

Erasmus+ Cooperation Projects — Elements of Successful Internationalisation

Participation by German Higher Education
Institutions 2014–2020
Objectives, Motivation and Impact

A Summary on the Evaluation Study



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Legal notice

This is a summary of the study 'An evaluation of participation by the German higher education sector in Erasmus+ cooperation projects and of the project-related information and advisory services provided by the NA DAAD', which is based on the detailed evaluation report prepared by the Technopolis Group (available on our website via eu.daad.de/evaluation-kooperationen-2014-2020)

Preface

Looking to the future always requires a review of the past. The NA DAAD took the end of the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ programme period as an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of participation in Erasmus+ cooperation projects within higher education in Germany. The aim was to take stock, but also to gain new insights into the motivations of higher education institutions (HEIs) for participating in the programme as well as into the effectiveness of the funding lines and our information and advisory services.

These evaluation objectives help to identify any potential for optimisation of the NA DAAD's advisory services and public relations, and to generate recommended actions for German HEIs and the EU Commission and/or its executive agency EACEA.

The project started at the end of 2020 with initial interviews with HEIs. On this basis, an online survey among participating HEIs was conducted, followed by secondary data analysis, further interviews and focus group discussions. In addition to the project participants at German HEIs, senior experts, external evaluators and political stakeholders were also included. The resulting case studies provide an excellent illustration of the diverse potential impacts that Erasmus+ cooperation projects can have on the internationalisation of HEIs, and of the synergies that can arise through creative use of the Erasmus+ portfolio in addition to the strategic planning of the HEIs and project consortia and pursuit of their own objectives.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all participants for taking the time to share their wealth of experience, expertise and reflections with us and the interested public. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to conduct such profound and comprehensive (and of course anonymised) analyses. I believe it was worthwhile in light of the findings!

A complete presentation of the objectives, the evaluation questions and above all the results can be found in the evaluation report produced by the Technopolis Group, which was finalised in October 2021. This report forms the basis for the present brochure, via which we would like to share the most relevant results with you in a summarised way.

Last but not least, I would like to thank our NA-internal respectively DAAD-internal project team who decisively contributed a great deal of expertise and commitment to ensure a successful project: Matthias Becker, Kathrin Herres, Florian Hillnhütter, Beate Körner, Britta Schmidt, Yvonne Schnocks, Elisabeth Tauch, Felixa Wingen, Katrin Winter (coordination).

For their expertise and agreeable cooperation, I moreover express my gratitude to Nadia Galati, Maria Stalla, Dr Lisa Nieth and Dr Florian Berger from the Technopolis Group who implemented the evaluation and produced the final report. My thanks also go to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for providing the financial resources for this project.



Dr. Stephan Geifes, Director of the NA DAAD

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Introduction



The Erasmus+ Programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe promotes both individual mobility and cooperation projects in the higher education sector between European institutions and partner countries around the world.

The **Erasmus+ cooperation funding lines** support academic cooperation and German HEIs in the further development and implementation of their internationalisation strategies.

The study 'An evaluation of participation by the German higher education sector in Erasmus+ cooperation projects and of the project-related information and advisory services provided by the NA DAAD'² focuses on the programme period 2014–2020 and analyses the activities in eight cooperation-related funding lines:

Key action 1	Key action 2	Key action 3
Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)	Strategic Partnerships Capacity Building in Higher Education Knowledge Alliances for Higher Education	Forward looking cooperation projects Social inclusion through education, training and youth European policy experimentations
Transversal		
Jean Monnet actions		

The study examined all relevant Erasmus+ cooperation funding lines in the higher education sector. These funding lines differ from each other, in some cases significantly, in terms of their objectives, thematic approaches and consortium structures³.

2. This is an abbreviated and edited version of the full evaluation report compiled by Technopolis Group, which is available on the NA DAAD website via the URL eu.daad.de/evaluation-kooperationen_2014-2020.

3. Detailed information on the individual funding lines can be found on the NA DAAD website (<https://eu.daad.de/infos-fuer-hochschulen/programmlinien/de/>).

Objectives and approaches

In addition to a quantitative evaluation of programme participation by German HEIs and other institutions in the higher education sector, the study also examined the objectives pursued by German HEIs via participation in the above-mentioned eight funding lines and the sustainable impacts that can be achieved by means of project implementation.

Not least, the NA DAAD also asked that the benefits and effectiveness of its own information and advisory services be analysed to enable optimisation of its services to German HEIs in the coming programme period.

The evaluation objectives involved three core sets of questions, which in turn can be differentiated into a multitude of individual questions⁴. They were assigned to three evaluation dimensions to enable systematic examination:

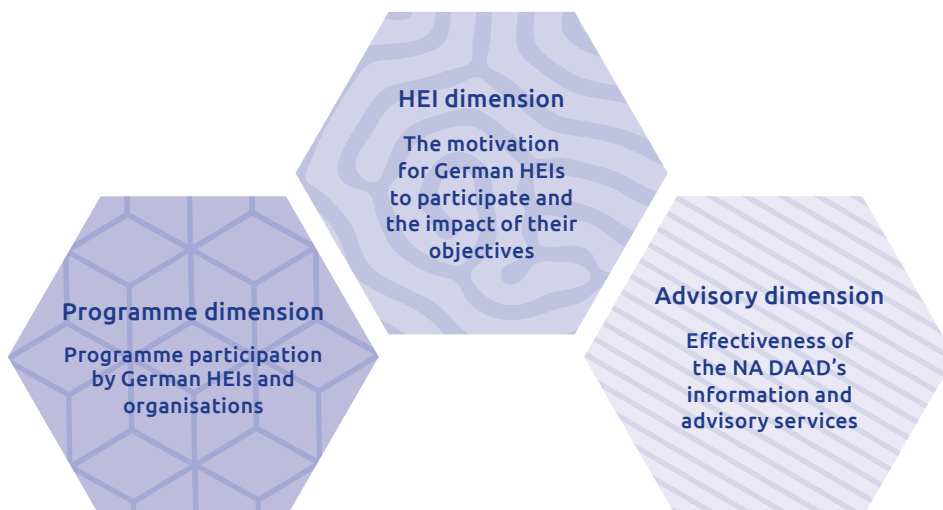
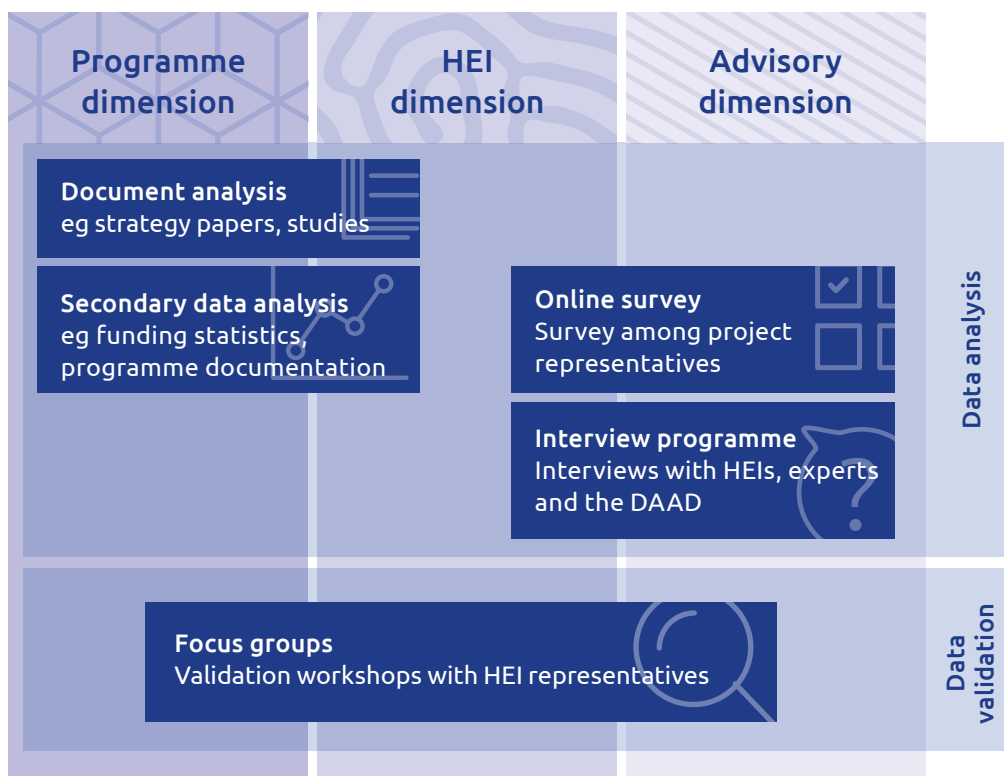


Figure Source: NA DAAD

These questions were analysed using a **combination of quantitative and qualitative methods**. This specifically included extensive analysis of documents and secondary data, qualitative approaches via an interview programme and focus groups with higher education institution (HEI) representatives and other Erasmus+ experts as well as an online survey among project participants⁵.

4. A complete overview of the questions can be found in the evaluation report, URL eu.daad.de/evaluation-kooperationen_2014-2021, p. 5f (Table 1).

5. A detailed account of the methodology for the study can be found in the evaluation report, pp. 6–8.



The mix of methods and their final validation in a total of five focus groups resulted in a solid data base for answering the evaluation questions.

The EU Commission and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) are largely responsible for designing the Erasmus+ EU education programme. They regularly conduct evaluations regarding the implementation of the Erasmus programme's objectives at a European level, so the present study expressly does not analyse the higher-level programme objectives or cooperation funding lines. It rather focuses on the German HEIs as the subjects for their implementation.

Key results of the evaluation

Generally, it must be noted that the study is characterised by a high level of complexity: this is reflected both in the variety of funding lines to be examined, some of which differ significantly, and the heterogeneity of the evaluation questions. Accordingly, the evaluation results permit a variety of overarching conclusions, which we set out below.

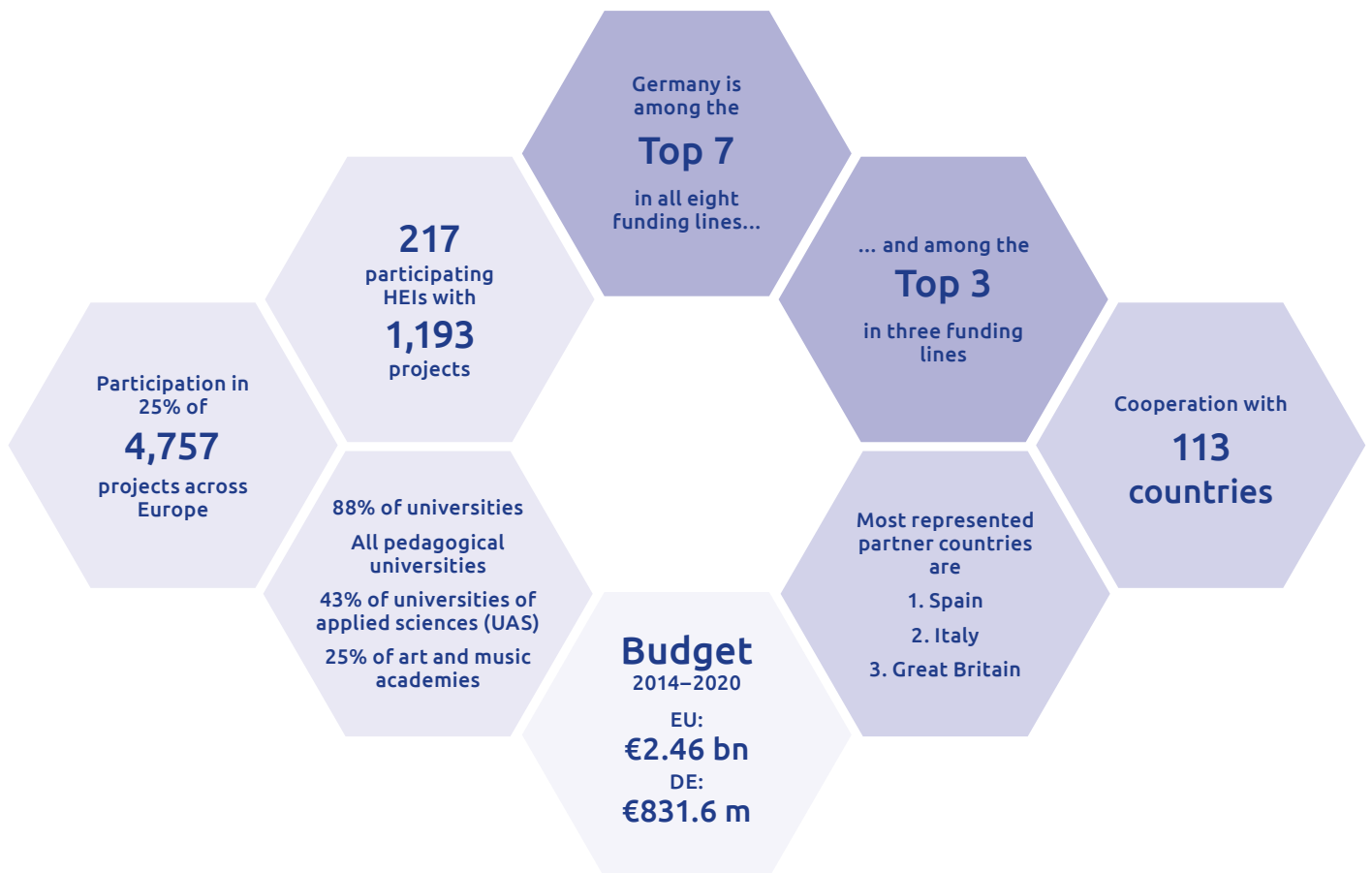


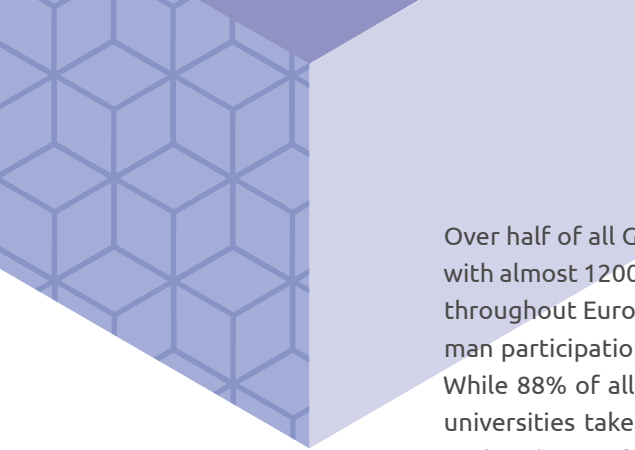
Programme participation

Programme dimension

Programme participation by German HEIs is an important indicator of attractiveness of the funding lines. Furthermore, the NA DAAD considers that it also enables conclusions to be drawn regarding the NA DAAD's role in providing targeted information and advice to German HEIs.

The evaluation results are remarkable—the following key findings can be highlighted:





Over half of all German HEIs (217 of 406) participated in this programme period with almost 1200 cooperation projects, which equates to a quarter of all projects throughout Europe. This is also reflected in the budget, where projects with German participation were able to attract more than one third of the total budget. While 88% of all German universities (95 of 108) and all six of the pedagogical universities take part, 43% of the universities of applied sciences (UAS, 103 of 240) and 25% of art and music academies (13 of 52) participate.

The overall participation of German institutions is at a high level in a European comparison: Germany is always among the top seven countries with the most projects in all eight funding lines, and in some funding lines also in the top 3 (Strategic Partnerships, Capacity Building and Knowledge Alliances).

German institutions use Erasmus+ cooperation projects to cooperate with more than half (113) of all states worldwide. The three main partner countries are Spain (441 projects), Italy (423) and the UK (295).

Due to a substantial budget increase, participation in the decentralised Strategic Partnerships strongly increased from 2016 onwards. In most of the other funding lines there was no trend towards increased participation by German institutions as coordinators over the programme period 2014–2020. Nonetheless, there has been an increase in the funding volume for Erasmus+ cooperation projects with German coordinators, as well as a stable high level of participation in the centrally organised funding lines.

Central to this study is also the analysis of participation patterns, i.e. an analysis of the frequency with which individual or different funding lines are used by HEIs. In the evaluation, the use of several funding lines—as one possible approach among many—is interpreted as an indication of a possible strategic use of the portfolio of Erasmus+ cooperation projects, meaning that the use and potential combination of the funding lines may be strategically coordinated at HEIs.

Percentage share in the use of different funding lines by HEI type
(coordination and partners)

HEI type/number of funding lines	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Universities	31%	22%	19%	19%	6%	1%	1%	1%
UAS	61%	25%	12%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pedagogical universities	0%	50%	17%	17%	0%	17%	0%	0%
Art and music academies	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Number of HEIs (absolute)	104	50	31	22	6	2	1	1

This analysis shows that half of the HEIs focus on one funding line while almost a quarter of the HEIs are involved in two funding lines. There are differences in the participation patterns among the different types of HEIs: almost 70% of universities use more than one funding line, with most universities participating in two to four funding lines. The vast majority of UAS participate in one or two funding lines. According to the conducted interviews, participation increases with the resources and internal support available in each case. Programme participation becomes more likely with increasing size of the HEI, given the higher number of potential applicants.

HEI dimension

HEI objectives

The HEIs pursue a variety of objectives. What motivates the HEI representatives to participate in the Erasmus+ cooperation funding lines? Are the objectives of the HEIs oriented towards the requirements of the respective funding line, or are there other, implicit objectives?

Evaluation of the online survey as well as the exploratory interviews with project managers revealed that the funding lines can be used for objectives at different levels. It is in particular the **cooperation-related as well as intrinsic/content-related motivators** that are paramount to the Erasmus+ participants. Above all it is the **establishment and expansion of professional networks** that is the primary objective in all funding lines. **Content-related motivators** such as **increased visibility of the project topic, societal impact** or **improved teaching** also play a role.

There are different priorities within the motivators of those involved in the project depending on the funding line⁶. What all funding lines have in common is the high importance of cooperation-related objectives.

Other objectives identified in the survey include the **internationalisation/ Europeanisation of one's own field of research** or the **international training of young academics**.

Increased visibility and the **HEI's reputation** are also considered to be **strategic motivators**. Differentiation by HEI type reveals that strategic objectives at the level of the HEI as a whole are more pronounced at UAS than at universities (such as an increase in HEI visibility of 83% at UAS compared with 65% at universities and an increase in HEI attractiveness of 83% at UAS compared with 62% at universities).

The Erasmus+ projects are almost exclusively initiated by the project participants themselves or by partner organisations, in other words primarily via a **bottom-up approach**.

6. Classification of the funding lines according to their most relevant motivators can be found on p. 30 of the evaluation report. (Figure 14)

What motivates HEI representatives to participate?

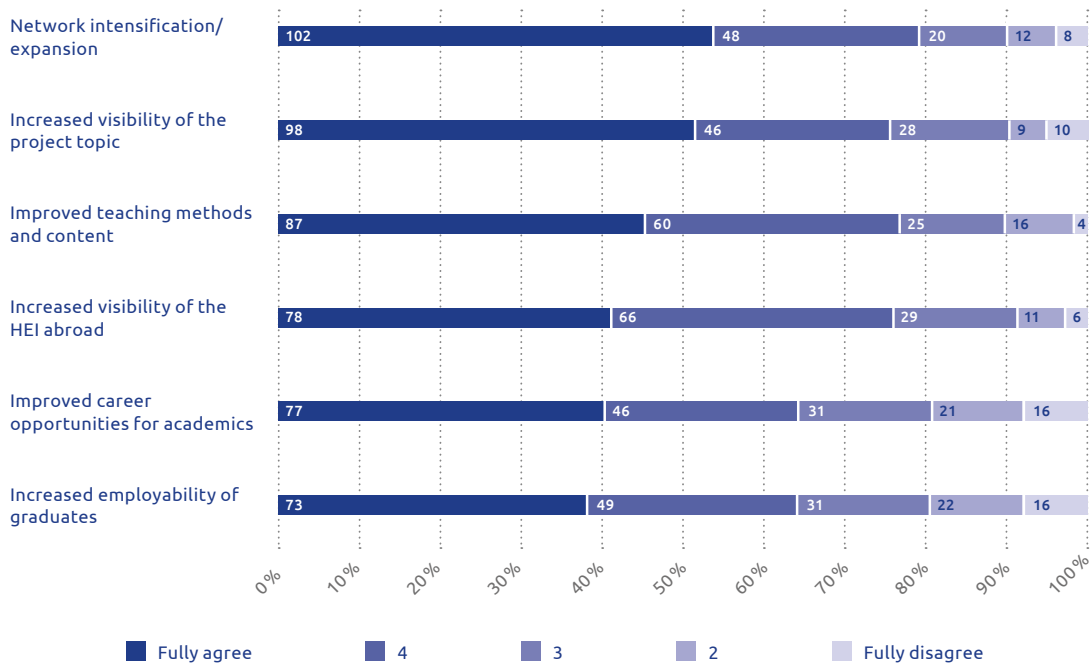


The impacts on individual participants and institutions and their sustainability

The online survey among project participants not only focused on the motivations for programme participation, but also on the outcomes and impacts both on the project participants and the participating HEIs.

In accordance with the cooperation-related objectives of the project participants, the evaluation showed that the **intensification of cooperation activities** and the **expansion of networks** are among the most important outcomes of the Erasmus+ cooperation projects (79% approval, see figure below). These in turn result in internationalisation 'from below'.

What specific outcomes and impacts were you able to observe as a result of your project?



The other most important outcomes include improved teaching methods and content, and increased visibility of the respective project topic and of the HEI (77% and 75% approval respectively).

These **central outcomes** are observed **primarily at the level of HEI representatives who are or were involved in the projects** and, to a further extent, **at the level of the respective faculty/institute (or similar)**.

Other outcomes include for instance the broader use of project results on the subject of digital teaching and/or virtual mobility at HEIs due the COVID-19 pandemic. Some project participants also used their projects for the preparation of other funding initiatives.

Addressing the HEI as a whole, further outcomes include aspects like increased reputation of the HEI and contribution of the Erasmus+ cooperation projects to (further) development of the HEI's internationalisation strategy.

With regard to the socio-political impact, the project managers attest to the high potential of funding lines under Key action 3 in particular to achieve outcomes at the (educational) systemic level, facilitated for example by the direct involvement of political stakeholders like ministries⁷.

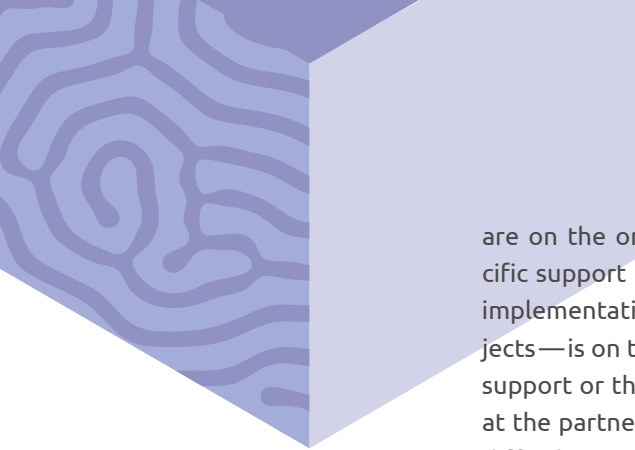
In particular, the project participants consider the **formation of networks, an expanded range of teaching content and methods** as well as the **further development and publication of their own scientific work**, among other outcomes, as explicitly sustainable. Nevertheless, securing the sustainability of the specific project results represents a challenge for many of those involved in the projects who were surveyed. This is partly due for instance to the challenges surrounding introduction of the developed teaching modules into HEI curricula because of different interpretations of educational systems or HEI requirements. A lack of permanent staffing as well as follow-up funding—such as for joint follow-up activities, the further development of the project results or elements specific to the funding line (like EMJMD scholarships)—can compromise sustainability.

Success factors and barriers

In addition to the outcomes and sustainability perspectives, the evaluation identified various **success factors as well as barriers** that are relevant to achievement of the objectives and sustainability of the projects. These can be allocated to the project level, the HEI level and to funding administration.

- **At the project level**, aspects like a high level of personal commitment, good personal relationships within the consortium and substantive, intercultural and social skills are highly relevant to project success. Early communication and integration of projects into HEI curricula and the acquisition of follow-up financing options also play an important role. A change in personnel or partners, (intercultural) differences within the consortium, a lack of personnel and content-related consolidation along with a lack of follow-up financing options are conversely considered to be barriers in terms of sustainability.
- **At the HEI level**, appreciation and recognition by HEI management relating to participation in Erasmus+, including in the form of HEI-internal incentives,

7. These and other outcomes mentioned by the respondents can be found in the evaluation report, p. 35ff.



are on the one hand cited by project participants as a positive factor. Specific support from the HEI administration—with the application and project implementation, but also in the strategic integration and monitoring of projects—is on the other hand considered an important success factor. A lack of support or the respective framework conditions at the HEIs (and potentially at the partner institutions) can however make project implementation more difficult. Project managers therefore often implement their projects without an explicit institutional connection—sometimes deliberately to achieve the freedom to choose individual topics and partners, but at other times some of those responsible would welcome such a connection⁸. Generally, however, the ‘EU-sponsored’ label is already a prestige factor for HEIs in its own right. This prestige may by the same token differ depending on the funding line; a high reputation is particularly associated with Jean Monnet, the EMJMD and with the funding lines under Key action 3.

- **At the level of funding administration**, support from the NA DAAD (see also the following section) as well as the partly very flexible support from the EACEA in project implementation are cited as positive factors. The project participants who were surveyed conversely report a very high amount of bureaucratic effort regarding the submission of applications and project monitoring, especially for coordinating institutions, which has a negative impact on the ratio of effort compared to the benefit from projects. The project managers cite changes in requirements during the programme period and differing statements from the EACEA as an additional barrier. Comparatively low levels of resources for project management—which project participants consider to be a key to successful coordination and project implementation—are similarly considered to be a barrier to content-related work.

8. Starting on page 26 of this short report you will find nine case studies elaborated in the evaluation study and relating to different priorities and approaches adopted by HEIs involved in Erasmus+ cooperation projects.

Advisory dimension

The contribution made by the NA DAAD

A success factor for the implementation of Erasmus+ cooperation projects is, among other aspects, the support of the HEIs provided by the NA DAAD. The information and advisory services offered by the NA DAAD comprise a number of elements: The NA DAAD firstly provides various (online) information material, including the NA DAAD website as a central information platform, brochures, explanatory videos, newsletters, and so on. Its service is supplemented by regular events, such as applicant workshops, information seminars and peer learning events. HEI representatives can directly contact the NA DAAD to benefit from personal consultation, for example to receive specific feedback on draft applications. These services are guided by the approach 'from the idea to the project', in other words the NA DAAD aims to provide comprehensive advice to project representatives and interested parties across the funding spectrum, especially regarding the matching of project ideas, funding lines and higher-level objectives. Advice is also provided throughout the entire funding cycle in the case of the decentralised Strategic Partnerships.

The effectiveness of the NA DAAD support as well as potential for optimisation was questioned in the online survey and discussed with HEI representatives in interviews and focus groups.. Both the survey participants and the project participants in the interviews and focus groups are almost exclusively **highly satisfied with the work of the NA DAAD**.

Two-thirds of the survey respondents have already used the NA DAAD's information and advisory services. The events are the most positively rated service: 73% of respondents consider these to be helpful, with almost 37% of respondents saying they are very helpful. The project participants in particular perceive the applicant workshops and the project draft consultation as being beneficial. The personal consultations are also rated as positive by the majority: around 70% of respondents consider these to be helpful, and almost 50% of them even consider them very helpful.

Emphasis is placed on the needs-oriented, detailed advice provided by dedicated and competent NA DAAD staff, as well as the usually rapid and reliable response from the National Agency to questions by HEI representatives. Regarding the personal consultations, it is also emphasised—as illustrated by the case study relating to the University of Jena on p. 37 of the present brochure—that the NA DAAD's commitment makes it possible, among other things, to further develop project ideas at an early stage. Furthermore, with the NA DAAD's support, interested HEI representatives can identify the 'Erasmus+ funding line best suited for their project ideas, following the NA approach 'from the idea to the project'.

Conclusion and recommendations

3

The results of the evaluation permit a variety of overarching conclusions. Various aspects of the overarching added values and strengths of the Erasmus+ cooperation-related funding lines can be summarised as follows:

Strengths and benefits of the Erasmus+ cooperation-related funding lines

Implementation of innovative, application-oriented projects , also by involving students	(To a large extent) non-subject specific character and flexibility in use	Possibility of (partial) coupling of teaching and research as well as interdisciplinary work	Content
Initiation and expansion of international cooperation → as a condition for systematic internationalisation	Opening up HEIs to new contexts (in partner countries, with external stakeholders like NGOs, public authorities, companies etc)	Potential generation of social/political impact (eg regarding European cohesion, European Educational Area)	Impacts
E+ projects as bottom-up elements in the internationalisation of HEIs via content and networks and can be used strategically	E+ projects as a comparatively “low-threshold” entry into international projects / preparation for other programmes	E+ projects can be used to address special topics (eg teacher training, transfer, digitisation, European Educational Area etc)	Significance

Overall, the Erasmus+ cooperation-related funding lines have the enormous potential to be used as **bottom-up elements at the interface between teaching, research and potentially other aspects**, such as entrepreneurship, transfer or digitisation in relation to the internationalisation of HEIs.

Technopolis Group presentation at the NA DAAD Erasmus+ Partnership Forum on 12 November 2021

With Erasmus+ cooperation projects, the project participants can establish and expand discipline-specific international networks, which usually provide lasting and reliable relationships for the people involved and their HEIs. These networks and the content they develop are proven to add substantial value to the respective work area of those involved. Where synergies with other and overarching HEI areas exist, the projects and networks can benefit the entire HEI.

Regarding the impacts, one of the key strengths of the cooperation projects is thus, as expected, the cooperation-related domain. The projects facilitate the initiation and expansion of robust, topic-related international networks, which is an important condition for the broad internationalisation of HEIs. The HEIs also open up to new contexts through these cooperation projects, whether for different educational contexts in partner countries or in cooperation with external stakeholders, such as institutions, public authorities, companies or civil society institutions.

Considering the **current Erasmus+ programme period (2021–2027)**, it is clear that there is no need for fundamental changes to cooperation projects in the higher education sector. Some of the strengths and potentials identified in the study are already being vigorously implemented in the new programme period.⁹ The evaluation results can therefore in principle also be applied in this programme period.

Based on the empirical evaluation results, various **recommendations** can be derived for the HEIs participating in the Erasmus+ cooperation-related funding lines, the **NA DAAD** and the **European Commission/EACEA**:

Recommendations for the HEIs

The evaluation results give rise to the following recommendations to HEIs focusing on a more strategic use of the cooperation funding lines. The case studies presented below illustrate success factors at HEI level that may also be relevant to the higher education landscape as a whole.

1. Awareness at HEI level of the potential relating to Erasmus+ cooperation projects should be increased.

In this context, (increased) communication of the relevance of Erasmus+ cooperation projects by the project managers themselves is proving to be central in raising awareness at the HEI strategy level. As a result, recognition and appreciation of the implementation of such projects can be increased at HEI level, which is highly important as an informal incentive for project participants and also for potentially interested HEI staff not yet involved in Erasmus+ projects.

Increased awareness can also promote a more deliberate use of Erasmus+ cooperation projects within institutional strategies and strategy processes — in the context of internationalisation strategies, but also in relation to other cross-cutting issues at the interface with Erasmus+, including digitisation of teaching, social responsibility and sustainability.

After all, discussions with project participants revealed that the cooperation projects have high potential to develop content and networks (also initially established on a test basis) concerning various HEI topics and missions, and thus to move things forward on a strategic level through follow-up activities and emerging dynamics.

2. At the formal/structural level, institutional embedding of the projects and networking within HEIs also prove to be beneficial in systematically advancing internationalisation of the HEIs.

The case studies in particular have shown that clear institutional responsibilities for Erasmus+ cooperation-related funding lines and the internal integration of projects with strategic administrative responsibility for in-

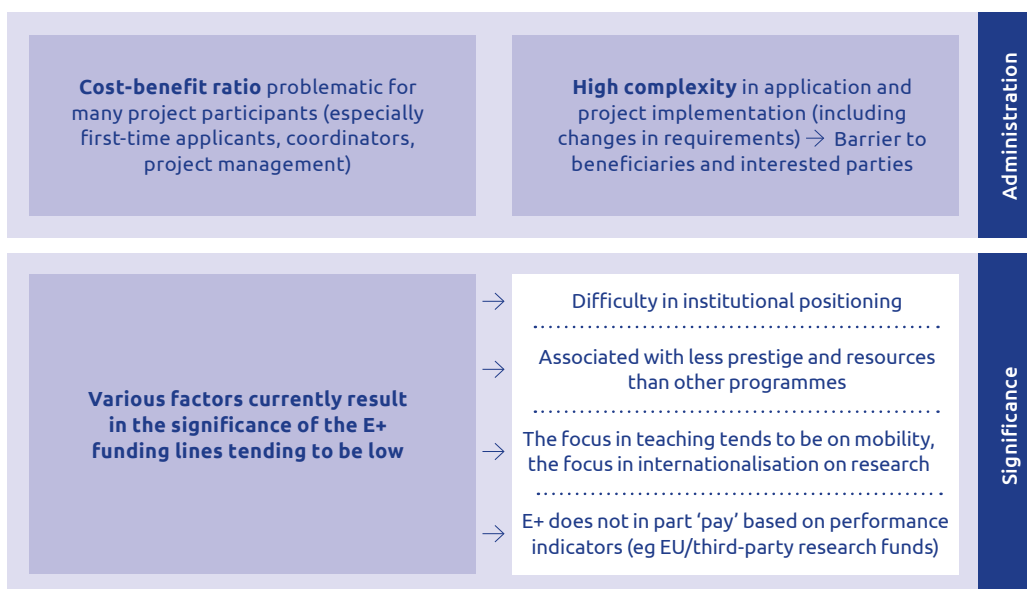
9. A review of the Erasmus+ programme period from 2021 is set out in detail in the evaluation report, p. 57

ternationalisation can improve the (strategic) use of projects within an HEI. The introduction and expansion of HEI-internal incentives for international projects (like reductions in the teaching load) can also improve participation in Erasmus+ cooperation projects.

The analysis of programme participation has shown in principle that a high proportion of German HEIs already participate in the Erasmus+ cooperation-related funding lines, although almost half of them are focused on one funding line. At HEIs participating in multiple funding lines, the evaluation team was able to observe, at least in some cases, that internal networking among the various project participants can be effective in increasing the overall value at the HEI added by the projects. Accordingly, it may be beneficial for HEIs to create opportunities for (regular) internal networking focusing on Erasmus+ cooperation projects. This would enable project managers and any interested HEI representatives to exchange views on issues regarding administrative handling and possible solutions, but they could also enter into a substantive discussion that may reveal potential synergies in terms of content between projects, which may make the complementary use of funding lines more likely.

.....

Potential for improvement/barriers regarding Erasmus+ cooperation-related funding lines



Increased awareness of the projects' (strategic) added values for HEIs among HEI management and administrative units with responsibility for internationalisation can thus be beneficial. Concrete examples of how different funding lines and projects can be embedded in the strategy and implementation of internationalisation at HEIs are shown below.

Technopolis Group presentation at the NA DAAD Erasmus+ Partnership Forum on 12 November 2021

Recommendations for the NA DAAD

In general, the evaluation has shown that the HEIs greatly appreciate the support provided by the NA DAAD. The NA could nevertheless provide more targeted support by being (even) more target group oriented in its communication.

1. The recommended measures include the development of concise advisory and information material that is even more tailored to the target group, such as practical handouts for applicants, but also for HEI management and administrators, among others, to encourage their internal support for the projects. The formats of existing events could also be adapted to enable the target groups to be addressed in a more differentiated manner (for example different sessions with experienced rather than with new applicants, and so on).
2. At the national and state (Bundesländer) level, the NA DAAD should consider ministries as a specific target group, considering their major influence on the priorities of the HEIs, and also address them with appropriate information material.
3. The relevance of and potential for complementary use of the cooperation funding lines should also be highlighted even more clearly than in the past. Examples of good practice in particular, which were also identified in the evaluation and are presented below, can be used specifically for this purpose.

Recommendations for the European Commission and its executive agency EACEA

Potential to increase the importance and effectiveness of Erasmus+ projects has also been identified in relation to the funding administration on the European level.

4. **An improved cost-benefit ratio should be achieved for the project participants.** The costs and complexity of the application process as well as of project implementation have proved to be a major barrier regarding Erasmus+ cooperation projects. Options for the simplification of the processes in the Erasmus+ cooperation funding lines has been discussed for some time. Albeit there is still a need to find ways to ensure the quality of the applications and project implementation, it is vital to reduce the administrative workload of project participants at the same time, so that project administration does not take place at the expense of content-related work.
5. **Increased resources reserved for project management can also be beneficial to the projects.** The evaluation repeatedly highlights the importance of project management in achieving the objectives. Improved resources for project management can thus positively influence project outcomes (possibly also beyond the project participants), and the significance of the projects can be increased within the respective faculty and/or at the HEI, since the project work is also reflected in the resources.
6. **The sustainability of the projects, which was identified in the evaluation as challenging, can additionally be underpinned by follow-on funding opportunities (on a smaller scale) at European level.** This may explicitly involve focusing on projects without the prospect of alternative funding sources. Suitable examples are the EMJMD scholarships, which initially enable the recruitment of highly qualified international students, but frequently there is a lack of alternative options for continuing to finance the scholarships once the Erasmus+ funding ends.

Examples of good practice

An important aspect of the evaluation is also to disclose examples of good practice that exemplify the various added values and potential impacts from Erasmus+ cooperation projects, while also demonstrating a clear correlation with the HEI's individual objectives and strategic planning.

These can and should serve as a stimulus for interested HEIs to exploit the manifold opportunities of the Erasmus+ programme in the field of partnerships and cooperation projects to further develop their cooperation activities and to optimise their internationalisation activities in the 2021–2027 programme period.



Decentralised grouping of Erasmus+ projects as a basis for interdisciplinary knowledge sharing and inspiration for strategy building

Case study 1

HEI: Saarland University

Funding lines/ projects:

various Erasmus+ cooperation projects in different funding lines (including Strategic Partnerships, EMJMD, Jean Monnet, Capacity Building in Higher Education)

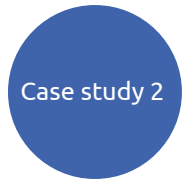
The various Erasmus+ projects are grouped within the departments and/or faculties at Saarland University according to an informal 'bottom-up approach'. Synergies between the projects are therefore exploited and experiences are exchanged within these thematic groupings. The project groupings are created in a decentralised manner, often by those who are the driving forces for Erasmus+ projects and who implement them with various partners both within and outside the HEI. This means that the various funding lines complement each other and can thus 'make a significant contribution to the broader basis of internationalisation'.

Synergies in project administration are also triggered via informal networking meetings. The result is that 'the wheel does not have to be reinvented' for every project and that project administration can act as an interface in relation to the third-party funding department, the finance department and those thematically responsible (the faculties). These informal developments in implementing the Erasmus+ projects have stimulated the organisational development of the HEI, in that the goal of internationalisation is now being further advanced by means of institutional networking.

The various Erasmus+ funding lines are also seen as a **driving force for strategy development** within the HEI. A range of Erasmus+ cooperation projects can thus inspire and/or accompany strategies at the faculty level. These projects are already developing and expanding international relations, thematic exchange and cooperation, so the aim in a future step is to ensure that some discipline-specific strategic elements can also contribute to the HEI's internationalisation strategy.

Lessons learned

- HEI-internal support in stimulating the strategic matching of various projects and funding lines, and the exchange of experiences among projects/funding lines
- Erasmus+ projects as a 'source of inspiration' for strategies (at HEI and faculty level)



Innovative, complementary project management at the interfaces of internationalisation strategy, project management and specialist knowledge

HEI: Ulm University of Applied Sciences

Lessons learned

- Innovativeness and flexibility in the design and staffing of project management and in the HEI's internal project cooperation and coordination
- Matching of the projects (and partners) with different elements of the HEI's strategies

Funding line / project:

Capacity Building in Higher Education / Employability enhancement in the field of renewable energies, on the basis of close collaboration between university and industry

Partners:

University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien, Tshwane University Of Technology, Deloitte Limited, Durban University of Technology, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Central University of Technology, Free State

Funding amount / project duration:

€984,984 / 2020–2023

The special feature of this capacity-building project is a project management team consisting of two professors from two different faculties (production engineering/economics and mathematics, natural sciences and economics) with different research priorities (energy technology and economics) and an international affairs officer. The international affairs officer, who is based in the Vice Chancellor's office, acts as an interface between the Vice Chancellor's office and the international office.

This complementary composition enables the strategic integration of the project and the corresponding activities within the HEI's internationalisation strategy, while the interdisciplinary focus is secured by two complementary research fields. With regard to the HEI's strategy (2018–2028), which includes its internationalisation strategy, the project covers two of the existing target areas: the development of international activities with premium partners, and research and transfer activities in the international arena.

The mix of skills within the team results in a highly functional distribution of topics and tasks. The synergies between the various stakeholders are exploited by the fact that the substantive work is primarily performed by the professors and the project management and administration by the international affairs officer.

The exploitation of synergies and the skills mix within the project management team represents a great opportunity, but there also needs to be a basis of trust between the stakeholders.

Quote from the project manager

From project partner to master's degree course coordinator

Case study 3

HEI: Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development

Funding line / project: various capacity building projects as partners (GeoServices-4-Sustainability, 2015–2018) and coordinator (BioEcon, 2017–2020)

In this case study, the University for Sustainable Development first learned about Erasmus+ cooperation projects through an Austrian university's request for partnership in a capacity building project. A DAAD event in Bonn resulted in contacts subsequently being established with Vietnamese project partners, with whom a further capacity building project was conceived. This enabled the original project partner Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development to build on the experience it had gained, so that—with significant application support from the NA DAAD—it became the coordinator of a project in the Erasmus+ programme period 2014–2020.

The inclusion of other partners from Spain, who were brought into the consortium by the Vietnamese partners, was also beneficial. Building on its good experience with new partners, it also applied to be the coordinator of a new joint Erasmus+ project with the Spanish partner (also in the Erasmus+ programme period 2014–2020). This project was initially rejected, but was approved upon resubmission based on constructive feedback from the external evaluators.

Overall, the strategy of 'seeking out' its own strategic partners, who do not necessarily need to be predetermined by the HEI, proved to be worthwhile. The success of these projects has resulted in further funding lines being considered, which can be used to strengthen the partnerships. In this context, the 'Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees' funding line was found to be useful regarding long-term continuation of higher education partnerships and an application has been submitted.

Lessons Learned

- Seek out strong partners, use projects to develop them into strategic partners and involve them in other projects.
- Use the NA DAAD review process (if the application is not successful) to further develop and improve the application.
- Build on experience gained as a partner and use different funding lines strategically depending on interest.

I sought out my own strategic partners.

Quote from the project manager

Support structures for the implementation of Erasmus+ projects

HEI: Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Lessons learned

- Institutionalisation of project support and direct support for strategy implementation by means of Erasmus+ projects
- Creation of longer-term project structures within the HEI promotes the development of international project experience among staff

Funding lines/ projects:

various Erasmus+ cooperation projects in different funding lines, participation both as a coordinating and as a partner institution (including Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Jean Monnet)

Dortmund UAS sees the various Erasmus+ funding lines as a kind of **building block system** by means of which skills can be expanded, resources created and dedicated staff actively involved. There is therefore a close, partly strategic link between Erasmus+ projects and the HEI management, which mobilizes significant HEI resources for the projects. This for instance includes resources being invested in supporting application procedures and the introduction of incentives (such as bonus payments and reduced teaching load) to facilitate application for and implementation of projects. The aim is to **create funding for internationalisation similar to existing research funding**. Precisely these aspects of the institutionalisation of processes with regard to project initiation and management are to be further elaborated in a future workshop. Not only has a broad portfolio of Erasmus+ projects been developed at Dortmund UAS in the course of these various developments; they have also created a specific structure within which the internationalisation strategy has been developed.

The potential of Erasmus+ projects for **collaboration with economic actors** has also been recognised as a win-win situation and is actively exploited. After all, Erasmus+ projects (mainly Knowledge Alliances) allow direct **contact with specialist departments in industry** (rather than just with HR departments). Both companies and graduates benefit from combining professional development in the company and master's training: the companies can identify potential future personnel, and the HEI benefits from practical experience. Master's theses, corporate visits and lectures from industry are further examples of the possible results of Erasmus+ cooperation projects. Industrial cooperation is not least a **unique selling point** for the HEI and increases its attractiveness compared to other HEI partners and students.

**Funding line/
project:**

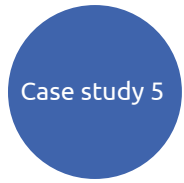
various Erasmus+ cooperation projects in different funding lines, participation both as a coordinating and as a partner institution (including Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Forward looking cooperation projects)

A particularly close institutional link between the Erasmus+ cooperation projects can be observed at TU Dresden. The 'European Project Center' (EPC) at TU Dresden can be seen as an example of good practice in how the project management and the specialist expertise relating to Erasmus+ projects can be successfully shared. It enables all employees in the EPC to be funded via third-party funds and—acting as if it were a multi-programme management unit—to assume the administrative and coordination tasks within the Erasmus+ projects.

Accordingly, EPC staff can identify synergies and initiate new projects, since they have an overview of calls for applications and new funding lines which they match with the interests of the corresponding academics and researchers. Its coordination with the international office at TU Dresden also enables the topic of individual mobility to also be linked with Erasmus+ cooperation projects. In addition to this type of 'service' relating to funding projects that are led by academics from the faculties, the EPC has also assumed the content management for 'in-house projects'.

Lessons Learned

- Innovative structure involving an HEI-internal body that handles applications and project management relating to Erasmus+ projects, pools expertise and identifies synergies



Erasmus+ projects with a political impact

HEI: Technische Universität Dresden

Lessons learned

- Successful communication of the project results to political bodies at national and international level

Funding line / project:	Forward looking cooperation project/Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement of Higher Education
Partners:	Catalan Association of Public Universities, State Capital of Dresden, Dublin City Council, City of Rijeka, Institute for the Development of Education Croatia, Regio Twente, PPMI Group, University of Ghent, University of Twente, Stichting European Consortium of Innovative Universities
Funding amount / project duration:	€499,300 / 2018–2021

The Forward looking cooperation project ‘Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement of Higher Education’ (TEFCE) has been implemented and communicated by the stakeholders in such a way that it can demonstrate national and international impacts on policy-makers and the stakeholders involved (HEIs and their sphere of influence). The project partners were able to position the topics politically within the EU so that the aspect of social commitment by HEIs has been included in future funding programmes. The toolbox developed in the project, which is intended to enable HEIs to record, evaluate and manage their involvement in this field, has been continuously disseminated and is now also used by HEIs outside the consortium.

Funding line/ project:	European policy experimentations/ A New Way for Talents in Teaching (NEWTT)
Partners:	15 partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania and the Basque Country
Funding amount/ project duration:	€2,500,000/ 2016–2019

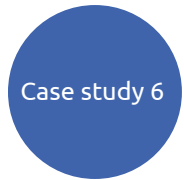
The NEWTT project under the European policy experimentations funding line also addressed an educational policy dimension: it aimed to test an alternative teacher training programme ‘as a policy experiment’ in several European countries. The project involves education ministries from five European countries as well as various HEIs, networks and civil society organisations; the project is thus placed at the highest political level and is accompanied by expertise from academia and civil society. The application process requires project participants to agree whether the measures are suitable for inclusion in the respective education systems, thereby creating good conditions for generating a systemic educational impact. This Key action 3 project effectively addresses the priorities within European education policy—supporting teachers and effectively addressing the EU-wide teacher shortage. Once the work was completed, the project results were adopted and further developed in another cooperation project under the same funding line. One of the success factors is that the same partner organisations—in other words the existing network—were also involved in the follow-up project and their relationships could thus be further expanded.

Lessons learned

- Partners within the consortium who were already operational in all participating countries before the start of the project; this enabled communication structures and working methods to be expediently established in a timely manner
- Overcoming the language barriers between partners in the ministries by simultaneous translation of all meetings

The exciting thing about European policy experimentations is the integration of our tested measures into policy development.

Quote from the person responsible for the project at the University of Duisburg-Essen



Significant increase in international students and their connection to the business community

HEI: Anhalt University of Applied Sciences

Lessons learned

- Successful and sustainable networking of EMJMD students and teachers with the business community
- Strategic utilisation of the potential for international orientation and increasing the attractiveness for international and national students

Funding line / project:	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees / European Master of Science in Food Science, Technology and Business
Partners:	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (coordinator), Catholic University Of Portugal
Funding amount / project duration:	€2,779,000 / 2015–2020, 2020–2026

This is now the fourth time that the Anhalt University of Applied Sciences is conducting an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree on the subject of food sciences, technology and business. With applicants from all over the world and students from all continents, the EMJMD has initiated the idea of joint master degrees within the HEI and has thus influenced the fact that this University of Applied Sciences is one of the HEIs with the highest proportion of international students throughout Germany (around 25%).

The EMJMD thus established and expanded important networks. These partners are both HEIs and businesses and come from Saxony-Anhalt, Germany and all around the world. These highly qualified EMJMD students open **new doors for the HEI**, since they represent points of contact with the business community; for example through internships, lectures by company representatives, graduate assignments in companies, and via employment after the completion of studies. While some students stay in Germany after graduation, others go back to their home countries and in turn create new connections, which are cultivated and utilised through alumni network meetings and activities. The professors involved today, for example, have thus established a variety of company contacts and are often actively contacted by large national and international companies as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with cooperation requests.

The global orientation of an EMJMD has also influenced this HEI's profile. The UAS is and was originally mainly oriented toward Eastern Europe, but now has a more global foothold.

The EMJMDs have contributed to the strategic, global orientation of our institution.

Quote from the person responsible for the project

Successful internal and external communication including the involvement of various stakeholders

Case study 7

HEI: Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University

Funding line / project:	Strategic Partnerships / Comparative Analyses of European Identities in Business and Every-Day Behaviour
Partners:	P.PORTO (Polytechnic Institute of Porto), CY Cergy Paris University, Budapest Business School, South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, Maieutica Cooperative of Higher Education CRL, Lodz University of Technology, University of Strasbourg, University of Łódź
Funding amount / project duration	€436,144 / 2018–2021

Lessons learned

- The use of various stakeholders (and their corresponding expertise) within and outside the HEI to 'publicise' the project and its results

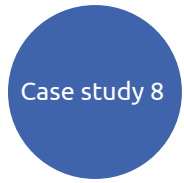
Communication regarding the activities and results of this Strategic Partnership has been successful, involving various internal and external stakeholders. These included a wide variety of individuals within the HEI, such as the Vice Chancellor, staff in research colloquia and the HEI's communication department who were involved and who activated communication channels. These stakeholders in turn contacted and involved external partners and multipliers (such as the Chamber of Commerce, associations or the regional press).

This active involvement of various stakeholders in communication concerning the project and its results was implemented in a similar format both in Germany and among international partners. An extensive website with a blog is also used to provide underlying information and updates on the project's progress.

In addition to the academic community, a broad spectrum of civil society was accordingly made aware of the project and actively initiated knowledge transfer. For the academic community involved in publications and events, the project was particularly interesting because it combines an interdisciplinary team as well as various topics and results. Not only the topics, but also various methods in multiple (academic) communities were thus sustainably developed.

I never missed an opportunity to tell people about the project.

Quote from the project manager



Inter-faculty cooperation on successful Erasmus+ projects

HEI: *Nürtingen-Geislingen University*

Lessons learned

- Use of Erasmus+ projects to inspire and create cross-cutting (cross-faculty) subjects
- Identifying the right time and addressing the right people within the university to form a functional and proactive core team
- Cross-institutional impact is significantly boosted by the interest of HEI management in a specific interdepartmental objective

Funding line / project

Strategic Partnerships / Social Entrepreneurship for Local Change

Partners:

MTÜ Social Enterprise Network, Creative Room Association, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Kiel University, Heldenrat - Beratung für soziale Bewegungen e.V., Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences

Funding amount / project duration:

€316,435 / 2015–2018

This case study focuses on special aspects and topics relating to the Strategic Partnership ‘Local change and entrepreneurship’ that were further developed as cross-faculty, cross-cutting issues at the HEI. The initial impetus came from a successful Erasmus+ project in a previous programme period (Erasmus Thematic Network) in which discipline-specific international online teaching was developed in one faculty. The project inspired the HEI management to also intensify the topics of internationalisation and digitisation of teaching in other faculties and to encourage knowledge transfer with the faculty that had already experienced Erasmus+. The project coordinators accordingly selected the Strategic Partnerships format and the cross-cutting topic of **social entrepreneurship / social innovation**. This combination of topics was finally developed into a new project. A cross-faculty elective course was thus created with the aim of transferring knowledge and networking into the faculties, which, among other things, brought about changes to the curriculum.

A **Living Lab** and an **Entrepreneurship Centre** were also created during cooperation with the project partners (and based on knowledge exchange with them). This first partnership—along with corresponding follow-up projects relating to cross-faculty cooperation and involvement of the various course managers—has thus stimulated the long-term adaptation of structures, the use of new methods and the formation of interdisciplinary expertise.

10. One of these follow-up projects is another Strategic Partnership (Community Learning for Local Change), which was implemented between 2018 and 2021 following the first Erasmus+ cooperation project. (Note from the evaluation report, p. 41)

One cooperation inspires the next.

Quote from the person responsible for the project

Using tailored advice to identify and use new funding lines

Case study 9

HEI: University of Jena

Funding line / project:	Jean Monnet actions / networks / Network for Applied European Contemporary History
Partners:	Stiftung Ettersberg, Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e.V., Ghent University, University of Wroclaw, University of Tuzla, University of Belgrade, University of Sarajevo, Krzyzowa Foundation, Museum of Yugoslav History, CegeSoma / State Archives
Funding amount / project duration:	€300,000 / 2016–2019

The Jean Monnet network involved in the project 'Applied European Contemporary History' was created following **tailored consultation with the National Agency of the DAAD**. The project partners already had a project outline regarding the concept of creating a network structure bringing together interested historians, but they did not know which funding programmes could be considered for this idea.

Contact with the DAAD was established during a work meeting at the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research, where the project partners were made aware of the funding line. This was followed by **tailored and competent support** from the NA DAAD, which quickly matched the project outline to the corresponding funding line. The project partners could thus discuss different scenarios in exploratory discussions, and appropriate solutions and tools enabled them to quickly adapt the project outline to the corresponding application. A completed project application was submitted within around two months, which was **directly successful**. This project is therefore not only the first academic and directly successful application submitted by the applicant, but also the first Jean Monnet network in Germany.

Lessons learned

- Openness of the applicants to engage in new funding lines, as well as the dedicated advisory services provided by the NA DAAD
- Clear communication between established contacts, so that existing knowledge and appropriate arrangements could be put in place

It was excellent that we were met with creativity to develop what we had formulated, so that it could fit into a funding line ... we hadn't seen the project in the context of Jean Monnet.

Quote from the person responsible for the project

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