact of the outputs: pre-primary and pre-school establishments, school education schools, vocational schools, higher education schools and expert organisations. Those cases illustrate sustainable forms which were acquired by the outputs after the end of the project.

## Pre-school and pre-primary education

### *First example – outputs for implementation of a new teaching strategy*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
“Experiential Education Competence”  
coordinated by Kaunas College (2014–2016)

Kaunas kindergartens, such as “Vaikystė” and “Klevelis”, have been applying the prospective methodology for experimental teaching for almost three years. Both the scientists and teachers-practitioners were very positive about the effectiveness of this methodology when educating little children<sup>35</sup>. Taking this into account, Kaunas College updated the Pre-School and Pre-Primary Pedagogy study programme by supplementing it with the experimental teaching theme. This way it was ensured that the experimental teaching would be applied in the kindergartens where the teachers trained by the college would be working.

The Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project helped Kaunas College to prepare for the update of the study programme and to practically deploy this method in Kaunas kindergartens. The aim of the project was to increase the efficiency of pre-school and pre-primary pedagogy. Therefore, Kaunas College, in cooperation with the Dutch, Latvian, Turkish, Greek, Portuguese and Romanian higher education schools, analysed the method efficiency and developed the methodological material for the students and teachers. The result: the college graduates of the pre-school and pre-primary pedagogy go to the kindergartens for training or work under the specific training strategy based on the experimental teaching, whereas the existing kindergarten teachers have more potential of taking that methodology over. Both the graduates and the kindergarten teachers who took part in the project better understand the characteristics of children's learning, are able to create an environment which is more favourable for learning and assess the children's achievements more accurately. Moreover, this method was analysed in greater detail in Kaunas College itself – at least 15 bachelor theses on experimental training were prepared after the project<sup>36</sup>.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, the thoroughly crystallised demand for the output: the survey of teachers was conducted, pedagogy lecturers and scientists were consulted when identifying the project theme and the national education priorities were taken into consideration. Secondly, the continuous feedback from the target group was ensured as the project coordinator's institution brought together the network of 17 kindergartens during the students' training.

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<sup>35</sup> Final report of the project “Experiential Education Competence” (2014-1-LT01-KA200-000368), 2016

<sup>36</sup> Manager of the project “Experiential Education Competence”, interview by phone, 1 July 2019.

## School education

### *Second example – outputs for teachers' qualification development*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
"Good teaching evokes motivative learning"  
coordinated by Prienai District Municipality administration (2015–2017)

The teachers from Prienai "Revuona" lower secondary school, "Ažuolas" pre-gymnasium and "Žiburys" gymnasium are a close professional community. Its members are brought together by the methodological work related to the search for and application of new didactic strategies. These schools focus on the learning motivation; therefore, many teachers are open to didactic innovations and feedback. More than a half of the teachers have tested or applied recommendations based on the so-called learning paradigm<sup>37</sup>.

The administration of Prienai District Municipality brought this community together during the Erasmus+ project. The aim of the project was to improve the pupils' motivation. The data of Prienai pupils' achievements, results of the school external evaluation and self-evaluation and other data showed that the prevailing attitude towards teaching needed to be changed. The partnership project was an appropriate instrument for changes. The municipality administration, in cooperation with Prienai pedagogical-psychological service, Prienai schools and Italian educational establishments, organised the analysis of the didactic literature and practical test of new methods. During the project, the recommendations for the teachers and school administration employees with regard to the practical implementation of learning paradigm were drafted. The dissemination of the developed recommendations after the project was carried out through "Leaders' time"<sup>38</sup>. Internships of at least 10 municipal teams took place in Prienai during that project. In addition, new municipal priorities of the teachers' qualification development were formulated on the basis of the project outputs<sup>39</sup>.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, the ability to identify problems: the municipality administration justified the demand for the project based on evidence and clearly formulated the desired changes. Secondly, good division of roles of the output development: the municipality represented the stakeholders and bore the administrative burden of the project, whereas the teachers represented the target group and ensured the practical application of the output.

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<sup>37</sup> Final report of the project "Good teaching evokes motivative learning" (2015-1-LT01-KA201-013481), 2017

<sup>38</sup> National project to improve school leadership.

<sup>39</sup> Manager of the project "Good teaching evokes motivative learning", interview by phone, 20 June 2019.

# Vocational education and training

## *Third example – outputs for new learning activities*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership projects  
“Let's Unify IT!” coordinated by  
Vilnius Railway Transport and Business Services School (2015-2017) and  
“Coding Skill Development Using Robotics for Young Europeans”  
coordinated by UAB Baltic Orbis (2015–2017)

The students of Vilnius Railway Transport and Business Services School have participated in the International Computer and Video-Games Tournament for five years already. Pupils from Poland, Latvia and Estonia also come to participate in this tournament, and recently it has been visited by students from Slovakian, Ukrainian and Moldovan vocational schools. Moreover, Vilnius Railway Transport and Business Services School has been offering the optional amazing robotics and LEGO robotics subjects for their students for the second year in a row. This helps enhance the technological excellence and motivation of the students.

Two Erasmus+ projects contributed to these additional IT teaching activities. During one project, Vilnius Railway Transport and Business Services School updated the IT training programme and harmonised it with the programmes of the Polish, Latvian, Estonian, Spanish and Portuguese school partners. The result of harmonising those programmes is the successful International Computer and Video-Games Tournament. It encourages the pupils to aim for the best results, helps them improve the English language and ensures the continuous update of IT training programme<sup>40</sup>. Another Erasmus+ project was carried out together with the company UAB Baltic Orbis and other vocational schools from Lithuania, Latvia and Portugal. During the project, the methodological robotics learning material was developed for both teachers and students. Therefore, two robotics-related subjects were introduced in the vocational school. In addition, a year after the end of the project the school together with AB Lithuanian Railways launched “Railway IT Academy”. It also adapted the methodological material developed during the project<sup>41</sup>.

What are the main sustainability lessons of those two projects? Firstly, a clear demand for the outputs: the school was aiming to improve the conditions for holding the international contest and update the IT programme. Secondly, involvement of the target group in the development of the outputs. As the robotics project was implemented together with the teachers, the group was motivated and skilled enough to continue the application of the outputs after the completion of the project.

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<sup>40</sup> Manager of the project “Let's Unify IT”, interview by phone, 5 July 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Project “Coding Skill Development Using Robotics for Young Europeans” partner’s representative, interview by phone, 4 September 2019.

## Fourth example – outputs for new learning activities

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
“Developing Apprenticeship: In-Company Trainer Training and Apprenticeship Promotion”  
coordinated by Vilnius Jeruzalė Labour Market Training Centre (2015-2017)

The demand for the specialists able to work in one of the rapidly growing engineering industry sectors is additionally satisfied by training at the workplace. This is so-called apprenticeship. The leader of this training method in Lithuania is Vilnius Jeruzalė Labour Market Training Centre. It significantly contributed to the implementation of the pilot apprenticeship project<sup>42</sup> and has been further developing this relatively new form of learning. According to the International Labour Organization, this is one of the priority forms of employee training<sup>43</sup>.

The Erasmus+ project initiated by the centre contributed to the apprenticeship development as well. During the project, in cooperation with the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian business associations, and education organisations from Finland and Belgium, the mastership training programme and apprenticeship promotion concept were developed. The said programme is a 72- and 36-academic hour course as an incentive for the company employees to become the apprentices, it also helps to clearer understand the foremen's tasks and role<sup>44</sup>. The developed programme helps the centre to build and maintain the relationships with the business sector and enhances the effectiveness of apprenticeship. Moreover, the developed Erasmus+ outputs are sustainable in terms of strengthening the leadership of the centre in the field of apprenticeship. The centre transfers the experience in this field by consulting legal act producers, teachers of other vocational schools and company employees<sup>45</sup>.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, the needs of the stakeholders were adequately considered when developing the outputs. The business associations are involved in the project, the Bruges Communiqué regarding the closer European cooperation in the field of vocational education reflecting high political expectations in connection with apprenticeship has been taken account of. Secondly, the outputs were developed by the organisation experienced in this particular field. The Centre was responsible for the first apprenticeship initiatives in Lithuania and has been further carrying out that activity.

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<sup>42</sup> CEDEFOP, Apprenticeship review: Lithuania, 2016

<sup>43</sup> E.g., *International Labour Organization*, ILO Survey Report on the National Initiatives to Promote Quality Apprenticeships in G20 Countries, 2018

<sup>44</sup> Final report of the project “Developing Apprenticeship: In-Company Trainer Training and Apprenticeship Promotion” (2015-1-LT01-KA202-013415), 2017

<sup>45</sup> Manager of the project “Developing Apprenticeship: In-Company Trainer Training and Apprenticeship Promotion”, interview by phone, 18 June 2019.

## Higher education

### *Fifth example – outputs for development of new structural divisions*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
“Smart Practice – Empowering Entrepreneurial Skills in Higher Education”  
coordinated by Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (2015–2017)

The Entrepreneurship Academy is a successfully operating twin-track study programme of Vytautas Magnus University and the pupils’ entrepreneurship education initiative. In 2018 alone, some 400 students and pupils participated in the programme<sup>46</sup>. The entire university and Lithuanian general education schools are involved in the activities of the Academy. Although it is a quite new structural division of the university, its activity was acknowledged in the European Enterprise Promotion Awards 2018<sup>47</sup>.

The establishment of the Entrepreneurship Academy was accelerated by the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project as it helped to develop and test the methods of the activity of that structural division. The aim of the project was to develop an effective entrepreneurship education model<sup>48</sup>. Whereas the result was the innovative methodology for organising students’ training which was integrated in the activity of the Entrepreneurship Academy to be established. The Erasmus+ partnership of Vytautas Magnus University with the Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, universities from Italy, Cyprus and Finland as well as a consultancy firm from Cyprus helped to analyse, test and select the innovative instruments for entrepreneurship education. The project allowed the university to discover new forms of cooperation with the business sector, whereas students and pupils were provided with an opportunity to effectively learn from real business situations. The instruments developed during the project are still used in the daily activities of the Entrepreneurship Academy and are further improved<sup>49</sup>.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, clear purposes of the use of the outputs. The outputs fully corresponded to the objectives and needs of a newly established division – they had to become the specific instruments for its activities. Secondly, high expectations of the stakeholders with regard to the use of the output as the establishment of the division during the project was the priority area of the activity. Thirdly, the competence-based partnership which allowed copying the best foreign practice and simultaneously develop the innovative output suitable for the university.

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<sup>46</sup> Vytautas Magnus University, Annual Report for 2018, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> European Commission, EEPA 2018 – Meet the European shortlist, 20 July 2019. Internet access: <https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/promotingenterprise/eeepa2018-shortlist/>

<sup>48</sup> Final report of the project “Smart Practice - Empowering Entrepreneurial Skills in Higher Education”, (2015-1-LT01-KA203-013477), 2017

<sup>49</sup> Coordinator of the project “Smart Practice - Empowering Entrepreneurial Skills in Higher Education”, interview by phone, 3 July 2019.

## *Sixth example – outputs for the update of the study programmes*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
“Risk and Security Governance Studies within Baltic – Nordic Academic Community of Practice”  
coordinated by Kaunas University of Technology (2015–2018)

Studies of politics and security and Public Politics and Security are two updated study programmes of Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) (bachelor and master’s degrees, respectively). They are exceptional as they transpose the issues of public security and risk into a new interdisciplinary level. They are also positively evaluated by the Lithuanian and foreign students.

The Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project contributed to the update of those programmes. At the highest political level, it was recognised that security was one of the essential challenges of society but, in practice, the security management did not receive sufficient attention. Therefore, the scientists of Kaunas University of Technology were primarily developing the risk and security management theme during the internal project<sup>50</sup>. The Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships were a proper tool to further develop that theme as it required interdisciplinary and international access. The aim of the project was to improve the training of the risk and security management specialists in the region of the Baltic and Nordic countries. Thus, Kaunas University of Technology, in cooperation with General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania and Estonian, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish universities, developed the innovative resources for the risk and security management studies: master’s study programme of 60 ECTS credits, material and measures for remote teaching/learning and cooperation between the specialists<sup>51</sup>. These resources are mainly used when implementing the politics and security studies as well as teacher exchanges<sup>52</sup>.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, the selection of the strategic theme of the outputs. The topic of security is one of the priorities on the EU political agenda (e.g. in the Europe 2020 strategy), therefore it is related to significant (i.e. valued by the stakeholders) knowledge and skills. Secondly, the long-term involvement of the project team. The project theme had been developed even before the Erasmus+ partnership and has been further developed after the implementation of the project.

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<sup>50</sup> Manager of the project “Risk and Security Governance Studies within Baltic – Nordic Academic Community of Practice”, interview by phone, 4 July 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Final report of the project “Risk and Security Governance Studies within Baltic – Nordic Academic Community of Practice” (2015-1-LT01-KA203-013467), 2018

<sup>52</sup> Manager of the project “Risk and Security Governance Studies within Baltic – Nordic Academic Community of Practice”, interview by phone, 4 July 2019.

## *Seventh example – outputs for development of new study programmes*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
“Trans-European Education for Landscape Architects”  
coordinated by Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (2016–2018)

As of September 2020, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University will launch the landscape architecture study programme. This will be the only landscape architecture study programme in Lithuania<sup>53</sup>. This is also the first programme compliant with the requirements and recommendations of The International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) and European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS). The Centre for Quality Evaluation in Higher Education is currently carrying out the evaluation of this study programme<sup>54</sup>.

This study programme was developed during the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project. The project was initiated by the scientists of the Faculty of Architecture of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University upon assessing the demand for the landscape architecture study programme and its potential in Lithuania. In cooperation with the IFLA and Estonian, Hungarian, Dutch and Polish universities (which implement the landscape architecture study programmes), they developed the international study programme requirements, plan, education content of the subjects and other resources necessary to implement this study programme. Taking account of the partners' needs, three alternatives of the study programme, which differed in their length (3, 3,5 and 4 years) and scope (180, 210 and 240 ECTS credits) were drafted<sup>55</sup>. The project had also contributed to building the academic and professional relationships with the representatives of this new study programme. This will allow the Lithuanian students to study part of landscape architecture in foreign universities and do international training.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, a clear purpose of the output – to launch a prospective study programme at the university. It gathered a strong and driven project team and also it allowed ensuring the support of the university management. Secondly, the selection of eligible partners. The project partners had experience, knowledge and connections required for the development and support of the outputs as the universities engaged in landscape architecture studies and federation representing the landscape architecture professionals all over the world were involved.

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<sup>53</sup> VGTU naujienų portalas, Augantis rinkos poreikis į universitetus grąžins kraštovaizdžio architektų rengimą [VGTU News Portal, Growing market demand will return training of landscape architects to universities], 23 May 2019. Internet access: <https://www.vgtu.lt/vgtu-naujienu-portalas/naujienos/augantis-rinkos-poreikis-i-universitetus-grazins-krastovaizdzio-architektu-rengima/246059?nid=308996>.

<sup>54</sup> Manager of the project “Trans-European Education for Landscape Architects”, interview by phone, 3 September 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Final report of the project “Trans-European Education for Landscape Architects” (2016-1-LT01-KA203-023219)”, 2018

## *Eighth example – outputs for deployment of new forms of specialist training*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
"Opening Universities for Virtual Mobility"  
coordinated by Vytautas Magnus University (2014–2016)

Vytautas Magnus University is one of the highest education schools most experienced in virtual mobility in Lithuania. The Innovative Studies Institute (division of the university) is responsible for the development of virtual mobility of the students and lecturers. It also consults other Lithuanian organisations and allows testing this alternative form of teaching/learning – where academic experience abroad is gained without leaving home.

The Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project contributed to the development of the prospects of virtual mobility. The goal of the project was to deploy this form of mobility by implementing the master's studies in Vytautas Magnus University. Thus, the Innovative Studies Institute, in cooperation with the higher education schools from Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain, developed the pilot modules of virtual studies and methodological material for lecturers<sup>56</sup>. This material helps to virtually prepare and implement the study subjects. Although virtual mobility is carried out after the project on the basis of the initiatives only (i.e. irregularly), Erasmus+ project strengthened the Institute as the competence centre of virtual mobility and remote studies. The methodological material developed during the project enables the Institute to more effectively advise on how to organise virtual or remote studies and how to develop the content adjusted for those studies<sup>57</sup>. Virtual mobility is an innovation that requires changes and is hard to plan, therefore the project is sustainable vis-à-vis experience as it allows the other institutions to test various scenarios of the implementation of virtual studies and practically understand the opportunities and restrictions of its application.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, the properly identified demand for the output as many higher education establishments increasingly need to test the similar instruments of remote training. Secondly, the long-term involvement of the coordinator. It manifested itself through an ability of accumulating the experience of innovation deployment and handing it over to other organisations – the Institute provides the services outside the university as well.

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<sup>56</sup> Final report of the project "Opening Universities for Virtual Mobility" (2014-1-LTo1-KA203-000550), 2016

<sup>57</sup> Manager of the project "Opening Universities for Virtual Mobility", interview by phone, 30 August 2019.

## Expert institutions

### *Ninth example – outputs for the update of the school education content*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
“Developing Interdisciplinary Economics, Ethics and Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools”  
coordinated by the Lithuanian Free Market Institute (2016–2018)

For the second year in a row, 9-10 grade pupils attend integrated citizenship, economic and moral education lessons in 13 schools in Lithuania. As of 2019, these lessons will be tested by 300 more schools<sup>58</sup>. The lessons are taught on the innovative moral (social) education programme. Although the subject of moral education is compulsory to the pupils of school education, its programme was lacking high-quality alternatives up till now. A new programme of integrated social education is therefore positively assessed by both teachers and pupils<sup>59</sup>.

The programme was developed during the Erasmus+ project. The project was implemented by the Education Centre of the Lithuanian Free Market Institute in cooperation with the Lithuanian, Latvian and Finnish universities as Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian schools. The Centre developed the integrated education model and programme for 30 lessons of citizenship, economics and moral education, including the education content, individual and group tasks, case studies, video recordings and self-evaluation measures. Most teachers, who took part in the pilot programme, continue to work with it. For the rest of the moral education teachers, these are freely accessible resources and an opportunity to teach in an innovative manner. In the upcoming years, this integrated programme will be implemented in four more schools which participate in the project of education innovations organised by the Education Development Centre<sup>60</sup>. The objective of the Centre of Education will be to have at least 30% of 9-10 grade pupils learning citizenship, economics and moral education in an integrated way by 2020<sup>61</sup>.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, the project coordinator’s experience and reputation in the field of the output. The previous textbook “*Ekonomika per 31 valandą*” (Economics in 31 hours) of the Free Market Institute has already gained recognition. One of the awards is the best learning tools in the world in “*The London Book Fair*” awards. Secondly, much attention to the selection of the partners. The Finnish scientists – integrated education leaders, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian academics – are the experts of the region and subjects, finally, teachers-supervisors. It was a combination of the partners that ensured high quality of the output content. Thirdly, the involvement of the target group. The coordinator aimed at increasing the teachers’ interest in the output since the very beginning of the project, besides, over 30 schools cooperated throughout the entire duration of the development of the output and during the test.

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<sup>58</sup> LLRI, website information, Nauja programa mokiniams: pamokose bus diskutuojama socialinėmis temomis – nuo skurdo iki dirbtinio intelekto [New programme for pupils: social topics will be discussed during the lessons – from poverty to artificial intelligence], 2019. Internet access: <https://www.llri.lt/naujienos/ekonomine-politika/nauja-programa-mokiniams-pamokose-bus-diskutuojama-socialinemis-temomis-nuo-skurdo-iki-dirbtinio-intelektolrinka>

<sup>59</sup> Final report of the project “Developing Interdisciplinary Economics, Ethics and Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools” (2016-1-LT01-KA201-023232), 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Currently – National Agency for Education.

<sup>61</sup> Manager of the project “Developing Interdisciplinary Economics, Ethics and Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools”, interview by phone, 2 July 2019.

## *The tenth example – outputs to draft the strategic documents*

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project  
"Strategic Partnership in Adult Migrant Education: Perspectives From Mediterranean and Baltic Sea Regions"  
coordinated by Public Enterprise "Diversity Development Group" (2016–2018)

The Strategic Document for Integration of Foreigners who have been granted asylum drafted in 2016 helps to better prepare for the challenges of the international integration of migrants in Lithuania. It is implemented according to the national programme of Asylum, Migration and Integration Foundation for 2014-2020. Some provisions of the said document were also transposed into the operational plan for Integration of Foreigners into Society for 2018-2020 approved by the Minister of Social Security and Labour.

The Strategic Document for Integration of Foreigners who have been granted asylum was drafted during the Erasmus+ project. The project was initiated by "Diversity Development Group", a non-profit organisation, which carries out education, diversity, migration and integration studies and develops the social projects in those fields. This organisation, in cooperation with the education and migration experts and scientists from Cyprus, Malta, Poland and Spain, drafted the recommendations for the migrant integration policy. They were used when drafting the strategic documents, programmes and operational plans of the related fields of policy. The project significantly contributed to the coordination of up-till-now separate fields of policy – education and integration of immigrants<sup>62</sup>. In addition, the project outputs were used not only at a political or programme level but also in practice – the methodology for education of adult migrants designed for the education service providers was developed. Based on this methodology, the project coordinator conducts the qualification development training for migration, integration and education specialists<sup>63</sup>.

What are the main sustainability lessons of this project? Firstly, the long-term experience and reputation of the team. The project manager is one of the well-known experts in immigrant integration and migration policy in Lithuania. He consults international organisations and participates in the governmental working groups. Secondly, the combination of partners is appropriate. The organisations carrying out fundamental and applied research were the project partners; they ensured the comprehensive and high quality of the output.

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<sup>62</sup> Final report of the project "Strategic Partnership in Adult Migrant Education: Perspectives From Mediterranean and Baltic Sea Regions" (2014-1-LT01-KA204-000643), 2018.

<sup>63</sup> Manager of the project "Strategic Partnership in Adult Migrant Education: Perspectives From Mediterranean and Baltic Sea Regions", interview by phone, 21 June 2019.

# CONCLUSIONS

## Sustainability evaluation

*The outputs of the programme Erasmus+ enable the high-quality update of the education content.*

Firstly, most outputs introduce something unique to the Lithuanian education and training sector, which supplements the education content with innovative resources. Secondly, all outputs are tested in practice, i.e. tested with a target group in Lithuania, assessed in terms of results, and publicly presented.

*Developed outputs are available to everyone.* The outputs analysed are freely accessible on the Internet – on the programme Erasmus+ result website (90% of the outputs), and they are additionally presented on the specific project websites (54% of the outputs). According to the coordinators, almost all outputs may be used without additional clarification. A half of the outputs are available in the Lithuanian language, the rest of them are accessible in English and/or languages of the partners.

*Developed outputs are used in the project organisations.* Almost all outputs attract users' attention after the end of the project. In Lithuania, 63% of the outputs are sustainable, 29% of them are partly sustainable, and 7% are non-sustainable. *Sustainable* means that the outputs were institutionalised, involved in the regular activity of the project organisation(s); *partly sustainable* means that the outputs are used on the basis of personal initiative. *Non-sustainable* means that the outputs are no longer used after the end of the project in Lithuania.

*The analysed outputs have been used in Lithuania as follows:*

- new study/vocational education programmes developed on the grounds of the outputs have been carried out;
- study/training programmes, school education subjects have been updated on the basis of the outputs;
- programmes or courses for qualification development produced on the basis of the outputs;
- non-formal education initiatives developed on the grounds of the outputs;
- new learning forms and methods have been introduced on the basis of the outputs;
- strategic documents drafted on the basis of the outputs;
- new divisions of the institutions have been established on the grounds of the outputs or operational measures of the existing divisions have been improved.

*Lack of initiative in promotion of a wider use of the outputs.* After the end of the project, the use and effectiveness of the outputs were not typically assessed. Monitoring of the use of the outputs in other organisations was generally fragmented and was carried out through the individual "success stories". Only few project coordinators were aiming at empowering the outputs in other organisations (not associated with the project).

*Insufficiently exploited opportunity of the output sustainability – impact.* The outputs of every tenth analysed project had a wide impact as they were used at a national or sectoral level, whereas most outputs were generating value for the project team or the project organisations only, therefore their impact is more related to the local changes. The outputs of the national or sectoral level show that Erasmus+ is an appropriate tool to deploy leading education innovations.

## Promotion of sustainability

**Well-defined problem of the project.** Sustainable outputs would usually have a clear demand – they were resolving significant organisational issues or those of the target group. At the application stage, the project coordinators were able to concretely define a problematic situation – by means of quantitative indicators (e.g. based on the data of the national evaluation of student achievements or employer surveys conducted), conclusions of the surveys (e.g. based on the reports of analyses carried out by international or Lithuanian organisations) and/or specialists' statements (e.g. based on teacher meetings, meetings of the members of association). Thus, when initiating Strategic Partnerships, a crucial problem, rather than a "good idea", is required. However, the identification of the problems requires the high-quality monitoring and analysis of the condition of education; the leadership of the project coordinators when assuming and solving the organisational problems is also important.

**Involvement of the stakeholders.** Generally, the promoters of sustainable projects properly assessed the role of their organisation in a broader context of education. They understood not only the formal functions and objectives of their organisation but also the more extensive requirements and expectations of the stakeholders. The stakeholders (heads of the organisation, municipal administration staff, representatives of the ministry supervising that field, members of education assistance organisations, respective associations or committees) successfully involved in the project provide more resources for the empowerment of the output – from trust to funding. Thus, when initiating Strategic Partnerships, it is useful to ask: "who else's problem is it?". This way the parties concerned are identified. The effective participation of the parties concerned, however, needs open cooperation rather than the formal one.

**Competence-based partnership.** Sustainable projects were implemented by professional teams and the partners were assigned a significant role in them. The project partners selected on competences enabled them to stop reinventing the wheel and start using the successful experience (e.g. the partners for tackling the issues related to integrated education would be generally selected from the Finnish education organisations as it is namely Finland which has the successfully implemented model of integrated education). Therefore, when initiating the outputs which create the Erasmus+ projects, it is significant to have at least one partner with an expertise in the problem of the project. That partnership, however, needs openness to the interaction with other organisations.

**Close connection with the target group.** The developers of the sustainable outputs were concerned about who will be using the outputs. Therefore, they would assign the target group (e.g. teachers, lecturers, educational assistants) not only the role of the output tester (at the end of the project) but they would also involve them in the planning and development of the output. By involvement, the coordinators earned the target group's trust and responsibility. Thus, a regular dialogue with the target group is important when implementing those projects. The assumption that passive dissemination ensures the use of the output is nevertheless erroneous.

**Long-term involvement of the project team.** The developers of sustainable outputs were generally motivated by a long-term social change, handling of important issues, i.e. new opportunities after the end of the project (e.g. launching a new study programme in Lithuania, developing activities that

motivate pupils, improving municipal education indicators). The projects were therefore merely a means instead of a goal per se. Thus, focusing on long-term changes is essential when implementing Strategic Partnerships. Nevertheless, it requires the preliminary groundwork and/or work after the completion of the project as well as the sustainable education and training strategy at a national or, at least, municipal level.

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