



Professionalisation

Across Borders

**The impact of International Exchange and
Cooperation with Erasmus+ on the Professional
Development of Educational Staff**

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Introduction

This report is an account of a study conducted by the National Agency Erasmus+ for Education and Training (NA Erasmus+) in which we explore the impact of projects co-funded by Erasmus+ which were geared toward the professionalization of education staff. In addition to the outcomes, which have been linked directly to the activities conducted by the participants, we primarily looked at the results with regard to the professional activities of staff in education and training after their return and the wider and long-term impact thereof on the organisation and beyond.

Permanent professional development is an important theme for teachers and other staff in the various sectors of education and training. As education professionals, they are aware of its importance, not just for themselves, but more specifically for their pupils and the students/trainees whom they work with. They create extra added value when they give even more substance to this theme through international activities, thereby fulfilling an important exemplary role.

Professionalization is an important theme for the NA Erasmus+ as well. Education staff their foreign experiences can promote professionalization. Nearly all participants in Erasmus+ activities state they have learned much and would recommend a stay abroad to their colleagues. It remains unclear, however, whether these initial positive outcomes reported immediately upon coming home will lead to lasting change in the professional activities of the people concerned, or to changes at the level of the educational institution or beyond in other people involved. Recent literature studies by the NA Erasmus+ and the Kohnstamm Institute show that as yet little is known about those lasting changes.¹ One of the study's recommendations was to conduct more targeted qualitative research on the basis of case studies.

National Agency Erasmus+

The National Agency Erasmus+ for education and training (NA Education and Training) implements the subsidy programme Erasmus+ for education, training of the European Union in the Netherlands. The goal of the Erasmus+ programme is to stimulate economic growth, employment, and equal opportunities and inclusion in Europe. Erasmus+ carries out its mission by improving the quality of education and training through international cooperation.

In the Netherlands, the National Agency (NA) Erasmus+ furnishes project subsidies to organisations involved in the education sectors of primary education, secondary education, higher education, vocational secondary education and adult education. Professionalization of educational staff and organisations is often an important goal of the separate projects. These subsidies are furnished by the NA Education and Training via two action lines: Mobilities (Key Action 1) and Strategic Partnerships (Key Action 2). Projects within the Mobilities action line (KA1) involve staff/education staff who visit an educational institution or other organisation (private and public) abroad for a number of days for the purpose of following a course (Structured Course), to learn from European colleagues (Job shadowing) or teach European colleagues (Teaching Training Assignment). Within the projects of the action Strategic Partnerships (KA2), tried and tested methods are exchanged, or new innovative educational products developed (Cooperation for Innovation).

¹ Verbeek, F. (2019). De opbrengsten van internationale mobiliteit voor de professionele ontwikkeling van onderwijsmedewerkers. (The Outcomes of International Mobility for the Professional Development of Staff in Education) 's- Hertogenbosch/Amsterdam: National Agency Erasmus+/Kohnstamm Institute.

The Term Impact

The NA Erasmus+ views investigating the way in which the employment of Erasmus+ leads to sustainable and desirable changes in education and training as an important task. To this end, it employs the Theory of Change and the thinking in terms of impact (See figure 1).

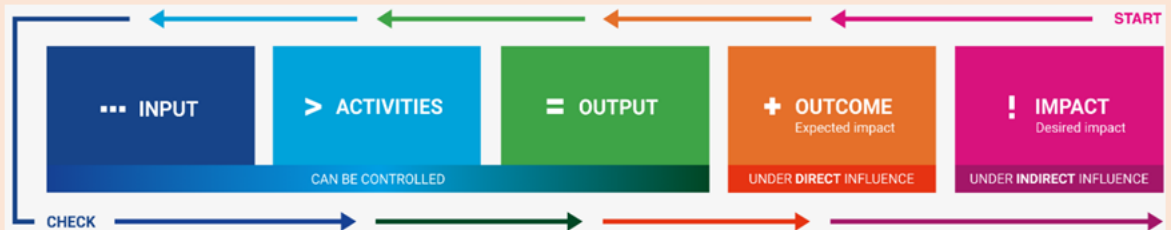


Figure 1. Impact model. From right to left and back to the right.

Erasmus defines impact+ as a contribution made to bigger and broader social changes occurring under the influence of other actors and factors. More concretely, and often described as the goals of an Erasmus+ project, are the so-named outcomes or results that become apparent through sustainable changes in the professional behaviour of the participants in the projects. The impact studies conducted by the NA Erasmus+ primarily focus on these outcomes or results, which can be viewed as expected impact, as they are directly affected by the activities in the projects.

To this end, NA Erasmus+ initiated a conversation with education staff and organisations who a few years ago participated or were involved in Erasmus+-projects. We asked participants about the results and the impact they continue to experience several years after the activities ended. In this report, we have formulated a case description for five educational sectors based on these interviews.

In the spring of 2019, The NA selected one project per educational sector which had been completed several years ago (three years or more) and was of sufficient quality to serve as the subject of a case study. It could be either a project for mobility or strategic cooperation. An important criterium in the selection was that the project had to have been geared toward the target group 'staff in education and training' (staff) or toward the theme 'professionalization'.

The cases selected for primary education (PE), secondary education (SE) and vocational secondary education (VSE) comprise mobility projects, those selected for adult education (AE) and higher education (HE) involve strategic partnerships with a professionalization aspect in their objective. The characteristics of these project forms are very different. An important difference is that the focus of the mobility projects always concerns the professional development of staff, whereas this is just one of the objectives or an implied objective of the strategic partnership projects.

I Case PE – Dalton school Koningin Emma: Working on an International Profile

The Christian Dalton school Koningin Emma in Zwolle is a primary school which has seen substantial growth and presently has 390 pupils and a team of 30 staff members. Since 2014, the school has undertaken multiple activities supported by Erasmus+. These activities primarily focused on developing early English foreign language training (VTO Engels) at the school. The school profiles itself as a school with a strong focus on English: ever since the school year 2009/2010, there has been a lot of focus on English from the 1st up to and including the 8th grade.

I.1 The Projects; Study Trip, Job Shadowing, and Training

In the school year 2014/2015, the whole team went on a week-long study trip to Cambridge. In the period 2016-2018, other activities were supported with the same objective, namely job shadowing at foreign partner schools and language courses for individual teachers. The school's objective was to become a certified EarlyBird school, which they did. This case description is based on group conversations with a total of eight of the school's teachers, supplemented with information from reports on the projects in question.

Study trip

The Cambridge study trip had multiple objectives:

- To increase the team's English language skills;
- To improve the didactic/methodological skills in teaching English;
- To increase self-confidence in teaching in English;
- To enhance the supporting power of the school's language teaching team;
- To acquire a positive attitude toward internationalization.

The school preferred to put the whole programme together by itself instead of buying a ready-made programme. Teachers believe this fits the Dalton character of the school. Only a limited preparation was expected from the participants in the study trip, so they could start the week with an open mind and a clean slate. In advance, the educational staff wrote a letter to the teacher, who used it in their classes on grammar and vocabulary. They also took ERK² tests to assess their language skills. This allowed for the setting of individual learning targets, as the differences in language skills between the team members were substantial.

The main activities during the trip were:

- Language skills training at the individual level;
- Didactical training to improve skills in teaching English as a second language;
- Integration of language skills and learning assignments;
- Visiting an English primary school, because in addition to developing language skills, the school wanted to familiarize itself with the English educational system for inspiration.

The contacts with the local population have staid in the participants' memories. They asked passers-by in the street to read out a poem, talked to students during a boat trip and attended a play in old English. The participants felt completely immersed in the English language and culture. The group was split in primary and secondary school staff, because the level required of the teachers (B1 for primary schools, B2 for secondary schools) and the methodology used differs between primary and secondary schools.

² Europees Referentiekader voor de Talen (European Framework of Reference for the Languages)

Many of the activities were geared toward immediate applicability in the teachers' own practice.

Follow-up activities

The goal of the follow-up activities carried out with Erasmus+ support from 2016 till 2018, was, in addition to the further professionalization of the current teachers also the training of new ones. In just a few years, the team has grown from 21 to 30 people. New staff did not take part in the first study trip and therefore missed a number of steps in vision development and development of VVTO English language teaching skills. New teaching staff took part in refresher courses on an individual basis in Canterbury, among other places.

In addition, job shadowing took place at four of the Emma school's foreign partners, with the exchange of experience and expertise as its objective. Emma school staff members for a brief period job shadowed teachers at one of the foreign partner schools, and vice-versa. The teachers who participated in job shadowing at the Spanish partner school were highly enthusiastic. In preparation, staff from the Spanish school had already visited Zwolle. Ahead of the visit, discussions took place to exchange intended objectives. In addition to the exchange with regard to English teaching, the Spanish teachers were also highly interested in the Dalton educational concept, and the Dutch teachers were hoping to learn from their Spanish partner about IT applications in education as well as about exploratory learning in pre-school education. Two teachers spent four, full and long days at the Spanish school. What was interesting is that Cambridge exams were sat during that week.

Teaching staff regard the various activities as an integrated whole in the development of internationalization and VVTO English. Part thereof are also the activities that fall outside the scope of these Erasmus+ projects, such as support for the school provided by a VVTO advisor, and pupil exchanges with Germany and Spain (School Exchange Partnership), in which teaching staff took part as coaches.

1.2 The People Involved

The study trip was prepared by a working group of the educational team itself, in which the VVTO coordinator played a leading role. The programme was put together in collaboration with the English teacher with whom contact had already been established earlier. The teachers who were interviewed primarily went on the study trip as participants. The VVTO coordinator took the lead in the whole development of VVTO English at the school. Now that this colleague has left the Koningin Emma school, a number of internationalization responsibilities have been transferred to other colleagues, such as for instance coordination of the school partnership.

1.3 Experiences and Impact

The teachers' experiences with the study trip and the refresher courses have been highly positive, but the experiences with job shadowing vary. Teachers mention impact at the school level, on themselves and the pupils.

Most frequently mentioned outcome of the study trip is the teambuilding and the support that was created for teaching VVTO English. Because the whole team had the same experience, they have grown closer. Before the trip, not all team members were convinced of the choice for VVTO English, but this was also due to the fact that much attention had to be focused on other themes as well. Only after the 2014 trip was the vision broadly carried by everyone. The week is regarded as a turning point:

"The greater level of support really did come about in that week."

Other results at school level are, among other things:

- Obtaining the EarlyBird quality mark for VVTO;
- The school's growth, even though teachers point to the Dalton method and the general quality of teaching at the school as important factors.
- The knowledge gained from job shadowing in Spain on the use of IT tools and exploratory learning among young children have become points of special interest at the Emmaschool.

Teachers also see results with regard to their own skills.

- Thanks to the lessons they attended during the study trip, the teachers can now in class give concrete form to VVTO English, have greater confidence in their abilities, and feel more self-assured when speaking English. This is not just because of the study trip, skills in VVTO English were already a point of special interest at the school and have remained one after the trip. It helps that the study trip was integrated in a broader policy.
- The teachers benefitted greatly from the various work methods they have learned, which are also easily applicable within the Dalton educational system. The Canterbury workbook is still in use in the teachers' own classes. The effect of the courses permeates the whole team, as the knowledge gained is shared with colleagues.
- Experiences differ with regard to the job shadowing. The experiences in Poland and Italy did not meet expectations, because the level of English language skills was lower than expected and some of the schools had not organised much for their Dutch visitors. The experiences in Spain, on the other hand, were quite positive, there, the exchange definitely made a contribution to the teachers' development.

One of the teachers gave the following example of a personal result:

"An eyeopener to me was that one's pronunciation does not always have to be perfectly British. The English teacher in Canterbury was Polish by birth, spoke really good English, but not with the typically British accent (...) I also felt pressured by the host family in England: "I was constantly being corrected". Later, during a course in Austria, I found that the threshold for working in English there was much lower."

Finally, the teachers mentioned the impact on the pupils' learning results: the level of their English has improved over the years. They also hear this from the parents:

"Parents say their kids feel free to speak in English and they also understand quite a lot."

Teachers also find that their pupils have grown accustomed to international visitors at the school. They feel comfortable talking to the visitors in English.

"The study trip was the driving force for this, that's when the flywheel effect started."

I.4 Furthering and limiting factors

Teachers point to a number of furthering and limiting factors in organising the study trip and developing VVTO English. Eventually, solutions were found for most of the impediments.

Points of special interest

- A major factor is finding the time. Little time resulting in a heavy workload initially caused a lack of support across the whole team. In addition to the VVTO English, some teachers point out that there were other themes as well demanding their attention. Making choices has contributed to creating support. For instance, the school used to organise an annual English week, but stopped doing that. Teachers also made their own investments in the week abroad because half of the time they spent in England came out of their vacation days. The teachers forewent on part of their vacation days also for later activities. Also, because there are hardly any substitutes, this is sometimes seen as the only solution.
- Attention must be paid to familiarizing new colleagues with the school's vision and their ability to teach VVTO English. New teachers find they fall behind the rest of the team in this respect. One of the new teachers finds there are sufficient possibilities to catch up.
- With regard to the job shadowing, some teachers say they have learned less than they had hoped for. This had to do with the level of English language skills at the Polish school and with the low few arrangements that had been made for the Dutch visitors in Italy. This is not to say that the visit was of no use, but with regard to the visit to Poland, the teachers said that it was too much of a one-way street: more was given than received. On the other hand, much was learned from the visit to the school in Spain. An important aspect in this regard is being reasonably well acquainted with the partner school, exchanging information and expectations prior to the visit, and a broad level of support for the exchange at the partner school, not just among a small group.
- How to flesh out the VVTO in the classroom posed a challenge for many teachers. This proved particularly difficult in secondary education. As there was no suitable method available at the school, the teachers had to design much by themselves. This is easier in primary education, as many of the daily activities can be done in English, such as hanging up your coat.

Success factors

The teachers named a number of factors that made internationalization and VVTO English a success for the school.

- The internationalization activities are integrated in a broader school approach to distinguish itself in the field of VVTO English.
- Teachers have formulated individual objectives. Differences in skill level were initially big.
- Activities were initially aimed at maximum applicability in the classroom.
- Initially, there was a designated person to start up the development. It takes a leader who takes charge of the team, a driving force. The teachers, however, also point to the working group who did much of the preparatory work.
- Possible downside to having a designated person is the dependency on one individual. It was therefore important for the development of VVTO English that the whole team was included in its development. The search for better methods continues to be a joint effort.
- The knowledge gained during the activities is shared with the team. Filling in the participant report is also experienced as useful: it makes people aware of what has been learned.
- To keep the workload within limits, the school has to make choices with regard to what they or do not want to focus on.
- The Koningin Emmaschool is an interesting partner for foreign schools, not just because of their English language skills, but also because of the Dalton school method.

- When asked about the activity they would like to participate in again in the future (study trip, job-shadowing, school exchange partnership), some of the teachers mentioned the School Exchange Partnership, under the auspices of which pupil exchanges take place (pupils visit the foreign school). Teachers feel that the impact on the students is greatest, while teachers get to look around a foreign school.

2 Case SE – Municipal Comprehensive School Nijmegen: Toward an excellent school

The Municipal Comprehensive School Nijmegen is a large secondary school for VMBO (Vocational Secondary Education, VSE), HAVO (Senior General Secondary Education, SGSE), and VWO (Pre-University Education). The school's spearheads are being a cultural profile school (close collaboration with multiple cultural organisations or people from the world of culture and the arts), internationalization, knowledge and science, and being a top-class sports talents school. Since 2013, SSgN has held the designation Excellent School for VWO and HAVO. In 2015, it received the same designation for its MAVO (Lower General Secondary Education, LGSE).

In the period 2019-2021, SSgN may once again call itself an Excellent School for VWO, SGSE and VSE. SSgN pursues an incentives policy to give its students and teachers a foreign experience. For years now, for instance, the school has been organising international exchanges for third-year students within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme (strategic partnerships) and encourages teachers, within the context of their professional development, to experience a teacher mobility with the support of Erasmus+.

2.1 The Projects: Training and Job-shadowing

This case describes the international mobilities of six teachers who went abroad either once or several times about three years ago. A French teacher had taken the initiative. She realised that she spoke relatively little French in her classes. She thought it would therefore be a good idea to be immersed in the French language and culture once again, so as to be better able to use French more in class. She then submitted an application with Erasmus+ to go abroad with a group of language teachers for a language course. She then successfully enthused many teachers for her plan by talking about its possibilities in the teams and publishing about it on the intranet. At first, the focus was on the language teachers, but was subsequently broadened to include all teachers. Together with her interested fellow teachers, she then explored the separate possibilities and learning questions and actively searched for interesting and relevant courses. The teachers wanted to:

- Follow a course to be able to do their work better;
- Improve their didactic (teacher training) and language skills (speaking and writing) according to the principle: target language = official language;
- Do a job shadowing to become acquainted with the working method abroad and to experience it for themselves.

2.2 The people involved

Six teachers who went abroad in the 2016-2017 period were interviewed for this case: three French teachers (including the coordinator) one drama teacher and two English teachers. They went on the following mobilities:

- One theatrical course with masks (in English) at The Trestle Theatre Company in London.
- Language didactics courses specifically for foreign French teachers in Vichy, Clermont Ferrand, Montpellier and Lyon, in international company in which only French was spoken (taught by Alliance Française and various universities).
- Cambridge English language course in Oxford
- Job shadowing at a SE school in Iceland (with regard to formative testing)

The courses and the job shadowing all lasted one week and took place either during the spring or the autumn vacations or in project or exam weeks (using a number of their own vacation days).

2.3 Experiences and Impact

Impact at the personal level

The teachers were, without exception, highly positive about their international experience and said that the mobility had made them even more enthusiastic about their subject, their students, and the school. It had boosted their self-confidence, while strengthening and reaffirming their skills, especially their language skills. In addition, the teachers felt it was a clear token of appreciation to be allowed to go abroad, continue learning, make new international contacts and to gain new ideas. It was highly motivational and made them proud of their schools.

“It really is a token of appreciation. I have been teaching for a very long time and will retire in three years, but I always want to keep learning. There is always room for improvement!”

The teachers also said that the international experience had given them a new outlook on the world. This open outlook and willingness to keep learning is something that a teacher will propagate in their classes and in turn has an impact on the students.

“I told the students about many things. That is when you notice that they feel they have a teacher who is developing, it really appeals to them!”

“I have learned to view education in the Netherlands in a much broader perspective.”

The language teachers mentioned that they have more freedom than teachers in other countries to determine how they teach their own classes, independent of the teaching method/the textbook.

“I once again realised how fortunate we are here in the Netherlands to have so much freedom.”

It was also special for the non-language teacher to experience that she thought she had enough English, but her language skills have since greatly improved, particularly in terms of professional terminology.

“Everything was in English. I do speak a little English, but I found it quite challenging. And now I have really learned the professional jargon. I feel like I had to take up that challenge!”

Impact at the class and curriculum level

The drama teacher emphasised the support from the school, also upon her return. She was able to apply what she had learned in her drama classes and was granted permission to purchase the special masks that she worked with during the course. The masks have been used for many years now, both in classes and during presentations and cultural days.

The student mobility to Iceland focused on the role of formative testing. Teachers discovered that the context there was very much different from the Dutch context, which meant it could not be integrally applied to the Dutch practice. They did, however, have some good ideas and a vision to make it fit the SSgN context and wrote a report on this process. The SSgN subsequently organised a conference on the Icelandic vision and educational system, which inspired many teachers and changed the way they use formative testing: more oriented toward personal feedback and less toward grades.

The language teachers have started speaking more French or English (the target language) in class. They build in certain routines to avoid having to speak in Dutch, for instance, when the students arrive or leave. They are doing their best to make this behaviour permanent. They gained many ideas for didactic working methods

geared toward activation, such as movement games. It makes language learning more fun and allows it to happen unconsciously. Such a playful setting will make the students feel safer to speak the foreign language. In addition, these working methods will make teachers feel less imprisoned by a teaching method or the textbook and give them a greater sense of autonomy.

“I’ve become more alert to speaking French in class, to consistently use the target language as the official language. I’ve now created routines that I use in class on a daily basis.”

“I do a lot of movement games.”

One teacher said, that in addition to the language, she also acquired many IT skills.

“I’ve learned a lot of new things, also in the field of technology. I completely immersed myself in OneNote and still use it.”

Impact at the organisational level

As a sequel to the teacher mobilities to Iceland, a group of teachers from the Icelandic school came to the SSgN (and other schools) to look at the Dutch educational system and learn from each other. Later, yet another teacher from the SSgN travelled to the same school in Iceland in connection with another theme (gender diversity). This way, a structural exchange of knowledge came about between the two schools.

Finally, there is a lot of focus on dissemination. SSgN advises other schools, posts press releases on the website and in the newsletter, and shares experiences on Facebook. Internally as well, experiences are exchanged with management and conversations held on what can be done with the outcomes. The school also promotes international mobility in the team consultations of all sections. This has led to growing numbers of new teachers registering spontaneously. Teachers who have already been on a study trip also would like to go on new ones for their further professionalization.

“At first it was primarily the language teachers, now me as a drama teacher as well. I’m always telling colleagues: you should do this too!”

“I’ve already been to France three times. It keeps you active and enthusiastic. But I also attend training and refresher courses in the Netherlands. That’s also valuable.”

“I would like something every year.”

2.4 Furthering and Limiting Factors

At SSgN, various teachers go abroad, but primarily language teachers. It can be difficult when the refresher course is planned during regular school weeks because a substitute must be arranged for the lessons. From that perspective, it is important that the school should think along and that teachers show that they are trying to plan their trips (partly) in their own time/vacations. The school does try to think along. It’s notable that the interviewees don’t see this as an obstacle. They don’t mind going abroad in their own time (vacations, days off) for their professional development. They do say that other teachers do not go for exactly that reason. Notable is that it is mainly women who go. This may be connected to the fact that they are primarily the language teachers, but other things such as motivation are also mentioned.

“Women go more easily than men. Men very quickly say: I’m not going in my own time. I’m not going alone. I have a thorough command of my subject. The women do want to go: the experience, discovering new things.”

Another impediment is that it can be quite difficult to find a course suitable for teachers. This is especially true for teachers in subjects other than languages, such as math. The foreign language teachers feel it’s sort of self-evident for them to go abroad, but this is not, or not yet, the case for many of their colleagues.

The first step toward an Erasmus+ application can be quite difficult. The support of management still has to be obtained.

“I went to management for that Erasmus+ application. Well, we’re not going to do that, too much hassle, they said. The deputy headmaster for SE said: you can write that text yourself! Then I went to HR to talk about the policy, to the finance department to talk about the money... “

A decent preparation and thinking long and hard about what you want to achieve is mentioned as an important factor for success. Formulating your own learning objectives instead of taking the offerings in a course catalogue as your point of departure. It is also important to adopt an open frame of mind when next you go abroad and to adjust to local customs and methods.

“It is important to know what you want to learn and not think from the perspective of the offerings in a course catalogue. You first need to have a goal of your own!”

One of the most important preconditions is the support from management. A training course or job shadow abroad must be embedded in the organisation’s personnel policy. The fact that the school, in addition to the Erasmus+ subsidy, also makes days available is seen as very positive, even though most of the teachers are willing to use some of their vacation days (and sometimes even a whole week) as well.

Sometimes teachers have been on a mobility as a group, in pairs, or on their own. Particularly in job shadowing, teachers really appreciated going together with a colleague, as it’s such an intensive experience. With a colleague, you can exchange thoughts, process the experience, and together take a closer look at how what’s been learned can be applied to your own practice. Conversely, the language students found that, particularly where language skills are concerned, it’s best to go alone because otherwise you will continue to speak Dutch with your colleagues. When a teacher goes abroad for the language and culture, a homestay at the house of local people is recommended.

“So, job shadowing in particular should preferably be done in pairs.”

“I went alone, but there were two Dutch people, and they did everything together. I don’t want that. When you get an Erasmus+ grant, go alone!”

Afterward, it is important to let the experiences sink in, to reflect on them, and share them with colleagues and students. Keeping in touch with fellow course members or host families - international or otherwise – is being mentioned as valuable but proves difficult in practice.

3 Case VSE – The Dutch Alliance: Working together on a safe school

The foundation called The Dutch Alliance (TDA) is a strategic network for international collaboration in the field of vocational secondary education and life-long learning for adults, comprising six ROCs (Regional Training Centres) and one AOC (Agricultural Training Centre). TDA believes that a clear international dimension should not be absent from both vocational and adult education. According to the TDA vision, this international dimension should be present in educational curricula, staff professional development programmes, and in the innovation plans of the educational institution.

To give form to the international dimension in curricula, staff development programmes, and innovation plans, the TDA organises joint international activities for its members' staff, such as study trips, training programmes, and international projects with a strong focus on high quality learning outcomes. This case study is based on a study trip to the UK on the theme of radicalization. Every four years, the themes are set down in a policy plan geared toward developments in the national education policy and developments in Europe.

In order to quality good learning outcomes, the TDA employs a fixed set-up to give form to the activities of an international study trip as best they can and tailored to the participants' learning objectives. So there is, for instance, a project team who take care of preparations, coaching during the trip, and the work upon their return. Subsequently, staff of the TDA members can register for the study trip's theme. A core group visits the organisations in the destination country to ensure the programme dovetails with the participants' learning objectives as well as possible. Preparatory meetings are held in the Netherlands as well. The participants in the study trip are carefully selected: they are expected to adopt a pro-active attitude toward the theme. During the study trip, the participants play an active role as well; daily evaluations take place in which everyone presents their learning outcomes and gives an indication of how they will further propagate and implement these outcomes once back at their own school. One year after their return, a follow-up day is organised during which the knowledge on the theme will be refreshed, and the results and outcomes of the study trip shared among the participants.

3.1 The project: Study Trip Safeguarding

Radicalization in education is one of the trends that educational institutions within the TDA saw themselves confronted with. This is why the question 'How do you cope with radicalisation and how can we safeguard social security at school' took centre stage during the study trip to the United Kingdom which was entitled Safeguarding. The United Kingdom has a long history with radicalization, and a number of schools has developed effective methods for prevention. They are geared toward safeguarding and reinforcing social safety and thus eliminate the breeding ground for radicalization.

"In Amsterdam, the idea for a study trip on 'Safeguarding' was pitched by the TDA core group. It seemed to us a particularly educational and suitable study trip as here in Amsterdam North we have received clear signals of students radicalizing"

During the Safeguarding study trip, a number of different schools were visited who have an active social safety policy and where training courses are taught to all staff in order to detect how radicalization comes about. An important component of the study trip was following this 'Restorative justice' training course, in which a specific conversation technique is taught. In addition, a number of conversations with the schools' care coaches were held about how they try to safeguard social safety, how they deal with students who are radicalizing, and which internal and/or external network they maintain concerning the theme of radicalization.

“The idea behind the Restorative Justice conversation technique is to restore balance to the perpetrator/victim relation”

Each night of the trip, a short evaluation was conducted in the evening. The subjects included, among other things, striking events, irritations, determining the focus, and possible active adjustment of the programme. After the trip, all of the participants evaluated and presented what they had learned during the trip and what their outcomes were. They were also asked to embed the newly gained insights in their educational institution. The core group bundled the learning outcomes and disseminated them among all participants.

“A simple but efficient way to keep the learning outcomes front of mind after your return, is to associate the study trip with a single word. I linked the word red carpet to this trip. We must roll out the red carpet for all of our students and staff, we must ensure that everyone feels safe, at home, and welcome at our school.”

3.2 The people involved

A number of participants in the Safeguarding study trip were interviewed for this case study: two coordinators from the core group who had organised the study trip, one Social Safety coordinator, one Education & Quality coordinator and one Early School-Leavers coordinator.

3.3 Experiences and Impact

All those involved said they saw and experienced a big impact of the Safeguarding study trip. At the individual level they said that they had learned much and were inspired to get to work on this theme at their own school.

“I learned a lot about social safety, particularly about what you should pay more attention to”

“The trip has inspired me even more. I now also stimulate my colleagues to have a foreign experience.”

“In England, I learned that the theme is actually very important and has many different aspects.”

“Prompted by this trip, I have started reading a lot of literature and at school we have created a SharePoint site on which we share much information with each other.”

They also felt it was really valuable to be on a trip together with colleagues from other MBO institutions.

“It really did have added value because we did not go as a team, but that there were various other TDA partners present in London. It was a great opportunity to meet people from other ROCs.”

Although TDA issues its own participation certificate to the participants, it is not clear if all schools recognize it as proof of recognition of a learning experience.

“The recognition of the learning outcome? That remains a point of concern. We do give them a proper certificate. At our institution, you can put this in your own archive. I assume that HRM looks at this as well. I have no information about that.”

The Social Safety theme is still topical and important at TDA schools. Concretely, it turns out that the learned conversation techniques are still in use. But there have also been many changes to the curriculum and across the school that are related to greater attention for social safety. A director of the Start College, for instance, has set up a project by and for the 'residents' of his site in the city, the ambition of which is to jointly ensure an appealing learning and work environment, in which all students, teachers and technical support staff feel comfortable, safe, and at home. This project was inspired by the English Safeguarding methodology and further elaborated in four starting points: the school is an appealing learning and work environment, the school is a safe and social environment, the school is a training ground for democracy, participation and citizenship, and the school is an active partner in its environment. As part of this framework, all staff are schooled on these starting points, including security staff.

"This implies, for instance, that when you walk into this building, the security people have a better idea of how to interact with students. And this is quite different from erecting a few security gates, something quite different from wearing a badge."

Another result of the study trips was that one year later the management team plus the chairman of the board went to London for this training course as well. As a result, this theme is now solidly integrated in policy.

"We have determined in our policy that every staff member, whether you are a caretaker, lunch counter staff, a teacher or the director: you must be or become knowledgeable about pedagogy."

It turns out that every school has its own interpretation and implementation of the outcomes of this study trip. Another school, for instance, has developed a module for a student's first 100 school days; it's fully focused on feeling at home and welcome at the school, your position and role in the group. Yet another school has gone to work on posters and activities to connect young people. At all the institutions involved, social safety has become a normal topic for discussion. It is not the case, that this only happened because of this study trip. Several developments were already ongoing.

"Ideas have many fathers. Sometimes they are influences that did result from that trip. And of which nobody knows exactly whether it was caused by this or by that. To me, this is not important. When you talk about impact, people sometimes want to see a straight line, but we don't think like that. We think much more in terms of developments."

The other TDA partners also organised similar study trips under their own auspices. They did, however use the set-up and the format of the TDA, with a thorough preparation and selection as this ensures quality. The set-up of this study trip has become the basis for the professionalization of staff on other themes as well.

For the Dutch schools, a secondary effect of the study trip has been establishing a profile in the United Kingdom. Although the TDA's ambition was primarily to gather information, the participants also managed to contribute expertise to the British schools. A few of the VSE institutions have since received guests from the UK to share information.

Dissemination occurred both in the own region of each school and beyond. This has led to four MBO institutions in the Rotterdam region coming together from a need to share knowledge and experience. They have decided to go to Newcastle on a joint study trip in the autumn very similar to Safeguarding. The theme is now called 'Urban Challenge'. The same theme is now on the MBO policy agenda of the Amsterdam council.

3.4 Furthering and Limiting Factors

The interviews have resulted in a number of points of concern and success factors.

Points of concern

- The different contexts in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Many of the training courses followed in the UK are mandated by law there. This might make Dutch and British schools more difficult to compare and course members having to make their own translation of what they see and experience abroad into the practice at their school in the Netherlands. Some participants said they found this difficult.
- After the Safeguarding study trip in 2015 the evaluation at first took place immediately upon return of the participants. Later, the TDA core group understood it should also organise a follow-up day at least one year afterward, to see to what degree the outcomes of the study trip have been embedded.
- There is still room for improvement in the sharing or learning outcomes. For instance, by actively sharing newsletters, also with previous participants.
- Ensuring recognition of the learning experience as part of the staff member's personal development plan.
- The preparatory meetings are highly appreciated, and maybe there is room for even more of them, possibly digitally, to get to know each other and share ideas even prior to the study trip. More attention could also be paid to the language (English).

Success factors

- Project structure. The spin-off from projects can be maximized through a good structure of the project including preparation and feedback (standard format).
- Monitoring, reflection and evaluation. It is important to keep learning, before, during and after the study trip. During the trip continuous – informal – monitoring is important for on-the-spot adjustments.
- Ownership. To make a project successful, it is crucial to give the participants ownership. They need to own the trip to be able to connect the learning objectives to the activities.
- Support from above. Both the Board and management have to back the activities and propagate them in policy. Implementing learning outcomes sometimes requires adjustments or a flexibilization of policy.
- Good selection of foreign partners. The foreign partners you visit can make or break your project.
- Good selection of participants. The participants are a delegation from your educational institution. So, make sure that responsible people with expertise take part, no fortune seekers. A manager can play a steering role in this respect.
- Sharing the workload. A study trip also brings extra work. This does not only include finding substitute teachers, but also the preparation and the work upon return that ensues from a study trip. Ensure that the participants' workload is evenly distributed, so that it's not seen as just a burden, but as an effective activity for your professionalization.

4 Case HE – University College Roosevelt: Strengthening the Liberal Arts and Sciences education

The project Best in Liberal Arts and Sciences Teaching Expanded and Reinforced (BLASTER) is a partnership between six institutes in higher education in several European countries who jointly applied for an Erasmus+ subsidy to execute a large-scale project in the field of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS). In this case, we describe the impact of the BLASTER project on the participating partners, including the University College Roosevelt in the Netherlands.

4.1 The Project: Developing Instruments and Strengthening the Network

The project strives to reinforce the quality and relevance of the European bachelor course as a whole and LAS in particular. This is relevant because there is much interest from European universities to develop and offer a LAS course.

The BLASTER project was initially set up by the ECOLAS consortium – the European Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences -, a non-governmental educational advisory group (with about 30 members) in the field of the development of bachelor programmes for 21st century Europe, within the context of the tradition of the LAS education. A LAS bachelor course is characterized by a broad, holistic curriculum in the humanities and social and natural sciences, with a strong emphasis on critical thinking, creative skills, and personal development. In addition, the focus is on acquiring academic skills, knowledge, and intellectual tools which help in being successful in any later career of follow-up study whatsoever.

In this project, the University College Roosevelt played the role of coordinator and collaborated with the partners Leiden University College, University of Warwick (UK), Leuphana University Lüneburg (Germany), Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) and ECOLAS. There was already a partnership with many institutions and organisations, but this was the first Erasmus+ strategic partnership project. The project ran from 2015 till 2017 (two years). In that period, many activities took place in the various countries, such as project meetings, working group meetings, multiplier events (including participants from more countries than just those of the project partners. In between, many consultations were held via Skype.

The project resulted in the following products:

1. A guide on LAS education in the European Union. This document is intended for policy makers and education experts, decision makers in higher education, teachers, and students. It provides an overview of the current state of affairs, and the backgrounds as well as four case studies of successful LAS models in Europe. Finally, it offers a step-by-step plan for developing a LAS curriculum.
2. A training kit 'Learning and Teaching in the Liberal Arts', for beginning teachers.
3. A manual for bachelor research in LAS, for students and their coaches.

These products were made available via the ECOLAS website to anyone who would use them.

4.2 The People Involved

For this case study, various people from different countries holding different roles in the BLASTER project were interviewed: an education manager of the Leiden University College, two science professors/researchers of the University College Roosevelt, one professor/founder/board member of the University of Lüneburg. They were all intensively involved in the project, either as general coordinator or as coordinator of a work package.

4.3 Experiences and Impact

Everyone involved said that the project has generated more attention for the cultural differences between the courses in the different countries and also for the variations in educational systems. Despite these differences and variations, material relevant to everyone involved was successfully produced, such as the toolkit and the workbooks. Each year, student initiatives were examined, and whenever congresses were held, the materials could be evaluated to determine whether they would actually be helpful.

Those involved indicated that there is interest in the results. People from other universities inquire about them.

“Recently, someone from New Zealand came by to see how we do things around here. I gave them the book and the manual.”

This person did note that the book could have been kept up to date better with updates in an on-line, interactive form. This has proved to be a matter of increased insight.

Another result has been that the people involved are forced to reflect on their own model, their own approach. This can also lead to a confirmation of the chosen approach.

“It has made us realize that we are doing the right thing!”

The researchers involved said that already much is happening in the field of LAS education. There are, however, huge cultural differences where research at the bachelor level is concerned. In this respect, the Netherlands is clearly in the vanguard. The BLASTER project focused some additional attention on this fact. For instance, by involving students in parts of the project as well. They turned out to be interested and motivated to use the manual for research purposes.

“Nice to see that students in a relatively short period have written qualitatively satisfactory articles which have been accepted and published.”

A number of those involved did say that they were disappointed that eventually not much was done with the project's outcomes.

“The goal of BLASTER never really got across.”

“The presentation in The Hague was really inspiring to colleagues, but there was never any feedback as to what was done with it.”

The people concerned cannot say what concrete changes were made at the University College Roosevelt as the result of the experiences in this project. The impression is that things are by and large already in good order at this institution, and that they, compared to other European institutions, are ahead of the others. People tend to believe that changes at the level of the college as a whole and of the curriculum happen only very slowly and with difficulty because most of the LAS courses are part of a larger whole, of a university.

“The colleges still depend on universities and deans are usually reluctant to change any structure.”

The ECOLAS board member defines the impact on his own professional developments as 'unmistakably large'. He now looks at things more bottom-up, in different ways. Comparing systems and approaches has made him very much sensitive to, and aware of all those differences. It has caused a shift in the ECOLAS focus. New roles may unfold. For instance, new accreditation and re-accreditation (of LAS courses) might pose a significant new challenge to ECOLAS or the career of the person concerned. The project has surely brought him much and got him thinking on this subject.

"An exhilarating professional experience!"

He views the reinforced, sustainable collaboration (without major issues) between these six partners and the expectation that much communication will continue to take place between them, including researchers, teachers, and students, as the most important outcome of BLASTER. He is happy about the European support from Erasmus+ and feels it's important to clearly state it.

"Realize it is sponsored by the EU and show that."

For the German partner a direct result of the project has been that he learned much about Erasmus+. This was his first experience, but since then he has become the initiator and coordinator of various new Erasmus+ projects. He has mainly learned that it is important to involve the whole project group in the writing of the project proposal right from the start, and to meet with all concerned immediately after approval to once again discuss the project and set up a good division of labour. It all is a lot of work, but he has learned from the project partners and is still in contact with them.

"For some people this is on top of their work: it's demanding!"

There have been many benefits for his university as well: there is now much more knowledge about the LAS programme and directors have become interested.

This was their first experience with E+ for all concerned. It has led to many new projects being set up. However, all of them say that the outcomes of this project should have been better evaluated and shared.

"Few people became aware of the BLASTER information. The material is there, but the target group was insufficiently reached."

4.4 Furthering and Limiting Factors

A furthering factor was the network that the project partners had already created before they started on the project. Because of it, they knew who everybody was and how they could collaborate. They met on a regular basis and maintained a good contact online as well. The people involved say they find the partnership crucial for creating confidence and commitment. To the initiator and coordinator of such a project, adequate knowledge about the goals and rules of the Erasmus+ programme is crucial.

Time is often mentioned as the limiting factor. For most people concerned this was something that came on top of their regular teaching and research duties. This made it sometimes hard to schedule the additional activities into their planning. And it turned out at the end of the project that the coordinator at the institution had left and someone else had to be found quickly. This person had only a short period to familiarize themselves with the project. Also, at other moments in the course of the project, people would sometimes drop out and others had to jump in and be shown the ropes. This is quite difficult in such a complex process. It was a challenge to get and keep everybody properly involved. At times, money was also a problem because the Erasmus+ daily allowance was not sufficient. However, this problem was usually solved in a creative way by the participants (for instance, by taking a room at a simple hostel instead of a hotel). The lack of time and money shows that the partners concerned were insufficiently aware of the fact that an Erasmus+ subsidy is intended as a stimulus where co-financing (in both time and money) is a necessary prerequisite.

The administration of such a big project with so many partners and so many special demands and systems from Erasmus+ was seen as difficult. People started out working with a home-made online tool, but it proved to be less than ideal. There was no opportunity to improve it.

The English language was an obstacle to some people, especially when writing in English. There were differences in fluency levels, but fortunately these could be resolved within the group.

The definitions and distribution of roles was not always clear, which meant the responsibility for the tasks was not always assigned to the right person. A proper organisation and coordination between the people involved is crucial. It is also important that the lead coordinator be kept well informed and bears the responsibility for informing others early on in the process. With such big projects, it is a challenge to start with a shared vision and to get and keep everybody on mission, in all phases of the project. It would have been better to spend a little more time on that at the start, before the first international meeting.

“Therefore, a clear shared vision and specific goals need to be defined in the beginning, to come back to in all stages of the project.”

5 Case SE – ITTA: Working with volunteers in language education for new arrivals

Various European countries employ volunteers for the integration of migrants. Language volunteers support migrants in learning the second language. A number of European partners have strengthened the roles of these language volunteers: less informal, more training and a clearer role in supporting the teacher.

This is what the project Working with Volunteers in Migrant language Education: roles and competences (VIME) is about.

5.1 The project: Toolkit Working with Language Volunteers

The project Working with Volunteers in Migrant language Education: roles and competences (VIME) set itself the goal of optimally deploying volunteers in Dutch as a Second Language (NT2) education in order to improve the language education for migrants. With this initiative, the project responds to the influx of migrants into Europe and the accompanying need for good support and well-trained supporters of migrants learning a new language. During the project (2016-2018), the focus was on the deployment of language volunteers for the purpose of language education for migrants.

The project leadership role was filled by the ITTA, the Instituut voor Taalonderwijs en Taalonderzoek Amsterdam (Institute for Language Education and Language Research Amsterdam), a private organisation which forms part of the University of Amsterdam. In the project, they collaborated with seven Dutch and European partners. The Dutch partners were the ROC (regional training centre) West-Brabant and the Stichting Het Begint met Taal (the Foundation It Starts with Language). The European project partners are the Danish Slagelse Sprogcenter (Slagelse language Centre); the British Institute of Education of the University of London; the British East London Advanced Technology Training institute; the Slovenian ljudska univerza Zalec (UPI Adult Education Centre) and the Slovenian Univerza V Ljubljani (University of Ljubljana).

All of the project partners found in each other the same societal challenge within the European context: namely, the need for deploying volunteers for migrant integration through offering migrants support in learning the second language. Two problems are at issue in the deployment of language volunteers. Firstly, the volunteers are deployed without any obligations on their part and trained only to a very limited degree or not at all. Secondly, volunteers and professional do not effectively work together because there is a lack of clarity about the role of the volunteers.

In order to solve this problem, the project partners jointly developed a toolkit for working with language volunteers. The VIME Toolkit consists of a model 'which enables improving the deployment of volunteers alongside, and in collaboration with professionals in the field of language and literacy'. The Toolkit also includes information about the different roles a language volunteer can play without taking the place of the teacher. It also comprises the toolkit's core materials for training language volunteers.

The project partners intend to achieve a professional deployment of language volunteers in NT2 education as part of adult education. Please note, this is not about professionalization of volunteers so they can become teachers. Professional deployment means the volunteer is trained (professionalized) to be of added value alongside the formal role of, and in collaboration with the teachers. The intended impact thus goes further than merely professionalizing the volunteer. The intention is namely to strengthen the whole NT2 education sector in which teachers (professionals) and volunteers, in collaboration and each from their specific role, contribute to optimum migrant education. Thus, the project is not only geared toward the formal side of education, but rather toward the interplay between formal and non-formal education.

As the intended impact demands a new vision of the professional role and deployment of volunteers, the project is not just geared toward training individuals, but also toward recognition at the policy level of the role of the volunteer alongside the role of the professional. This why the project partners have described the intended impact at multiple levels, from the individual to the (European) policy level and all levels in between. To achieve this impact, the VIME Toolkit also includes a manual at the policy level for policy makers in adult education.

5.2 The People Involved

For this case study, participants in the VIME project were interviewed who each had a different kind of involvement in VIME. They are project partners, teachers/trainers, volunteers, course members, policy makers (both national and municipal) and the parties whom the VIME project partners call 'third circle parties'. These third circle parties are representatives (stakeholders) from the various European countries who work in adult education. These representatives are not official partners in the project, but during the project period serve as a kind of sounding board group who provide feedback on the materials developed. In total, interviews were conducted with more than ten participants in the project. Not all those interviewed were directly involved in the project's implementation. Some were only indirectly involved and as such did not consider their activities a derivative of the VIME Erasmus+ project.

5.3 Experience and Impact

The experiences of the VIME participants are positive, and all those concerned state there has been impact. They do, however, indicate that it is quite difficult to interpret this impact as the project was only recently completed and because some of those interviewed were not officially involved in the project. However, all the interviewees recognise the importance of the employment of volunteers and of the non-formal side of education. The interviews show that the results of this project pertain to giving shape to this non-formal type of education. All the interviewees recognise the growing importance of non-formal education, which, in addition to formal education, offers possibilities for a greater focus on the learning question of the course member/migrant, bespoke teaching, and differentiation.

As mentioned earlier, the interviews show that the interpretation of the impact is not a simple matter, particularly at the policy level the impact is most difficult to establish. However, some of the project partners we interviewed did mention impact indicators at the policy level. The interviewees also said they found it difficult to see a clear connection between the VIME project and changes in their own and sector working methods. This is mainly due to their having integrated VIME products in existing materials and working methods. It is precisely the integration of the materials that can be read as an important result because the project thereby shows it ties in with the existing educational practices and working methods. In this paragraph we successively discuss the impact at the level of the project partners, policy makers, third circle parties, trainers/teachers, volunteers and the course members.

Project Partners

The project partners mention that in all countries involved in VIME, few frameworks exist for giving shape to migrant language education, and that the project created an option for useable frameworks. This was very important to the partners from the different countries, each facing their own challenges with regard to language education. The partners describe the impact as partners being able from their own background and developmental phase to give shape to non-formal education in their countries through the employment of volunteers in different roles. To this end, each country also employed third-circle parties: the stakeholders from the countries involved that we mentioned before. The partners also had these parties check and use the materials that were developed.

“This collaboration in a European connection, you really learn a lot from it. And I’ve also heard things I didn’t know yet and was able to apply to my own field of expertise. People outside the project team were interested as well. My manager showed great interest in the results.”

“The involvement of the third circle parties was really important for the results of our project and for finding the best possible fit with the practice.”

The impact for the project partners was primarily described as the strengthening of their European and national networks and partnerships. This European collaboration in this project came about in a good way because it was clear prior to the project that all countries were by and large facing the same challenges and wanted to achieve the same impact: a large number of volunteers willing to help migrants who want to learn a new language well and effectively. In order to contribute to this impact, the project set itself the goal, as the outcome, to strengthen the role of volunteers in migrant language education to allow migrants to learn the language more effectively and for volunteers to stay motivated to play a role in language education. The European network has been strengthened despite the different contexts of the project partners. The contexts of the countries differed mainly in the degree to which policy frameworks were present, the volume of resources, financial and otherwise, the scale at which volunteers were or were not already being employed, and the level of experience of the sector in deploying and training volunteers. The common underlying problem was, however, identical for all countries, and the solution developed by the project supported by the different project partners and countries. This has strengthened the network from the different contexts. The network has mainly been strengthened because of the common problem and the fact that the solutions developed by the project were recognised by all project partners, despite their different contexts.

“All of the partners were highly involved, very professional, and active from their own perspective and context. Clearly, everybody had a contribution to make.”

Trainers and Teachers

The trainers and teachers say that the training courses and models developed tie in well with the existing material and gave a clearer substance to the different roles a volunteer can play. Particularly the coaching role of volunteers as a supplement to the role of the teacher was perceived as especially valuable. The trainers and teachers who were interviewed said they were still using these roles in their training courses. The trainers and teachers said they were provided with new materials, as a result of which they now have the means to make the roles of volunteers more explicit.

“VIME really was about the coaching role of volunteer as different from the role of the teachers. For instance, the VUT method of looking ahead, elaborating, and looking back. I learned a thing or two from that myself”

“I noticed during the training courses for language volunteers that a world was opening up for them.”

The trainers and teachers we interviewed said they did not always have a clear view of the degree to which the trainings and models developed were also disseminated among other colleagues in the sector. Although the trainers and teachers are still regularly being asked to organise training courses for volunteers, for instance, in the municipalities.

“I include the VIME materials in the preparations for new training courses.”

Volunteers

The volunteers we interviewed stated that it became clear during the training courses that their role differed from that of the teacher, and that they were given a handle on how to give substance to the other role. The volunteers involved in the project also said that they were aware of not being a teacher, filling another, non-formal role instead, for instance the role of a discussion leader. Volunteers mentioned that they experienced a sense of calm as a result of not having to fill the role of teacher, but instead being able to create a safe environment where migrants can learn how better to apply the language. During the training courses, a number of things were discussed the course members were already familiar with, but also new things.

“Really the things I already knew, and they were identified once again. Also, the realization that each and every volunteer and participant is really different, so bespoke tailoring is always required.”

“Giving feedback was another important element in the training courses. It was really inspiring and recognizable.”

“This training was mainly about prejudices. I noticed that other volunteers had quite a lot of prejudices about the trainees, when the questions from the participants are so different, completely incomparable.”

Volunteers mentioned that different roles, such as, for instance, the role of coach, better fits their own motivation. One of the volunteers said that as a volunteer, she primarily wants to get to know other people and that her role as language coach allows her to give this substance.

“What I find important right now, is that as a volunteer I am not playing teacher, but that I know what the learning requirements of my participant are.”

Policy Makers

Dutch policy makers at the municipal and national level were aware of the VIME project. One result of which was that the ministry for education, Culture, and Science awarded VIME an additional subsidy to give substance to the role of the volunteers in NTI education (Dutch as a first language) as well. The policy maker we interviewed indicated it was a good project but wondered to what extent the policy document that was drawn up is actually used by the target group of policy makers. The interviewees said they did not make use of the manual from the VIME Toolkit.

“The model was launched but afterward never fed back to me. During its runtime, the project was well promoted, and I’m sure I must have received a report afterward. But I have no idea where and how it is used today.”

One of the project partners does mention that a change seems to have occurred in the discourse: the project partner sees that the deployment of volunteers, in addition to professionals, has now become a topic of conversation in policy circles.

“I do experience that the discourse has changed. I believe that people are now giving more thought to the development of a strategy for volunteer work.”

5.4 Furthering and Limiting factors

The interviewees were also asked about what the limiting or furthering factors were with regard to achieving impact. The following factors were mentioned:

Limiting factors

- Multiple interviewees mentioned that feedback and evaluation were limiting factors. Particularly the interviewees who were not directly involved in the project have had little or no contact with the project partners after the activities were concluded, such as, for instance, the training courses. As a result, the people concerned had little insight in the eventual further development of the products and who is making use of them or how.
- The project partners experienced limited involvement at the policy level as a limiting factor. The state of affairs with regard to policy is not known and policy makers themselves did not take an active role in integrating good practices, such as VIME, into policy.
- The limited runtime of the project, and concomitant limited financing were experienced as a limitation. After completion of the project, there was no more time or budget to make the transition to project result implementation in either policy or current activities, and to further disseminate project results. In the adult education sector, the lack of time and means is seen as a seriously limiting factor because there is a shortage of financing.
- Another limiting factor that was mentioned was that setting up a project requires a lot of paperwork and management tasks. The interviewees say that an international project of this size and scope requires quality project leadership and administration.
- Limited dissemination activities are also mentioned as a limiting factor. A number of the interviewees said they were unaware of the quantity and type of dissemination activity, or which stakeholders reacted positively and actively to the materials.

Success factors

- The make-up of the project team was mentioned as a success factor. Within the team, the partners worked from the practice and policy as starting points toward a clear, common goal. This goal was, despite the different contexts of the project members and countries, supported by all. The project meetings were characterised by a pleasant atmosphere. Between times, skype meetings took place as well.
- A positive factor was the level of involvement and connection with the adult education sector, and by extension the non-formal education, including the involvement of third-circle parties. As a result of the sector's involvement, the products were of good quality tied in neatly with practice.
- Much attention was paid to the connection between project and practice. Within the project, good, existing practices and methods were initially collected and combined so as to have the existing materials reinforce each other. Next, the roles of the language volunteers were explicitly described and differentiated on the basis of a comparison between existing practices. The explicit description of the roles and the corresponding tasks was an innovative element but was the direct result of what was already taking place on a small scale in practice. This meant the innovative element was not overrated and a good connection between the project and the field was created.
- The project partners called the ITTA (Netherlands) project leadership an important success factor. The leadership was powerful and focused on collaboration. ITTA also took responsibility for monitoring progress and including partners in that progress. Finally, it worked out well for that the Netherlands had accepted the project leadership because it turned out that the Netherlands was the most developed and experienced in training volunteers. With respect to content, the positive and constructive attitude was mentioned as a major success factor. Due to thinking in terms of opportunities and studying good examples everybody had a positive and constructive attitude.

6 Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendations

The five examples of good practices that we have examined show that the experienced impact of the projects supported by Erasmus+ varies greatly. In this final chapter we will look at what the applicants intended to achieve with their Erasmus+-project, which activities they employed, and, in as far as we can say something about this, to what extent they have succeeded in their efforts. For the interpretation of their data, it is important to note that we base our conclusions on the interviews with the participants about the impact they experienced.

We see that on the one hand, the impact of the projects is much broader than was initially aimed for, on the other, we see that many different factors contribute to this impact, in a complex reality which involves more than just the project. The projects often form part of a broader policy of one – or more – educational institutions and other organisations intended to bring about a specific development. The projects contribute to this development, in which the impact, as one of the interviewees so poetically put it, has many fathers.

In this chapter we will take a closer look at what purposes the Erasmus+ resources are used for, which activities are carried out to achieve these objectives and what the eventual outcomes of the activities are. In our conclusion, we differentiate in as far as possible based on what impact is experienced through which kind of activity. We conclude this chapter with a number of recommendations resulting from the success factors and bottlenecks mentioned by the people involved in this project.

6.1 How are the Erasmus+ Resources Employed?

Educational and training institutions pursue various goals with the Erasmus+-project. The common thread is that the objectives are achieved through the professionalization of staff. This applies in particular to the projects geared toward staff mobility (KA1 projects). The projects in PE, SE and MBO (vocational secondary education) fall in this category. In the HE and SE cases, which focus on strategic collaboration (KA2), staff professionalization is more of an indirect goal or aimed at people and organizations outside the project team itself.

The educational institutions in PE, SE, and MBO strive for the direct professionalization of their participating staff. They participate in activities which develop or improve skills, such as competency in a foreign language or the ability to teach in it, or knowledge and skills in identifying and preventing radicalization. In all cases, the educational institutions pursue a higher goal at the organisational level. In PE, it concerns a primary school which is certified for early English foreign language education and seeks to create an international profile with a strong emphasis on the English language. For the SE school, one of the objectives was to gain and retain an 'excellent school' designation. Both schools were eventually successful. In the MBO case, staff were professionalized in order to make a contribution to a safe school through the prevention of radicalization.

The impact that the HE and AE institutions strive for is often found outside their own educational institutions. These two cases are geared toward the development of strategic cooperation. The objective of the HE case is to further develop Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) as a discipline at various institutions across Europe. The AE case is geared toward supporting volunteers in their role in the language development of new arrivals and thus their integration. Both projects are indirectly geared toward professionalization as in both cases tools have been developed that are geared toward the development of a broader public of education professionals and volunteers in the Netherlands (AE) and Europe (HE) who are not directly involved in projects.

6.2 What is Being Realized in the Erasmus+ Projects?

Within the mobility projects executed in PE and SE, we see that schools have used different activities to achieve their higher goal, school development. It concerns a study trip (PE), educational activities, such as training courses and job shadowing (PE and SE). An obvious reason to go abroad for professionalization is the development of foreign language education. We see that this is an important reason for a study trip or training course both in PE and SE. But the schools also employ the Erasmus+ projects for the development of different kinds of educational expertise, such as formative testing or exploratory learning. Job shadowing is often used for the development of other, non-language related expertise. The study trip of MBO institutions to England was also geared toward gaining specific knowledge available abroad, in this case an approach to creating a safe school where all students feel at home and radicalization can be prevented.

The concrete results in HE and AE are the tools developed in these projects. For instance, the VIME project (AE) developed a toolkit to better deploy volunteers in migrant language development. The BLASTER project (HE) developed a number of tools with which knowledge about LAS bachelor education is made available to a wider audience.

6.3 And what are the Outcomes?

Participants in the Erasmus+ projects in this study mentioned a broad range of results of the projects, for themselves as participants, for the institution, and even beyond. In order to sort the various types of results, we employ the typology developed on the basis of literature research into the impact of internationalization (see box).

1. Professional Development:
 - Has learned from good examples;
 - Attitude toward education and training has changed;
 - Has become acquainted with new learning methods;
 - Has learned new subject-specific skills;
 - Has gained new professional knowledge;
 - Has become acquainted with new grading methods;
 - Improved foreign language skills;
 - Improved IT skills;
 - Improved organizational and leadership skills.
2. Personal Development:
 - Improved job satisfaction;
 - Improved career opportunities.
3. Intercultural Development:
 - Social, language and/or cultural competencies have improved;
 - Cultural awareness and ability to express oneself have improved;
 - Greater knowledge of educational systems abroad.
4. Impact on their own Organisation:
 - Knowledge and skills have been shared with teachers and management;
 - Internationalization is better embedded in their own curriculum and the mobility of other teachers and students has improved;
 - There have been changes in the organisation, the management;
 - New educational methods now in use;
 - New learning methods, approaches in use.
5. Cooperation:
 - The professional network has been enlarged;
 - The cooperation with labour market organisations has intensified;
 - The cooperation with social organisations has intensified;
 - The cooperation with partner institute or organisation has intensified.

From: Verbeek 2019

The case descriptions show that impact is primarily experienced in the field of professional development of the individual and at organisation level. In the projects in which professionalization was directly related to the participants' activities, namely the mobility projects in PE, SE, and VSE, it is easier for the participants to name the results for themselves and their work environment compared to the cooperation projects in HE and AE. Particularly relevant to HE, is that goals for specific people or organisations were formulated only to a lesser extent, and the intended impact was more geared toward general use of the outcomes. It is precisely the use of the developed instruments by third parties that is not always easy to identify.

Teachers in PE and SE see great value in the participation in Erasmus+ projects for their professional development. They improved their knowledge of the foreign language in which they teach and say they have acquired more didactical possibilities and learning methods. As a result, they now enjoy greater self-confidence in class and feel more autonomous. Their use of the target language in class has increased. They have also developed further with regard to other aspects of their teachership, such as knowledge of formative testing (SE), and conversation techniques to prevent radicalization (MBO).

Examples of personal development are, for instance, teachers feeling greater enthusiasm for their students and their profession and being prouder of their school (SE). Examples of professional and personal development for the individual participants are less often mentioned in the AE and HE cases. One participant, however, did say that thanks to the cooperation project they have acquired a great amount of knowledge about the partnership itself, which has led to a desire to make greater use of it in future, possibly also with an eye to a further step in their own career.

Teachers mention various results which can be categorised under the label intercultural development, such as language development in teachers who do not teach a foreign language and being able to view the Dutch educational system from a broader perspective and identify its strong and not so strong points. The eye-opener about the relative importance of a perfect English pronunciation also falls in this category. It is not so much the training courses, as much as the job shadowing, and working and learning in an international setting in general which contribute to the intercultural development. A number of participants point to the cultural differences and the concomitant challenges they faced during the activities. This was the case in some of the examples of job shadowing. Things at the schools they visited were sometimes less well organised than the Dutch participants had expected. Learning to cope with such challenges could be interpreted as a, possibly unintended, intercultural outcome.

The development at the individual level in different ways has its effect on the organisation as a whole. Firstly, a positive impact on staff is reported. A joint study trip has contributed to team building and the level of support for the school's strategic choices (PE). Teachers feel appreciated by their school because of the opportunity they were given to develop themselves abroad (SE).

At the schools, internationalization has also resulted in number of new points of special concern for the teaching practice, such as the use of IT and exploratory learning in PE, formative testing in SE, and the approach to fighting radicalization in MBO, which have led to changes in the curriculum.

Very concrete examples of impact at school level toward creating a profile have been obtaining the EarlyBird certificate (PE), the excellent school designation (SE), the school's growth (PE), or establishing a profile as a safe, welcoming school for all (MBO). Especially of these last three forms of impact, it is said that naturally many other factors are also influential. Impact on the study results of pupils and students could also be considered to be impact at the organisation level.

The results also have had their effect on the educational institutions' policies. At one MBO institution, for instance, the points of departure of their safe-school and anti-radicalization approach now form part of school policy. Because the management team got on board, the approach is now securely embedded. The Erasmus+-projects have been able to put topics on the agenda, both in and outside the school. The HE case shows there is now more attention being paid to LAS at their own educational institution. In AE, the VIME project has led to a stronger focus on the role of volunteers in the language development of newcomers and to additional funding from the Dutch Ministry for Education, Culture and Science for elaborating the range of ideas for NTI (Netherlands Language Institute) education. The approach for a safe school and against radicalization requires cooperation with partners outside the school and has therefore ended up on the municipal agenda as well and

been placed in a broader context.

Also mentioned are forms of impact that are a bit harder to fit into this typology, such as social impact in and outside the school, for instance, putting themes on the agenda, and the impact on students in the form of better learning outcomes. As these outcomes say something about the quality and social impact of the school, we consider them outcomes at the organization level.

In both the partnership projects (HE, AE) and the mobility projects (PE, AE, VSE), there have been outcomes of the collaboration. In a number of cases, relations and networks are reinforced after the first meetings within the framework of an Erasmus+ supported project. The partners in the BLASTER project (HE) say that their network, which already existed before, was strengthened further. In the VIME project (AE), the cooperation with both national and international parties has been strengthened. The mobility projects, particularly job shadowing, have resulted in lasting contacts and return visits from the visited educational institutions and from others. In addition, the MBO institutions also see that the Dutch schools were able to establish a profile as a result of the contacts made during the study trip.

6.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The conversation we had with the people involved a few years after completion of the Erasmus+ projects, show that they experience substantial impact, a broader impact than was aimed for at the start of the project. A number of differences can be pointed out between mobility projects and partnership projects. The mobility projects seek to achieve certain goals at the level of the educational institutions by focussing on the professionalization of staff. There seems to be a clear impact on the professional development of the participants and a carry-on effect at the level of the organisation. Participants in study trips and courses in particular are able to point to very concrete results in their professional development. This has proved to be more difficult in the case of job shadowing. There does seem to be, however, a high level of intercultural development in job shadowing, such as a broader perspective and, possibly as a subconscious and unexpected impact, the ability to deal with cultural differences and challenges that are initially perceived as problematic. The impact on individual participants has had a knock-on effect on the organisation.

As to the partnership projects in which certain tools are developed, after a number of years it can be more difficult for those involved to say what the impact has been for them. This is mainly because there is often a focus on concrete projects which have to be completed and not so much on the professional development of specific people or organisations. The tools were developed for wider use and there is not always insight into their use by third parties. The participants do experience impact on the cooperation and their own development through participation in the international partnership.

In comparing cases, we see that the success factors and bottlenecks are quite diverse, but also show similarities across the various sectors. We are not listing them all here, because they have already been discussed in the case descriptions. We will limit ourselves to the points mentioned by several people involved and those that institutions can base policy on.

- The people involved felt it was positive when the plans for the Erasmus+ project were supported by management or at the policy level of the institution. Getting management on board during the starting phase is important. Related to this point, the people involved also thought it important that the whole team should be involved in the intended development, and that this should not be limited to just a few individuals. A proper embedding in the organisation can also limit the risks for the continuation of a project or for the continuation of a development in the institution, which might be caused by personnel turnover. This involvement at the management level is also necessary at the foreign partner schools. Dutch participants in job shadowing experienced as a bottleneck that at some of the foreign partner schools the project did not have a sufficient level of support within the school
- It is important that the intended impact is or will be embedded in the school policy. Professionalization has more impact when it ties in with the educational practice and with activities at the own educational institution in the Netherlands. In case of developments in the field of, for instance, countering radicalization, the school must also take steps policy-wise to implement the lessons learned.
- Selecting the right partners is named as an important success factor. To this end, it is important to know the partners. It's an advantage when projects are developed within existing networks.
- Selecting the right people for a project or professionalization activity is important: are they the right fit for the development of the individual and the organisation? Is the person in question willing and able to sufficiently prepare themselves and afterward implement the lessons learned? Is the institution able to provide the necessary time and space?
- It is important to keep an eye on the outcomes both during and after the activities: monitoring during, and evaluation after the project. This allows for reflection on the lessons learned. Reflection is seen as valuable.
- After the project, it is important to maintain the contacts and inform each other about the outcomes. This applies specifically to the development of tools. Monitoring their use and user experiences is important, as is communicating on the subject with the developers and other parties involved. They want to know what is happening with their tools, whether they are being used. When this does not happen, the people involved will experience less impact in the long term.

6.5 In Conclusion

In this qualitative study, we took a closer look at a number of concrete Erasmus+ projects from five different sectors in education and training which had the professionalization of education staff as their focus. Per project, a large number of people involved were asked about the impact it has had. In all cases, the tone of these conversations was positive, and concrete, sustainable results could be identified which affect the persons, the organisations, and beyond: sometimes expected and stated as a project goal, but sometimes also unexpected and surprisingly different than foreseen. As important success factors emerged a proper embedding in the policy of the educational institute, support from the team and the management, a good preparation, good monitoring and evaluation/dissemination, maintaining the new network of contacts, and facilitating the participants in the Erasmus+ projects in terms of time (before, during, and after). When one or more of these factors are missing, they are experienced as bottlenecks, and the experienced impact will be less clearly discernible. The results of this study, and more specifically the success factors mentioned, can serve as inspiration and support for new Erasmus+ projects, with the goal of achieving even more impact for the staff and institutions involved, and by extension eventually also for the pupils and students.

Colophon

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