



Erasmus+



**EVALUATION OF THE RELEVANCE,  
EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF THE  
„ERASMUS+“ KEY ACTION 1 ADULT EDUCATION  
STAFF MOBILITY (KA104)**

## REPORT IN BRIEF

© Education Exchanges Support Foundation, 2020

Vilnius, Lithuania

## BACKGROUND

This is the annotated version of the evaluation of the ***relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Erasmus+ Key Action 1 adult education staff mobility (KA104)***. The research was initiated by the Education Exchanges Support Foundation (EESF) (Lithuania) and performed by the research team.

The evaluation was performed during September – December 2020. Erasmus+ KA104 projects implemented during the calls of 2014–2019 were evaluated. Some of the projects under the call of 2019 were still in progress. They were not included in the scope of evaluation.

## THE AIM

To evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Erasmus+ adult education staff mobility and provide recommendations for improving the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Erasmus+ learning mobility on the adult education sector.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

**RELEVANCE.** To what extent are the aims, activities and administration of adult education staff mobility projects aligned with the needs of the beneficiaries?

**EFFECTIVENESS.** To what extent does Erasmus+ KA104 achieve the aims of the programme on the levels of personal and professional development of individuals and organisations?

**IMPACT.** What changes has Erasmus+ KA104 produced, and what are expected systemic changes on the organisational, municipal, and national levels?

## METHODS AND SAMPLE

The evaluation is based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods: 1) document analysis of reports on finished Erasmus+ KA104 projects of 2014 –2019 (N=50); 2) survey with mobile staff from organisations that participated in mobilities over the last two years (2017–2019), N=179 and coordinators of non-formal adult education from all municipalities of Lithuania, N=62 (there were two municipalities in which two respondents replied to the questionnaire); 3) secondary data analysis (Erasmus+ Participant report (KA104 adult education staff mobility), data from the section Achievements and Impact); 4) focus groups with mobile staff (two focus groups, N=12); and 5) interviews with representatives from associations of adult education organisations in the country (N=5).

## THE MAIN RESULTS OF EVALUATION

### RELEVANCE

To what extent are the aims, activities and administration of adult education staff mobility projects aligned with the needs of the beneficiaries?

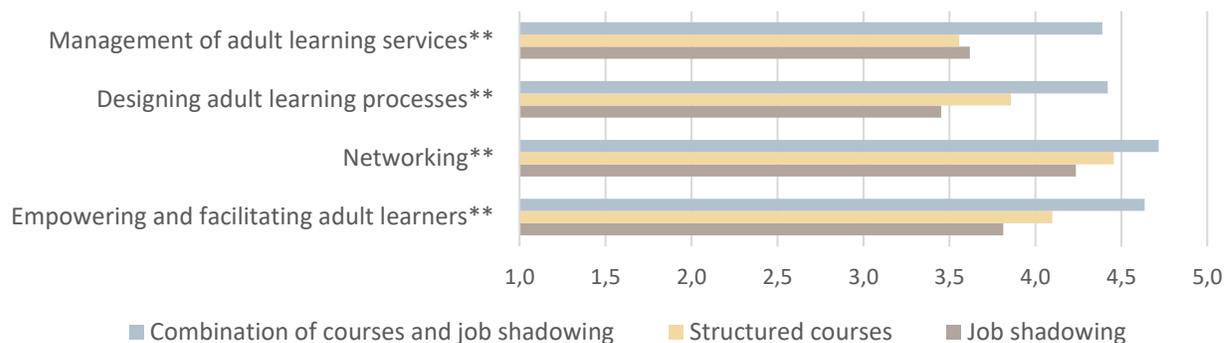
**The evaluation has revealed that the competences planned for and improved during adult education staff mobilities abroad are generally aligned with the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme as well as with the set of key competences of adult education professionals in accordance with Buiskool et al. (2010), the content and activities in mobilities under KA104 projects generally meets the needs of their participants.**

*"We are very pleased that the competencies we planned to improve (managerial, subject-related...) to increase the quality and accessibility of our own services, to attract more other target groups ...and we have succeeded!"*

*"When we go out into the city - we grow...We grow on a national scale... As you go to another country and you see the context, they face ... You really see how people live and how they work."*

- Comparison of the personal and organisational competencies defined in the Erasmus+ programme guide (2020) and expected to be improved during KA104 project mobilities with the set of key competences of adult education professionals by Buiskool et al. (2010) has revealed that the expectations in terms of developed skills and qualifications in the Erasmus+ programme guide (2020) are more universal and broader, with the focus on internationalisation, cooperation, linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness. The set of key competences of adult education professionals (Buiskool et al., 2010) provides a more focused structure of competences, which is required for efficient organisation of non-formal adult education and higher quality of adult education programmes. Together with the Erasmus+ programme guide (2020), it would be reasonable to use the set of key competences of adult education professionals (Buiskool et al., 2010) in preparing project applications.
- Mobile staff and coordinators of non-formal adult education at municipalities generally agree that the competences of adult education staff being improved at KA104 project mobilities are aligned with the needs of adult education organisers. Adult education staff that have participated in mobilities say that competences related to partnership network building are the most important to them, such as the *ability to cooperate with other adult education institutions, intercultural awareness, foreign language skills* as well as general competencies such as *teamwork, autonomous long-life learning*. Coordinators of non-formal adult education think that municipality should primarily focus on the improvement of competencies related to organisational aspects of adult learning: *identification of learning needs and demands for adult learners, ability to motivate and inspire adult learners, designing and constructing study programmes, and application of different methods of adult learning*.
- It has been found that the proposed mobility activities (structured courses, job shadowing and teaching assignments) meet the needs of their participants. Evaluation of alignment of activities to the needs of participants is related to the area of competencies developed during mobility: a combination of two activities (structured courses, and job shadowing) offers the best match to the improvement of competences in *managing adult learning*

services and empowering and facilitating adult learners. Mobile staff considers mobilities involving job shadowing to be the most appropriate for improving *networking and internationalisation competences*.



**Fig. 1. Self-assessment of competences acquired / improved during mobility, by type of mobility activities.** Mean in the range of 1 to 5. \*\*Statistically significant differences,  $p < 0,001$ ; ANOVA test. The opinion of mobile staff (N=171)

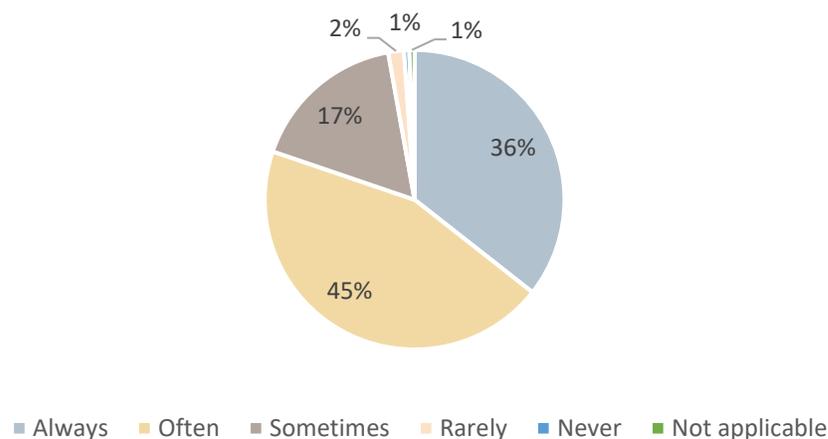
**Education Exchanges Support Foundation activities in providing information on the preparation of Erasmus+ KA104 project applications and on the administration of the implementation of projects are generally aligned with the mobile staff's needs.**

- Participants of focus groups and interviews appreciate the staff's professionalism in inviting the applicants, administrating projects, and giving advice on the relevant matters. As to the funding of Erasmus+ KA104 projects, however, participants in the qualitative research note that: 1) budget is not sufficient to cover high-quality course fees; 2) organisational support funding is insufficient, which restricts the opportunities for non-governmental organisations to prepare and implement the projects because some of them do not have staff who could competently prepare a project application and carry out managerial activities related to the administration and coordination of project activities.

## EFFECTIVENESS

To what extent does Erasmus+ KA104 achieve the aims of the programme on the levels of personal and professional development of individuals and organisations?

**It is reasonable to conclude that Erasmus+ KA104 projects achieve the aims set out in the Erasmus+ programme. Outcomes of the projects are the most valuable on the level of personal and professional development of individuals. The survey results approve that the value of mobilities for individuals is highly appreciated and that the competences improved during KA104 mobilities are rather often applied in the work of adult education staff.**



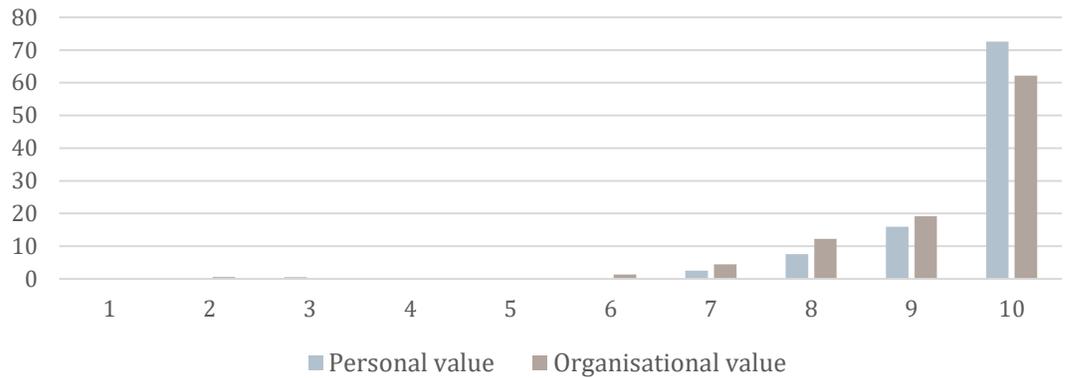
**Fig. 2. Application of competences improved during KA104 mobilities.** The opinion of mobile staff (N=171)

- Erasmus+ KA104 participants perceive the most important improvement in the competences of *local and international networking, didactics, foreign language, and ICT usage*. Development of subject-related competencies is rather often mentioned in the project reports. During focus groups and interviews, the development of generic competences in the following areas was pointed out: *increased self-awareness, self-esteem, and openness to new experiences, strengthened a sense of European and national identity, increased motivation to continue learning and training, and inspiration to take action to improve adult learning at the organisation.*
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of projects is related to the respondents' international experience and position in an organisation. Respondents with multiple previous experiences in mobilities and those who combined courses and job shadowing during their learning abroad more highly rate the value of mobility outcomes and reported that they apply the developed competencies more frequently. Heads of organisations and managers of KA104 projects also point out that they use improved competences more regularly in their work. Coordinators of non-formal adult education at municipalities apply the competencies improved during mobility the rarest.
- Lithuanian adult education staff (to compare with the mobility participants from other Erasmus+ Programme Countries) appreciate competencies developed during learning abroad more than those from other countries, particularly in the area *changes to management*. Lithuania's representatives say that they notably improved analytical and teamworking competences and *emotional skills (e.g. having more self-confidence)*.

*"Another great benefit for us was that we signed cooperation agreements with the same organizations abroad that carry out such activities."*

**The research confirms that mobility's perceived organisational value is rather high but slightly lower than the perceived personal value.**

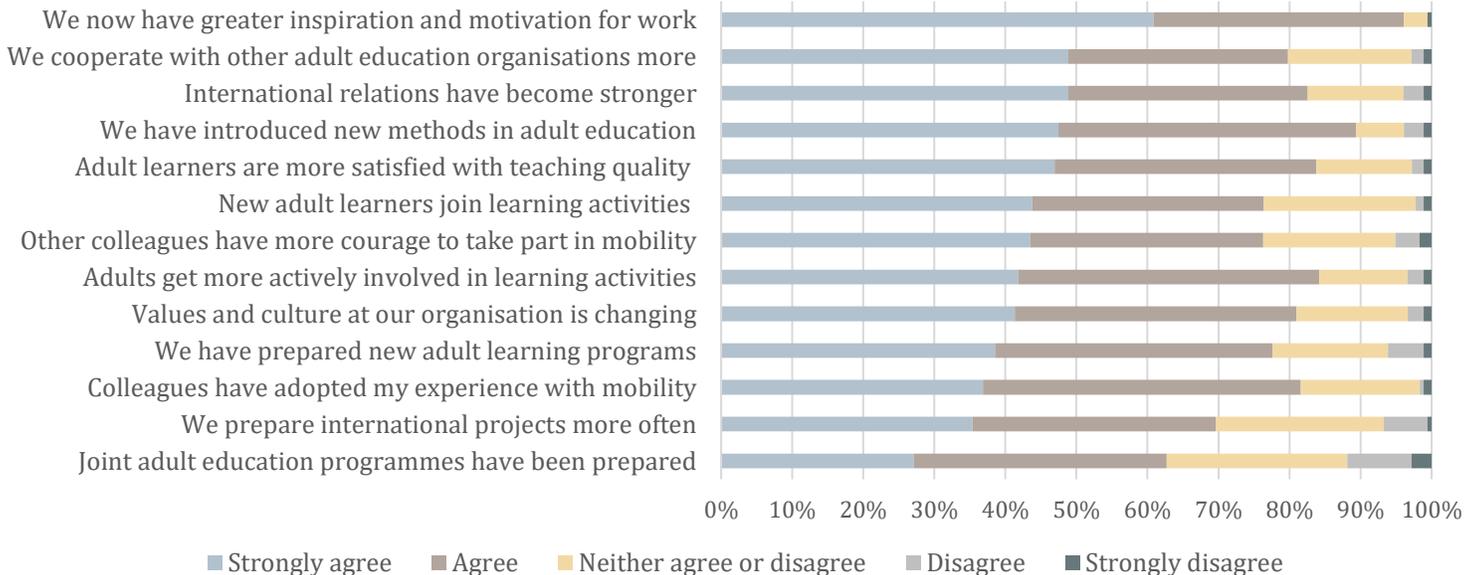
*“It gave us a broader perspective on the challenges we face and opportunities”*



**Fig. 3. Personal and organisational value of mobilities (%).** The opinion of mobile staff (N=171)

*“Mobilities give a lot of motivation. It’s like an energy boost, like an explosion! [of energy]”*

- Participants believe that the most significant organisational value from participating in the Erasmus+ KA104 projects is increased staff inspiration and motivation to work. Upon completion of KA104 projects, organisations began to use new teaching methods. They report t adult learners’ growth, learners’ improved satisfaction with teaching quality, and the expansion of partnerships with other adult education organisations. Respondents who have combined courses with job shadowing, the value of mobility for organisation rate higher.



**Fig. 4. Changes at organisations participating in Erasmus+ KA104 project.** The opinion of mobile staff (N=156)

*"We realized that going in a squad is better than going one by one. Cooperation, such conscious non-resistance to act together as a result..."*

- Data from focus groups and interviews confirm that Erasmus+ KA104 projects produced the positive organisational changes in internal and external cooperation, development of working and learning environment, applying teaching innovations, and creating new adult learning programmes. The projects improve adult learning quality, improve organisational image, expand the range of services leading to the attraction of new segments of adult learners, and strengthen organisations' position as an essential player in the adult education system.

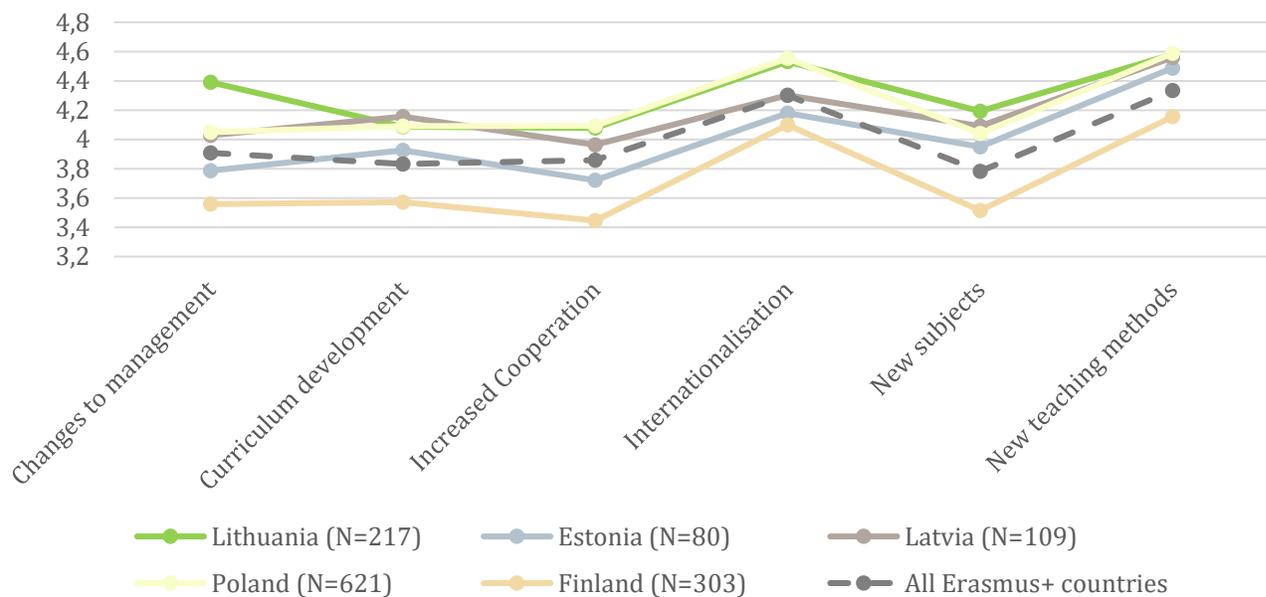
## IMPACT

What changes has Erasmus+ KA104 produced, and what are expected systemic changes on the organisational, municipal, and national levels?

**The evaluative research revealed that the most evident change that KA104 projects produce is on the level of organisation. It was found that a small part of the results of the projects has an impact on the municipal and national-level change in the area of adult learning.**

- The research participants were quite positive about the impact of KA104 projects on an organisation. Adult education coordinators at municipalities are more sceptical about this impact than the participants in KA104 mobilities are. The most remarkable difference among these groups was found in assessing the changes in job motivation and the effect on the end beneficiary, the adult learners.
- The impact of KA104 projects on organisation depends on whether the project is run by the single institution or consortia and is more noticeable in combining courses with job shadowing. Consortia participants consider the organisational impact of mobilities as more significant in internationalism and internal teamwork.
- The impact on an organisation depends on the type of competences improved while learning abroad. Networking competences improved during mobility have the most significant impact on organisational changes. Improvement of *adult learning services management* has the greatest impact on organisational changes in the area of *curriculum* (preparation and implementation of adult learning programmes).
- Secondary data analysis on the organisational impact of mobility (mobility participants from all Erasmus+ Programme Countries) has revealed that the greatest organisational impact in all countries is the internationalisation of organisations and the application of new adult teaching methods. The impact rating scores of Lithuanian participants exceed the average rating score of Programme countries.

*"Mobility increased our capacity and motivation to operate internationally."*



**Fig. 5. The organisational impact of mobilities. The opinion of Erasmus+ participating countries.** Mean in the range of 1 to 5. Data source: [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eacdashboard\\_qv](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eacdashboard_qv)

*"We were 19 people going abroad...And we have cemented ourselves [as a team]. After we got home, we continue the connections we have made to solve problems together."*

- Opinions expressed by participants in focus groups also confirm that KA104 projects help an organisation strengthen its activities' systematic nature. The implementation of these projects leads to more consistent development of the international dimension. Development and implementation of adult learning programmes in non-educational organisations become more systematic, and organisations dare to take on the role of advisor to help other organisations to develop international projects.
- In the final reports of the projects, only one-third of the organisations link the results of mobilities to the lifelong learning goals set at the municipal or national level and plan the impact on expanding adult learning at the municipal or national level. However, more than half of the coordinators of adult non-formal education at municipalities where these projects have been implemented believe that the results of Erasmus+ KA104 projects change the quality of adult education at the municipality.
- This approach was also confirmed by the focus groups' participants in discussing the impact of the projects' results in consortia. In their opinion, when implementing adult education staff mobility projects at the municipality, it is the form of a consortia that involves new institutions in the organisation of non-formal adult education, strengthens inter-institutional networking and cooperation practice, helping organisations to discover the variety of forms and methods of organising adult learning, attracts new adult learners, and build a more sustainable network of adult learning organisations in the municipality.

*“Those projects are one of the most important investments since regaining independence. Definitely!”*

- In the answers to the open-ended question in the questionnaire of what, in the respondents’ opinion, could increase the benefit and impact of KA104 projects, a set of person-level, organisation-level and external factors stand out. Relatively the most important (based on the frequency of recurring statements) are the support by the head of the organisation and development of specific organisational mechanisms for institutionalising mobility results, involvement and individual responsibility of members of the organisation to apply mobility results, and commitment of the municipality to shape the vision and strategic directions of adult learning in the municipality, to assist in networking of adult education organisations.
- According to the survey, the impact of KA104 projects would be increased by disseminating information about the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme, assistance by the Education Exchanges Support Foundation staff in selecting high-quality course providers, communicating about the best practices and success cases of high impact mobility projects.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **For Erasmus+ KA104 applicants**

The need for improvement of competences of the staff of adult education varies depending on the functions performed at the organisation. When planning mobilities, it would be reasonable for organisations to refine individual participants’ competence development needs depending on the functions they perform and the responsibilities they have and take them into account when planning mobilities.

When preparing the consortia project, it is recommended to assess the possibility of bringing together persons performing the same functions in different non-formal adult education organisations. This would allow to purposefully strengthen inter-institutional cooperation by sharing operations and discovering new forms and ways of organising adult learning, reaching less accessible groups of adult learners, and building a more robust network of non-formal adult learning organisations in the municipality and the country.

Projects performed by a single adult learning organisation are also valuable. Such projects are beneficial at an organisational level. Involvement of people with different roles at the organisation enhances systemic team synergy and better collective performance.

It is recommended to consider mobility in terms competencies to be developed when choosing mobility activities. In order to improve competencies in the areas of *management of adult learning services*, *designing adult learning processes*, and *empowering and facilitating adult learners*, it would be reasonable to choose the combination courses and job shadowing, while job shadowing is more appropriate for strengthening networking competencies. The effectiveness of mobilities (the value for the individual and the organisation) is also greater if training courses and job shadowing are combined.

**For adult learning coordinators in the municipality, developers and implementers of municipal adult learning policy**

As the evaluation revealed, competence improvement needs differ in the groups of adult learning coordinators in the municipality and adult education staff in adult learning organisations. Municipal adult learning coordinators who participated in mobilities and other adult education staff apply the improved competencies in their work less often than other participants do. Separate KA104 mobilities bringing together municipal adult learning coordinators are recommended. Mobilities should be focused on developing competencies such as strategic planning and design of adult learning at the municipality, building and maintaining networks with international and local adult learning organisations, and advising about the development of adult learning programmes.

Consortia projects strengthen the networking of non-formal adult education organisations. Therefore when preparing KA104 project applications, the consortia could be a priority form of organising learning abroad at the municipality, which would increase the collaboration of non-formal adult education organisations and their potential to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Erasmus+ programme.

Supportive attitude and leadership of adult education organisations heads are an essential success factor that increases the impact of mobility on the organisation. Therefore it could be beneficial to bring the leaders of adult education organisations together under the KA104 project for purposive strengthening of leadership competencies.

It is recommended that adult learning coordinators at municipalities provide suggestions to include the submission of applications for Erasmus+ KA104 projects and other international programmes in the municipality's Action Plan for Non-Formal Adult Education and Continuing Learning and to consider coordination and facilitation of in-service training (including abroad) to be an important professional duty.

Aiming to increase the impact of Erasmus+ KA104 on the development adult education system, it is expedient for municipal non-formal adult education coordinators to carry out mediation activities that encourage organisations to participate in international projects together and undertake joint activities that enable sharing experiences.

**For the national administrator of grants under Erasmus+ KA104**

When organising Erasmus+ KA104 project presentation events and advising applicants, particularly those from outside of the education sector, it is recommended that they be advised to use the set of key competences of adult education professionals (Buiskool et al., 2010) so that applicants can focus on the improvement of the competencies required by the staff activity field, functions and responsibilities at the organisation.

Individuals who have participated in Erasmus+ mobilities more than once tend to use the competencies they have developed abroad more often in their work. Therefore, to ensure the effectiveness and impact of KA104 projects, it is recommended to provide a supportive approach to organisations with international experience.

It is reasonable to stimulate the activity at the level of local non-formal adult education policymaking. The proposed measures of educational work with self-government institutions could be: 1) mobility visits of municipal politicians and heads of education departments of municipality administrations, the content of which is the formation of lifelong learning policy at the local level; 2) presentation of good foreign experiences of organisation of non-formal adult education at the municipal level.

In order to increase the diversity of KA104 project applicants, it is recommended to consider the following changes to the Erasmus+ programme mobility funding: 1) to increase the budget for mobilities under KA104 projects, thus enabling organisations to purchase higher quality training services; 2) to introduce the possibility for non-governmental organisations providing non-formal adult education services to get their administrative costs covered.

It is proposed to revise the system for reporting Erasmus+ KA104 project results by considering to replace the traditional dissemination of information about the project outcomes with more involving forms of activities: experience sharing workshops, events for co-creation of innovative adult learning programmes, co-testing of new adult teaching / learning methods, etc.