

the faces of erasmus+

PROGRAMME SUMMARY 2014-2020

VOLUME I



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THE FACES OF ERASMUS+. Programme summary 2014–2020. Volume I

Interviews:	Martyna Śmigiel, Michał Radkowski, Ula Idzikowska, Maciej Zasada, Karolina Ludwikowska, Anna Brzezińska-Czerska, Justyna Tylczyńska-Seliga
Photos:	Szymon Łaszewski, Aleksandra Dudziak, Krzysztof Karpiński, Paweł Krzepina, Krzysztof Kuczyk, Luka Łukasiak, Dariusz Majewski, Danuta Matloch, Krzysztof Pacholak, Agnieszka Ucińska
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Dear Readers,

The first consolidated implementation period of the Erasmus+ Programme, the largest educational initiative of the European Union, is about to end. Being the successor to the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action programmes, over the past seven years Erasmus+ has supported the reforms of education systems in the programme countries, and focussed on developing key competences in learners of all ages. The development of teachers' professional and language competences and the use of ICT in the education process was another important objective of the programme. Activities undertaken within the projects also included co-operation with enterprises – they made it possible to adapt their education offer to the needs of the labour market and to modernise vocational education and training curricula.

From the funding perspective, the most important sector of Erasmus+ was the Higher Education. In 2019 alone, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System acting as the National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme in Poland allocated more than EUR 82 million for co-financing projects related to higher education, which was almost 80% more than in 2014. In total, since 1998, almost 250,000 Polish students have gone abroad to study or to serve a work placement, and there are still many more interested. To many young people, mobility to a university or technical university abroad has become an obligatory stage of their studies. It has also been the case with university staff. For the first time, the change in the rules introduced in the consolidated Erasmus+ financial framework has made it possible for university and research institution staff to benefit from the programme. Abroad, they completed teaching periods, took part in training, seminars, workshops and courses, expanded their knowledge and exchanged experiences. What is worth noting, not only the largest higher education institutions, but also those located in smaller academic centres, have benefited from funds assigned for development and internationalisation.

The effects of the seven years of the programme can be seen today in the lasting relations with foreign partners, close co-operation on new initiatives, and a wide range of study programmes available in European languages or these using new technologies. It is particularly pleasing that thanks to new opportunities and established contacts, it is easier for Polish higher education institutions to find international partners to implement further innovative ideas, thus contributing to the development of our society. They also engage in other transnational initiatives, such as the European Universities, thanks to which students, doctoral students, higher education staff and researchers can share knowledge and resources freely in order to learn or teach joint study programmes.

When the Erasmus+ Programme was launched, many people feared that using the name Erasmus – previously associated only with student mobility

– would cause complications. After seven years, one can certainly say that the map of associations has been expanded. Today, virtually any person working in the education sector knows that the European Union programme's offer is not addressed to students and universities alone, but also to hundreds of other institutions and organisations – ranging from kindergartens to universities of the third age – and to millions of individual beneficiaries, including learners and teachers. Thanks to the funds coming from Erasmus+, which in Poland is supported by the Operational Programme Knowledge, Education, Development, it has been possible to greatly modernise teaching methods in our country, and our students are better prepared for the entry into the labour market.

Striking evidence of how much Polish education has changed in recent years – both in formal and non-formal sector – can be found in this publication. The protagonists presented in the first volume of *The faces of Erasmus+* who put their ideas into action across the country, describe in their own words the experiences gained during the implementation of the programme. They show that education projects have a significant impact on the development of professional, interpersonal, social and digital competences in all participants – both learners and teachers. They also prove the importance of benefits for individual institutions. Thanks to Erasmus+, educational institutions have developed teaching tools and methods that help them find their way in a new reality that requires a non-standard approach to teaching and great attention to students' needs. The projects carried out in the School Education sector and under the eTwinning programme can set an example here. Especially the projects described in this publication show that interdisciplinary teaching conducted using modern technologies, away from school desks, is not a thing of the future, but is already happening today. The projects implemented within the framework of the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ Sport are of key importance for personal and professional development. The participants in these initiatives show how EU support can be used to help the most disadvantaged groups of our society to equalise their opportunities and open them up to new ones.

The wide range of experiences gained over the seven years allows us to look forward to the next framework for the Erasmus+ in Poland. The successful programme definitely is worth continuing.

I truly hope you will enjoy reading the publication.

Paweł Poszytek, PhD
general director
Foundation for the Development of the Education System

PHOTO: LUKA LUKASIAK





Foundation for the Development of the Education System



European Funds Knowledge Education Development



Republic of Poland



European Union European Social Fund



European Language Label



eTwinning



Eurydice



SALTO EASTERN EUROPE & CAUCASUS



Youth Wiki



eurodesk Poland



europass



EDU inspiracje inspirator



Selfie+



EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS



POWER



ecvet European Credit system for Vocational Education & Training



EPALE



world skills Poland

New dimension of education

Erasmus+ is a programme of the European Union which funds the development of education and training and the implementation of youth and sports projects. Its main objective is to support the participating countries in the effective use of social potential and to promote lifelong learning. In practice, Erasmus+ helps to modernise education and training, contributes to innovation, entrepreneurship and employment.

The programme is divided into five sectors corresponding to areas in which formal, non-formal and informal education takes place: Higher Education, School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and Youth. In each of these sectors, several key actions are implemented, under which organisations wishing to participate in the programme could apply for funding. Erasmus+ key actions implemented in sectors differed in detail, but the general principles were similar: Key Action 1 is mobility, Key Action 2 stands for inter-institutional partnerships, and Key Action 3 supports systemic activities. In Poland, the latter was implemented only in the Youth sector.

In the years 2014–2020, the programme offer was addressed to institutions providing education and training: universities, schools and training companies, associations, foundations, employers' organisations, entities involved in activities for the benefit of seniors, as well as analytical centres and research institutes. The programme gave them the opportunity to obtain funds for projects, from which employees, students and listeners benefited. Erasmus+ also provided funding for partnerships between educational institutions, youth organisations, businesses, local and regional authorities.

Institutions participating in Erasmus+ Programme have taken part in various types of activities aimed at, among other things, raising professional qualifications of staff, capacity building or establishing international partnerships. They also had the opportunity to organise mobility of students, lecturers and teachers, trainees, volunteers as well as youth workers and professionals working with adult learners.

In Poland, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System (in Polish: Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, FRSE)* manages Erasmus+ and acts as the National Agency of the programme. Between 2014 and 2020, the Foundation also managed programmes linked to Erasmus+: European Solidarity Corps and eTwinning. The former enables young volunteers to gain experience, develop interpersonal and professional skills, and carry out activities aimed at meeting important social needs. The latter, on the other hand, provides a state-of-the-art, safe space for schools from dozens of countries to co-operate online using the latest technology. FRSE was the first National Agency in Europe to use funds coming from the Operational Programme »

» Knowledge Education Development (Program Operacyjny Wiedza Edukacja Rozwój, PO WER) to carry out Erasmus+ projects. The budget of the PO WER supported the mobility of school education staff, students with disabilities and disadvantaged students. These funds were also used to stage traineeships abroad of vocational school students and graduates as well as vocational education and training staff.

The Erasmus+ Programme in the period 2014–2020 included important initiatives supporting specific key actions and sectors. Applicants for funding and beneficiaries carrying out their projects as part of non-formal education of young people used the information and training offer of Eurodesk Poland and the SALTO EECA Resource Centre. Institutions using in their projects tools for the recognition of qualifications or accumulation and transfer of credits could follow the progress in the implementation of Europass and the work of the ECVET Team of Experts. A new initiative supporting adult educators and lifelong learning – the Electronic platform for adult learning in Europe (EPALE) has been also launched during the first Erasmus+ framework.

Between 2014 and 2020, **5,200** educational institutions and organisations from all over Poland benefited from the Erasmus+ Programme

Over the past seven years, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System has conducted extensive promotional activities and undertakings aimed at communication and dissemination of project outcomes. It contacted the beneficiaries via websites, traditional and social media. In the far corners of Poland, the Foundation's employees and a group of experts co-operating with FRSE presented the offer of the programme during information and training meetings and at regional information points. Erasmus+ Bus and the Mobile Educational Centre played a very important role in promoting the programme. Between 2016 and 2020, they visited several hundred localities, where several thousand people interested in participating in international projects were trained. The Foundation has also initiated original educational, sporting and training events to encourage new groups of recipients to take advantage of the programme offer.

Each year, the National Agency organised EDUinspiracje Awards and Selfie+ photo contest, in which beneficiaries of all Erasmus+ sectors and accompanying programmes and initiatives took part. The institutions running the best language projects were awarded the European Language Label and vocational school students competed in international WorldSkills and EuroSkills competitions.

Analytical work and opinion surveys addressed to project participants in individual sectors of the programme were also conducted. The Foundation has also developed and updated tools providing access to reliable information to those responsible for education policy in Europe. The Eurydice network has produced reports and statistical data showing the up-to-date picture of various sectors of the education system. Since 2017, the offer has been extended to include the Youth Wiki database aimed at developing knowledge on youth policy.

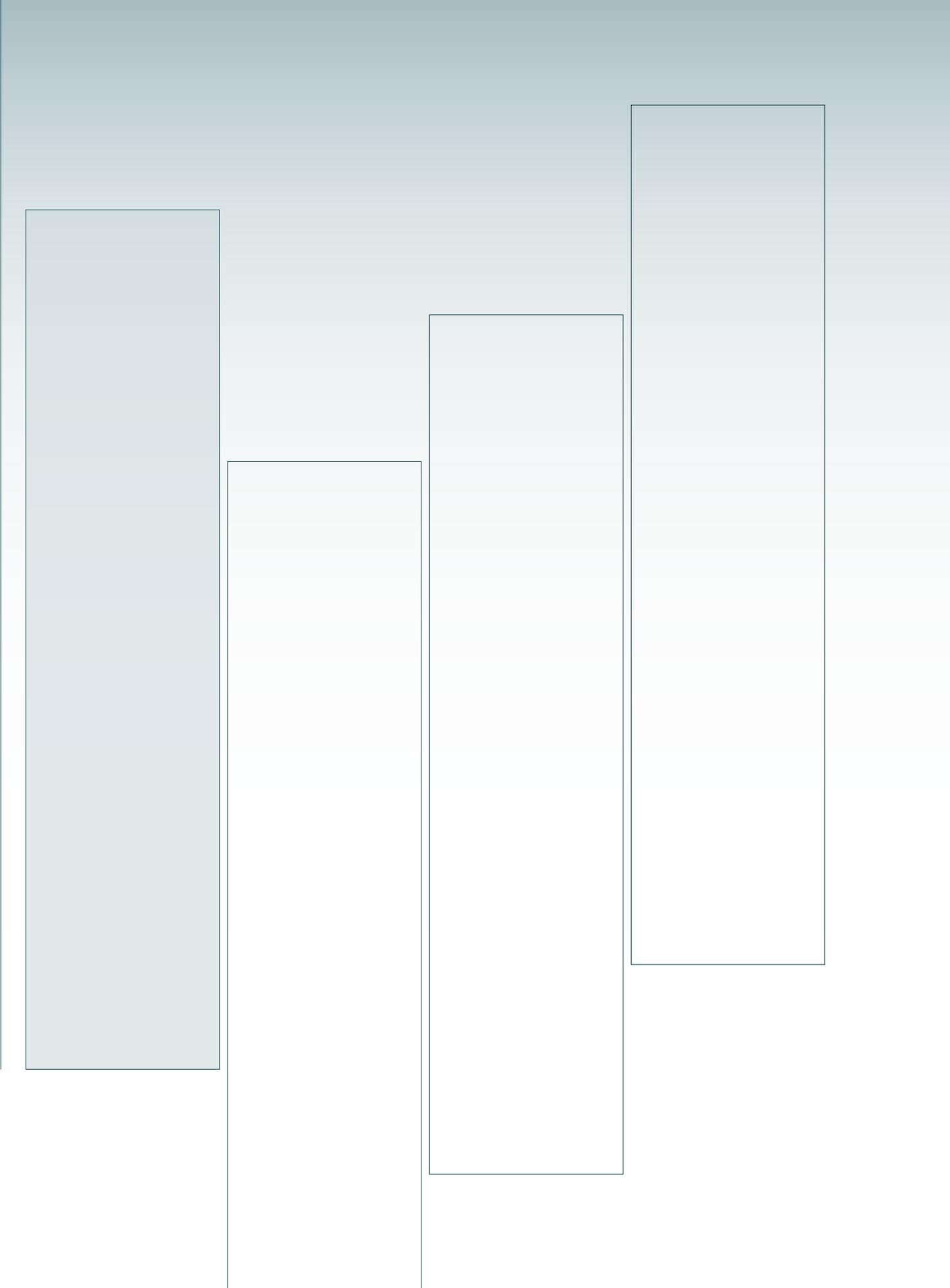


PHOTO: DARIUSZ MAJEWSKI

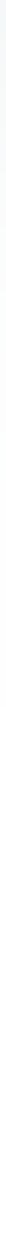
In the years 2014–2020, the Polish National Agency published over 150 publications financed or co-financed by the Erasmus+ Programme, including thematic reports, guides, presentations of good practices and project outcomes, as well as “Języki Obce w Szkole” quarterly and “Europa dla Aktywnych” magazine, which enjoy great interest on the part of beneficiaries of programmes managed by the Foundation.

This publication shows the results of the first Erasmus+ framework for the programme in Poland. The first volume of *The faces of Erasmus+* presents profiles of beneficiaries implementing projects as part of individual Erasmus+ key actions and sectors and accompanying programmes. Project co-ordinators and participants from all over Poland share their ideas on how to use financial support to improve the quality of education at any stage of life. They prove that education with Erasmus+ is diverse and teaching can be done anywhere. They inspire and encourage participation in the future framework of the Erasmus+ Programme in Poland.

[†] For the convenience of readers, in the following chapters, all names of institutions, projects, and its results (publications titles, movies, games, etc.) used in original language version have been translated into English.



Erasmus+ & POWER



HIGHER EDUCATION

The Higher Education sector continues the tradition of the Erasmus Programme, which has operated in Europe since 1987 and in Poland since 1998. The sector finances student mobility for placements and studies. The programme also supports the mobility of university staff, along with international multilateral projects aimed to improve the quality of teaching or the operations of institutions. This way, universities, research and science institutions achieve their internationalisation objectives set out in their missions or strategies.

Well-established programme

Martyna Śmigiel: The programme is so massive and well-established that today we may speak about the Erasmus generation.

Beata Skibińska: Many people believe that the programme has contributed to shaping European attitudes. In Europe, Erasmus was launched in 1987, in Poland 11 years later, so indeed the whole generation has benefited from this international experience. And they build on it every day.

Who are Erasmus+ beneficiaries?

When they come back from their student exchanges, they usually say that it was the time of their lives. And that they would never forget it. They are certainly open-minded people, curious about the world, not afraid of differences or atypicality. They establish international contacts, which affects further course of their studies, their opportunities on the labour market, but also more generally – their life attitudes.

The first consolidated framework for the programme was launched in 2014, ends in 2020. How can you describe the seven years?

We did not observe a revolution, simply because it was not needed. Certainly, there have been some organisational improvements, and the recent years have been, first of all, a time of stabilisation of the programme, of the conscious use of its offer by the universities and, as a result, improvement of education quality. In recent years, higher education institutions have become even more open to international contacts and co-operation.

Polish universities have changed thanks to Erasmus+?

I am convinced that thanks to the programme, they perform their educational and teaching tasks more efficiently. After all, the world of science must be open to international exchange of ideas. We should also remember that Erasmus+ is used not only by students, but also »

BEATA SKIBIŃSKA

director of the Bureau for Higher Education, FRSE

She holds a master's degree in economics. She has worked in the education sector for almost 30 years. In 1991–2000, she worked for the Tempus programme, where she dealt with scholarships for mobile students, academic teachers, and managed multilateral projects. From 2000 to 2014, she was the co-ordinator of the Erasmus sub-programme. Currently, she is in charge of the team responsible for European educational programmes in the Higher Education sector.

PHOTO: SZYMON ŁASZEWSKI





The changes introduced in 2014 as part of the Erasmus+ Programme were most quickly noticed by exchange participants, mostly students. To them, the novelties were very beneficial, as in the first consolidated framework they could take part in learning mobility at any stage of their tertiary education

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

» by academic teachers and administrative staff, thanks to which it is also an investment in human resources. It all combined affects the quality of education.

The programme is recognisable, but is it accessible to everyone? Has it reached the intended number of participants since 2014?

We are still not satisfied with this indicator when we relate it to the entire population of students and academic teachers. According to the European guidelines this was supposed to be 20%. This has not been achieved in Poland.

Why?

I believe it is related to the level of wealth of our society. The mobility requires certain financial resources. The grant is only an allowance to cover a part of the costs. The students receive support in order to be able to stay abroad. However, the purchasing power of Polish zloty is not high, so it can still be a challenge for our students to travel to the countries of Western Europe.

Do we need a larger budget for the programme or do we need to become more affluent as a society?

A larger budget involves a need to achieve higher indicators, that is a larger number of mobilities. However, this does not affect the level of wealth of society and will not make it possible for all to go abroad. It is my great wish that the programme is accessible to anyone who wants to benefit from it. The new framework for the programme is to focus on combating social, economic and cultural exclusion.

The first Erasmus+ framework ends in extremely unfavourable circumstances, that is during a pandemic. Will it impact on the programme?

This sudden halt of the world may raise concerns as to whether we will be so eager to take advantage of the Erasmus+ Programme offer in the future or whether students and academic teachers are not be discouraged from travelling and continuing international co-operation. I hope it will not be the case, because I cannot imagine the world without Erasmus+.

SECTOR AT A GLANCE

Focus on development

For years, students were the group of beneficiaries most often associated with Erasmus+. Their mobilities, both for studies and placements, form the most important element of the programme, and in the first consolidated Erasmus+ framework the largest part of the budget has been allocated to them. Tens of thousands of Polish students have tasted studying abroad or served placements in foreign institutions. Since 2015, the programme has offered brand new opportunities to them, by giving them a chance to go to the most remote places in the world. Those who stayed in Europe were more and more willing to serve work placements, although in absolute numbers, studying at universities has maintained its leading position.

The stay abroad has become an opportunity for young people to improve their language skills, gain independence and strengthen their self-confidence. Research carried out by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System shows that competences acquired abroad improve the career prospects of programme beneficiaries. Erasmus+ has enabled students to acquire skills particularly valued by employers, such as: critical thinking, teamwork, flexibility and creativity. The mobilities also allowed them to get to know new cultures, which can be an important asset when working in a multicultural environment.

During the first Erasmus+ framework,
for projects implemented by Polish institutions
in the Higher Education sector over
EUR **360 mln** were assigned

Over the 2014–2020 period, university staff and academic teachers also seized the opportunity to improve their professional competences. The mobility projects gave them the opportunity to complete a course or to teach classes at universities abroad. On the other hand, Polish higher education institutions invited employees of foreign institutions valued for their knowledge and professional experience to reveal the secrets of their specialisation to students during classes taught in Polish universities. The effects of international exchanges can be seen in the growing openness of the academic community. The impact of different forms of internationalisation on education quality and attractiveness is more and more appreciated.

In seven years, Polish higher education institutions have participated in more than one hundred partnership projects, during which innovative study programmes and teaching materials were developed. Many of them were of an interdisciplinary character or used modern information and communication technologies. Among other things, Polish scientists have developed e-books for laryngeal surgery, researched the use of emotion-recognising robots in the therapy of autistic children, created games supporting the management of cultural heritage or musical instrument playing courses using the possibilities offered by a virtual orchestra.

2014 interest in mobility for placements grows in the programme countries, and the number of students benefiting from exchanges stabilises at the level of more than a dozen thousand per year

2015 a call for mobility projects with the partner countries is launched, which opens up opportunities for students and teaching staff to study in institutions all over the world

2016 for the first time Polish higher education institutions host more international students than they have outgoing students

2017 Poland rises to 6th place in Europe in terms of the number of mobilities. The balance of incoming and outgoing mobilities is changing: students are more and more willing to study in Central and Eastern Europe

2018 the Erasmus+ Programme engages in the establishment of European Universities – international university partnerships that are linked by an integrated and long-term strategy for education and research

2019 a significant number of Polish higher education institutions implement innovative projects focussing on topics, methods and aspects of teaching, which have not been analysed anywhere in Europe

2020 since the start of Erasmus+, over 15,000 Polish students per year on average have benefited from the programme. The top universities and companies they selected include those located in Germany, Spain, France, Italy and Portugal. The choice of the countries of destination for university staff was slightly different. A priority was given to institutions located in Spain, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Italy and Germany



JAKUB ZIULKOWSKI
law student at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

He studied at the University of Caen as part of Erasmus+. He is interested not only in law, but also in international relations. In 2019, he completed a bachelor programme in this field. He loves to set himself new goals and then pursue them.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 1 – THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

France for everyone

Ever since high school, Jakub has been fascinated by France and dreamt of studying there. He recently returned from Erasmus+ at the University of Caen in Normandy and says that he spent the best six months of his life there

Justyna Tylczyńska-Seliga: Caen is a city of business, exhibitions, universities, shops and monuments. Most people who go to France for Erasmus choose Paris or Toulouse. Why did you decide to go to this city?

Jakub Ziulkowski: Caen is smaller than Toulouse or Paris. It has only 200,000 inhabitants and life there is much more peaceful than in the French capital.

Was it difficult to get in?

Me and my friend, with whom I went to Caen, used to joke that we crushed the contest. The truth is, however, that we did not have any competition at all. Only two of us applied, and there were two places available at the university. I am a little surprised that people are afraid to go to France for student exchanges.

Main conclusion

It is worthwhile to participate in academic exchanges and study in an active way, not limiting oneself to reading textbooks and passing exams

Did you know French before your departure?

Yes, I have been studying French for six years. My language skills, however, were only verified upon arrival in Caen. The purpose of this was not to disqualify me or to send me back to Poland, but to match me to the appropriate group in a French language course. This is a fantastic opportunity for students coming to Caen, because it only costs EUR 50. People from outside the university must pay EUR 300 for such a course.

It is said that the French bureaucracy is even more daunting than the Polish one. Did you have a buddy assigned to you?

It is true that French bureaucracy can cause many problems. My friend had a buddy, but I did not ask for one. What is great about Erasmus+, is that the

students help each other a lot. Information is spread very quickly, and formalities can be easily dealt with thanks to help from newly acquired friends.

How is it to study at a French university?

There is no need to be concerned about the level of these studies, as it is not so different from that in Poland. The lecturers are very understanding of the students and devote a lot of time to them. The grades are obtained in a similar way.

Did you stay in a dormitory or in rented accommodation?

I learnt from a friend who was previously in Caen that flats in the city centre are very expensive and it is not worth renting them. Therefore, two months before I left Poland, I applied for a room in a dorm and I am very happy I did that. We had single rooms which were equipped with everything you need: a bed, an en suite bathroom and a large desk. I met many interesting people in the dorm and I think these friendships will last a very long time.

The best experience

I opened up to the world, met many wonderful people, visited many beautiful places, developed my language skills and discovered many new opportunities for my future career

Was it expensive to live in a dorm?

It was around EUR 1,000 per semester. I think this is a reasonable price compared to the cost of renting an apartment.

Did you cook together with students from the dorm?

It was not very cost-effective to cook because there was a university diner nearby, which served lunches at very affordable prices. It was used by students from the University of Caen – there was a lot on offer – from traditional French dishes to fast food.

Some people mentioned experiencing what they describe as post-Erasmus depression. Has it affected you at all?

I have experienced the opposite – I fell depressed after my arrival. It is difficult to adjust if you have not been in France before, and you have only learnt the French language at school. When I came back to Poland, I did not have any problems, but I already know I will return to France. I plan to look for a job in a French-Polish law firm because I am interested in French law. After graduation, I would like to progress my professional career in this direction, and I hope that I will be able to use the Erasmus+ Programme again.

What advice do you have for those who are afraid or hesitant? How would you convince them to participate in this programme?

It is not worth worrying about whether you can handle it or not. I am not some super ambitious person and I did just fine. I am sure that everybody will manage well. Such an experience gives a huge boost to further learning after returning and greatly broadens your horizons.

Learning mobility

Under **Key Action 1**, the sector provided financial support for study and work placements to foreign higher education institutions and enterprises.

Co-operation projects included:

- » student learning mobility (for 3–12 months);
- » student and graduate work placements or internships at a higher education institution or a company (for 2–12 months);
- » graduates' mobility for work placements or internships (for 2–12 months) subject to their qualification for mobility during the final year of studies.

In the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, this offer was available for the first time to students of all educational cycles, and even for graduates, as long as their mobility ended no later than 12 months after graduation. Participants were also allowed to take part in mobility several times. Thanks to these changes, over the seven-year period, several hundred thousand students and graduates have taken advantage of the sector's offer.

The support was also used by the staff of higher education institutions who used mobilities to broaden their knowledge and exchange experiences. They could teach classes to students and take part in training, seminars, workshops and courses. Staff mobility always serves to improve competences related to the scope of professional duties. At the same time, people establish contacts, develop their own research, passions and interests.

Students and staff travelled to higher education institutions and enterprises operating in the Erasmus+ programme countries (European Union countries, EU candidates or associated countries), and as of 2015 – also to higher education institutions from partner countries located outside Europe. Within the framework of those latter projects, most students and staff were sent by the University of Warsaw, the Łódź University of Technology and the Kozminski University.



DOROTA KAMIŃSKA, EngD
assistant professor in the Institute
of Mechatronics and Information Systems
of the Łódź University of Technology

She is a specialist in innovative teaching methods, such as problem based learning and case study. Since 2013, she has been working in the DT4U team – a space for creative problem solving using the design thinking methodology. At the university, she co-ordinates Erasmus+ projects in the field of augmented and virtual reality.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 2 – THE BENEFICIARY’S PERSPECTIVE

A leap into the future

They found a solution to a shared, real-life problem in virtual reality. All this so the students could learn from their own mistakes, and the lecturers did not fall into a routine while conducting classes

Ula Idzikowska: How did you come up with the idea of tapping into virtual reality?

Dorothea Kamińska: It all started at a conference where I met our future partners. It turned out that lecturers in Italy, North Macedonia and Estonia face the same constraints as the lecturers at the Łódź University of Technology. The equipment used in classes is expensive, not all higher education institutions can afford to buy the latest models of engines. As a result, students often work on old types, and the lecturers explain the same things over and over again. Furthermore, we cannot allow for any of the engines to burn out. That is why lecturers in class cannot demonstrate any emergency conditions. Our team has come to the conclusion that instead of buying the latest models of the engines, we could show them to students in other ways – via virtual reality. This is how the “ViMeLa” project was created – a virtual laboratory devoted to teaching mechatronics.

Key result

Satisfaction of the recipients. This makes you feel that you are doing something worthwhile

But virtual reality is not a cheap solution either...

That is true. And that is why, in the new project entitled “Atomic”, we have decided to focus on augmented reality, linking the real world with computer-generated content. This is a cheaper and more accessible solution. We started with the assumption that if students use phones all the time, why should not they do it for study purposes? In this case, however, we will show them how it is supposed to be done. The app works on smartphones, so students can carry out the exercises at home. This is a great convenience, because all the tasks can be repeated until the student achieves the desired outcome: by absorbing the knowledge or performing a given task correctly. Furthermore, it is possible – literally – to disassemble the equipment into its basic components to better understand its functioning. For example, loosen every screw

in an engine or look inside a machine. You can see what happens when you change the voltage or experience first-hand that you may cause the engine to blow by carrying out certain tasks incorrectly. This is a real teaching aid, because students absorb the knowledge better when they see the consequences of doing things the wrong way.

What else can be shown by means of augmented reality?

We are currently working on a tool that will allow students to analyse how manual workers in factories lift heavy objects and move them from place to place. One of the students will carry a load and the other will supervise the task. The visualisation will allow the observer to see which parts of the person's body are working, and which are at risk of injury. As soon as the students playing the role of an employee makes a risky move, they will be informed that they are at risk of sustaining an injury.

The greatest challenge

International co-operation in an interdisciplinary group. And practical problems: it took several months to set up an account in North Macedonia, for example, and the issue of depreciation of the equipment looked different in each country

How do students and lecturers react to these new teaching methods?

The interest in them among the University of Technology staff is remarkably high. Everyone is dealing with new technologies and no one needs encouragement. And students? They did not want to take their VR headsets off! Some were openly disappointed that the workshops lasted only one hour. For many, it was their first encounter with this technology and therefore a monumental experience for them. They were happy that they could check different settings and try things out for themselves, instead of following step by step instructions. Besides, we can see that the students are more involved and more willing to carry out tasks when the latest technology is involved. Augmented reality technology is basically a carrot on a stick, an incentive to learn.

And how did the co-operation with the partner universities go?

Obviously, things are not always perfect. Long distance co-operation is difficult and minor misunderstandings are a common thing. That is why face-to-face meetings are so important. Such meetings allow us to discuss everything, test the prototype and reach a compromise. I must admit that I was very lucky when it came to project partners – everyone was very keen to create the best possible product. We will continue this co-operation. We have already applied for a new project. We want to use virtual reality to teach empathy by showing the problems faced by people with disabilities or by pregnant women. The mixed reality method will not only allow us to see certain phenomena, but also to experience them.

Does this mean that your adventure with virtual reality is not over?

It is definitely not over. It is an amazing method and is highly praised by its users. And soon it may become less expensive.

Co-operation for innovation

Key Action 2 supported strategic partnerships – the co-operation projects between at least three institutions from three different programme countries.

In the higher education sector, funding was provided for activities aimed at improving the quality of education and innovation in universities. The initiators of these types of undertakings applied for coverage of costs related to:

- » project management and implementation;
- » organisation of international project meetings;
- » generating the results of intellectual work;
- » organisation of events disseminating the results of the work;
- » organisation of activities related to teaching, learning or training.

The goal of the projects which were carried out was most often the implementation and dissemination of innovative solutions, and the result was the modernisation of the educational offer and its better adaptation to the needs of society and the economy. The Erasmus+ Programme co-financed the development of specific project results and products, as well as the organisation of international meetings, intensive courses for students, short-term joint staff training events, short-term student mobilities and long-term teacher mobility for teaching purposes.

In the 2014–2020 programme framework, over 400 applications for partnerships have been submitted, most often by the University of Warsaw, the Warsaw University of Life Sciences, the University of Łódź and the Łódź University of Technology. Other higher education institutions have also actively sought funding for this type of co-operation. As a result, after seven years, on the map of Poland there are no white spots that would indicate a lack of interest from academic centres in conducting international educational projects.

SCHOOL EDUCATION

The offer in this sector was addressed to educational institutions ranging from kindergartens to secondary schools. The projects enabled the beneficiaries to gain new insights into teaching, as well as to share experiences and best practices. They strengthened self-confidence and contributed to taking on new challenges. The institutions participating in the programme have gained prestige and reputation, which has often translated into an increase in the number of candidates willing to study in a given institution.

Where is a will, there is a way

Martyna Śmigiel: In my school days, nobody even dreamt of going abroad for a student exchange, and today in many schools this is everyday life.

Alicja Pietrzak: Currently, in the majority of Polish counties schools implement student exchanges or mobility projects for school education staff. Throughout the years of implementation of Erasmus+ and Comenius, which is the predecessor of School Education sector of Erasmus+, we tried to reach as many schools as possible. And now we can see that it has worked. Of course, it is still not the case that participation in the programme is common, and that the majority of Polish schools benefit from it, but we are working on it.

Have Polish schools changed thanks to Erasmus+?

That is for sure, because they have found the opportunities in the programme, and they reached for the money offered by the European Commission. We should bear in mind that Erasmus+ budget for school education is smaller than in the case of Higher Education sector, but still there are a lot of funds to be allocated. Each year, Polish schools submit many grant applications for projects, and the programme budget is used in one hundred percent. And this translates into tangible benefits.

What are the benefits?

Thanks to Erasmus+ projects, teachers and students acquire new competences, especially soft skills, which are highly valued today. To young people, a learning mobility abroad is an opportunity to develop language skills, and also social and civic competences.

And what are the benefits for the teachers?

We see that the teachers involved in the projects are people who want to do more than just »

ALICJA PIETRZAK

director of the Bureau for School Education, Youth and the European Solidarity Corps, FRSE

She graduated in management and marketing at the Kozminski University and completed post-graduate studies in European integration at the University of Warsaw. Since 2004, she has managed European education programmes, such as the Lifelong Learning, eTwinning, European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+. She currently leads a team responsible for youth and school education initiatives of the European Union.

PHOTO: SZYMON KASZEWSKI





PHOTO: LUKA LUKASIAK

erasmus+ SCHOOL EDUCATION



From the very beginning of the programme, a large group of beneficiaries in the School Education sector have been the institutions, which had previously benefited from Comenius sub-programme. This was both an advantage and disadvantage. They could build on the experience gained during the implementation of previous projects, but we had to make sure that the beneficiaries forgot about the old rules and learnt new ones

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

» teach the core curriculum. They are educators who do not like being stuck in a rut, who appreciate innovations in teaching, and who are creative. These features can be developed thanks to Erasmus+ projects. And once they complete one project, they embark on another one. Erasmus+ attracts more and more people. And it changes the image of schools.

How does it do that?

Participation in international co-operation is a big challenge, which allows to improve the quality of teaching, and affects the attractiveness of schools in their local environments. You can see it in the reports and in conversations with teachers. It turns out that schools which implement Erasmus+ projects are more popular among prospective students and are appreciated by their parents. It is often the case that a child is sent to a given school because it offers something extra that makes the teaching process more attractive. Thanks to Erasmus+ projects schools are not settled into a groove, and students use the skills acquired during project implementation not only in class, but also in everyday life.

How would you summarise the 2014–2020 framework for the programme?

The most important thing is that Polish schools have taken full advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the programme. It is worth stressing that they were eager to co-ordinate projects and were not only partners in international school co-operation. The role of a co-ordinator involves much greater responsibility for project planning and implementation. Many Polish schools have taken up this challenge. It is important that we have changed conventional thinking that Erasmus+ is for higher education students only and only higher education institutions can carry out the projects under the programme. We have even reached with this message schools located in smaller towns and in regions far from the major educational centres. Today, Erasmus+ is a recognisable brand – more than 17,000 student and teacher mobilities are conducted every year. This is a very good result.

SECTOR AT A GLANCE

Hues of success

In the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, applications submitted for the calls in the School Education sector have enjoyed unflagging success. Each year, as compared to other sectors, the largest number of institutions applied for project financing. The implementers of the best projects received awards in contests organised by the Polish National Agency, and the most interesting initiatives have been presented in publications as good practices and sources of inspiration. The completion of the 2014–2020 edition of Erasmus+ is a good moment to take a closer look at lesser known initiatives, as they also prove that Erasmus+ has contributed to changes in the immediate environment of its beneficiaries.

Taking one step at a time, the staff of the “Diamencik” Public Kindergarten from Gdańsk, which implemented two projects, made a great success. Their main goal was to improve teachers’ language skills and to diversify the teaching methods used in working with children. This was made possible thanks to the participation of teachers in courses conducted in the United Kingdom and Malta. The transfer of the solutions learnt during the mobilities to Poland has allowed to incite in children the curiosity about the world and a sense of discovery while playing outdoors. Improved command of foreign languages enabled teachers to communicate freely with colleagues from other countries after the projects were completed. Teachers from the “Diamencik” kindergarten have started new projects on the eTwinning platform. They have also established contacts and constantly shared their knowledge with 17 educational institutions from all over the world. The openness to international co-operation resulted in a major project called “In the heart of my city”, for which the kindergarten has been awarded the eTwinning National Quality Label in 2018.

In Poland, the largest number of Erasmus+ projects were implemented in the School Education sector: there were more than **4,600** of them

Sometimes a new situation requires changing the set patterns. This is shown by the example of the No. 1 General Secondary School in Szubin, where two students from Hungary arrived as part of an Erasmus+ project. They were to spend three months in the small town staying with students’ families and attending the school without any knowledge of Polish. A maths teacher decided to reach out to them and started to teach lessons in English in order to involve the two students in the classes. She decided to do so despite fears that she would lose her authority in the eyes of the students who speak better English than she does, because they are more likely to use it in their everyday lives and in the social media. But her fears did not materialise. Her bravery was appreciated and resulted in greater openness of everyone to co-operation during the lessons.

These are just two examples of several thousand success stories written by teachers and students of educational institutions implementing projects between 2014 and 2020. More such stories, which may draw inspirations for the upcoming Erasmus+ framework, are available at www.erasmusplus.org.pl.

2014 the first call for proposals attracts hundreds of prospective beneficiaries. The **strategic partnership offer enjoys the greatest interest**. As many as 1,259 applications were submitted by various institutions to the Key Action 2

2015 the number of applications in the School Education sector **increases on average by over 40%**. The largest number of submissions are received from three voivodeships: Śląskie, Mazowieckie and Małopolskie

2016 the first meetings for those interested in applying and discovering the secrets of project development are staged. School headteachers and teachers can benefit from webinars and training abroad organised within transnational co-operation activities

2017 the interest in the sector’s offer for the first time significantly **exceeds the available financial resources**. In the call for funds, the quality of project application becomes increasingly important

2018 streamlined rules for implementing school co-operation enter into force. International mobility, in particular exchanges of groups of students aimed to shape the attitude of openness, gains on importance

2019 thanks to project grants, **almost 18,000 beneficiaries travel abroad**, including 8,510 school staff and 9,344 students

2020 among benefits resulting from projects implemented in the sector and mentioned by beneficiaries are: establishing professional contacts, learning innovative working methods, improving curricula, improved teaching at the institution, and expanding the education offer



KATARZYNA SAWICKA
and **MALGORZATA BRASSEAU**
Erasmus+ project co-ordinators and
trainers conducting workshops on this
programme

They teach languages at the St. John de La Salle Primary School in Gdańsk. Katarzyna Sawicka is also a licenced mindfulness trainer in stress reduction and Małgorzata Brasseaux is a certified instrumental enrichment therapist. She infects her colleagues with her passion for outdoor activities in Scandinavian style.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 1 – THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

You can't stop the waves

It started with the raising of one's own competence and ended with an outdoor revolution with a hint of mindfulness. The Erasmus+ project co-ordinators from a primary school in Gdańsk are teaching how to surf around the world of innovation

Ula Idzikowska: You have carried out two Erasmus+ projects, under which 29 mobilities abroad have taken place in the space of four years. This is a real eye opener, showing other teachers that they can teach differently. But what does it mean to teach differently?

Małgorzata Brasseaux: We started with a smartphone app. Back in 2016, nobody even thought about using them for teaching. And now, for some teachers, using Socrative, Quizlet or Quizizz is as natural as opening a school register.

Katarzyna Sawicka: Teachers at our school are undergoing an incredible development in the scope of their information and communication competences. Recently, we have been organising thematic events online and everyone had great ideas: "I have a Prezi, let's do a quiz. Let's split the kids into rooms, create an escape room at Genial.ly. Let's develop tasks on Wordwall". And who would have thought that a few years ago none of us had heard of Kahoot.

Recommended methods

M.B.: These activating ones, e.g. decision making. It teaches entrepreneurship, new vocabulary and quick decision making. The class is divided into two groups, followed by a statement in a foreign language: "I like chocolate. I like biscuits". Everyone instantly has to decide what they prefer

Has the whole school embraced technological innovations with open arms?

K.S.: Not everyone, of course, is a fan of digital education or blended learning. Many teachers prefer analogue solutions. However, the idea is not to replace actual relationships with computers, but to turn applications into one of our tools.

M.B.: Some people still need some support. We are happy to share our knowledge and experience by preparing training sessions for teachers in our school and beyond.

K.S.: We also remember our own beginnings, the first eTwinning training events – everything seemed complicated then.

M.B.: Today, we use applications regularly, even for tests. Instead of pens, pupils often take out their phones.

In the first project, you have also focussed on interdisciplinary teaching.

M.B.: That is correct. For example, we go to a forest or a park. We collect leaves. We name them in Polish and then we try to find their English names. We divide the finds into groups of smaller and larger objects. After such a lesson, kids gain knowledge from various disciplines: English, biology, maths, physical education. The relaxing environment makes everyone learn faster and more willingly, and they simply have fun.

What else did you observe during your Erasmus+ mobility?

M.B.: I became an advocate of outdoor learning. It is not only about going to the forest or the mountains, but about encouraging people to leave the room they are currently in. I often organise a spelling test “on the run”: I hang words or fragments of poems in the corridor and pupils need to run out of the classroom to find those words or phrases, remember the new vocabulary and run back inside to write them down accurately. Teaching accuracy is one of the tasks in an instrumental enrichment programme which I use during my classes. Pupils absorb the knowledge whilst moving and having fun.

K.S.: In Spain, I was delighted with the mindfulness classes based on stress reduction techniques, and I am currently conducting mindfulness classes myself. Balance is extremely important in today’s world. It helps us to deal with difficult emotions and improves concentration.

What is worth trying?

K.S.: Escape room – it develops imagination and creativity. I also encourage everyone to practise mindfulness and look after their own well-being, because happy teachers shape happy people

How do parents and teachers react to these innovations?

M.B.: The introduction of non-standard methods always was, and still is, a bit of challenge. Teachers are constantly testing various methods, while parents worry whether their kids will get their clothes dirty during the outdoor activities. The positive feedback from pupils who talk about their experiences at home helps a lot in the change process. Various tests show that outdoor learning does not stand in the way of implementing the core curriculum.

K.S.: Yes, there is a myth often associated with the core curriculum: you cannot leave the classroom because you have to keep going with the material. At one point, I understood that top-down guidelines do not limit us at all. They indicate content, but we are to choose the methods. As the creator of the concept of mindfulness, American professor Jon Kabat-Zinn, used to say, “You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf”.

Mobility of school staff

The projects implemented under **Key Action 1** improved the quality of work of educational institutions by enabling staff to participate in courses and training events abroad, thus facilitating the development of various types of competences. People participating in mobilities had the opportunity to learn about modern teaching and management methods. They could acquire not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical experience and could establish international contacts at the same time.

The project co-financing included costs related to travel, individual support, course fees and organisational support for the institution. The mobility trips lasted from 2 to 60 days, and the entire project lasted from one to two years. In this Key Action, between 2014 and 2020, almost 4,800 applications were received. Institutions from across the country were among the beneficiaries who have implemented at least six projects: Henryk Sienkiewicz General Secondary School in Częstochowa, John Paul II Public Integrative Primary School in Radom, No. 66 Kindergarten in Bydgoszcz.

School staff could participate in mobility in order to:

- » teach classes – it allowed teachers or other staff members involved in school education to gain experience in working with students from other cultures, in another language, in partner schools abroad;
- » take part in organised courses or trainings – in this way the school staff could improve their professional skills, related not only to teaching, but also to the management of educational institutions;
- » undertake job shadowing – it gave school staff the opportunity to spend a certain period of time in a partner school or other educational institution, and to observe working methods in another education system.



ANNA SULEK

deputy headteacher of the Complex of Vocational Education Schools in Electronics and General Secondary Schools in Warsaw

She is an author of numerous partnership projects carried out under the eTwinning, Comenius and Erasmus+ programmes. For several years now, she has been popularising the image of the queen of sciences – maths. And she is doing so with great success. The participation of students in projects translates into their final exam results.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 2 – THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

Common denominator

She has carried out a multitude of Erasmus+ strategic partnership projects and today has no doubt: the international co-operation is an excellent opportunity to overcome one's weaknesses and improve working methods

Anna Brzezińska-Czerska: Five schools, six countries, two years of action, one topic. What did the international exchange under project dedicated to the development of key competences through bilingual teaching entail?

Anna Sulek: Its main goal was to prepare materials and try out lesson plans based on bilingual teaching. We had no experience with regards to bilingual teaching. The school in Croatia, on the other hand, had such a great deal of experience in this area that it was allowed to award specialist certification in this field. For us, this exchange was primarily time spent on observing and learning.

The most powerful experience

My first mobility abroad. It was a study visit to Budapest in 2011, and it was the beginning of my adventure with EU programmes. I was the only Pole in a group of a dozen or so people, this is I could not just say something in Polish and count on a colleague repeating it in English for me

As part of the project, did each of the schools focus on maths?

Each participating institution could choose their own subject. The school in Latvia developed lesson plans in maths and biology, which is similar to our choice, while the school in Italy focussed on the history of arts. Italians in general place a great deal of emphasis on humanistic subjects, but they also do well with the sciences, which I had a chance to verify while conducting classes for them.

Beata Karwowska: How was the idea of establishing international co-operation born?

It all started with an unfortunate accident, which forced me to take a long break from my professional life. I could not just lie at home and do nothing. I reminded

myself of the eTwinning training I had attended once, which I had wanted to look into more, when I would have time. Not long after, I was able to establish international co-operation. In the past, the conviction that the teacher is supposed to be a role model for students and speak foreign languages perfectly had prevented me from undertaking such activities. My concerns regarding the language barrier were soon dispelled and the motivation to undertake further initiatives has increased.

Maciej Zasada: You work with many schools in Europe. Is there any common denominator that links these activities?

Asking a mathematician about the common denominator is quite a risky move, so I will answer simply: for me it is maths. Since the first project, I have been looking for ways to “smuggle” as much maths as possible into activities I have carried out, in order to gain as much experience as possible in the scope of teaching maths, and for the students implementing the project to re-discover this discipline by themselves.

What is worth trying?

The student–teacher role swap. During trips, when we can go beyond the school walls, students are very willing to play the role of a teacher and share their knowledge in a very professional and interesting way

B.K.: Are the students responding with improved academic performance?

Yes, the students who implemented the first project of the programmes managed by FRSE achieved very good results in maths on their final exams, which is very satisfying. The school is also becoming increasingly popular among candidates. A few years ago, we managed to obtain the Silver Label awarded by “Perspektywy” magazine.

A.B.-C.: What is the biggest challenge in terms of integration between partners?

Polish participants often have complexes. They are worried about their language skills – that they speak English worse than others, that they will not manage to adequately communicate. This is a myth, the falseness of which can be proved as early as at the stage of preparation for the project by working with English language teachers, who can point out to the students: “Look, since you can easily communicate during your English class, you will have no problems communicating with foreigners”. Students also have concerns over accommodation arrangements. During the exchange, their peers from other countries are accommodated in their homes. The question often arises among our students: “Are you sure my two-room flat will meet the expectations of the guests?”. Yes, it will. It is only accommodation, not the essence of the project.

A.B.-C.: How do you translate your acquired experience into new activities?

We are introducing pedagogical innovations. We are also carrying out a long-term project entitled “New paths in maths”. It is attended by students from technical schools in Portugal, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Italy. The experience gained in previous activities meant that for the first time we became a leader, not just a partner. This is a new experience for us, and above all a new challenge.

School exchange and strategic partnerships

Key Action 2 allowed Polish institutions to implement two types of projects: school exchange partnerships and strategic partnerships for school education. The first consisted of the co-operation of institutions from different countries focussed on a common theme or problem to be solved. Part of these projects were exchanges of groups of students to promote tolerance and the idea of social inclusion, as well as increasing cultural awareness, motivation and involvement in the learning process. These types of projects typically lasted from 12 to 24 months, and long-term projects up to three years. The co-operation could be established by schools, kindergartens and centres running schools, fulfilling the full-time compulsory education obligation.

Strategic partnerships, on the other hand, consisted of international co-operation between educational institutions, local or regional authorities responsible for education and other organisations working for school education (research and development institutions, foundations, associations). The aim of the activities was to introduce long-term changes wherever it was necessary in order to ensure high quality education. Partnerships, which were established for a period of 12 to 36 months, could be related to:

- » innovation – with the aim of creating and promoting new solutions;
- » exchange of good practices – serving the strengthening of international activities and the exchange of methods, practices and ideas.

During the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, more than 2,500 applications were submitted for funding for the school exchange partnerships and strategic partnerships.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In this sector, support was mainly provided to vocational schools, enterprises, organisations and institutions related to vocational education and training. The implemented projects aimed at improving the quality of vocational and continuing education, both on an individual level – by organising mobilities abroad, as well as institutional or systemic one – by establishing international partnerships and implementing innovative educational solutions.

NATIONAL AGENCY'S PERSPECTIVE

A part and parcel of sector

Martyna Śmigiel: Thanks to Erasmus+, our young chefs, hairdressers, mechatronics technicians and florists are men of the world.

Izabela Laskowska: Indeed. School headteachers and teachers often stress that student mobilities under Erasmus+ are not just trips where one talks a bit in a foreign language and sees some sights. The content of mobility is very important, and the traineeship programme is prepared with taking into account the needs of local employers. The mobilities broaden young people's horizons and increase their chances of finding a good job. Thanks to interviews with headteachers of sectoral schools and thanks to tracer studies conducted by FRSE, we know the career progress of the graduates and these are success stories. It turns out that participants in Erasmus+ projects improve both hard and soft skills. All this makes it easier for them to become successful in the labour market.

They would not learn the same thing during their traineeship at home?

The traineeships offered in Poland are also of a very high quality, but thanks to the international programmes, young people can learn different production processes, technologies and diverse approaches to customer service. In the service sector, this is invaluable knowledge that is hard to find locally. There are many examples showing that during Erasmus+ mobilities, students perform tasks that go beyond the national traineeship programme and learn more new things. You can see the effects as soon as you get back. They receive better grades in language classes and far much better during practical exams. Many people experience personal transformation. Teachers often say that upon their return from mobility even introvert or shy students become more self-confident and courageous. After all, Erasmus+ is a lesson in self-reliance, independence and maturity. »

IZABELA LASKOWSKA

director of the Bureau for Vocational Education and Training, FRSE

She graduated from the Faculty of Journalism and Political Sciences at the University of Warsaw. From 2000 to 2013, she was the co-ordinator of pilot projects and innovation transfer in the Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme. She participated in the implementation of international initiatives aimed at social inclusion, e-learning, support for the low-skilled and learning in the workplace. Since 2014, she has lead a team responsible for the implementation of projects in the Vocational Education and Training sector. She is a technical delegate to WorldSkills Europe and WorldSkills International.

PHOTO: SZYMON KASZEWSKI



PHOTO: PAWEŁ KRZEPINA

erasmus+ VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



What were the first successes? First of all, attracting a variety of beneficiaries, including many companies. Secondly, the development of a network of regional consultants. Thanks to them, we reach small communities for which the development of partnership co-operation is particularly important for building the institution's prestige and for expanding education and training offer

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

» How has the programme changed over the past seven years?

We continue to use the experience of the Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme, which preceded Erasmus+ in the vocational education sector. At that time, however, mobilities were a kind of reward for the best students, they were not as common as they are now. The budget of the Erasmus+ Programme is much bigger, so more schools benefit from it – more students studying in different professions have a chance to go abroad. The awareness of schools is growing. They prepare well to mobilities and plan what can be achieved thanks to them.

Has the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework proven a success?

The success can be seen in the statistics. The number of applications is growing year by year, which means that schools see the need for mobilities, see their meaning for their students and teachers. They can use well the results of these projects. They make them recognisable in the local community and attract more new students. The European traineeships are already part and parcel of many Polish schools. The promotion of traineeships abroad brings results, because the demand for them is growing. Every year the budget is fully used. And judging by the number of submitted applications, the demand is three times greater. The cure for this is a twin Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (PO WER), under which projects placed on the Erasmus+ reserve list are implemented. In both of these programmes more than 20,000 students per year can benefit from mobilities. It proves that the past few years have been well spent. Now we would like to use this potential to show the stories of people who served a traineeship abroad and achieved professional success. They could form a network of young Erasmus+ ambassadors.

What would you like to see in the coming years of the programme?

I hope that Erasmus+ will contribute to the promotion of vocational schools and change their image of inferior choice institutions. Thanks to their prestige, traineeships abroad have already proven that being a cook, hairdresser or mechatronics technician is a great and rewarding career path.

SECTOR AT A GLANCE

Shedding the image

Today it is difficult to imagine life without skilled workers, but the last few decades have been a period of deepening crisis in vocational education and training. This process resulted in difficulties in finding qualified workers, less than expected innovation of the economy and lowering the prestige of vocational education. However, those in favour of changing this trend have a strong ally. For more than seven years, Erasmus+ projects have added an international dimension to vocational education and training. From 2014 to 2020, the Polish National Agency received almost 7,000 applications for staging traineeships abroad or establishing international partnerships. Every year there was a record of interest in participating in the Vocational Education and Training sector. In total, almost 2,000 initiatives from all over Poland were supported. Out of 380 counties and cities that have a status of a county, only 19 did not participate in the programme.

International mobility projects carried out in this sector served as a harbour from which nearly 58,000 students and teachers set off to the furthest corners of Europe to gain unique experience and learn from masters in their profession. Approximately EUR 172 million has been invested in international traineeships for students of sectoral schools. What is important, the popularity of Poland as a destination country has increased. In the course of the seven years, about 13,000 trainees and 2,700 vocational educators have raised their skills in Polish schools and companies. Beneficiaries not only learnt from others, but were also keen to share good practices and achievements. Top quality mobilities were rewarded with a European Quality Charter for Mobility. The number of Polish organisations that have received this certificate has come close to 30.

Over EUR **217 mln** in grants awarded
in the period 2014–2020 was used by beneficiaries
of almost **2,000** projects

In the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, strategic partnership projects implemented as part of Key Action 2 have become a platform for co-operation between vocational education and training institutions and business. The sum of co-financed undertakings exceeded EUR 45 million. In all partnerships established in the years 2014–2019, more than 600 educational products have been developed with a total investment exceeding EUR 20 million. Since 2019, the Polish National Agency has observed an increase in the number of projects addressing the subject of new technologies and promoting the development of digital competences in students. Thanks to this, vocational schools quickly found tools for developing skills remotely.

The achievements of projects implemented in the sector have strengthened the quality of vocational education and training in Poland and have contributed to shedding its negative image. Nobody doubts any more that the future belongs to skilled workers and the future professionals are in good hands thanks to Erasmus+.

2014 the first mobilities are organised mainly by vocational schools. The largest number of them is located in the Śląskie Voivodeship. First project applications usually concern **traineeships in foreign companies and vocational education and training institutions**

2015 an opportunity to be awarded a **European Quality Charter for Mobility in VET** opens up to Polish institutions. More than 30 institutions take part in the first call for proposals

2016 the sector's offer fits increasingly better in the systemic changes in vocational education and training. **Co-operation between schools and employers takes on a new meaning**, and career guidance in the sector becomes more practical

2017 a very important year for the sector. **Poland joins the group of countries participating in WorldSkills professional skills competitions**. FRSE becomes the organisation responsible for preparing the Polish representation team

2018 the amendment to the Education Law introduces an obligation for theoretical vocational subjects and practical vocational training teachers to undergo training in enterprises. **The costs of such training can be covered by Erasmus+ funds**

2019 Poland takes **one of the top positions in the ranking of countries with the highest number of VET student and staff mobility**. Every year, more than 20,000 people leave for traineeships and placements abroad as part of Erasmus+!

2020 according to Erasmus+ graduates, **international mobilities teach them how to co-operate in a group and find themselves in new situations**. They also arouse curiosity about the world and open up to new challenges



JOANNA ŻEBROWSKA
headteacher of the No. 7 Complex
of Schools in Tychy

She co-ordinates Erasmus+ projects which brought her many foreign and domestic awards, including the VET Excellence Award 2018 for the best vocational teacher in Europe 2018; EDUinspirator 2018 Award Winner in the category Vocational Education and Training. Privately, she enjoys travelling, skiing and visiting the Baltic Sea.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 1 – THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

Out of passion for profession

We want to ensure that sectoral vocational schools and secondary technical schools are not inferior choice institutions. Well-prepared graduates of those schools can successfully work all over the world

Martyna Śmigiel: In 2018, the European Commission presented you with an award for innovation. What does that actually mean?

Joanna Żebrowska: This award is a summary of my activities as the headteacher at the school. Since 2005, we have sent more than 300 students to foreign traineeships, for implementation of which we have received more than EUR 1 million in funding. But it is not just about the mobility itself. Throughout the whole school year, we teach our students in such a way that they are well prepared – both for traineeships and for work. For example, we have introduced lessons taught jointly by a vocational teacher and a foreign language teacher. After all, learning a language in practice is much more effective than the standard language lessons.

The effects of Erasmus+

Receiving the European Quality Charter for Mobility as well as strengthening the school's position in the local, national and European environment through EU projects and, above all, through traineeships abroad

What are the impressions of students returning from foreign mobility?

Typically, students initially feel shy or apprehensive, but once they return, they want to go again. After the first traineeship, they look at the world in a completely different way. They gain the confidence and the conviction that they can cope with difficult situations. They also learn to work under the pressure of limited time, to speak a foreign language in everyday situations, they observe different cultures and meet new people.

Do young people choose vocational schools out of passion?

It varies. I want to believe that their choice is primarily based on interest and

passion, but let us not deceive ourselves. Some students come to us because they did not manage to get somewhere else, or their friend has chosen this school. But there are also students who know exactly what they are here for.

For vocational education and training to develop, there must also be co-operation with employers, doesn't there?

This has always been the case at my school. The work placements are held in real workplaces. Young confectioners spend three days a week at school and two days a week with the employer, where they are involved in regular work. We give them the initial knowledge, so they are already aware how to operate the machines and prepare certain types of pastry during the work placements.

You also work for the Council of Vocational School Headteachers.

What solutions are needed at the system level?

Co-operation between employers and schools is very important. I would like – although it is very difficult – to involve employers in the process of creating curricula. They do not like paperwork and procedures, but they have certain practical expectations regarding our students, and those can be great guidelines for teachers. We invite employers to visit our school once a semester to talk about their expectations. And then, we try to implement it into our work with young people. It is worthwhile for specific provisions to appear in the curriculum.

Invaluable observation

I enjoy observing how the time spent at our school develops students. I am particularly pleased to witness the changes that take place in them after returning from foreign traineeships

And what about the teachers? Should they learn too?

Not only should they continue to learn, but as a matter of fact they must do so. The law stipulates that every teacher of vocational subjects is obliged to complete 40 hours of training with an employer. This has been happening in our school for several years now. Both teachers of vocational subjects and teachers of foreign languages are sent abroad to participate in traineeships related to their respective positions. As a result, a hospitality teacher stood at the reception desk of a foreign hotel and a production teacher – in the kitchen. I managed to go to Barcelona for a traineeship in a Japanese patisserie. Its owner, who originally came from Japan, won the contest for the best croissant in the city in 2016. Indeed, his croissants are incredible. I had a chance to prepare them together with him.

How would you sum up your adventure with Erasmus+ so far?

I am not sure if my school would still exist if not for this programme. The foreign traineeships have boosted its popularity and aroused the desire of young people to study gastronomy and hospitality. Teachers also see an opportunity for their own professional development through participation in mobility as chaperones.

Mobility for learners and staff

Thanks to the foreign mobility supported in **Key Action 1**, students at vocational education and training schools and graduates of these institutions, who completed their studies relatively recently, have gained professional experience and improved their language skills. They have completed traineeships or work placements in companies, practical training centres or vocational education and training centres. Their trip could last from two weeks to one year.

The curriculum carried out at that time provided for practical vocational training. An integral part of the traineeship had also a preparatory nature – language classes as well as cultural and pedagogical ones. The experience gained made it easier for the students to transition from education to employment. The record holder in terms of the number of traineeships was the Group of Agricultural Schools in Namysłów, which in the years 2014–2020 raised almost EUR 1.5 million for this purpose. Every year, about one hundred students from Namysłów participate in mobility abroad!

The Erasmus+ Programme has also provided an opportunity for the development of teaching staff. Teachers of vocational subjects, placement co-ordinators and career advisors have gained the opportunity to learn about new teaching methods or technical and organisational innovations, which are not yet available at schools and businesses at home.

Staff mobility lasted from two days to two months. During that time, teachers of theoretical or practical vocational subjects conducted classes or courses in educational institutions in one of the countries participating in the programme. They were also able to carry out traineeships in enterprises or job shadowing in vocational education and training institutions.



PAWEŁ NOWAK, EngD
assistant professor at the Institute
of Building Engineering, Warsaw
University of Technology

He is responsible for didactic projects,
foreign internships and mobility
of students, graduates and academic
staff within the Erasmus+ Programme.
In 2019, he was an expert and the coach
of Polish team in the Building Information
Modelling category during the WorldSkills
competition in Russian Kazan.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 2 – THE BENEFICIARY’S PERSPECTIVE

A conversation- -mate

Do you know how to recognise Erasmus+ veterans in a group? Those who come back from mobility have less fear of the lecturer and are not afraid to ask questions. They sit at the front in order to interact with the teacher

Michał Radkowski: Adam, a graduate of the Warsaw University of Technology, went on an Erasmus+ internship. Upon his return he wrote on your website: “I have worked on amazing projects. It was an invaluable experience. Over the last six months that I have spent in Denmark, I have probably learnt more than during most of my studies”. Are you happy or worried about these words?

Paweł Nowak: This statement cannot worry me because it is very positive. It is not an isolated opinion. Most of the students who participate in mobility gain new experience, if only in terms of what studies are like in other countries. I often tell them that if I were in their place, I would venture to a different higher education institution every semester.

The greatest success

Nomination of the “MentorCert” project
for the Best Practice award by the
Hungarian National Agency

There are still big differences in technical education in Poland and abroad?

In Poland, technical issues are at a much higher level, and that is why students coming on Erasmus+ have trouble passing them. Usually the first classes start by writing a formula on two boards, which students must memorise. In other countries there is much more emphasis on practical teaching of the profession. What we conclude in a few hours of classes, over there is conducted for two semesters. In over 20 years, we have made many close acquaintances with people from many European higher education institutions. We stay in touch and visit each other on a regular basis. I can see that teaching over there is not inferior to the educational offer in Poland, and that students are more creative. That is why, as part of the Erasmus+ projects, I try to invite foreign specialists in order to benefit from their experience and better prepare students for entering the labour market.

How do you find partners for international student placements?

At our university, over 60 people are involved in searching for partners and maintaining close contacts with them. They are known as the dean's team of advisers. We work with about 50 construction and design companies, including huge companies with international capital. Thanks to our contacts, we can send several people to each of them. For example, there is quite a large design office in Malta, serving almost half of all the European countries. They gladly accept our graduates for a one-year or six-month internship. And they are very pleased with this co-operation. Not only that, four of our graduates got offered permanent positions in that office after completing a year-long internship. Erasmus+ gives young people some amazing opportunities.

The staff of higher education institutions can also undertake further training within the framework of the programme.

Of course, I am benefitting from it myself. For the last 10 years, I have been in several places in Europe: from Norway and Iceland to Spain and Turkey. These have always been successful trips. As lecturers, we are obliged to publish scientific texts in English, so we are constantly improving our language skills, meeting new people, and some of the friendships that we have made are valuable for developing international educational projects. Our lecturers also participated in training courses on building diagnostics in Italy and Poland. These are interesting activities, which are attended by experienced people from the industry. And it is an opportunity to systematise knowledge and introduce new didactic materials.

The unexpected challenge

Maintaining the involvement of Polish and foreign partners in Erasmus+ projects and mobilising students and staff to participate in international exchanges

Does a graduate of Warsaw University of Technology who went on an Erasmus+ internship have an easier start on the labour market?

HR specialists in large corporations and the heads of small companies who recruit personally take into account what a given candidate is capable of. Knowledge, qualifications and competences count. Our graduates have a great deal of knowledge, a level of qualifications similar to those after a three-month traineeship. But what about the third element? Social competences are extremely important in general and also in the construction industry. However, they are not adequately developed in the course of the studies. That is why at our faculty we try to implement as many projects as possible based on soft competences, such as: being engaged, resistant to stress, hardworking, able to work in a group or thinking analytically. Foreign mobilities teach all of these. And the acquired experience influences how graduates present themselves during a job interview. Courage, self-confidence, boldness – these are the qualities that certainly stay with students after Erasmus+.

Co-operation for innovation and exchange of good practices

Beneficiaries applying for funding under **Key Action 2** could engage in two types of strategic partnerships. The first one consisted of the development, implementation or adaptation of innovative educational and didactic materials, and dissemination of the developed solutions and products. The latter primarily supported organisations in the creation and development of co-operation networks and in improving skills and opportunities for activities at international level through the exchange and collation of various ideas, solutions, practices and working methods.

The partnerships lasted from 12 to 36 months. A consortium could be formed by at least three organisations from three countries. The eligible participants included: vocational schools, practical training centres, teacher training centres, companies, trade associations, chambers of crafts, social partners, local and regional authorities. Extensive co-operation made it possible to build lasting relations between institutions from different sectors and countries, and the primary objective of the projects was to improve the quality of educational activities and to better match them with the needs of the labour market. In 2014–2020 period, partnerships involving Polish institutions were visible abroad.

A notable success in 2019 was the nomination of the project "MENTEE: mentoring, networking and training for European entrepreneurs", co-ordinated by INnCREASE, for the VET Excellence Award.

ADULT EDUCATION

In the period 2014–2020, Erasmus+ supported the development of non-professional adult education. Any organisation dealing with the topic could apply for a grant. As a result, the programme offer in the Adult Education sector benefited the most diverse group of recipients, even though the funds allocated to support beneficiaries were much smaller than in the remaining Erasmus+ sectors.

Wide horizons

Michał Radkowski: Do adults want to learn?

Alina Respondek: Not all of them. And not everyone is aware that they are learning. When adults are asked about it in surveys, many of them deny the fact. And that is not true. After all, each of us is learning something, even in everyday life situations. We often do it without knowing: we watch TV, listen to the radio, read, talk – and in this way gain knowledge.

Many people do not see it as learning.

Because they do not sit at a desk or do not have a teacher in front of them or they do not take part in a course or training. However, there are adult learners, especially those in employment, who are keen to participate in professional development, seminars or other activities aimed to improve competences. It is an opportunity for them to broaden their skills, learn about new tools and changing regulations, or to improve language skills. It is also a form of escape from everyday life in the workplace.

Learning is therefore not necessarily about formal settings, and Erasmus+ is not just about students.

Who are the beneficiaries of Adult Education sector?

These are organisations that support adult development in non-professional area. Most often these are associations and foundations carrying out educational activities for adults, including those from disadvantaged groups. More and more often projects are also implemented by cultural institutions: libraries, museums or community centres. Beneficiaries are also the universities of third age, folk or open universities as well as social welfare institutions and job centres. Our projects most often concern the development of key competences of adults: from the ability to understand a written text, through social and civic competences, to expression and artistic creativity. Educators from different organisations participate in training to learn how to support the development of adult learners more effectively. »

ALINA RESPONDEK

co-ordinator of the Adult Education Team, FRSE

A chemist by education, but an adult educator by vocation. She graduated in human resource management at the University of Warsaw. In the 1990s she worked in the Phare programme. Next, she was involved in the Socrates and the Lifelong Learning programmes, managed projects in the area of teacher training, and acted as a deputy director for Grundtvig sub-programme. In the Erasmus+, she is responsible for developing the adult education offer.

PHOTO: SZYMON JASZEWSKI





PHOTO: SZYMON ŁASZEWSKI



The launch of Erasmus+ meant big changes for the Adult Education sector.

The different structure of the programme, as compared to previous initiatives, was a bit challenging for small organisations, but the final results are encouraging

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

» And I do not mean only courses, but also job shadowing in foreign organisations focussing on adult education. Our beneficiaries exchange experiences with partners from other countries, learn new working methods and develop new education offers, but also organise mobilities for their adult learners. These projects are intended to improve the quality of life of adults, so that their natural predispositions and talents are used to their best advantage. Let me give you an example. One of the beneficiaries is an association working with adults with intellectual disabilities. The carers learn how not to interfere with their gaining independence. It is a general knowledge that these adults are not capable of taking care of themselves the way able-bodied people do, but it is enough not to do everything for them, be patient, and let them act. Such an approach will enable them to reach their greatest capacity, and as a result they will feel more happy and fulfilled.

You award grants, but also inspire other people. Do the beneficiaries need additional motivation to implement projects?

Many of them serve as an inspiration for us and for other less experienced organisations. Although we suggest how to develop a project or invite another group of people to it. We listen carefully to our applicants and help them choose possibly the best solutions. But I would not say that our beneficiaries need extra motivation to work. For the majority of them, working on behalf of their target groups is a passion and mission, and our projects allow them to create an even better educational offer, motivate them more effectively to develop and, what is very important, prevent their burnout.

What has been the greatest success in recent years?

Each year, we manage to increase the number of applicants representing diverse organisations. We are most proud of the fact that cultural institutions have taken an interest in our programme. In recent years, we have convinced them that their daily activities effectively develop key competences in adults. These competences were the subject of an international contact seminar for cultural institutions. Guests from all over Europe were invited and excellent ideas for joint projects were born. It was a great challenge for us, but also a great success. I am lucky to co-ordinate the work of a fantastic team. I often hear from our beneficiaries that they are people with passion, who approach everyone with care and understanding.

SECTOR AT A GLANCE

What the small one can do

Over the 2014–2020 period, the budget for project grants in the Adult Education sector has gradually and significantly increased. With each year, more and more organisations operating in the sector applied for funds to enrich their offer with non-standard approaches and innovative methods. As a result, at the end of the first Erasmus+ framework, twice as many projects were supported as compared to the first year of the programme.

The funds were most often used by associations and foundations (about 65% of beneficiaries), including those working for the benefit of seniors or people with disabilities, promoting health, ecology or pro-social behaviours and also public institutions supporting the non-professional development of adults, e.g. social welfare centres. The subject matter of implemented projects concerned primarily the development of adults who need special support, often people with lower basic skills.

The cultural institutions have untapped enormous potential – they were represented by the youngest group of the sector's beneficiaries. There are hundreds of such institutions scattered in towns all over Poland, and local residents treat them as centres for personal development. Therefore, in the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, funds were allocated for learning mobilities of the staff of libraries, museums, community centres and for partnerships formed by them. The commitment to the project helped the employees of these facilities to discover their vocation and look at their profession from a different perspective. During their visits to institutions abroad, project participants found out that the activities undertaken by libraries can contribute to the development of all key competences in adults. Cultural institutions most often took actions to develop digital, linguistic and reading comprehension skills as well as these related to providing information, and social, personal and civic competences.

In the sector, over **540** projects were carried out. The co-operation was facilitated by the partner search available at the EPAL platform

The Erasmus+ projects in the Adult Education sector have repeatedly stood out from the average. In the years 2014–2019, six project co-ordinators were awarded the title of an EDUinspirator for their deep commitment and high quality work for reliable adult education: Bartłomiej Głuszak of the Federation of Social Organisations of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, Małgorzata Tarasiuk of the Continuing Education Centre in Białystok, Aleksandra Zawalska-Hawel of the Municipal Public Library in Żory, Piotr Harhaj of the Municipal Welfare Centre in Gdynia, and Anna Kwiatkowska and Jarek Marciszewski of the Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability. They are passionate and dedicated people who work wholeheartedly to promote lifelong learning in their communities.

2014 first year and first success: as part of Key Action 1, the sector saw the **largest number of applications approved** as compared to the total number of applications submitted in all programme countries. NGOs most often apply for funds, but the offer is also of interest to private companies

2015 EPAL platform is in full swing. It serves as a source of information on adult education. It **enables adult education staff from all over Europe to share experiences and establish co-operation**, also in the form of projects funded by the Erasmus+ Programme

2016 the rules for the allocation of funds as part of Key Action 2 changed. **Organisations operating on a smaller scale no longer have to compete** with large-scale projects

2017 the budget for the sector is increased and its **offer reaches the farthest regions of Poland**. The interest on the part of cultural institutions, which are submitting a growing number of applications is a great success

2018 Adult Education is expanding far beyond the Erasmus+ Programme. **A large number of high quality applications allows to reach for POWER funds**. Co-operation with this programme is also being strengthened thanks to a new project "Chance – new opportunities for adults", aimed at less competent adults

2019 Poland receives a significantly increased budget, thanks to which **the number of approved projects grows by 60%**

2020 the last call for proposals under Erasmus+ in the Adult Education sector saw a **significant increase in the number of submitted applications**. As part of Key Action 2, the number of applications has increased by more than 100%



ALEKSANDRA ZAWALSKA-HAWEL
director of the Municipal Public Library
in Żory

She has extensive experience in co-ordinating projects managed by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System. In 2016, she was awarded the EDUinspirator title in the Adult Education category. She is interested in the subject of non-formal education, the offer of which she is constantly developing in her institution.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 1 – THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

Something more than just books

Makerspace, drones and coding courses – this is how the library in Żory transformed from a traditional lending library into an interactive meeting centre and education mecca. Much of this is thanks to Erasmus+

Ula Idzikowska: The Żory Library has recently undergone a real transformation. What role did the Erasmus+ projects play in this makeover?

Aleksandra Zawalska-Hawel: If it were not for Erasmus+ projects, we would not have been able to go abroad to learn from others and gather inspiration. The knowledge we gained and the fact that we opened up to new ideas were essential for initiating far-reaching changes. A kind of revolution took place in Żory. We completely changed the image of the library. It ceased to be just a lending library and instead it became a real window to the world – a creative space where you gain knowledge and share your skills.

The biggest change

I think I have managed to infect the staff with my passion for exploration. We are constantly learning new things. And the Erasmus+ Programme makes it easier for us – it opens the door to education in a wider sense

Where did you get your inspiration from?

We have visited many libraries, including the Scandinavian ones, which are widely recognised as the best in Europe. We not only watched the work of librarians during job shadowing, but we also collected information on marketing and trends in collection management. In order to better understand all this, some of the staff took English language courses. During our trips abroad we also paid attention to functional solutions in libraries. It just so happened that this period coincided with a project to create the interior design of our new library. So we kept sending inspirations to our architect on a regular basis.

Why is the visual appearance of the library so important?

It is common knowledge that people prefer to spend time in visually appealing

spaces. If we want the library to become a meeting place, we must make sure that people want to spend time in it. We have tried to create an attractive place similar to those we have visited abroad. The pleasant surroundings helped a lot: the proximity of the park and its location in the very centre of the city. The new library will be housed in a revitalised electric mill. We have retained some of the mill's machines in order to preserve the history of the building. However, new spaces have also been created, such as a rooftop café.

The greatest aspiration

We want to equip people with tools that will make their daily lives easier or inspire them to learn.

In order for them to be able to continue to develop their interests, learn new things and new languages.

We will do this so they become open to others, because this will make others open to them

And what about makerspace?

Such creative spaces, where you can develop and teach others, are slowly becoming a standard. In our library we pay a lot of attention to technological innovations. Many things, such as programming, simply must be learnt. That is why we offer coding courses for children and teenagers. For a long time, we have also had a 3D printer, drones and robots. We want to awaken children's passion for technology. Makerspace is also a great venue for other activities. A place where members of our community can teach others, for example, how to use a sewing machine and where volunteers from the European Solidarity Corps run their own creative workshops. In another area of the library, they teach English, Spanish and Turkish.

You have pulled the librarians out of their comfort zone, which traditionally used to be between the library bookshelves. What impact did this have on them?

Foreign trips have changed their approach to work. We took part in two renowned conferences dedicated to modern librarianship. Ideas for change were born from just listening! A library is about much more than just the lending of books, and librarians are not merely people responsible for the collections. They are actually enthusiasts and experts who can share their knowledge with others. In our team, apart from certified librarians, we also have an artist, historian, ethnographer, linguist, film expert, chemist and IT specialist. And almost each of them, in addition to standard reader support, conducts their own educational activities.

In the descriptions of your projects we can often come across the term "library of tomorrow". What will such a library look like?

The basis of our activity will, naturally, remain the collections, but there will also be other aspects of it: the scientific, digital and performative zones. These are places where people will create culture together. In addition, we will invest in education, including our own, because our strength comes from knowledge and wisdom. So, this is certainly not the end of our adventure with Erasmus+. When we go abroad, we show films pointing out what we have achieved so far. Many people shake their heads in disbelief: "And you are doing all this in a library?! But how?".

Mobility for adult education staff

As part of projects within **Key Action 1**, international mobilities of employees were co-financed. Such staff members were mainly educators and managers of organisations providing non-professional adult education. The offer included participation in courses, seminars and conferences as well as observing colleagues working in an adult education organisation in another country. Erasmus+ also financed teaching and training assignments, i.e. providing classes for adult learners or training for adult education staff in partner organisations abroad.

Thanks to these activities, the adult educators could look at the learning process from a completely new perspective, improve the quality of services offered by their home organisation, and even develop international co-operation. The mobilities were also an opportunity to improve foreign language skills and broaden knowledge of other cultures.

In the years 2014–2020, over 750 applications were submitted under Key Action 1, and among the beneficiaries who implemented at least four projects were: the Polish Association for People with Intellectual Disability from Lublin, the Centre for Continuing Education in Krakow and the Empowering Children Foundation from Warsaw. Every year the number of consortia grew. This formula was popular among smaller and less experienced organisations. In the consortium, it was the co-ordinator, e.g. a large library, who submitted the application on behalf of the entire group of partners.

The most diverse group of recipients took advantage of the opportunity to raise competences in this sector. It was a great success to activate institutions working for people with special needs, seniors and local communities from the most remote parts of Poland.



EWA SMUK-STRATENWERTH
co-founder of the Ecological
and Cultural Association ZIARNO

An ecologist and community worker by conviction. She is one of the initiators of the “Childbirth with dignity” social campaign. In 1993, she moved to the village of Grzybów, where she runs the Ecological Folk University, and together with her husband runs a 28-hectare organic farm, cheese maker’s dairy and bakery.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 2 – THE BENEFICIARY’S PERSPECTIVE

Age does not matter

Nearly 30 years ago she sowed her first seeds, and year after year she harvests better and better crops. Listeners from all over Poland come to Grzybów to taste life in harmony with nature in the atmosphere of partnership

Michał Radkowski: You escaped from Warsaw to the countryside in order to open a folk university there. That was brave.

Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth: I had always been quietly dreaming about it. In the early 1990s, in Warsaw’s Ochota district, I worked at the Ecological Education Centre Eko-Oko. As early as then I was looking for a place where I could continue my socio-educational activities, which would be linked to the rural environment. I managed to find it in 1993. I would not have taken such a brave step myself. The man who would one day become my current husband ran an organic farm in Grzybów. The move turned my life upside down, but it was a very positive change.

The most important outcome

The instances when the graduates of the Ecological Folk University, after completing or even during our course, set up and run organic farms or engage in the development of agroecology

So, you and your husband had a farm, but there was no university yet.

How was it established?

We opted for organic farming and its practical teaching. We wanted to combine different areas of knowledge and experience, to motivate the learners to develop and discover their talents. That is why we intertwined our classes with manual work, such as carpentry or weaving. We have also introduced into our course a model of the Oxford-style debate, during which a statement is discussed without offending or ridiculing other participants. The atmosphere of acceptance and mutual respect was important for the learners. This was complemented by singing – an integrating element, but one that needed to break through some barriers. The beginnings were difficult because Poles do not want to sing, but after some time they got so into it, that it was a joy to listen to them.

What have you managed to change in the Polish countryside through co-operation with partners?

I knew that it is impossible to blindly copy all foreign solutions. After all, it was not a matter of turning a Polish village into a Danish one, where the people's universities come from. I wanted to keep what is good here and change what actually needed changing. I also wanted to make the courses longer and more diverse, and adapt them to the local community. Then I proposed a segment on ecology and wellbeing. This had to be done carefully, because people in rural areas are sceptical of environmentalists. So, in order not to alienate them, we started by introducing classes on healthy cuisine, which turned out to be a breakthrough and changed the eating habits of the participants. We showed them, for example, how to incorporate vegetables into familiar dishes. They also had meetings with nutritionists and doctors, followed by gymnastics and massages. During IT classes, they learnt how to use the internet, send e-mails or write cover letters. It was very important for the participants – they learnt about things that their children and grandchildren were telling them about. The group also worked with a psychologist on personal development. Many of these ideas were the result of trips to our partners where we could see how such activities worked in practice.

Invaluable observation

Seeing the change that is taking place in the learners – grown-up people – during the two-year course at the Ecological Folk University: greater maturity in discussion, self-confidence and openness to co-operation

Did the years of involvement in Erasmus+ projects have an impact on ZIARNO?

We are at a completely different level today than we were several years ago. If a small organisation from the countryside is the second one after the University of Warsaw to receive a distinction in the EDUinspiracje 2018 edition in the special category "25th anniversary of FRSE" for projects in the Adult Education category, that certainly speaks volumes. It is nice that someone has noticed us, especially as we carry out all our projects with passion, heart, and dedication. One of the projects in which we took part resulted in the establishment of the National Network of Folk Universities, the signing of an agreement with the Polish government and the inclusion of these entities in the priorities for the development of civil society. Such successes give a sense of empowerment and the conviction that what we are doing in Grzybów is worth continuing.

How has adult education changed thanks to the programme?

I am, and I always have been, a great Erasmus+ enthusiast since the beginning, because this programme builds a sense of European community. Thanks to international mobility, I can show both my neighbours in Grzybów and learners how people live in other countries, and at the same time dispel the many myths that function in our imagination. Erasmus+ projects are of great value in overcoming stereotypes about foreign cultures.

Multilateral projects implemented with the participation of Polish institutions

The scope of activities undertaken as part of **Key Action 2** was much wider than under Key Action 1. The funding was used to organise partner meetings, produce joint results and develop co-operation between organisations dealing with non-professional adult education in different countries. The projects were implemented in international partnerships and the beneficiaries could choose between two types of these undertakings.

The first is strategic partnerships supporting the exchange of good practices, aimed at implementing modern solutions at a European level. On the other hand, strategic partnerships for innovation served to develop products (e.g. curricula or educational tools), which could be widely used in adult education.

The aim of both types of activities was to increase the access of adult learners to an attractive educational offer, enabling, for example, the development of key competences (linguistic, digital, social, civic and entrepreneurial), necessary to improve the quality of life. The co-operation of the organisation included not only the exchange of experience and good practices, but also the development and testing of new programmes and methods and organisation of joint events, including highly desirable educational mobility of adult learners from the target groups.

In the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, Key Action 2 enjoyed only marginally less interest than Key Action 1 – applications for funding partnerships were submitted over 740 times.

YOUTH

The basis for the activities within this sector is non-formal education, in other words, what a young person learns in his or her free time, taking up activities that are typically not offered in traditional educational institutions. Under the Erasmus+ Programme, youth is understood very broadly, which is why the sector's offer has been divided into three key actions. In addition to raising competences and developing educational opportunities within the framework of these actions, there is also space for activities aimed at building an understanding between the world of youth and the world of adults.

Never-ending adventure

Michał Radkowski: Would Erasmus+ exist without young people?

Anna Pavlovych: Of course not! This sector allows young people to pursue their passions, to develop their language skills, but also to gain their first experiences in civic life. These projects are based on the grassroots initiatives of youth.

We want to let them speak so that they work for the benefit of organisations and the local communities where they operate. It is young people who have the most interesting ideas, know how to develop their small homelands. It is they who encourage their peers to participate in social actions or elections, and they engage with the local authorities to co-decide on what is happening around them.

Are young people willing to take advantage of the opportunities that Erasmus+ gives them?

The numbers speak for themselves. Since 2014, in the Youth sector, 3,000 Polish organisations have taken advantage of the programme, and if we add foreign partners – 13,000 organisations. Over 90,000 young people have gone abroad to gain new experience and establish international friendships. By the end of 2020, we will provide almost EUR 80 million for project co-financing.

Is this a satisfactory result?

Most definitely, although the potential is much greater. For a long time, I have seen how many good ideas young people have. Unfortunately, we must reject some projects due to the lack of funds for their implementation. However, there is also good news: the upcoming Erasmus+ budget planned for 2021–2027, is to be much larger. This means that more projects will be implemented, and the voice of youth will be heard even better in Europe. »

ANNA PAVLOVYCH

co-ordinator of the Youth Team, FRSE

A project manager with over 15 years of experience in education, marketing, responsible business, recruitment and employer branding. A graduate of the University of Warsaw and the SGH Warsaw School of Economics. She has been associated with the Foundation for the Development of the Education System since 2007. She gained experience in the Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme and the Scholarship and Training Fund. Since 2017, she is co-ordinating the Youth sector within Erasmus+.

PHOTO: AGNIESZKA UCINSKA





PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF PACHOLAK

erasmus+ YOUTH



The main challenge for the sector at the beginning of the programme was to maintain its visibility and character when it became part of a larger structure. It was not easy to break through with non-professional educational content in a programme that mainly concerns formal education

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

» Our young people have had the opportunity to travel abroad as the part of the exchange programme. What did they say upon their return?

Before leaving, some of them were fearful and full of worries that they might not manage linguistically. This was unnecessary. When they arrived and started talking to their colleagues from Germany, Spain or the United Kingdom, it turned out that they were doing fine. Young people from Poland are very well educated, speak foreign languages and are active in a civic context. They represent us worthily both in local projects in our country and abroad.

Were they equally eager to get involved in the European Voluntary Service?

Apart from youth exchanges, this was probably the most recognisable action of the Youth sector. Young people went abroad for longer – for a few weeks or even a year. While abroad, they implemented their ideas in schools, kindergartens or local communities. They taught languages, painted, sang, played football together with children, and at the same time gained experience in new fields, learnt foreign languages and engaged with other cultures. Since 2018, volunteer projects have already been implemented under the European Solidarity Corps programme. This proves that the European Commission wanted to distinguish volunteering as a component which is important for young people.

Has working in the Youth sector given you youthful energy, optimism and joy?

I am a huge fan of it! I have participated in youth exchanges many times in the past, and I have even had some successes to show for it. Together with my Italian and Spanish peers, we discussed the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in Denmark before Poland joined the European Union. The initial draft lacked an article on how to leave the Union. We added it. I never thought it would be necessary to reach for it. This illustrates that we, the young people, already perceived something that nobody had thought of before. The exchanges I have taken part in have been an amazing experience and forged life-long friendships. To this day, I keep in touch with these friends, we meet, we cheer each other on, and we are happy when one of us is successful. It is my great adventure with Erasmus that keeps going on and on, and on.

SECTOR AT A GLANCE

Seven years with youth

The Erasmus+ Programme in the Youth sector is coming to an end with almost 3,000 completed projects, which are backed by thousands of satisfied young people and those working with them. The participants of the mobility projects came back with a wealth of experience, and international co-operation developed new competences within them and allowed them to build lasting relations. Some, such as Mateusz Piątkiewicz – winner of the EDUInspirator title in 2014 – did not rest on the laurels, and in each new round of project calls they applied for funds for further initiatives. Others have gained recognition beyond their local communities thanks to their projects. An example of this is the members of the Volunteer Fire Brigade from the village of Lotyń, who in 2019 received the Florian Prize awarded by the Main Board of the Union of Volunteer Fire Brigades of the Republic of Poland. Young firefighters won this distinction in the Foreign Co-operation category for the implementation of the "Transnational youth initiative" together with their peers from Germany. As part of it, they trained with their friends from Lübeck rescue operations during simulated fires in buildings and after car accidents.

New Erasmus+ youth initiatives have been promoted by... *The hole in the sock of emigration*. A video with this title was made by Polish and English youth from environments at risk of marginalisation. For years, it served as the material for work on the subject of emigration, homelessness and alcohol addiction, which could be used in classes of entrepreneurship or social studies. The documentary went beyond the school walls very quickly and set off on a tour of film festivals. It was screened in Los Angeles and Berlin, and the authors even returned with prizes from the Festival Wrażliwy in Gdynia and Żubroofka International Short Film Festival in Białystok.

The Youth sector concludes first Erasmus+

framework with excellent results: almost

3,000 projects finalised, with a total amount of almost EUR **80 mln** allocated

Educational materials for work with young people were also developed in strategic partnerships. The result of one of them is a free, multiplayer computer game *New shores – a game for democracy*, created by the Wrocław Centre for System Solutions in co-operation with the Hungarian Rogers Foundation and the Slovakian Tandem organisation. The game was created for those who are looking for attractive educational tools to help understand the challenges of the modern world. It allows young people to actively make decisions, deal with their consequences and draw conclusions from them. The game gained the recognition of the jury of the prestigious The Educators' Challenge Awards. It was ranked among the 10 best projects, and its creators have received an award from the Global Challenges Foundation – the founder of the contest.

Those seven years with youth have shown that non-formal education is inspiring and that it is worth creating it together with those to whom it is addressed.

2014 despite the new rules, calls for proposals in this sector have attracted interest from the outset. **The first calls succeeded in allocating all of the funds** and keeping the number of participants in mobility at a similar level as in the previous programmes

2015 as many as 31% of young people who take part in Erasmus+ Youth projects this year are from **disadvantaged groups**

2016 Europe is celebrating the **20th anniversary of the European Voluntary Service**. Young people in Poland are becoming increasingly interested in volunteering in Ukraine, and more and more young French people are coming to Poland

2017 the nature of international relations is stabilising. Polish institutions implementing youth projects most often **co-operate with organisations from Spain and Italy**, followed by Romania, Lithuania and Bulgaria

2018 this year marks a milestone for youth volunteering: on the 30 October, **the new programme of the European Commission – the European Solidarity Corps**, is inaugurated in Poland

2019 the Polish EuroPeers network **is being revived**. It consists of former participants of Erasmus+ Youth projects who want to share their experiences through activities aimed at their peers

2020 first summaries show that the sector's offer attracted **beneficiaries from regions with the highest percentage of young people** and from the most urbanised regions. According to the volunteers, the greatest benefit of international projects is the development of language skills and overcoming communication barriers in an international environment



SONIA ZAJĄC

co-ordinator of Erasmus+ projects, Centre for Youth Co-operation and Mobility

She graduated in history and started her career from local volunteering. Today, she co-ordinates international exchanges and volunteering and trains youth workers at the Centre for Youth Co-operation and Mobility in Gdynia, with which she has been related since 2012.

PHOTO: SZYMON ŁASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 1 – THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

Let's do it together

In Gdynia, they want youth to change the world, and in order to do that it is necessary to get to know it first. The projects of the Centre for Youth Co-operation and Mobility show how little Polish youth differs from their peers from other countries

Martyna Śmigiel: You show young people that their attitude can change the world around them.

Sonia Zając: For almost 20 years now, we have been working to build a civil society. We want young people to take matters into their own hands, to organise themselves, to solve problems they see around them. We are opening up their way to non-formal education, because it is also possible to learn and develop outside of school, for example, through volunteering. In this way, we acquire new competences, develop potential, increase our chances on the labour market and in other areas of life. I know a thing or two about it, because I started as a volunteer myself.

Recurring memory

I remember a volunteer from Belarus, who left us as a completely different person. Previously closed and shy, answering only “Yes” and “No” questions, and after the end of the project – open, sociable, talkative and already planning further activities

Every year, you host about 20 people from other countries.

They come to our organisation, but also to other Tri-city institutions that we work with. There are more and more organisations that want to host volunteers. Foreigners support their activities in a very special way because they give something unique from themselves. Contact with foreign volunteers opens people up to other cultures and new experiences – the benefits are mutual.

You have moved from the local level to the European, international one.

In 2004, we started participating in the European Voluntary Service, sending our volunteers abroad and hosting foreigners at home. Now, through the Erasmus+ Programme, we are organising international youth exchanges, training and

placements. The essence of such projects: meetings with people from other countries, getting to know foreign cultures, fits perfectly into the mission of our association. We also encourage people with special needs to participate.

Is disability not an obstacle to getting actively involved?

We want to support people with disabilities to overcome their fears. Of course, it is quite a challenge to involve them in voluntary work or exchanges, but we are doing our utmost to make our activities as accessible as possible. This is, in fact, one of the priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme. It has been a great success for us to obtain funding for a project involving the exchange of young people with various degrees of physical disability, coming from Ukraine, Poland, Georgia, Slovenia and Romania. The young people stayed with us for 10 days, during which they learnt about each other's passions and organised workshops. For many of them it was the first opportunity to talk in a foreign language or to organise group activities by themselves. In this way they not only gained practical skills, but also self-confidence and self-esteem. They realised that despite their physical limitations, they could teach others and give a lot from themselves.

Longest journey

It continues, because our work is like a never-ending journey. I guess we will never say that we know everything, that we are sure of everything or that we have nothing left to learn. Each project is a new challenge, a new person, a new situation, and a new experience that enriches us

Practical skills and passions are present in many of your projects, for example, in "eMOTION's mashup" workshops.

This particular project took place during an international exchange of young people who were passionate about dance. Together they created a theatre and dance performance about the influence of emotions on us and how to express them through movement. The culmination of the project was a performance in the open space in the centre of Gdynia. Thanks to this undertaking, the young people discovered how emotions are treated in different cultures and at the same time learnt to work in a group.

How do the residents of Gdynia and its surroundings perceive your efforts?

The people of the Tri-city and the staff of the institutions who come into contact with our volunteers develop through these relationships an openness to the world and to others. This works especially for people who have little contact with foreigners on a day-to-day basis, and there are many such people. By working with volunteers from other countries they learn tolerance, develop curiosity about the world and alter their surroundings. If an Italian volunteer comes to the children's day-care centre and starts telling them what childcare looks like in his or her country, the staff of the centre gain a new perspective, look at their work differently and improve it. Volunteers are also the best proof that volunteering itself makes sense. Through their work and attitudes, they encourage others to act.

Learning mobility

Key Action 1 in this field covered three types of activities: exchange programmes, mobility of youth workers and the European Voluntary Service. The first type of initiatives involved transnational meetings of groups of peers aged between 13 and 30, coming from at least two European Union countries or partner countries. The subject matter of the projects was very diverse; the focus was on strengthening values such as solidarity, tolerance and democracy. The most important aim of those undertakings was to gain experience outside of the school or university walls. During the exchanges, young people spent up to 21 days together, participating in activities such as workshops, exercises, debates, games or sports activities.

The second type of activities included foreign mobility of youth workers, lasting from two days to two months. Beneficiaries could participate in a course or training event, take part in a seminar, internship or study visit, observe work in other organisations or acquire practical educational experience. Such projects enabled the exchange of experience amongst organisations working with young people during their free time outside of school hours.

The third type of activities was dedicated to people between the ages of 17 and 30 who could take advantage of the offer of unpaid work in foreign institutions and organisations. Such trips were an opportunity for young people to express their personal involvement in selected initiatives and to develop social and linguistic competences. European Voluntary Service projects were conducted from 2014 to 2018. Similar initiatives which were implemented for the benefit of local communities became part of a new EU programme – European Solidarity Corps.

Under Key Action 1, applications for funding for youth mobility projects were the most popular – they have been submitted almost 7,400 times!



PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI, THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY OF THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY

AGNIESZKA MIROCHA
vice-president of the Antares
Foundation from Krakow

She is passionate about astronomy, which is the focus of her doctorate. She established the foundation to show young people and adults that science is not about boring and incomprehensible equations. As part of the Erasmus+, she runs youth exchanges and strategic partnerships.

KEY ACTION 2 – THE BENEFICIARY’S PERSPECTIVE

Under a common sky

Doctoral students from Krakow prove that the evolution of the universe can be talked about with lightness and simplicity, and scientific knowledge can be smuggled into play

Martyna Śmigiel: Thanks to Erasmus+ you teach others to look up into the stars.

Agnieszka Mirocha: We have set up a foundation with a view to popularise astronomy. At the time, we were students of astronomy at the Jagiellonian University and we saw the enormous potential of this science, how it affects the imagination of people, including those outside the academic world. But it all began with egoistic motives.

Lucky number

4 – this number of projects we have implemented so far through the Erasmus+. And we started out without any knowledge about international activities

Can you shed some light on this?

We were trying to raise money for a field trip. It was 2015, we wanted to see a solar eclipse, which at the time was only possible in the Faroe Islands or Spitsbergen. As a student research club, we were looking into various ways to finance such a trip – both through the higher education institution as well as outside of it – as an NGO. In the end, we did not manage to go, but by that point we had already registered as a foundation. I learnt about the Erasmus+ Programme from a colleague who took part in the European Voluntary Service. I took part in training on non-formal education and got a lot of information about the possibilities of carrying out projects. We decided to build upon that.

Today you have several such projects under your belt. Did you find yourself passionate about Erasmus+?

Definitely, because the programme has given us new opportunities. The student research club at university has a very small budget and faces some bureaucratic difficulties in organising its own initiatives on a larger scale. The university also has strict requirements as to how much we can spend on a given budget category.

In the Erasmus+ Programme, we have much greater freedom, and in addition, we can operate internationally. Going abroad is not a problem, even if it involves high costs. We can obtain financial support for practically all of our ideas.

You have moved from a local to a European scale...

This was a natural process of development which was encouraged by the people we met through Erasmus+. During one of the training courses for young leaders, I met Martina, a 17-year-old girl from Slovakia, who was also interested in astronomy and was a member of a science club in her hometown.

We thought it would be worth doing something together. That is how the project "We are all stars" came about. As part of it, young people from Poland and Slovakia created an educational astronomy game, while learning to read scientific charts, developing logical thinking or acquiring knowledge about the types of stars and their evolutionary paths at the same time.

Most important result

Competences that are acquired by our volunteers and project participants. They work in international groups, in a foreign language, with people from different cultural backgrounds, they use online tools. This will bear fruit in their future professional and personal lives

Anyone can use your materials.

Yes, because we publish them free of charge on our website in several languages. We have also shown games in schools, and many teachers are interested in educational work conducted in such a form. Most games involve competition, but we wanted them to be more co-operative. There is, of course, an element of competition, but nevertheless, players have to help each other to get through all the stages. This teaches them to be co-operative and open to others.

Do you also learn from working on the projects?

All the time. We started as a group of students doing a few local shows about the stars and astronomy, and today we are acting on a European scale, disseminating our activities to other countries. And we are getting used to working internationally, with people from other cultures, in a foreign language. We have broadened our horizons.

What are your plans with regard to Erasmus+?

For the time being, we are focussing on the latest project, which is related to the internet of things, a system of devices equipped with sensors that collect information and communicate with each other. For example, a smart refrigerator can inform the owners that they have just run out of eggs. Or it can order them itself. It is not science fiction, such things can be done by yourself, using simple sensors and programming tools. We want to show it to young people and encourage them to experiment.

Young people with initiative

Strategic partnerships, i.e. international co-operation of organisations and institutions dealing with youth and non-formal education, supported under **Key Action 2**, were utilised to implement innovative projects. These projects offered the exchange of experiences and solutions, improvement in ways of working with youth, learning new methods, creating educational programmes and innovative tools used in youth work – so that young people could increase their competences and to make it easier for them to find their place in the adult world. The scale of the projects was truly diverse. Beneficiaries had the opportunity to co-operate with one partner from abroad or implement large undertakings, which in some cases had even more than a dozen entities involved.

Projects aimed at exchange of good practices could include:

- » meetings of international partners;
- » activities aimed at the development of competences and learning (short-term joint staff training events or blended mobility of learners).

Beneficiaries could also apply for long-term mobility for youth workers. They were organised within the framework of projects, such as those aimed at:

- » development, testing and approval of innovative educational programmes, methods and tools;
- » activities for the dissemination of results.

The second type of activities supported under Key Action 2 were transnational youth initiatives – projects implemented and co-ordinated independently by groups of young people. Their aim was to work together with young people from different countries and to share their experiences. Among the organisations which most often applied for funds in the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework were: Cyryl & Metody Solun Brothers Foundation from Jaroslaw or the Regional Volunteer Centre from Kielce.



BARBARA MOŚ

director of the Europe4Youth Association
She is a social project co-ordinator, trainer and social researcher. She specialises in youth policy, youth education programmes and youth information. In Krakow, she founded the Civic Dialogue Committee for Youth and chaired it for many years. She works with many youth initiatives as a Eurodesk consultant and a member of the SALTO-YOUTH Participation & Information Think Tank.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

KEY ACTION 3 – THE BENEFICIARY’S PERSPECTIVE

Exercises in democracy

Support for policy reform is not about young people dressing up in suits and pretending to be adults. We teach them what partnership is about and how to discuss the issues that are important to them

Karolina Ludwikowska: Sitting opposite each other there is an official in a suit and a teenager with a nose piercing. And... then what?

How do debates between young people and decision makers play out?

Barbara Moś: We are in the conference room, with a lot of people around: project participants, media, listeners. The young people are talking about what their peers want and where the essence of the problem lies. The decision-makers listen a lot, calculating in their heads what is possible to achieve and what is not. The conversation continues. Ultimately, the best proposals are rewarded and all of them are referred for further work.

Interesting observation

The emergence of a sense of solidarity among a group of boys who considered inequality and discrimination to have its source in evolution. It was a beautiful moment when they began noticing a little bit of diversity and started working to protect it

In order to talk to those in power, do young people need to learn some rules, a specialised vocabulary?

Young people are experts in the field of youth, and the fact that they talk about their ideas in their own language is of great value. However, in order to be understood, it is important to formulate one’s proposals properly, to put them into objectives, to fit them into the schedule and to calculate the cost of the project. These are the skills that we use in social project development workshops – for this purpose we have created a board game called “CrackIT!”, which helps players to formulate thoughts into coherent proposals, without impeding creativity.

Officials – too conservative, youth – not serious enough. Such generalisations appear on both sides. How are you trying to change this mindset?

Well, sometimes these stereotypes are proven to be true. But people learn to work together despite barriers. The method that always helps to combat prejudice is to create a loose, informal atmosphere. An example is the introductory round, during which each participant – from a 13-year-old to an elderly official – have to invent their animal alter ego and present it with a gesture or a sound... I leave the rest to the imagination.

Projects carried out under Key Action 3 are policy-oriented and may therefore be perceived as less attractive than international youth exchanges. How do you promote them?

Participation in them provides an opportunity to influence reality, respond to the real problems of youth and build optimal conditions for young people's development. Yes, it is politics – but it is the kind of politics we would like to see on television: taking care of common affairs, learning partnership. It is also about learning to think in terms of projects, to create public policies and to discuss them with the authorities.

The most important conclusion

The best results are achieved by giving young people as much room for action as possible – it is not a new thing, but it is confirmed from project to project

What influence do young people have on the city's policy?

Our greatest success was to contribute to the creation of Krakow's youth policy. Each successive project contributes to its development, as each year we take up new topics on which we work with young people. The year 2019 was devoted to culture for young people, and the theme of 2020 is youth workshops and green spaces. We are also looking forward to supporting entrepreneurship and creating a mentoring system for young people.

And how do participants change under the influence of Erasmus+ projects?

Young people, above all, gain confidence. They enter projects a little bit in the dark and leave with full awareness of their capabilities. Working on real social problems and collectively creating solutions that later come into effect gives amazing results: new competences, increased motivation and activeness, as well as a greater interest in how ideas are being implemented. After participating in the project, young people look for opportunities to get involved in making decisions, join youth councils or create their own projects.

As a teenager, did you know that you can change the reality around you and your peers?

I first came across social projects at the university. I felt that I had wasted most of my life, simply by not knowing about such opportunities! The schools taught me that exams and grades are the most important aspect. There were trips and exchanges, but it was the teachers who were in charge of them, which limited the students to being passive recipients of services. That is why, shortly after my first youth exchange, together with my friends we set up an association to offer young people information about the projects in which they can take a lead.

Youth policy development

The projects carried out under **Key Action 3** in the Youth sector have benefitted not only the participants, but also entire organisations and local communities. Polish institutions were able to obtain support for activities aimed at developing youth policy. The goal of these projects was to build relations between young people, the institutions and decision-makers, by creating a space for discussion on issues concerning young people. That is why, under this action, project activities very often consisted of the organisation of events devoted to policies and tasks carried out by European Union institutions in relation to young people. Most often they took the form of meetings, seminars, debates, consultations and workshops. Projects supporting the development of youth policies could last from 3 to 24 months.

Key Action 3 also supported activities aimed at developing a structured dialogue. Projects could be transnational, but, uniquely, national activities could also be carried out (without involving a group from another country) – which was the only instance of such in the Erasmus+ Youth sector.

The development of youth policies within the framework of this action was addressed by groups consisting of at least 30 people from 13 to 30 years of age. They could invite for co-operation institutions and persons responsible for youth policy, e.g. at the local level.

Among the beneficiaries of Key Action 3 were organisations from the largest cities, but projects were also implemented in smaller centres, e.g. in Pomorze region in Chalupy (Foundation for Supporting Local Development Initiatives), in Lutomiersk near Łódź (Public Trust Foundation "Publica Fides") or in Sosnówka near Lublin ("Active Frontier" Association).

PO WER

Long-standing experience in the implementation of educational programmes enabled the Foundation for the Development of the Education System to launch innovative undertakings on a European scale, combining the financial capabilities of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (PO WER) with the benefits of the Erasmus+ Programme. These initiatives have made it possible to finance the best projects from the Erasmus+ reserve lists of School Education, Vocational Education and Training, and Adult Education sectors, and to co-finance international mobility for students with disabilities and those in a difficult financial situation. The PO WER team have also implemented their own bespoke funding paths, which opened innovative educational opportunities to new groups of recipients.

The power to act

Michał Radkowski: Mobility, mobility, mobility. This is the shortest way to describe what has happened in the last seven years thanks to the PO WER programme.

Liliana Budkowska: Most definitely yes. As part of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development in 2014–2020, more than 80,000 pupils, teachers, students and people working with adults embarked on a foreign mobility. They were respectively taking part in courses, internships and work placements, joining peers from another country during their school classes, and observing the work of their foreign counterparts.

What do you hear from them when they return back home?

First and foremost, I hear joy in their voices. Foreign mobility gives teachers and people working with adults a chance to acquire new skills. In other countries, they can learn about new tools and methods of working. The experience they come back with shines through in their work. Their activities become more interesting, and they themselves are less likely to fall into a routine. For those who run educational institutions, these trips grant an opportunity to see how to effectively manage such institutions. Partner associations or schools willingly share their successes as well as their failures. However, for students and teachers, the greatest benefit of mobility is the improvement of language skills. Because they speak mainly English every day, it quickly becomes their second nature.

The flagship project of the PO WER is the “Transnational student mobility”. Where does this success come from?

This project has been developed from beginning to end in the FRSE. It complements the offer of the Erasmus+ Programme with the possibility for students to acquire competences necessary for their personal development, future employment and for being active Europeans, but it also focusses on learning foreign languages and developing learning skills. As part of this project, students in small groups »

LILIANA BUDKOWSKA

director of the Bureau for External and Intersectoral Programmes, FRSE

Pedagogue, certified teacher, the Ministry expert on the professional promotion of teachers. Since 2003, she has been involved in international projects in the field of education. She led the implementation of the educational sub-programme Comenius. Currently, she oversees the work of teams implementing projects within: Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development, intergovernmental bilateral programmes (with Lithuania and Ukraine): SALTO EECA – covering Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation, and the Edukacja programme conducted under European Economic Area.

PHOTO: SZYMON ŁASZEWSKI





PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF PACHOLAK

PO WER



The FRSE takes advantage of the additional support available for Polish institutions through the funds of the PO WER. Projects implemented under this programme prove that synergy and complementarity of European programmes is possible

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

» go to European Union countries accompanied by their teachers. They spend 7–14 days there. During this time, they implement any project-related issues that form part of the core curriculum. The project is primarily concerned with enabling students to develop key competences.

Which ones?

Such a trip is a great opportunity to improve the ability to work creatively in an international group, develop social relations, solve problems together and discuss them. It is also an impulse for shaping ICT skills, as no project can be completed without the knowledge of state-of-the-art IT tools. Young people can use them perfectly, and in conversations with our beneficiaries we keep hearing more and more often that students deal with technology much better than their teachers.

Which projects have received the most funding from the PO WER?

Most funding was allocated to internships and work placements for students. This is because the PO WER supports the activities of the ministry education related to the reform of vocational education and training. In the past period, considerable funds have also been allocated to an innovative project entitled “Chance – new opportunities for adults”, which is addressed to people with low basic skills. It is primarily about people at risk of exclusion acquiring the skills of understanding and creating information, digital skills and social competences, without which it is impossible to function in everyday life. Together with our experts we have selected eight target groups. This includes people returning to the labour market, people with intellectual and physical disabilities, emigrants and people aged 50+.

Did the PO WER programme give you a power boost?

Of course! Just ask my colleagues on my team, who is the biggest energiser in our institution. I think I would easily get a place on the podium. But it works both ways. The PO WER gave me a power boost, but I also got involved into PO WER because I have raw power in me.

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

A cornucopia of options

Thousands of opportunities enjoyed by pupils, students and teachers, hundreds of supported institutions from all over Poland, 14 implemented initiatives – this is a brief summary of the last seven years in terms of FRSE utilising the opportunities of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development. The marathon of initiatives financed from its budget started with a project supporting foreign mobility for internships and courses. Later on, students with special needs and adult education staff were also given the opportunity to take advantage of its funds, and towards the end of the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, adults with low key competences joined the group of beneficiaries.

Thanks to the PO WER, the best projects from the Erasmus+ Programme reserve lists have gained wind in their sails. In total, more than 80,000 people took part in transnational mobility to improve professional and key competences in the years 2014–2020. The acquisition of additional funds from the PO WER budget has also increased the diversity of institutions taking part in calls for proposals. Today, these include not only universities and schools, but also research institutes, local cultural centres and non-governmental organisations.

During the 2014–2020 period, **14** initiatives were launched under the PO WER, and the total value of grants exceeded EUR **250 mln**

The programme activities were accompanied by undertakings aimed at reinforcing the results of the projects, integrating the beneficiaries of the PO WER and promoting the idea of lifelong learning, as well as personal and professional development. In the years 2014–2020, the Foundation initiated a series of informational meetings and cyclical events, among which a very popular one was the POWERGEDON – a combination of a forum for the exchange of beneficiaries' experiences with workshops improving social skills through building good relations in project teams. Three editions of the event have taken place in the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework and will certainly continue in the following years. Another example is the POWER MASTER, i.e. thematic workshops for institutions implementing projects in the area of vocational education and training. The offer is addressed to various industries, e.g. the green sector (agro-tourism, forestry, agriculture), the creative sector (multimedia and advertising) or the construction sector.

The results of the projects carried out under the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development should be looked at not only through the prism of a rich educational offer, enabling the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills at every stage of education, but also through conscious use of them in practice. The ability to speak foreign languages fluently, the knowledge of information and communication technologies or the increase in social competences positively influence the readiness to take up new challenges and carry out subsequent international projects.

2014 the programme is launched at full speed. Initially, there are **three projects supporting students with special needs, nursery and school teachers, as well as staff, students and graduates of vocational schools**

2015 two further projects open opportunities for **new groups of beneficiaries**. By the end of the year, it has become possible to sign agreements that will enable over 20,000 people to benefit from foreign mobility

2016 FRSE is implementing an innovative idea of **combining the experience of Erasmus+ with the possibility of financing activities from the PO WER**. Thanks to this synergy, which is pioneering on a European scale, the availability of studies, courses and training for interested parties has increased

2017 the PO WER travels across Poland. During the year, the programme team organises 10 information events, while **the beneficiaries meet for the first time at POWERGEDON** – an event combining networking and integration in project teams

2018 the first successes do not go unnoticed: in **the first edition of the "POWER Teacher" award**, the most interesting initiatives carried out in previous years receive awards

2019 the people who need it most get their opportunity: the PO WER launches **funds for new, proprietary funding paths** that increase the availability of foreign educational trips and support people with low basic skills

2020 one basic conclusion can be drawn from the project reports: **the PO WER has given thousands of pupils, students and teachers the opportunity to acquire new competences**, and allowed institutions to develop their educational offer and improve the quality of education



PAWEŁ KORZEŃ
headteacher of the Polytechnic
Schools Complex in Głogów

He is a Polish language teacher with 20 years of experience and a coach of multicultural education. He completed post-graduate studies in project management at the University of Wrocław and tutor training. For many years, he has been developing educational projects, which are later implemented by his students. He is proud of the fact that the teacher of a humanities subject became the headmaster of a technical school.

PHOTO: SZYMON ŁASZEWSKI

THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

In their element

Mobility can sometimes be reduced to a trip abroad. But not in Głogów, where students embark on mobility to enrich themselves and the school. After their return, many of them get involved in school projects by creating something for others

Michał Radkowski: Thanks to the PO WER, you have built a VR lab in your school.

Paweł Korzeń: Yes, the kids from the IT class learn how to create computer games and apps. We have taken advantage of the experience of companies that our students have visited as part of their foreign internships. We were able to see there how professional game design studios look, and I must say that they do not in any way resemble the IT rooms known from Polish schools. That is why we arranged the whole space from scratch, and we included our students in the process of designing it. Now the studio has special tables, screens, gaming chairs and, of course, virtual reality headsets. The reason behind this, is to bring them closer to the conditions in which they will work in the future.

A word of advice for those who hesitate
Do not be afraid of new technologies. The
FRSE programmes offer great opportunities
for the development of the school and,
above all, for students and teachers.
But it also requires a lot of work

How else have the PO WER projects helped the school to develop?

We have built a solar energy laboratory. During their internships, the students learnt how photovoltaics works and how to build simple solar panels. We have two large cells and a small power plant which was designed and built by our students. There is also a plug point inside the school building where you can charge a mobile phone using solar energy. This was also the idea of my students. We recently signed a strategic partnership agreement with an energy company. We are the only school in Poland that has received software from them. They were extremely impressed when they saw our laboratory. Thanks to the fact that we have it, our students can virtually visit a high voltage power station, which no one except the company's employees has access to, because it is a part of the strategic infrastructure.

Without international co-operation, would students have the same development opportunities?

Unfortunately, they would not, because our region lacks companies that could organise such attractive work placements for students. These are generally small family businesses in which there are no employees available to devote time and knowledge to young people. That is why FRSE programmes are such a powerful impulse for development. It has allowed us to introduce new technologies at school.

Do projects within Erasmus+ and the PO WER differ in any way?

Both programmes operate on the same principles and support the same activities. The PO WER is a lifeline for good projects from the Erasmus+ reserve list. Importantly, it is not necessary to complete documentation for the same project for a second time. Applying to Erasmus+ automatically means applying to the PO WER.

The measure of success

The EDUinspiracje Award. In the justification we heard that we inspire others. This confirmed our belief that the path we have chosen is the right one

When there is a lot of competition, it is possible that some applications will not be successful. Did this experience help you prepare the applications better?

This is definitely the case, although sometimes I see that many schools produce very good applications, but minimal differences during assessment mean they do not make the grade. Both of the programmes have clear guidelines. They focus on specific skills, knowledge, competences and foreign languages. And they both strongly promote innovation.

Between 2015 and 2020, you have obtained EUR 400,000 for the implementation of projects using EU funds. What did you spend it on?

The costs of the flights, insurance, accommodation, meals and pocket money for students are covered by the programme. We also organise an optional sightseeing trip, to allow students to get to know the culture, language, and cuisine of the region. Prior to departure, I teach young people how to work in a group to achieve the best results. It is all about getting to know each other well, because work placements abroad are attended by students from different classes, and I want to make sure that they arrive there as a well working team.

Do students return from mobility changed?

Yes, because they learn in a completely different education system, where there is a different pace and different teaching methods are used. During the work placements, they realise that it is not only knowledge and skills that matter, but also language skills, because most often they work in multicultural groups.

Where do you see your students going on work placements in a few years' time?

I regret to say it, but it is going to be abroad. The PO WER and Erasmus+ projects have made them feel very much at home in an international environment. They are in their element there.

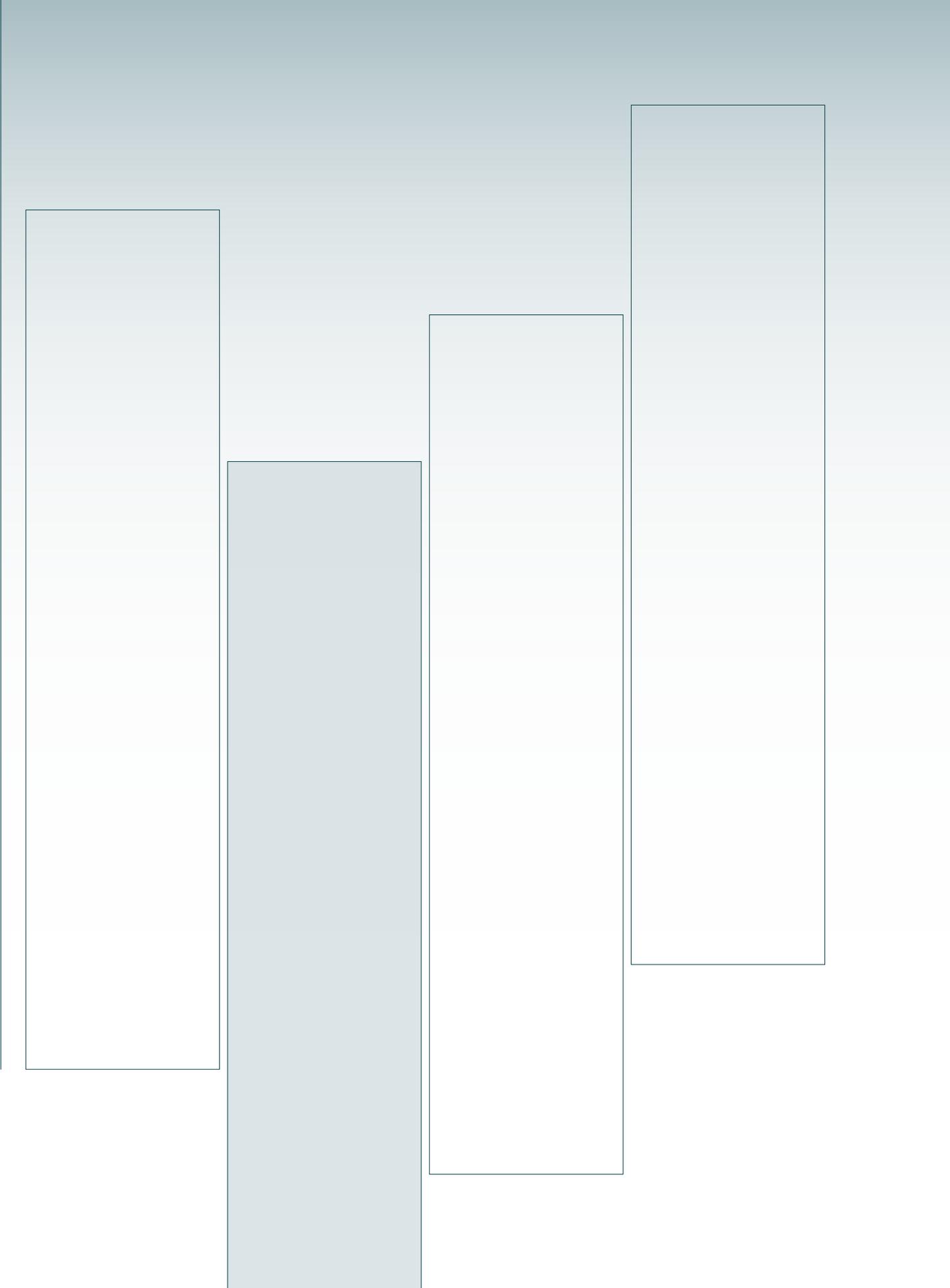
New opportunities for students and adults

Towards the end of the financial period 2014–2020, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System launched two individual paths of financing, not related to the Erasmus+ Programme, facilitating applications for funding from the PO WER for projects which contribute to the equalisation of educational opportunities.

The first of these – “Transnational student mobility” – supports group educational trips that enhance the key competences of students. The subject of the activities carried out under this project may be any matter that fits into the core curriculum. Another objective of the project is to promote social inclusion and equal opportunities. This is why priority of participation is given to institutions that direct their activities to students with the greatest educational needs, including those who encounter geographical, social, economic, health, cultural and financial barriers in their engagement with various forms of learning.

The second initiative is entitled “Chance – new opportunities for adults”. Its main objective is to support adults with low basic skills, and it will result in recommendations on incorporating selected models of acquiring these skills into systemic public actions and policies aimed at specific groups of adult Poles. The “Chance...” is intended to contribute to the equalisation of the level of skills related to understanding and creating information, mathematical reasoning, digital skills and social competences. Without them it is becoming increasingly difficult to cope, not only in professional life, but above all in everyday life.

Both projects will be continued in the new edition of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development.



accompanying
programmes



PHOTO: SZYMON KASZEWSKI



Solidarity can be understood as a sense of responsibility for others and willingness to sacrifice oneself for the common good. It can be expressed by specific actions taken without expecting any kind of favour in return

Source: www.eks.org.pl

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

The best is yet to come!

The latest initiative of the European Union benefits communities across Europe. The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) was established by transforming and separating European Voluntary Service projects from the Erasmus+ Programme. The ESC quite soon has secured a strong position among programmes targeting young people. The projects implemented under the programme focus on important social challenges and their common denominator are activities that contribute to solving or reducing a given problem.

The European Solidarity Corps is based on three actions: Volunteering Activities, Traineeships and Jobs and Solidarity Projects. The largest component is Volunteering Activities. They enable young people aged 18–30 to become involved in work on behalf of local communities at home and abroad. The programme also enables the acquisition and development of various competences. Thanks to participation in Solidarity Projects young people develop pro-social and civic attitudes, and those who would like to improve their professional skills can benefit from traineeships and jobs.

Despite being in place for a short time, the programme has already seen its first graduates and achievements. By mid-2020, 410 projects of the European Solidarity Corps had been completed by Polish youth and youth organisations. They included: 228 volunteering activities, 174 solidarity projects and 8 traineeships and jobs projects. The total value of their co-financing exceeded EUR 13 million. Since its launch, over 180 organisations from Poland have joined the programme. A total of 3,486 volunteers were active in the projects.

More than **250,000** young Europeans have registered on the European Solidarity Corps portal and more than **36,000** started to implement their projects

European Solidarity Corps' volunteers can be found in many Polish towns and cities. They work in cultural institutions and NGOs, where they promote the idea of solidarity, they take care of young people and the elderly, the disadvantaged, the unemployed and people with fewer opportunities. They open up Poles to inter-cultural dialogue, exchange working methods, encourage to speak a foreign language and help breaking down barriers.

The first years of the European Solidarity Corps in Poland, were also marked by valuable meetings with prospective beneficiaries and training for co-ordinators and young people participating in projects. Thinking about young people, an e-learning course has been created, which helps them prepare an application for a Solidarity Project grant.

2016 the European Commission launches the European Solidarity Corps. The initiative takes its first steps outside Poland, but from the very beginning the Foundation for the Development of the Education System supports its development with promotional activities addressed to the beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ Youth sector

2017 in the first year of the programme's operation, **42.745 young Europeans join the Corps and 2.166 start their projects** in 1.434 organisations co-operating with European Solidarity Corps in European countries

2018 the Foundation for the Development of the Education System becomes the National Agency of the European Solidarity Corps in Poland. The inauguration takes place during a gala on 30 October 2018 in Warsaw. The SALTO EECA Resource Centre is included in the activities aimed to promote the European Solidarity Corps

2019 sees the launch of the promotion of the European Solidarity Corps throughout Poland. Training is also organised for future and current beneficiaries. In the meantime, young people launch their first Solidarity Projects, and leave abroad to work, serve a traineeship, or volunteer

2020 the European Solidarity Corps develops more dynamically. The aim is to **involve 1.5 million young people by the end of 2027**. In 2021, EU Aid Volunteers – another European initiative – will join the programme



ANNA-SOPHIA PAPPAL
founder of the Association
for International and Intercultural
Exchange ANAWOJ

She comes from Germany, where she graduated in history, and works and lives in Michalów in Podlasie. Since 2002, she has been associated with the European Voluntary Service as a co-ordinator of countless projects. In recent years, she has been implementing projects as part of a new programme aimed at young people – the European Solidarity Corps.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

A change starts from the backyard

21 years ago, she got on a train from Germany to the Podlasie and stayed there for good. Since then, she has invited half the world to her place to show new opportunities to youth from rural areas

Martyna Śmigiel: How was the ANAWOJ Association established?

Anna-Sophia Pappai: As a former volunteer, I received support from the European Commission to implement my idea. I used that money to start up the association. We started with an office in Białystok, where we informed young people about the opportunities offered by the European Union programmes.

The strongest relationships

I still have contact with the people we sent abroad to volunteer 12 years ago. I felt that they did not want to stop there, they wanted to develop and use their experience. Today, they are part of ANAWOJ and work as mentors and co-ordinators

Are the people of Podlasie open to foreigners?

There are not many foreigners here, and that is a big problem, because a lack of contact with foreign cultures can often mean a fear of them. It is normal for us to be afraid of what we do not know, which is why we are trying to defuse these emotions. Volunteers from abroad work in many small towns in Podlasie. Residents have very personal contact with them: they meet them in shops, they chat to each other in the streets. This is how they build relationships and openness to others. It turns out that they often listen to the same music, share a mutual interest in a hobby, or enjoy the same sport.

Are young people from the Podlasie region keen to get involved in projects?

We managed to send a dozen or so people on a volunteering project. This is primarily thanks to the fact that we place great emphasis on information. We regularly visit schools and present opportunities. We have noticed that it is often difficult for young people from rural areas to decide on a long-term

trip (e.g. for a year), which gives the best results. It turned out that such a long timeframe was discouraging and intimidating at first. As a result, we started to organise short-term trips with partners from Spain and Portugal.

Do they really have lesser opportunities?

The opportunities here are completely different. Sure, you can check everything on the internet, but you still need to know what to look for and how to use it. Besides, there are villages that are completely remote. Recently, we sent a boy, who did not have access to the internet, a mobile phone, or even a computer at home, on long-term volunteering. For him, just applying to go was a challenge. We gave him access to a computer, showed him how to write a letter and send it by e-mail. For people who have never gone anywhere, such mobility is a tremendous experience.

The longest journey

My first journey to Bialystok. It seemed the train was going and going, with no will to get to the destination. At every station I asked people if we were already there. That trip has marked my whole life

How do you encourage people to take part in voluntary projects?

The best advertisement for volunteering is contact with the volunteers themselves. That is why long-term volunteering is so valuable. People need time to establish contact with a foreigner. For the first month or so, they usually just observe them, for the second month they may greet each other, and only with time do they pluck up the courage to establish a closer relationship. When people see that the foreign volunteer is learning Polish, starts to speak, they began to consider that maybe they will also try to speak to the volunteer in a foreign language.

Recently you create projects within the European Solidarity Corps.

We have so far prepared one, which will be implemented in 2021. "Our home is part of the world" is to be the answer to summer holiday boredom affecting children in our municipality. There is no big offer for this time, no day camps for kids, and hardly anyone goes away on holiday. Despite these limitations, we wanted the summer holiday time to be attractive and valuable for them. At the same time, we want to make the young generation sensitive to the problem of climate change, and encourage them to start changing the world from their own backyard, by changing their own habits.

Do you think that the sum of the ANAWOJ activities has changed Podlasie?

The most important changes are taking place within people. In the beginning, residents were afraid of the things they did not know, afraid of using another language. Today, they are no longer afraid of foreigners, they are open and welcome our guests in English, Spanish or Turkish. They invite them to create joint initiatives, to implement ideas. The presence of volunteers has become part of our everyday lives.

European Solidarity Corps forms of activities

Volunteering

Thanks to this opportunity, young people participate in the daily work of the host organisation. Volunteers can carry out their activities in their home country or abroad and participate in projects concerning such topics as social inclusion, the natural environment, culture, environmental protection, and working with immigrants. Projects usually last from 2 weeks to 12 months.

Traineeships and jobs

A traineeship is treated as full-time work and is paid for by the organisation hosting the employee or trainee. The traineeship and work may take place in the participant's country of residence or abroad. In the latter case, participants receive a small salary to cover the costs of their stay. Co-operation can last from 2 to 6 months. During this time, trainees develop their educational, social, civic and professional skills.

Participants in voluntary activities as well as young trainees and employees benefit from language assistance, training and online counselling services. Their travel costs to the project site are also covered.

Solidarity projects

Groups of at least five young people can plan, develop and implement their own initiatives within the framework of the European Solidarity Corps. The aim of these activities is to generate change for the better in their local community. Young people carry out these project activities for 2 to 12 months.



The steady growth of the eTwinning community is an effect of the programme's extraordinary flexibility, which allows teachers to work according to their needs and interests, and provides access to numerous tools supporting professional development. Anyone interested can benefit from a variety of free training courses – both in-house and online – and develop their skills in a way that is the most convenient to them

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2015

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

Faces of co-operation

For many years, teachers have been looking for new solutions to make learning effective and enjoyable. A way to do this is to use the latest technologies. Since its launch 15 years ago, eTwinning has responded to the needs of teachers from across Europe and neighbouring countries by providing an online platform that facilitates access to modern education tools and is constantly expanded by new training offers. Its main objective is to create space for the implementation of school and kindergarten online co-operation projects using new technologies.

The guiding principle of the programme is its flexibility. This is why from 2014 onwards eTwinners not only can carry out international projects (which have not always fully met the needs of all partners) on the platform, but also unilateral projects. This change was met with great enthusiasm, especially from teachers who were afraid to communicate in a foreign language. We did not have to wait long for the results. By the end of 2020, unilateral partnerships accounted for almost 10% of the 20,000 projects registered since 2014.

Changes in school environment, new opportunities and challenges have stimulated the development of the programme in the years 2014–2020. The rich offer comprising traditional and online training courses answered the teachers' needs. Several information campaigns supporting changes in Polish system of education concerning programming, entrepreneurship and e-safety have been organised on the eTwinning platform.

Modern information and communication

technologies have enabled Polish eTwinners to conduct more than **30,000** innovative projects with partners from Poland and abroad

The effectiveness of the activities conducted by eTwinners and, above all, the positive impact of projects on the development of students' skills and competences, contributed to including the platform in the core curriculum for language teaching in Poland in 2017. However, the biggest change was observed in the eTwinning community. Since 2014, it has been joined by 9,000 schools and 47,000 teachers. The most popular project themes have also changed. Science, social sciences and ecology have been the prevailing project topics. These enable the implementation of core curriculum in an innovative and creative way. The way eTwinners work has also changed. Thematic groups composed of people interested in particular issues have become extremely popular – currently there are over 3,000 of them. Members of the groups discuss new working methods, broaden their horizons and learn from one another.

With such great capital, the eTwinning platform has a chance to set new records for the next 15 years.

2014 the first projects with the participation of teachers from one country only are implemented, and Poland joins **co-operation within eTwinning Plus** – an initiative operating in the countries neighbouring the European Union. The first contact seminar is organised for them in Krakow. Polish teachers register 415 projects with eTwinning Plus countries

2015 marks the 10th anniversary of the programme, which is celebrated by eTwinners from across Europe

2016 the eTwinning platform in Poland boasts **40,000 registered teachers and 13,000 education institutions**. Together with teachers from 40+ countries, they have implemented 19,000 projects

2017 online training offer develops intensively. The number of Polish teachers who have participated in training covering almost 90 topics exceeds **15,000**

2018 the programme offer includes a new element – **the eTwinning School Label**. In the first year, 70 Polish schools receive the Label. Since 2018, thanks to the Teacher Training Institutes initiative, future teachers can also use the platform

2019 the eTwinning School Label goes to **39 schools and 512 partnerships from all over the country** are awarded Quality Labels for projects using technology in an innovative and creative way

2020 the platform is used by nearly **800,000 teachers from 44 countries**. Polish teachers are among the most active ones. They participate in every third eTwinning project, and more than 70,000 of them are registered on the platform!



MAREK FULARZ

deputy headteacher of Emilia Plater Primary School in Bogatynia

Ambassador, trainer, the legend of eTwinning, with which he has been associated since 2007. He was awarded the title of Top Ambassador of the Decade in Poland on the 10th anniversary of this programme. He has been teaching IT for 30 years, and runs eTwinning workshops and online courses for teachers.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

All-singing, all-dancing

Every project succeeds if it teaches co-operation. To start with, you need a good idea, a bit of enthusiasm and consistency. Then all you have to do is... grab a microphone

Michał Radkowski: Everyone in Bogatynia already knows that kids in your school like to sing. The project I am talking about, the "Schoolovision", started in your primary school 12 years ago. Is this the school version of the Eurovision?

Marek Fularz: Yes, but our version is even better than the original. It gives us a lot of fun and opportunities to get to know participants from other countries. The idea is simple: the pupils dance and sing, and document their achievements on the eTwinning platform. The kids from primary schools in about 30 countries compete with each other. I did not expect the project to see so many editions. And in many countries, it has become an event that goes beyond school. In the Czech Republic, for example, this contest is presented on TV.

The greatest success

The award for the "Schoolovision" for outstanding contribution to eTwinning co-operation between 2009 and 2013. This project we have been implementing for 12 years now, because it still makes us happy, and we still want it to continue

Did you have to persuade pupils to participate in the project?

Quite the opposite. The interest was so great that we had to organise auditions to select the school's representation. The parents also helped. There was a lot of work involved because each of the participating teams had to make a video about their school and publish it on a blog. Then the pupils recorded a song, shot a clip for it and placed it on the platform. Finally, just like on Eurovision, we watched all the performances and voted for the best. This happened live, and we could see each other on the screen thanks to a special app.

And what about the teachers? Were they happy to take on extra work?

I did not force anyone to participate, although some teachers were worried that I would take advantage of the hierarchical dependence, and they would feel

uncomfortable saying no to the deputy headteacher. It was not the case at all. Many teachers joined in because they liked the idea, and it did not take long to register the project – there was no need to fill in extensive applications. I wanted to use it as an excuse to utilise the potential of the entire school. During IT lessons, I encouraged kids to create animations that they could use in music clips. The music teacher taught them how to play instruments, which later came in handy while recording the songs. The English language teacher practiced posting comments on the blog, so during the competition the pupils knew how to communicate with their peers from other schools. Project work teaches co-operation and working towards a common goal. Today my colleagues prepare several projects a year. Two of them have already received 15 eTwinning Quality Labels.

The most important result

The materials created by pupils and teachers within the framework of the eTwinning programme. The projects range from simple school yard games for children, through presentation of the culture of their country, to topics related to climate change and human rights

Has participation in eTwinning projects made a difference to pupils?

It has certainly taught them to be committed, active and inventive. At a later stage of their education, they volunteer for further projects. Some of my former students took part in the Odyssey of the Mind. It is an international contest for pupils and students from all over the world. It teaches creative and critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork, in other words, the key competences.

You talked a lot about “Schoolovision”, but your school also has other eTwinning projects. Which ones proved to be the most successful?

With partners from Ireland and Italy, we have implemented the “S.O.S. Water in danger!” project. Kids were learning what water is, and that its resources are limited. Together we investigated the properties of water, and how to purify and save it. The pupils also took part in an experiment of surviving one day with only one bottle of water at their disposal. This allowed them to understand the situation of people living in water-poor areas of the world. The “Animal talk” project, dedicated to discover animals sounds in different languages, was also very much appreciated. The wife of a friend from Scotland came up with this idea. She noticed that in children’s books, the words imitating the sounds of animals vary from one language to another. The result is a blog containing resources on animal sounds in nine European languages. During the IT classes, I taught pupils how to record and process sound, and showed them how to create animated characters for the blog using online tools.

And what have you learnt through eTwinning?

The English language, because I did not know it before. I had a strong motivation to learn, because it is necessary during the implementation of projects, especially if you represent the school. Now I go to international conferences and conduct training sessions for teachers in English without fear.

eTwinning Awards

Quality Label

The eTwinning National Quality Label is awarded to teachers who have put in outstanding work in the project. The aim is also to reward schools for carrying out creative and innovative projects that are integrated with curriculum, facilitate the exchange of information between partner schools, and are technology-based. The Labels are awarded throughout the year.

eTwinning School

The Label is awarded as a token of recognition for enormous commitment of the entire eTwinning team in a given organisation. eTwinning Schools are pioneers and leaders in the following areas: digital practice, e-safety, in-service professional development of staff, and peer learning based on co-operation between teachers and students.

Our eTwinning Project

This contest organised every year by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System serves to honour the best eTwinning projects implemented by Polish kindergartens and schools. Awards are given in four age categories of pupils involved in the projects (3–6, 7–10, 11–15, 16–19), as well as in additional categories, in which the following are awarded: novice eTwinners, platform ambassadors, projects combining elements of eTwinning and Erasmus+, and projects selected in two thematic categories. The winners receive attractive prizes or invitations to eTwinning special events. International projects awarded with the National Quality Label can take part in this competition.



PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF KARPINSKI



The Erasmus+ Sport programme aims to prepare and implement joint actions to promote sports and physical activity, to identify and implement innovative practices in the field of sports, and to organise non-commercial events designed to increase physical activity

Source: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce, Raport 2018

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

They did it for sport

Sports, as an extremely effective tool for shaping skills, has always been part of the European Union's educational programmes. This is a result of the values that this area of life carries: honesty, tolerance and fair play, for example. However, it was the Erasmus+ that gave special significance to sports-related projects. Distinguishing this field among other areas related to lifelong learning has emphasised that it applies to everyone, and due to the added value that accompanies various forms of recreation, it deserves an important place in education.

In the years 2014–2020, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System conducted activities promoting Erasmus+ Sport, and the call for proposals was conducted by The European Education and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels. However, this did not discourage Polish organisations from applying for funds for projects. Among the beneficiaries who tried their luck in the European calls for funds were not only sports clubs and associations, but also local government units, higher education institutions, foundations and associations, as well as the Polish Paralympic Committee. It is impossible to list them all, although it is worthwhile to take a close look at several of the achievements.

In 2014, the Erasmus+ Sport launched the action called Not-For-Profit European Sport Events, with 406 projects submitted and only three winners selected. Among them was a project from Poland – “Let's dance together!” – submitted by the Centre of Culture and International Co-operation “Światowid” from Elbląg. Funds were allocated for the organisation of the International Dance Festival “Baltic Cup”, with the participation of dance clubs from 12 countries. As part of the tournament there were competitions for mixed couples, where one of the partners is a wheelchair user.

Between 2014 and 2020, over **120** Polish institutions received funding for implementation of sports activities, and its total value exceeded **EUR 3.7 mln**

The next year was also successful: The Gdynia Sports Centre became one of the first leaders in the “Move up to be healthy and happy” project. It was aimed at reaching the youngest city residents with the offer of sports classes, in order to prevent the development of bad habits and diseases. As a part of this project, players from Gdynia's sports clubs attended physical education lessons at schools and practiced together with children. Healthy eating workshops were prepared for parents and teachers were learning about the methodology of conducting sports activities. The results can still be used thanks to the project's handbook and online platform, which contains the most important information about maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

The signals coming from the bodies preparing the upcoming Erasmus+ framework give hope that sports will not be forgotten, and that the solutions developed to date will strengthen the importance of sports in the lives of Europeans.

2014 the first calls for proposals for the organisation of Erasmus+ Sport activities are launched. Among the three winning Not-For-Profit European Sport Events is a project led by the **Centre of Culture and International Co-operation “Światowid”** from Elbląg

2015 the European Commission launches the **BeActive campaign promoting physical activity**. From this date onward recreational events are held throughout Europe as part of the European Week of Sport

2016 the Foundation is organising the **first information and training event** addressed to the beneficiaries of Erasmus+ Sport on the possibilities of applying for funds under this initiative. The event attracts about 150 participants from all over Poland

2017 in September, FRSE inaugurates its own sports event – **the first Erasmus+ International Run**, which tracks across a distance of 30 km in a series of relay races. Almost 500 guests visit the venue in one day

2018 **Iron Man Sports Association** from Gogolin is the first in Poland to receive a grant for a pilot project of the European Commission concerning exchange of experience and mobility in sports

2019 Erasmus+ Sport is planning activities for the coming years. At the end of the year, the **current and future beneficiaries come to the conference on European Initiatives for Sport** to learn about the rules of financing sports initiatives in the upcoming Erasmus+ framework

2020 the first summaries show that it was a **very good year in terms of the amount of financial support** provided for activities promoting physical activity in the programme countries



ROMUALD SCHMIDT
chairman of the Board of the Sports
and Rehabilitation Association START
in Poznań

A true enthusiast of bocce
– the Paralympic sports discipline.
In 1992, he started its first trainings,
two decades later he established the Polish
Boccia Federation for the disabled and
a few years ago he became president of the
Polish Boccia Association. He has been
using the Erasmus+ Sport since 2015,
when it was launched in Poland.

PHOTO: SZYMON LASZEWSKI

THE BENEFICIARY'S PERSPECTIVE

Training for the leaders

Success in Erasmus+ is like success in sports.
What counts is the experience gained over
the years and a well-co-ordinated team,
made up of people ready to face challenges

Ula Idzikowska: Your adventure with Erasmus+ began by accident...

Romuald Schmidt: When Erasmus+ Sport was established, we already had extensive experience in training athletes with disabilities. We were already the pioneers of Polish Paralympic sport. Even before 2015, we implemented various European projects, and at the time it was our partners from Bulgaria who persuaded us to participate in the programme. They even convinced us to be the project leaders. We had doubts, because we had no experience in writing project applications, but we threw ourselves into the deep end and it worked well.

The greatest challenge

Taking a leadership role in projects.
With each initiative, we have gained more
confidence – now we know what we can
achieve. It made us more ambitious

Your first project involved bocce. Is that correct?

Yes, this first project was a great success and it even won an award.
The starting point was sport and the goal was social inclusion. We chose this
as a priority of the programme and we translated it into what we are good at:
inclusion of people with disabilities through recreation.

How did you select your project partners?

We decided to co-operate with countries that had little experience in sports
offers directed to people with disabilities. We realised that thanks to our
qualifications and knowledge, we could create a project that would benefit
partner countries. We did not want the partners to have to carve their own path
just as we did, but rather to be able to start working effectively with our help.
And that is exactly what happened. In North Macedonia, our organisation has
established bocce as a form of recreational activity. This sport has attracted
the attention of young people who have taken over and developed this

discipline. They even set up their own organisation. The same has happened to the Georgians, who previously had no idea of this sport.

You did not stop there. We can see an evolution in your projects, for example, in 2018 you entered into unknown territory.

That is true. Under the “Osmosis” project, we have focussed on activities that will be useful to us as well, meaning the creation of modern marketing tools that enable better business management and greater support. We have invited competent people to co-operate with us and this costs money. Employing a marketing company, ordering an organisation development strategy and dealing with the media is a task for professionals. Fortunately, we can benefit from European funds. What is more, we can share the products that are created within the project. After its completion, organisations which cannot afford to directly invest in such materials will be able to take advantage of our package free of charge.

A positive surprise

The partners about whom we had doubts proved to be more diligent and reliable than those from whom we did not expect any problems

You are a multiple beneficiary of Erasmus+. Is it easy to write a project?

We have gained loads of skills in this regard, but it still consumes a great deal of time. Everything must be thought through to the last detail. The competition is strong, so a poor-quality proposal will not stand a chance. Writing projects is an art unto itself and it takes us at least three months. We start by gathering information meticulously: we talk to different organisations, we go to information sessions in Brussels, we consult, we ask questions – all to increase our chances.

You also spend a lot of time seeking out suitable project partners.

Yes, it is true – because they are a critical element of the project. We try to get to know our future partners, so that before we start working together, we understand who we are dealing with and whether someone will fail us or not. We choose our partners based on a careful selection process. We gather as much information as possible, we conduct talks and look for recommendations. We try to build mutual trust. There is always a risk, but I have to be sure that I can count on our partner – that if I ask for something to be prepared in 24 hours (as can often happen during such projects), I need to know that I will get it on time.

What are the advantages of co-operation?

The entire Erasmus+ Programme revolves around the exchange and development of skills. Besides, it is simply a great adventure. Not everyone can travel, and if it were not for the projects, we would not be able to undertake so many interesting activities. We have also noticed that the exchange helps participants to develop positive attitudes and improve the quality of partners' work. For us, punctuality, reliability and a quick reaction are commonplace, which is not always the case in other countries. Thanks to our leadership position, which sets the tone for the whole undertaking, we have successfully instilled these attitudes in our partners.

Transnational co-operation

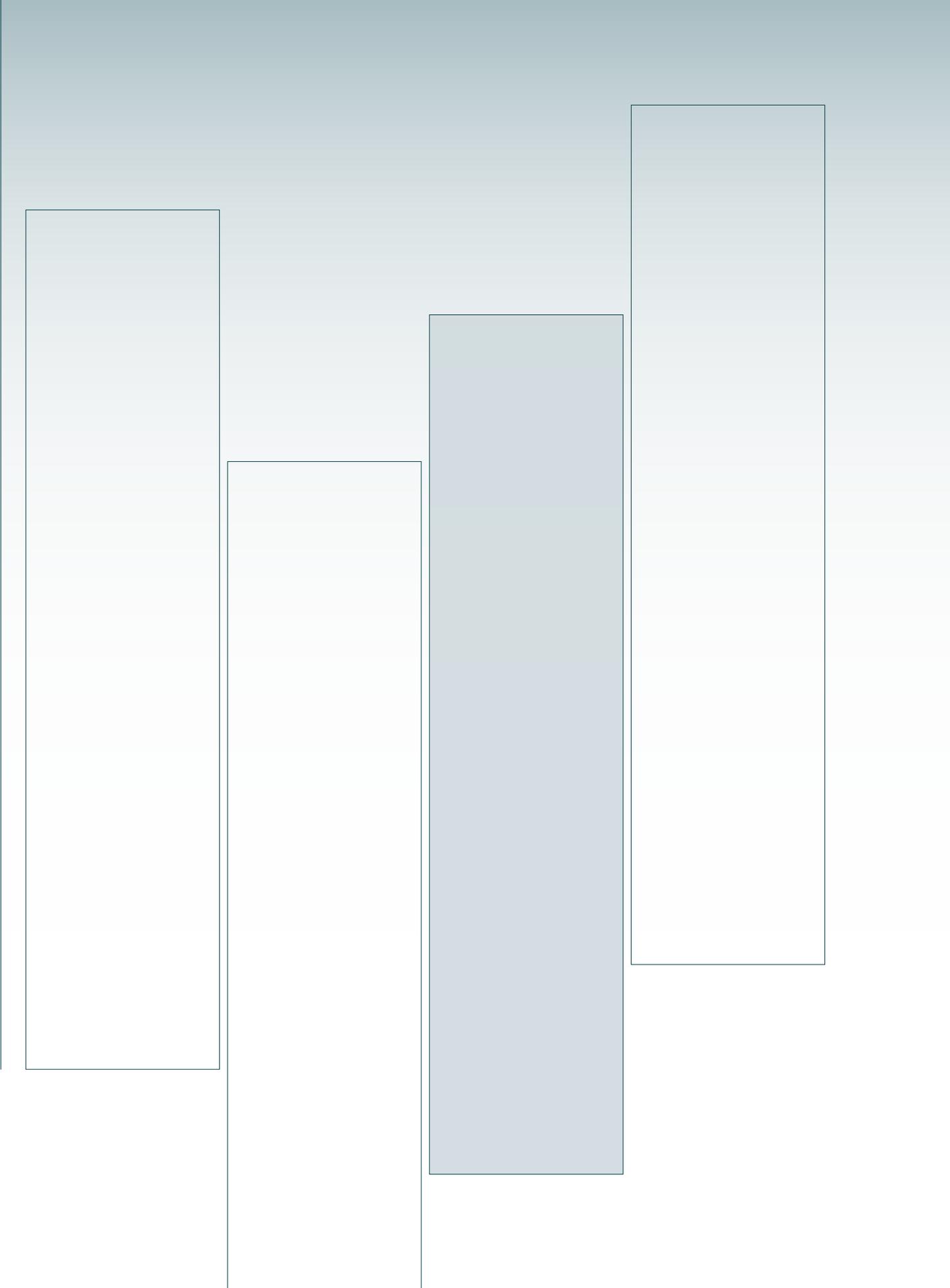
During the 2014–2020 period, Erasmus+ Sport was addressed to organisations and public institutions working in the field of sports. The main objective was to promote it at the local level – the one closest to the citizens. Beneficiaries could also allocate funds to the organisation of not-for-profit events to promote physical activity, ensuring physical and mental well-being.

The activities undertaken within the projects also included the following priorities:

- » promoting volunteering, social inclusion and equal opportunities, physical activity that improves health as well as increasing participation and removing barriers in access to sports;
- » eliminating trans-border threats to the integrity of sport (such as doping, match-fixing and violence) and all forms of intolerance and discrimination;
- » supporting sports management and the dual-track career paths of professional athletes.

Over the course of seven years, the initiative has contributed to the development of the recreational activities offer in Europe and in the Eastern Partnership countries and to the promotion of physical activity among the inhabitants of the outermost regions, people with disabilities, children, youth and the elderly. It was possible to level out access to the sporting offer among those who have not yet had such opportunities, as well as to increase participation in volunteering in the field of sports.

More than 800 projects carried out in the past have made it possible to strengthen co-operation and the exchange of good practices between organisations working in the field of sport and recreation in the European Union countries as well as candidate or associated countries.



supportive
initiatives



SOURCE: REGIONAL VOLUNTEER CENTRE IN KIELCE



In small towns, and especially in rural areas, the knowledge of the opportunities offered to young Europeans by EU-funded programmes is rudimentary. Having in mind that lack of knowledge means exclusion, we joined the Eurodesk network to open up young people to the experiences they could have

Dominika Caune, headteacher of the Bolesław Krzywousty Complex of Secondary Schools of Mechanics in Kołobrzeg

The information network

Eurodesk is an information programme operating within the Erasmus+ structures. It does not award grants, but supports other initiatives related to non-formal education and youth work. It also co-operates with more than a thousand youth organisations and institutions working for young people across Europe. Network members share information, experience and know-how.

The Eurodesk Poland is one of the largest and most active networks in Europe. In 2020, it consisted of more than 50 organisations and institutions, which on the regional and local level reached out to young people with information about the opportunities offered by the European Union programmes implemented at home and abroad. The Eurodesk National Centre in Poland provides training to employees of these organisations so that they can organise and participate in events, conduct lessons and workshops and answer questions.

One of the means of communication with young people is the www.eurodesk.pl website. It features a database of grant programmes that support learning mobility and co-operation in Europe. It is the largest source of such information in Polish internet. It collects information about more than 300 initiatives. Young people who look for information on opportunities related to education and training, volunteering or activity

in other parts of the world can also use the European Youth Portal, an internet platform run by Eurodesk. In the years 2014–2020, the Polish version of the portal was one of the European leaders in terms of the number of featured materials. In this period, the Eurodesk National Centre published nearly 2,000 articles, news and other information pieces about events. The publishing offer has also expanded. In 2017, the Centre issued a publication entitled *Internships in international institutions*, which launched a new publishing series in a larger format, richer in content and more journalistic in nature. Previous publications devoted to working, volunteering and studying abroad were published in the form of pocket guides (*Altruist in action, or all you want to know about volunteering abroad*, 2014 and 2017; *Legit, or how to work legally in Europe*, 2015 and 2018; *Studying is a challenge, or how to become a student in Europe*, 2017). The following publications in the new series were devoted to youth exchanges (*International youth exchanges*, 2018) and volunteering (*International youth volunteering*, 2019).

In the 2014–2020, the Eurodesk Poland website was visited by over **2 mln** unique users

A Europe-wide “Time to move” campaign was launched in 2014 to promote mobility in the continent. The number of events organised as part of the campaign has grown each year, and for four years now Poland has hosted the largest number of the events. In six years, 585 events took place under the banner of “Time to move”.

During the first consolidated Erasmus+ framework, the Eurodesk National Centre reached out to several hundred thousand new recipients in schools, at fairs and during information events. The most important activities were lessons and workshops, including the ones devoted to Euro-projects, Euro-studies, Euro-work, Euro-activation and Euro-volunteering. In the years 2014–2020, the Eurodesk Poland Network informed about the European Solidarity Corps (“Youth to be heard”) and discussed the Europass documents (“Career docs”). It also published two games: *Euro-opportunities* and *Time to move*. In total, the network conducted 2,479 lessons for 49,160 students.

Over **3,000** events, **2,000** posts, **9** workshops and games – this way Eurodesk has marked its presence in past **7** years

In 2020, Eurodesk launched a new website. It is a modern and intuitive tool, which features advanced search engine, presents international mobility offers and a database of good practices, which is a collection of inspiring information about projects and interviews with their authors as well as descriptions of youth organisations and institutions working for the benefit of youth. The presence of the Eurodesk on the internet was complemented by its activity in social media. Each year, the Eurodesk National Centre published several hundred posts on Facebook, which reached almost half a million recipients. From 2020, Eurodesk Poland also runs a profile on Instagram, where it promotes mobility, presents good practices and their authors.

2014 the first “Time to move” campaign is launched to promote the mobility of young Europeans. During the meetings, which attract over 800 participants, the opportunities for working, studying and volunteering abroad are presented in several dozen Polish towns and cities

2015 Eurodesk Poland recruits 20 correspondents of the European Youth Portal. In a few months, they post over a hundred articles, and Poland becomes a leader in terms of the number of texts published on the portal!

2016 the EDUinspiracje Awards is expanded with a new category: European Information for Youth, which is intended for the Eurodesk network organisations. The first winner in the category is the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów

2017 the network organisations are actively involved in the celebrations of the European Youth Week and stage 30 events

2018 the top year in terms of the number of lessons and workshops conducted by Eurodesk Poland. A total of 21,820 students participate in 958 lessons on mobility and youth activity

2019 the network is involved in promoting the European Commission’s pan-European contest entitled DiscoverEU. Eurodesk consultants answer nearly 400 questions about the initiative

2020 Eurodesk focusses on social media presence. An Instagram profile complements a popular Facebook profile and the website is revamped



PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF KUCZYK



*Following the launch of the Erasmus+ Programme in 2014, the SALTO EECA team focussed on **improving the quality of educational events** organised by the Centre, resulting in new partnerships and long-term projects*

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

Closer to the East

Erasmus+ is the third Community programme aimed at the development of young Europeans, which covers with its scope not only the countries of the European Union, but also its eastern neighbours – Russia and the Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The main institution supporting the development of international youth activities in the region is the SALTO EECA Centre, i.e. the Eastern Europe and the Caucasus Resource Centre. It is a part of a network of seven SALTO YOUTH centres present in various European Union countries. The common goal of these institutions is, among other things, to improve the quality of youth projects. The centres do not award grants, but carry out intensive information and training activities.

Polish SALTO EECA Resource Centre was established in 2003, and from the very beginning it has supported international co-operation with the countries of Eastern Europe and Caucasus within the framework of European Union programmes in the youth field. Since 2017, the Erasmus+ Youth and

European Solidarity Corps information centres have operated in each of the seven neighbouring countries. These are officially designated organisations with many years of experience in youth work at local and international level. Their main aim is to inform about the possibilities offered by European youth programmes and to support the quality of projects implemented in the region.

In the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, the SALTO EECA Resource Centre supported organisations operating in neighbouring countries, co-organising on several occasions the Eastern Partnership Youth Forums (Riga 2015; Warsaw 2017; Vilnius 2019) and the Eastern Partnership Youth Conferences (Bratislava 2016; Vienna 2018). Moreover, the Centre has strengthened contacts, especially with the countries where activity was quite low. For example, in 2018 and 2019, it joined the efforts aimed at the establishment of an international youth section of the soci-economic forums of Northern Caucasus organised in the Russian Federation.

One of the tasks of the SALTO EECA Resource Centre aimed at improving the quality of youth projects in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia is to accredit organisations wishing to participate in volunteer projects within the framework of European Union programmes. In the years 2014–2020, a total of 455 accreditations were granted by the SALTO EECA, of which 388 related to Erasmus+ and 67 to the European Solidarity Corps. Thanks to these documents, the organisations can apply for co-organisation of projects addressed to young people or youth workers.

In the countries of Eastern Europe and Caucasus, from 2014 until the end of the first consolidated Erasmus+ framework, the SALTO EECA Resource Centre organised and carried out 72 training courses for participants in the European Voluntary Service upon their arrival in the host country and 65 training courses on indirect evaluation. These events were attended by about 2,000 people. In addition, 22 events for former volunteers who completed their projects in the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia took place in the countries of the region and were attended by 435 people. The majority of project graduates came from France, Germany, Poland and Italy, and most often they were hosted by Georgian and Ukrainian organisations.

In 2020, the largest number of accredited organisations operated in Russia: **77**, and in Ukraine and Georgia: **70** each

In the first consolidated perspective of the Erasmus+ Programme, the SALTO EECA Resource Centre also focussed on social inclusion. The project started with a study prepared together with several Erasmus+ national agencies and the SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre, which analysed the needs of and challenges faced by young people working in the Eastern Partnership and Russia region. The results of the survey significantly influenced the training activities that were included in the SALTO EECA offer. The number of projects addressed to people working with marginalised groups has increased, and the initiatives have become more diverse and targeted the specific needs of particular groups, e.g. young people from rural areas, people with disabilities and socially excluded groups.

2014 the SALTO EECA Resource Centre activities focus on the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in the Youth sector, including the promotion of its offer and **information on how organisations** from programme countries and these in Eastern Europe and Caucasus can seek partners

2015 a very important event: **Eastern Partnership Youth Forum** is organised in Latvian Riga. This is a clear signal from the European Union showing that youth co-operation is a valuable element of policy development

2016 the SALTO EECA team is involved in the **development of new youth initiatives**: it holds consultations on the principles and structure of the Eastern Partnership Youth Window and supports the establishment of the Polish-Ukrainian Council of Youth Exchange

2017 a network of Erasmus+ Youth Information Centres is established in the Eastern Partnership countries and in Russia

2018 the European Solidarity Corps is launched and the SALTO EECA Resource Centre joins in information activities. It also awards the **first European Solidarity Corps Quality Labels** to organisations from the Eastern Partnership region and Russia

2019 the HOP platform is revamped. It is a tool developed by SALTO EECA to support youth organisations in remote learning, and to provide space to collect and share e-learning contents

2020 a time of new challenges and the digitisation of international co-operation. The first **virtual Eastern Partnership Youth Engagement Summit** takes place. It proves that even in challenging conditions the international dimension of youth co-operation will thrive



PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF KUZYK



Thanks to intensive promotional activities, the EPALE platform gains popularity among people involved in adult education. An impressive achievement of the National Support Service was that in the first year of the platform's operation, Poland was ranked third in Europe in terms of the number of the EPALE registered users

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2015

The journey through education

The word “education” is most often associated with class-based lessons, syllabuses, grades and examinations, but in fact the longest stage of education is the time that starts upon graduation. In the workplace, one can learn the things that are not covered by school curricula, acquire new competences during workshops or training, and as part of pursuing own interests one can learn about opportunities offered by the latest technology. The Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) has been launched to focus on this longest learning phase and to highlight its role. The portal is a source of knowledge about adult education and an inspiration for educators who deal with both informal forms of learning and professional development of this group of learners.

The biggest advantage of EPALE is the possibility to co-create its resources. Each registered user can publish news, event information, materials, blog posts, or comments on other authors' publications. Some elements of the platform have been designed specifically for the beneficiaries of the Adult Education sector of the Erasmus+ Programme. An interesting tool is the calendar of events. It allows to find a suitable course, training or conference throughout Europe, in which one

can participate as part of project activities. The partner search engine can be used to establish contacts and invite organisations from other countries to join a venture. The resource centre can be used to publish the results of project work. Such materials and tools that can be of use to other adult education practitioners.

The platform has had small beginnings. When it was designed in 2014, it was intended to support a select audience. However, it soon became clear that adult education has many faces, and the new initiative filled a communication gap and facilitated international exchange of experiences. A year later, almost 500 users from Poland were registered on the platform and this was just the beginning.

Today, EPALE features contents available in 24 languages. It consists of 36 national support services operating across Europe. The articles and blog posts published by users most often concern support provided to adult learners. There is a strong emphasis on social inclusion, informal and non-formal education and development of key competences. The topics are presented in a creative way, and the group of users who specialise in various areas of informal education is constantly growing. They keep track of trends in mentoring, tutoring, gamification, storytelling and supervision and present the latest trends to other educators. The timidity was also broken by Erasmus+ beneficiaries who are more and more willing to publish the results of projects implemented in the Adult Education sector.

Registered users also include office workers, employees of non-governmental organisations, training companies, folk and third age universities, schools for adults, community centres and andragogues. Polish EPALE community already has over 5,000 members, which places it at the forefront of the countries involved in developing the initiative. The platform is created not only by Europeans, but also by inhabitants of the most remote corners of the world, such as Mexico or Nigeria. Countries located outside Europe are represented mainly by the United States and India. The multicultural character of the platform offers great opportunities to exchange experiences and establish international co-operation.

The Polish version of the platform includes over **3,000** various types of content that are viewed on average **22,000** times per month

EPALE is supported by a group of ambassadors. In the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework for the Erasmus+ Programme, their group has grown from eight to 16 people. They are experts in various fields of adult education. On the EPALE platform, they share their experiences of working with disadvantaged groups, show how to make activities in community centres more attractive or where to look for information about new technologies. EPALE users can also chat with the ambassadors in virtual groups called communities of practice, listen to their original webinars, or meet them at conferences and seminars organised by Polish EPALE team.

Because EPALE is not only about the virtual world – more and more is happening “in the real world”. The National Support Service organises regular events throughout Poland and promotes the initiative during various types of meetings: scientific discussions, educational congresses and industry conferences. It is everywhere where issues of importance to lifelong learning are addressed.

2014 28 countries are preparing to launch the platform.

There are already **30 national support services in Europe.**

In Poland, this function is performed by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System

2015 in April, a big event takes place: EPALE platform is launched

on the internet. The blog posts, news translations and other resources attract nearly 500 new users

2016 EPALE National Support Service in Poland organises the first Adult Education Forum

– a conference for professionals who are involved or interested in the topic as researchers or practitioners

2017 the first major information campaign is launched on the internet, radio and in the press.

Users of social networking sites and readers of trade magazines learn about EPALE platform

2018 16 EPALE ambassadors co-operate with the platform, including specialists in new technologies, education in cultural institutions andragogy, and evaluation studies. On EPALE,

every user can read their blog posts or chat with them in one of six thematic discussion groups called communities of practice

2019 the year of changes. EPALE refreshes its logo and visual identity and until the end of the year intensive work is under way to launch a revamped version of the platform

2020 new records of popularity are set. In the mid-year the EPALE community already has over 70,000 users across Europe, and **5,000 of them come from Poland**



europass

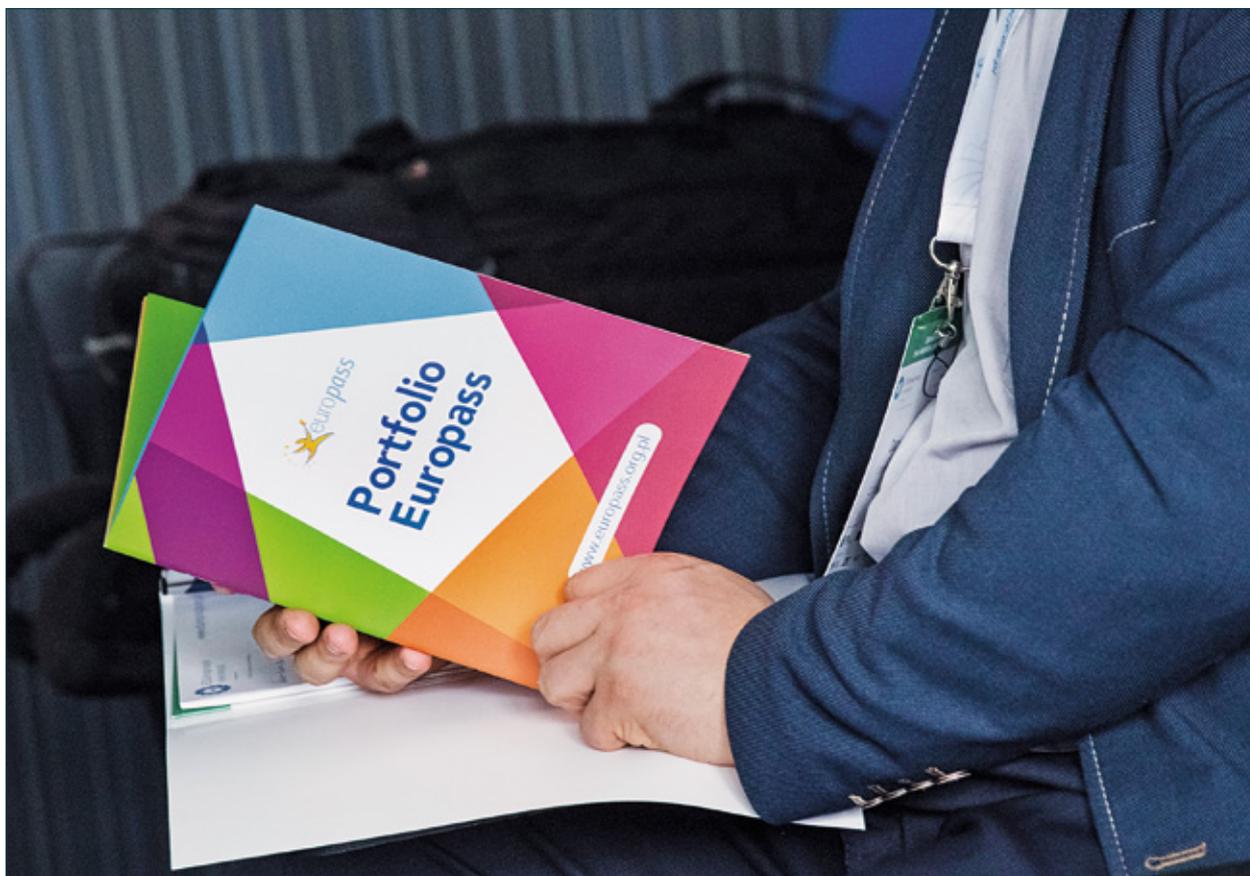


PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF PACHOLAK



Europass is an easily accessible way to effectively present citizens' competences on the education and labour markets in the European Union. Its greatest advantage is that it operates in a coherent form throughout the Union, the member states of the European Free Trade Association and the European Economic Area as well as in the candidate countries

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

Career docs and more

Europass is an initiative of the European Commission aimed at increasing the transparency of qualifications and supporting learning and professional mobility of citizens across Europe. It has operated in Poland since 2008. In 2014, it became an element of the Erasmus+ Programme.

For many years Europass consisted of the following elements: Europass CV – enabled to gather all educational and professional experience in one place; Europass Mobility – confirmed periods of study and training abroad; Diploma Supplement – presented the acquired knowledge and competences of a higher education graduate, and Certificate Supplement – issued after the completion of vocational education and training, which facilitated understanding of the skills that the holder of the diploma possesses. Each of these elements functioned independently and from 2020 they have been combined into one e-career portfolio, which now also includes information formerly given in the Europass Language Passport. Qualifications in the Europass Portfolio are presented in a coherent form in all participating countries. This contributes to their greater

legibility and increases the chances for continuing education or taking up employment in the European labour market.

Throughout the seven years of Erasmus+ operation, Polish Europass Centre organised more than 460 training, information and promotion events attended by more than 312,000 people who learnt about the documents. Coupled with more than 844,376 views of the www.europass.org.pl portal, one can talk about a powerful promotion and information campaign. This impact was achieved thanks to co-operation with many other initiatives carried out by the FRSE. The Europass National Centre regularly participated in trainings and information meetings for beneficiaries of mobility and youth programmes and for systemic projects carried out within the European Social Fund. Innovative advertising campaigns based on rich media were also of importance. The use of interactive elements, which directly involve users in interaction and learning has produced very good results.

The National Europass Centre presented an attractive co-operation offer to representatives of human resources management teams in companies and private enterprises. The aim has always been to attract partners to the Europass set as well as an invitation to use specific tools available online, e.g. CV comparison engine.

The effects of promotion activities can be seen in the numbers summarising the past seven years. Between 2014–2020, Polish citizens created online 1,437,090 Europass CVs and 29,273 Europass Language Passports. The Europass Mobility documents were awarded to 136,132 students. Moreover, 801,670 certificate supplements for graduates of vocational schools, 62,843 certificates for master craftsmen and apprentices and 1,937,300 diploma supplements were issued.

Poland took the **14th** place in terms of the number of Europass CVs issued, out of **35** countries participating in the initiative

Supplements issued by awarding bodies are documents in print or in digital form. Europass CV can be created by users themselves on the initiative's website. Since 1 October 2019, the Europass Mobility has also gone digital. The IT environment used to create this document is called EMOL. It allows to shorten the waiting time for documents and reduces the costs of obtaining them. In addition, access to the document is protected by a non-qualified electronic signature and any interested user, e.g. an employer or university verifying the candidate's competences for work or study, has the possibility to authenticate it in real time.

The first Erasmus+ framework ends up with over **4.4 mln** Europass documents issued by Polish students

The operation of Europass as a supporting element of the Erasmus+ Programme should be considered a success, and the use of more than one million euros of the 2014–2020 budget should be viewed as innovative and efficient.

2014 the Foundation for the Development of the Education System is appointed as the National Europass Centre in Poland. A **digital advertising campaign** is launched. It significantly increases the recognisability of the initiative in Poland

2015 the first edition of the brochure entitled **Success with Europass** is published. It presents profiles of European users of Europass documents. One of them represents Poland

2016 the training of 19 educators begins with the first edition of the "Career docs" project, carried out together with the Eurodesk Poland Network. By the end of the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, **almost 1,100 lessons on Europass** were conducted for more than 20,000 students

2017 the National Europass Centre in Poland launches its **Facebook profile**. In the first few days, it attracts over one thousand followers

2018 a decision is taken at European level on a common framework aimed at the **provision of better quality information services on skills and qualifications**, which transforms Europass set of documents into a modern, comprehensive online service

2019 EMOL is launched. It is a fully digitised application for issuing Europass Mobility documents. It **reduces the waiting time to a few days**

2020 the European Commission officially implements **the new Europass digital service**, which aims to support citizens looking for work and training in the upcoming Erasmus+ framework for the programme scheduled for 2021–2027



PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF KUCZYK



From the launch of Erasmus+, there has been growing interest among vocational schools in the ECVET system and its use to improve the quality of mobility as part of programme projects. Every year, the institutions have been supported in proper understanding ECVET principles and the benefits of the system for students, teachers and schools

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2015

Beneficiary first

ECVET stands for European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training. For many years, it was one of the European Union's policy tools developed to facilitate the acquisition of professional qualifications and to support mobility and lifelong learning. The aim of the initiative was also to promote mechanisms for the recognition of achievements gained in one country by institutions operating in others.

The ECVET principles have been implemented in many European countries since 2009. In Poland, the national authorities are supported in this activity by the National Team of ECVET Experts established in 2012. At the start of the Erasmus+, expert activities became an integral part of the programme.

ECVET was a tool for careful planning, monitoring and evaluation of the learning process. It supported the organisation of mobility and ensured its quality. It thus contributed to greater student mobility not only between educational institutions, but also between companies offering professional training in many European countries.

Between 2014 and 2020, the composition of the team changed, but its goals remained unchanged:

- » disseminate information about ECVET to stakeholders,
- » provide advice on the use of the system in mobility projects,

- » recommend ways of using ECVET principles in vocational education and training and in higher education,
- » exchange information and good practices as part of domestic and international co-operation.

The starting point for the development of the ECVET system were recommendations given in 2014 for the use of ECVET principles in Polish system of education. In the following years, an important topic in the experts' discussion was the use of the system of accumulation and transfer of achievements in programmes with a professional profile. The team conducted two studies on the use of ECVET principles in Poland (2016) and on validation of learning outcomes during admission to studies (2018). In connection with the new regulation of the minister of education on the core curricula in sectoral school occupations, in 2019 a training programme was developed on the ECVET system for beneficiaries of Erasmus+ and Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development.

In the years 2014–2020, ECVET was promoted during more than one hundred local, regional, national and cross-border meetings. The beneficiaries of Erasmus+ could obtain information on the system during annual information days and regional conferences organised by the National Agency of Erasmus+ in Poland. The staff of vocational schools and centres for continuing education and practical training learnt about the system during cyclical conferences of the Polish Craft Association (2014), industry seminars organised by the Centre for Education Development (2017 and 2018), and training sessions for vocational education teachers, consultants and methodology advisers employed in teacher training centres (2019). The principles of the system were also presented to representatives of local government units, higher education institutions, research institutes, industry organisations, employers' organisations and labour market institutions during the European Congress of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (2017 and 2019), the Congress of the Education System Development (2018 and 2019) and the Congress on Non-Formal Education (2019).

At the end of the consolidated Erasmus+ framework, the use of ECVET principles was declared in **58%** projects approved in the VET sector

Training activities of the National ECVET Team of Experts concerned first of all the use of the system's assumptions in learning mobility projects implemented under Erasmus+ and Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development. Since 2014, 19 workshops and one webinar have been staged. They were attended by nearly 800 participants. They had the opportunity to learn good practices, prepare exemplary descriptions of learning outcomes and methods of their verification for a selected industry.

The team members also opened up to co-operation with experts in areas related to ECVET. In the passing Erasmus+ framework, they regularly met with experts from the Educational Research Institute and the Centre for Education Development. They also maintained occasional relations with the Contact Point for Polish and European Qualifications Framework and the Euroguidance Poland network.

2014 from the launch of Erasmus+, beneficiaries participating in events and conferences organised by the Foundation have been **informed about the role of ECVET** in ensuring the quality of learning mobility and in building trust in qualifications

2015 the Team of Experts is already **16** strong. Among the members are **practitioners in the field of VET and higher education** as well as former Bologna Experts

2016 **recognisability and usefulness of the system grows**. As many as 45% of beneficiaries of the Vocational Education and Training sector of Erasmus+ Programme plan to organise internships and apprenticeships abroad using the tool

2017 as part of partnership projects, **innovative materials based on ECVET principles are developed**: an application to compare qualifications in the construction professions and a bank of training modules for the waste management technician occupation

2018 as part of advisory activities, the publication entitled ***Learning outcomes and their verification in learning mobility*** is published. It describes tools that facilitate raising, developing, and accumulating competences using ECVET

2019 this year, a strong emphasis is placed on **counselling for Erasmus+ beneficiaries** who implement learning mobility projects and on promoting ECVET among employers, representatives of higher education and vocational education and training

2020 the work of experts ends with **case studies on the development of market qualifications** as well as on VET and higher education systems



PHOTO: DANUTA MATLOCH



In 2014, the Eurydice network was included in the Key Action 3 of the Erasmus+ Programme. As a result, the supporting role of Eurydice in the implementation of the European Union's policy in the field of education and training was emphasised more strongly than in previous years. Information developed by the network is also used by Erasmus+ beneficiaries who are preparing for international mobilities

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

Support for reforms

The Eurydice Network was established in 1980. In the past, it formed a part of the Socrates (1995–2006) and Lifelong Learning programmes (2007–2013). From 2014, it is a part of the Erasmus+. The mission of the network is to provide those responsible for education systems and policies in Europe with reliable information and analyses that will support their decision making. Between 2014 and 2020, the framework of this co-operation was determined by two key strategies of the European Commission: *Education and training 2020* and *Europe 2020*. Over 40 years, the Eurydice network has published comparative reports and provided annual updates of information on various aspects of the operation of education systems in European countries.

In the years 2014–2020, the focus of the Eurydice Network was on education at every stage of life: from early years (early childhood education and care), through school years (subject teaching with a particular focus on languages, reducing early school leaving), to university studies (modernisation of higher

education, situation of students in Europe). More general topics were also developed (integration of migrants and refugees, civic and digital education, situation of teaching staff, financing of education). Polish Eurydice Unit has prepared five reports, including a publication on teachers' working time in Europe.

Eurydice in Poland published over **50** reports covering education priorities of the European Union

Eurydice's task was also to provide the most up-to-date information for comparative reports. An important element of the work was preparing sets of indicators published in the European Commission's Education and Training Monitor and descriptions of national education systems, published in the National Education Systems database. The descriptions were edited on the basis of common recommendations, which allows users to compare the situation in different countries. All descriptions have been made available in English and some – like the Polish one – in national languages.

In 2015, the European Commission launched a new tool. Youth Wiki is an online encyclopaedia on youth policy in Europe that supports decision makers in this field. It presents the most important issues concerning the lives of young people. In the near future, large resources of Youth Wiki will be used for implementation of the tasks set out in the *EU Youth Strategy for 2019–2027*. It stresses that in order to provide young people with the best possible education and to facilitate their entry into the labour market, appropriate legislative action based on evidence and research is needed.

The Youth Wiki platform draws on Eurydice's experience and it has also been included in the Erasmus+ Key Action 3. In an encyclopaedic form, it develops knowledge on issues related to: domestic youth policies, volunteering, employment and entrepreneurship, social inclusion, social and political participation, health, creativity and culture, education and training, global youth situation, the labour market and youth work. Entries take form of statistical summaries, results of national youth research and analyses of legal acts.

The Youth Wiki database is developed by national correspondents from 29 countries. The project has resulted in the creation of a very broad base, which covers 37 countries and regions of Europe. The data is presented in a way that allows easy comparison of information and use by policy makers and researchers for legislative and analytical purposes.

Youth Wiki virtual database includes policies from **37** European countries and regions

At the end of the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System became involved in promoting the effects of the two initiatives. In June 2019, employees of the Polish Eurydice Unit and Youth Wiki organised a joint information seminar dedicated to discuss the possible forms of using outcomes of both initiatives in education policy and practice.

2014 “Eurydice – understanding education in Europe” is the title of the first conference organised by the Polish Eurydice Unit, which serves an opportunity to **present the network as a rich source of information about European systems of education**. The programme website in Polish is launched

2015 Eurydice Poland Facebook profile is created. **The interest in the results of the latest research exceeds the wildest expectations of the team**. In the same year, the European Union launches the Youth Wiki project

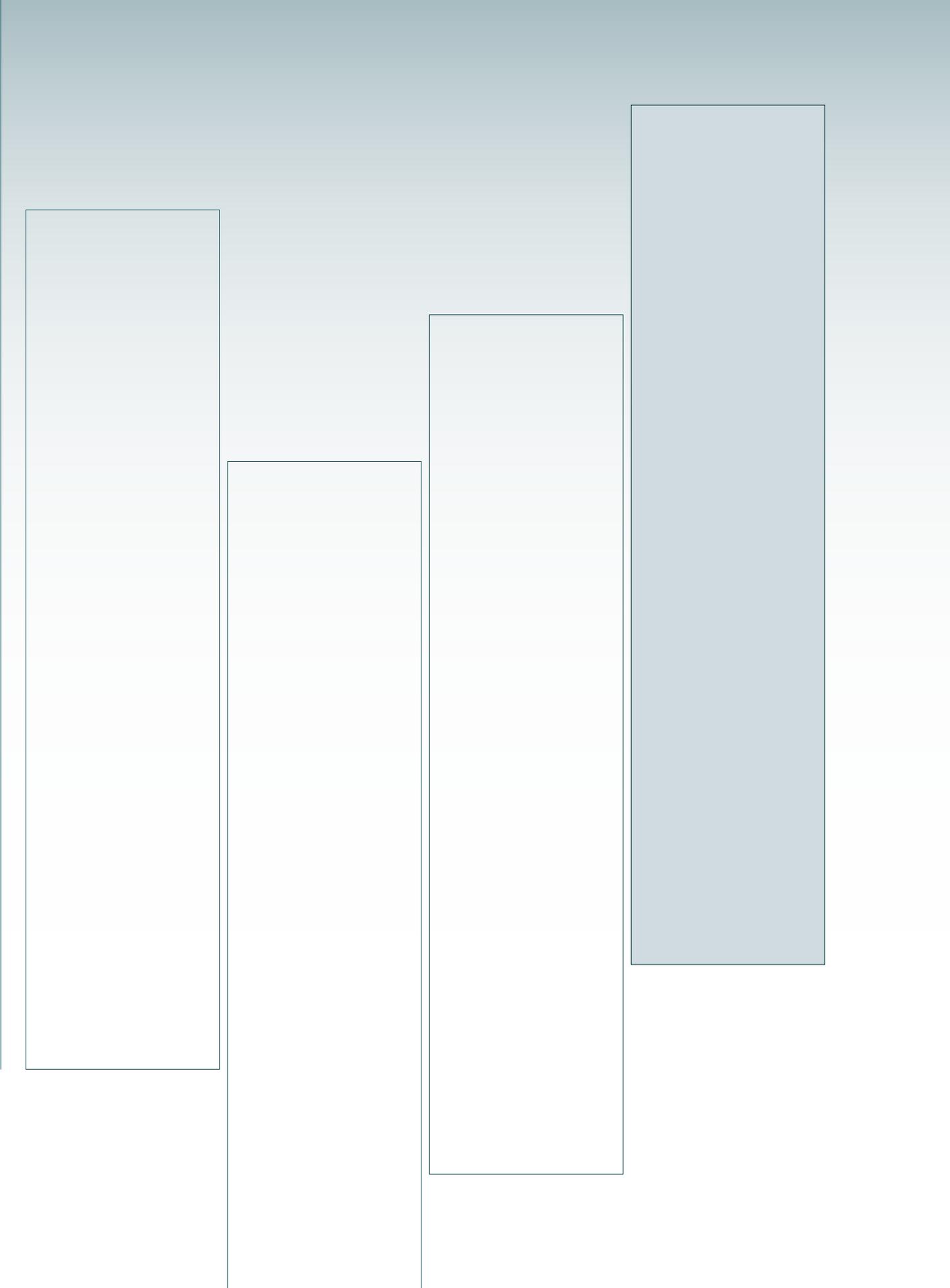
2016 Polish Eurydice Unit is 20 years old. On this occasion, throughout the year, the network makes available on its website a tab presenting **an overview of the published reports covering the topics that were most frequently discussed**

2017 Eurydice's website enjoys great popularity. It is visited by almost 19,000 users per year. **Poland joins the countries that contribute to the Youth Wiki platform**. The database is constantly updated with new information

2018 Youth Wiki becomes the first international online encyclopaedia of youth policy – all contents, so far offline, have been made available online

2019 the first Eurydice and Youth Wiki joint seminar brings together representatives of administration, academia, NGOs and all those interested in education and youth policy

2020 Polish Eurydice Unit prepares **new publications** on, among other things, inequalities, the teaching profession and adult education



boosting actions



PROMOTION, COMMUNICATION, DISSEMINATION



PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF KUCZYK



The Polish National Agency provides access to information about the Erasmus+ Programme primarily through integrated communication activities conducted on the internet. It uses not only traditional websites, but also social media and newsletters for this purpose. Via the programme website, Facebook and Twitter profiles, it holds a coherent and active dialogue with those interested in implementing education activities, journalists and programme beneficiaries

Based on: *Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014*

First-hand information

In the years 2014–2020, the Polish National Agency actively used online communication channels for promotional activities. Along with the start of the programme, a new web portal www.erasmusplus.org.pl was launched. Throughout the seven-year perspective, it provided beneficiaries with the most important information, presented opportunities offered by particular Erasmus+ sectors, supported and inspired a huge group of recipients. The website features varied contents, including documents, handbooks, success stories, multimedia and information on events or activities supporting institutions in implementing their ideas.

Equally popular information channel were social media, among which the most popular were FRSE and Erasmus+ Facebook profiles. At the end of the 2014–2020 framework they had nearly 43,000 followers. Communication with users was also intensively developed on Twitter. Since 2018, internet users can follow the actions and event reports on Instagram.

Over the past seven years, 1,039 videos were posted on YouTube. Since 2018, the YouTube channel has also been used to disseminate online training to help beneficiaries consolidate project results. Over the past two years, 18 webinars conducted by practitioners and experts in promotion, communication, branding and project management were streamed on YouTube.

Up-to-date information is provided via Foundation and Erasmus+ newsletters. Between 2014 and 2020, a total of 4,670,866 e-mails were sent

to 130,699 subscribers, in which they were informed about application deadlines, European Commission communications, training, calls for proposals, conferences and other important educational events.

Throughout the entire period of the Erasmus+ Programme operation, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System supported the development of top quality education in the most remote corners of Poland. In 2018, a network of regional information centres was established. They serve as contact points for people who want to gain first-hand information about educational programme offer. Over the past seven years, the centres supported local Erasmus+ projects and provided advice by phone and e-mail. Each year, they held on average 1,800 individual consultations on the possibilities of acquiring knowledge and experience within the framework of educational programmes and initiatives managed by the Polish National Agency.

The Foundation for the Development of the Education System actively involved educators in all regions by organising training, workshops and webinars for them. From 2017, Erasmus+ Bus has made it easier to reach out to the residents of the most remote localities. The Bus was used to transport to them experts who met representatives of local authorities, schools, cultural and vocational education and training institutions, adult education staff and representatives of youth organisations. This way, prospective beneficiaries learnt about the opportunities of effective use of European funds for the implementation of educational tasks and the possibilities for the development of students and teachers as part of international projects. In May 2018, Mobile Educational Centre started its tour of Poland. It is a trailer transporting a classroom equipped with modern technologies and educational materials for conducting classes and meetings. It is one of the most original information initiatives of the Foundation for the Development of the Education System on Polish and European scale. Classroom visitors can use, among other things, tablets, interactive whiteboards and floors, iMO-LEARN cubes, VR headsets and robots, which can be successfully used to add variety to classroom activities.

Between 2018 and 2019, regional information centres hosted almost **400** events for over **15,000** participants

During classes conducted at the Mobile Educational Centre, the participants can have a taste of virtual learning environment, learn how to teach programming and explore the secrets of robotics. The FRSE experts, who are qualified professionals and teachers, are eager to share their experience gained during the participation in Erasmus+ and eTwinning programmes. On the tour, the winners of European Language Label certificates presented the most interesting results of their projects and encouraged others to use them in language learning. They also showed less obvious applications of modern technologies to develop social and civic competences. In the first Erasmus+ framework, the Mobile Educational Centre made 75 trips across Poland and three international trips, during which 8,215 people were trained.



www.facebook.com/FRSE.fb



www.facebook.com/erasmuspolka



www.instagram.com/frsedukacji



twitter.com/FRSEdukcji



twitter.com/ErasmusPlus_PL



www.linkedin.com/company/frse

EVENTS

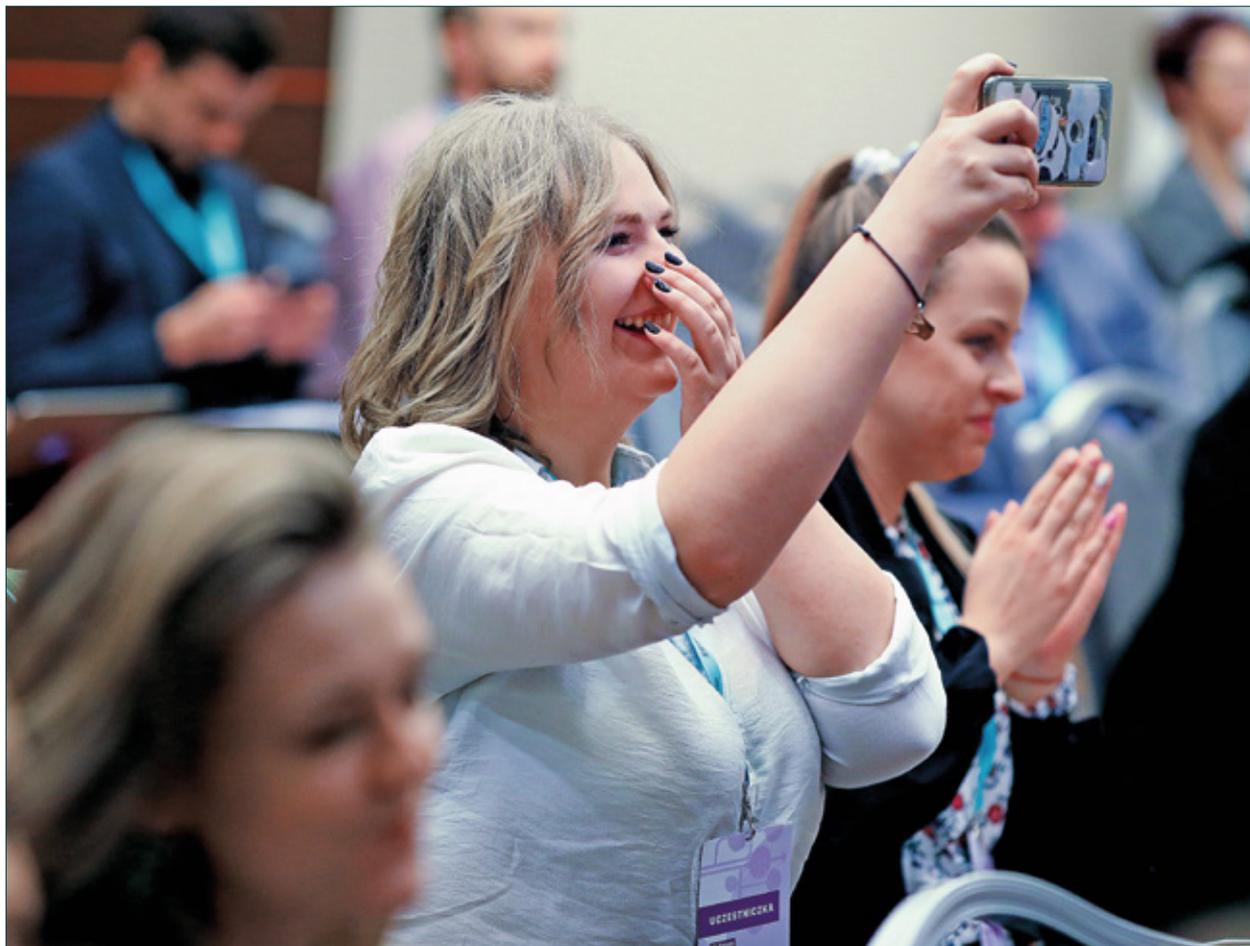


PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF KU CZYK



The first year of the Erasmus+ Programme operation posed a challenge. The Foundation had to start many new activities to bring the principles of the new EU initiative closer to prospective beneficiaries. The results achieved by the beneficiaries of previous EU programmes have certainly encouraged many people to try their hand at Erasmus+.

Based on: *Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014*

Open to the dialogue

Between 2014 and 2020, the Polish National Agency reached all groups that could benefit from the Erasmus+ Programme with information about European Union educational initiatives and programmes. For them, the national and international conferences, seminars, debates and trainings were organised, creating a space for open dialogue between many education groups of interest in Poland.

Each year, approximately 500 meetings of various forms took place, with an average participation of 20,000 people in all of them. During these events, participants learned about the offer of programmes managed by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, but the topics also included current issues related to the development of the Polish education system, the use of modern technologies in non-formal education or professional development of teachers and the possibilities of acquiring key competences by adults.

Many of the events launched at the beginning of the Erasmus+ Programme continued with great success in the following years. Growing interest in the Foundation's offer has contributed to the development of FRSE's activity and broadening the group of its recipients. The sports and recreation events organised as part the Erasmus+ in recent years, have drawn positive responses.

The main source of information on the programme was the Erasmus+ National Information Day. It is one of the largest cyclical events organised by the Foundation, which at the beginning of each year gathers roughly a thousand participants. By participating in trainings and thematic workshops, new and prospective beneficiaries took the opportunity to learn about the offer of European Union initiatives and programmes in the field of education.

FRSE's own initiative was the Congress of the Education System Development inaugurated in 2018. Its idea was to create a space that would support the development of a high quality education system and the improvement of teachers' competences in response to the challenges posed by the modern world. In the passing perspective, the invitation to debates on these issues was accepted by several dozen experts dealing with higher education, school education, vocational education and training as well as local government and business people.

In the period 2014–2020, the Polish National Agency has also been involved in European initiatives. One of them was the biennial European Youth Week, which aims to support activities undertaken for the benefit of young people and to present programmes and initiatives addressed to them. Workshops, debates and good practice fairs organised at that time by FRSE and organisations co-operating with it served to exchange views and inspiration on how to participate actively in civic life and develop social competences from an early age. Events organised all over Poland attracted over 1,500 people each time.

Every year, the Foundation co-organised one of the most important events for young leaders from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – the Economic Forum of Young Leaders, accompanying the Economic Forum in Krynica. The Polish National Agency's experts participating in this event supported the idea of developing co-operation, solidarity and civil society building among young people by promoting Erasmus+ opportunities and participating in debates and meetings with young people. Every year the event was attended by about 300 participants representing 34 countries.

Since 2017, the Foundation organises one of the greatest recreation events –

Erasmus+ International Run

combined with an all-day family picnic

Polish edition of the European Vocational Skills Week was equally popular. The event focussed on the promotion of education and development of vocational competences. The invited guests and experts held a dialogue on co-operation between educational institutions and the business sector aimed at building economic potential.

2014 the www.erasmusplus.org.pl website is launched. It presents the main objectives and activities of the new programme. In the first year, the number of visits exceeds 2.2 million! In February, for the first time, the Erasmus+ National Information Day is held in Warsaw, which gathers 1,500 people

2015 the Erasmus+ Academy develops. It is an initiative addressed to future programme beneficiaries. Throughout the year, **169 information and promotion meetings are held in many regions of the country**

2016 Erasmus+ Bus sets on its first tour. Representatives of schools, kindergartens, libraries, third age universities, local authorities, and museums listen to presentations on the programme offer

2017 Erasmus in Poland is 30 years old. The anniversary is celebrated throughout the year during numerous events organised by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System

2018 the first Congress of the Education System Development attracts 800 participants! During the event, an exhibition summarising the Foundation for the Development of the Education System's contribution to modernising Polish education for the past 25 years is staged

2019 Mobile Educational Centre breaks new records. In one year, it covers more than 25,000 km and the mobile classroom is visited by more than 5,500 students and teachers from 49 localities!

2020 information and promotion activities go online. It is here that the most important events take place, including the 3rd Congress of the Education System Development staged in a 3D TV studio

CONTESTS & COMPETITIONS



Every year between 2014 and 2020, FRSE announced the next editions of the EDUinspiracje Awards and European Language Label, launched many years earlier. These initiatives were later complemented by the Selfie+ photo contest addressed to beneficiaries of educational programmes, and the WorldSkills and EuroSkills competitions promoting the achievements of young professionals.

Grasped in the frame

The Selfie+ platform was launched in 2015 to support the beneficiaries' efforts aimed at promoting and disseminating project outcomes in the most accessible and attractive way – through images. Videos and photos posted online by participants present inspiring moments that happened during projects.

Via the platform, participants and institutions conducting activities under the programme could submit their photos to the Selfie+ photo contest. Initially, beneficiaries of the School Education sector could enter the contest,



but the great interest in the initiative quickly resulted in opening it to all Erasmus+ sectors. Since 2017, the competition also was attended by beneficiaries of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development, the Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund and the Polish-Ukrainian Council of Youth Exchange.

The winning photos were selected by the Foundation's experts at the end of each year. Their authors received awards and diplomas during the Selfie+ awards ceremony. From the launch of the platform, 2,390 images, including 116 videos, have been published, and in six editions of the Selfie+ contest organised in the years 2015–2020, 152 photos were awarded.



The main purpose of disseminating project outcomes results is their re-use. This will not only maximise the impact of the programme on the work of organisations, institutions and individuals not involved in specific projects, but will also allow beneficiaries promote the results achieved

Based on: Program Erasmus+ w Polsce. Raport 2014

The best educational ideas

The EDUinspiracje Awards were established in 2011 to reward the best practices developed in educational projects conducted under European Union programmes. It is one of flagship initiatives supporting the dissemination of the outcomes of programmes managed by the Foundation. Each year, the award is organised under a different motto and promotes the value of lifelong learning, the sustainability of the impact of project outcomes and innovative approaches to education.

The jury selects the most interesting projects that can serve as role models. The winners are awarded during the EDUinspiracje gala, which is one of the largest events promoting the activities of project beneficiaries. The event, the scale of which resembles the Oscar gala, is attended by educational experts, and the outcomes of winning projects are widely disseminated in the media and publications issued by the Foundation.

In the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ framework, the number of laureates has increased many fold. The institutions awarded for the best projects in 2014, were joined by individuals who were involved in educational activities. The title of an EDUinspirator was awarded to individuals active in local communities, whose attitudes inspired others to take initiative for education and personal development.

In 2015, for the first time, distinctions were awarded in the EDUinspiracje Media Awards. It is addressed to press, radio, television and internet journalists who discuss social and educational matters related to the Erasmus+ Programme. Each year, jury composed of academic experts and media representatives, select the materials, which present educational topics that contribute to the dissemination of the idea of European education in an interesting and accessible way. In six editions of EDUinspiracje Media, a total of 30 mass media materials were awarded.



EDUinspiracje

In the years 2014–2020, in the EDUinspiracje
70 projects, were awarded, and the title
 of EDUinspirator was awarded to **37** individuals

Distinctions in the EDUinspiracje were awarded in 11 categories, corresponding to Erasmus+ sectors and other educational programmes and initiatives. These were: Higher Education, School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education, Non-Formal Education of Youth, Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (in school education and vocational education and training), European Information for Youth, European Solidarity Corps, Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund and Polish-Ukrainian Council of Youth Exchange. The EDUinspirator title was awarded to Erasmus+ beneficiaries in five categories.



PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF PACHOLAK



The distinction in the EDUinspiracje Awards gives a second life to projects implemented under programmes managed by the Foundation. Every year, the awarded projects and educators' profiles are described in a publication summarising each edition, available free of charge at www.czytelnia.frse.org.pl. The winners also discuss the secrets of their successes during regional meetings and webinars.



PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF KUCZYK

Websites featuring FRSE contests and competitions

Selfie+
selfieplus.frse.org.pl

EDUinspiracje
www.eduinspiracje.org.pl

European Language Label
ell.org.pl

WorldSkills
worldskillspoland.org.pl

Languages for special tasks

The Erasmus+ Programme has contributed to the creation of many innovative projects related to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The best of them competed for the European Language Label quality certificate. With this initiative, dating back to 1998, the Foundation promoted an innovative approach to language education, rewarded the ability to develop linguistic and intercultural competences in learners, and distinguished educators involved in teaching languages.

During the first consolidated Erasmus+ framework, prizes were awarded to the authors of 52 institutional projects and three teachers. Additionally, the jury awarded seven special distinctions on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus, the 25th anniversary of the FRSE and the 20th anniversary of the European Language Label.

The promotional activities related to disseminating effects of the awarded initiatives were supported by the Mobile Educational Centre. Workshops prepared by academic lecturers and addressed to teachers, school principals, educators, and students were held there. They were aimed at presenting modern educational tools and training the teaching staff on how to use them for language teaching.

The effects of the awarded projects and learning foreign languages were promoted during conferences and seminars. The European Language Label was heard by the participants of the Erasmus+ Academy, the European Congress PASE, the conference "Languages for special tasks" and contests: "Reading companion", "Teach big", "Assessment in language education", as well as the annual workshops organised to celebrate the European Day of Languages.



European Language Label

Professionally about skills

In October 2017, Poland joined the WorldSkills organisation, which aims to promote vocational education by international skills competitions on the European (EuroSkills) and worldwide level (WorldSkills). The initiative supports the development of competences needed on the labour market, with a strong emphasis on shaping the skills needed for the jobs of the future. The competitions have been staged for 70 years and have been attended by representatives from 84 countries.

Participation in WorldSkills and EuroSkills stirs up strong emotions, but most of all it requires many months of preparation. At the beginning, the biggest challenge was to select competitors and experts representing Poland. To this end, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System has established co-operation with the best specialists in particular industries, who select competitors and supervise their preparations.

The Polish team took their first steps in the EuroSkills competition in Hungarian Budapest in 2018. An eight-strong team participated in seven categories and returned with a medallion won in cooking. This success was repeated the following year during the WorldSkills competition. Over 1,200 VET students competed in 60 official categories on a 75 ha of Expo halls. From Russian Kazan, Polish team returned with a silver medal in cooking.



At the EuroSkills competition in Graz,

Poland will be represented by **17** young competitors taking part in **16** competitions

The commitment to WorldSkills has brought fruit in the catering industry. Drawing on the experience gained during excellent co-operation with the coaches of the first editions of the competitions, in 2019 the Foundation for the Development of the Education System organised national eliminations to the competition and selected a young chef to represent Poland at EuroSkills in Austrian Graz.

Since 2017, the WorldSkills Poland team has participated in numerous meetings and conferences aimed to promote vocational skills. The team has visited over a dozen regional and national skills competitions, established co-operation with representatives of companies and institutions that decided to join in preparing competitors for the contests. Co-operation with the leading representatives of vocational education in Poland, such as the Association of Headteachers and Teachers of Creative and Active Vocational Schools and the Polish Craft Association, also gives positive results.

2014 for the first time in the history of EDUinspiracje, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System awards **individuals for their efforts aimed to improve the quality of education system** that deserve special recognition. The jury of the European Language Label awards certificates to institutions teaching Polish as a foreign language

2015 the Selfie+ photo contest is launched. Initially, it was an initiative addressed to the beneficiaries of the School Education sector who use the photos to showcase inspiring project activities. EDUinspiracje opens up to journalists who discuss the European Union educational programmes in their work

2016 European Language Label turns 15. The national jury awards 13 innovative projects

2017 Poland is admitted to the group of countries participating in international skills competitions, and the Foundation for the Development of the Education System **co-ordinates preparations for participation in the first EuroSkills competition**

2018 the Selfie+ contest is growing. In the 2018 edition, the **beneficiaries of all programmes managed by FRSE can show their best side**

2019 participation in the WorldSkills competition is a huge success. **Polish representation team in the cooking competition wins a silver medal in Kazan!**

2020 new photos are posted on Selfie+. Over the year, the platform **features 228 new photographs** presenting the achievements of various initiatives and programmes co-ordinated by the Foundation

PUBLISHING HOUSE & MEDIA LIBRARY

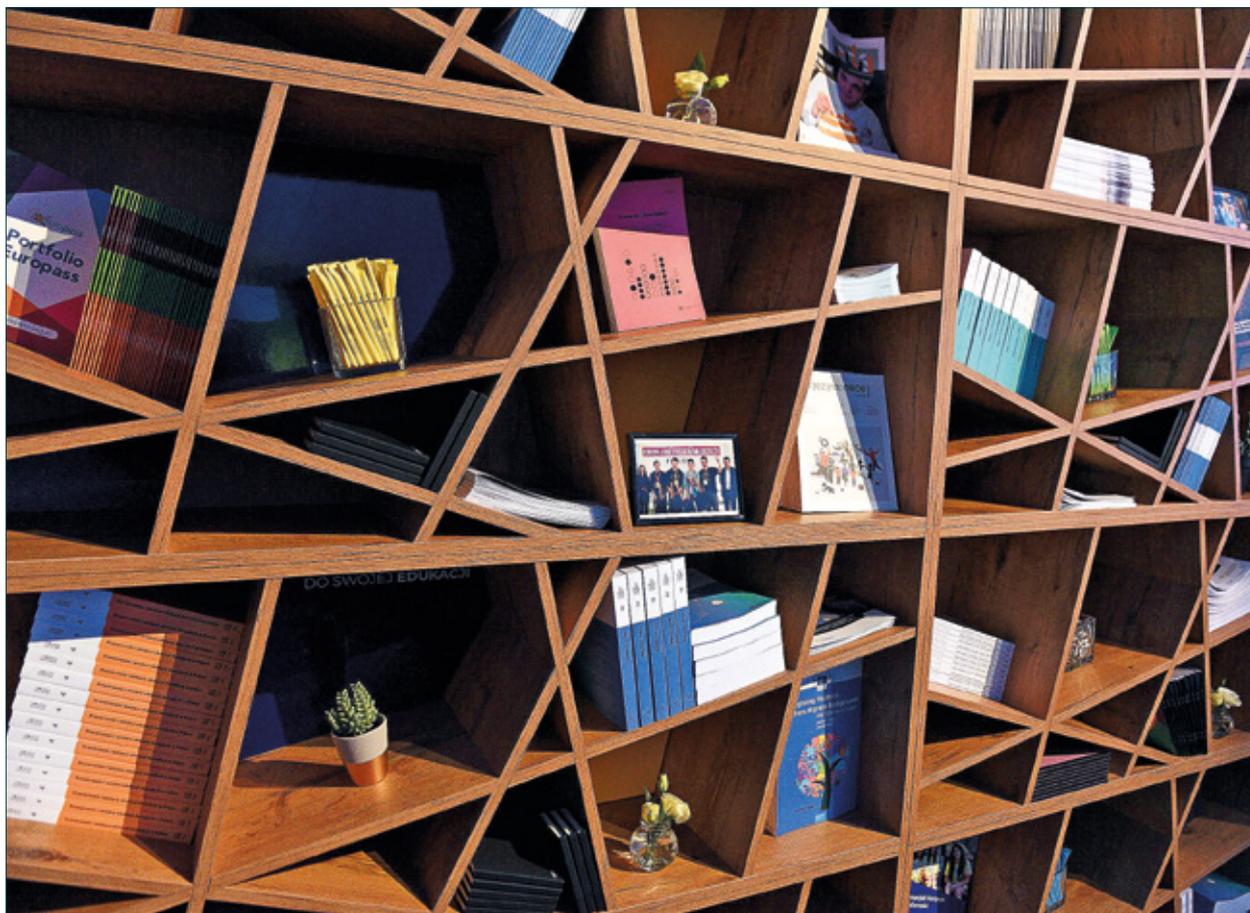


PHOTO: DARIUSZ MAJEWSKI

What appeared!

For many years, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System has conducted publishing activities aimed at informing about educational programmes' offer and promoting their outputs. Between 2014 and 2020, FRSE's publishing activity developed very dynamically. Articles and studies were prepared by staff working in teams responsible for Erasmus+ sectors as well as programmes and initiatives managed by the Foundation. Other authors of publications included programme beneficiaries, external experts and researchers. The topics of the publications and the subject matter of the educational projects was very diverse, but tailored to the needs and interests of the readers.

The seven-year consolidated framework ended up with over 150 publications funded or co-financed under the Erasmus+ Programme. All of them were made available free of charge in digital (PDF, ePub, Mobi formats) and printed versions. Digital publications can be downloaded at www.czytelnia.frse.org.pl and



at issuu.com/frse. In the passing perspective, publications in print were also distributed during events organised by the Foundation, book fairs and sent to educational institutions, universities, libraries and teacher training centres.

For over 20 years, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System operated without a publishing house. Although publishing activity constantly developed, there was no unit, which would take care of the publishing process and relieve individual teams. The year 2017 saw a change in this respect, as a Publishing Team was established within the organisational structure of FRSE. Initially, it was responsible for co-ordinating publication plans of various Erasmus+ sectors, other FRSE programmes and supporting initiatives. The Team was responsible for editing, typesetting, proofreading, printing and distribution. The Publishing Team took over from other units of the Foundation two quarterly magazines: "Języki Obce w Szkole" ("Foreign Languages at School"), which is addressed to teachers and "Europa dla Aktywnych" ("Europe for the Active") addressed to programme beneficiaries. In early 2019, the Publishing Team was transformed into an independent unit employing over a dozen of staff members. The unit closely co-operates with other units of the Foundation, but also takes its own initiatives and develops its presence within the organisation.

Between 2014 and 2020, more than

150 publications were funded

or co-funded under the Erasmus+

Over the past seven years, FRSE's books and magazines have consistently been transformed into modern publications adapted to the requirements of various software, applications and readers' needs. "Języki Obce w Szkole" was revamped for the new Erasmus+ Programme, and "Europa dla Aktywnych" went through two metamorphoses in the passing perspective. The magazine, which turned 10 in 2020, has developed from a 16-page brochure, and later a 32-page bulletin, to a 72-page magazine that is becoming increasingly popular and pleasing to the readers' eyes.

The main objectives of FRSE Publishing House is to disseminate project outcomes, provide advice to the beneficiaries and create space for the exchange of ideas by academics and researchers. It also co-operates on an ongoing basis with a group of mobile correspondents who describe events that accompany the programmes managed by the Foundation and conduct interviews with beneficiaries all over Poland. All texts are illustrated with professional photographs taken by the photographer. The materials are constantly published on the website of the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, the websites of the two quarterly magazines and on the Eurodesk and European Youth Portal, which are also run by the Publishing House unit.

In 2020, the Publishing House appointed the Scientific Council and announced a contest for academics and researchers for the best monographs on education. It has also developed a concept for a modern portal, which will provide information on the upcoming Erasmus+ perspective. The team distributes publications on an ongoing basis and promotes new publications with the catchy phrase: "What appeared!".

2014 Erasmus+ is widely promoted through various publications.

Leaflets are produced to present all its sectors. Materials prepared by the European Commission are translated into Polish. All of these are posted at www.erasmusplus.org.pl

2015 the first *Erasmus+ in Poland* report presenting the

achievements of the first year of the programme's operation is published. It gives examples of good practices developed in projects. The publication launches a series of reports that are published each year until the end of the Erasmus+ framework

2016 14 new publications are issued, and the "Europa dla Aktywnych" magazine is accompanied by "Your Eurodesk" supplement

2017 FRSE Publishing House is established. A new key concepts series is launched

2018 modern graphic design is created for publishing series and organisational improvements are introduced, thanks to which the Foundation publishes a growing number of books

2019 is a record year in terms of the number of publications.

There are over 30 of them. All the publications are available free of charge online at www.czytelnia.frse.org.pl.

They are distributed to libraries and other institutions, and promoted during fairs and events organised by the National Agency in Poland

2020 FRSE Publishing House grows its internet presence.

The team takes over the responsibility for the **Eurodesk and European Youth Portal**, and the Scientific Council is appointed to co-operate with the team

Online Resources

FRSE Publishing House

www.frse.org.pl/wydawnictwo:

over **3,400** views per year

FRSE Media Library

www.frse.org.pl/czytelnia:

30,300 users
since its launch in 2016

“Europa dla Aktywnych”

www.frse.org.pl/eda:

on average almost

1,800
views per month

“Języki Obce w Szkole”

www.jows.pl:

2,607,531 views
made by

997,193 users over the seven
years of the Erasmus+ Programme

Number of copies

20,000 – Academic Planner

8–15,000 – publications
on supportive programmes

8,000 – “Europa dla Aktywnych”
magazine

1,000–2,000 – thematic
reports, manuals, guides

500–2,000 – key concepts
series

500 – Eurydice reports

Publishing series

Eurydice publications

Series with 40-year tradition.

It presents information about European education systems, up-to-date statistics and a lot of information useful for the recipients interested in all

stages of education. In the last perspective of the Erasmus+ Programme, the series has been enriched by more than 50 translations and original publications.



Research reports

The publications published in this series present the results of studies on educational programmes managed by FRSE. So far, they

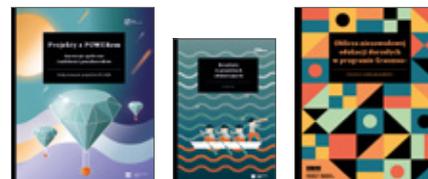
have discussed topics related to the European Voluntary Service, teacher mobility, traced the situation of Erasmus+ graduates in the labour market, presented how to increase the sustainability of project outcomes and support adults with low basic skills, and how to promote co-operation between schools and local authorities.



Thematic reports

This series features guides, descriptions of outcomes of projects implemented under the Erasmus+ Programme and as part of supporting initiatives.

The publications present valuable information and tips for current and future beneficiaries. They tell all you need to know about educational projects in a nutshell.



Key concept series

The latest FRSE publishing series focusses on the key concepts in contemporary education.

In volumes published since 2018, the academics discussed the development of competences valued by the labour market, teacher leadership, and presented the results of research into inclusive education and online safety. The series is recommended to educators and all those interested in concepts that are of key importance for personal and social development.



Jubilee

publications

Each publication in the series summarises the intense, ever-expanding activity



of the Foundation. The publications describe the most important events and achievements of the past years. Readers can also find there inspiring interviews, success stories, dates and data – i.e. everything worth knowing about programmes and initiatives managed by the FRSE.

Annual reports

The publications describe in detail each year of the Erasmus+ Programme in Poland. They present examples of good practices developed by the beneficiaries, statistics, activities of the National Agency as well as programmes and initiatives supporting the objectives of Erasmus+. The reports should be viewed by people interested in the achievements of the programme in the 2014–2020 framework.



Good practices in projects

This series features publications describing the results of projects awarded in contest organised for beneficiaries of programmes managed by the Foundation. The diversified contents of the collection prove that the source of inspiration is inexhaustible, and new ideas are produced every year. It is worth having a look at them to learn from those who succeeded.



“Języki Obce w Szkole”

The quarterly provides language teachers with theoretical and practical information on glottodidactics, linguistics, psycholinguistics and cultural studies. The magazine discusses issues related to projects implemented under European Union educational programmes, including those describing activities implemented under the Erasmus+ Programme, primarily projects awarded in the European Language Label.



“Europa dla Aktywnych”

This free-of-charge magazine is addressed to beneficiaries of the programmes managed by FRSE. The quarterly provides inspiration, advice, explanations and support to make sure that projects bring the greatest possible benefit to those involved in them and to stakeholders.



In the years 2014–2020, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System published over **250** publications, among them:

80 issues of journals co-financed by the Erasmus+ Programme:

41 issues of “Europa dla Aktywnych” magazine

and

39 issues of “Języki Obce w Szkole” quarterly

10 volumes of key concept series

150 publications co-financed by the Erasmus+,

including:

over **50** guides, manuals and instructions

over **20** publications in English

over **20** publications of the Polish Eurydice Unit

over **20** analyses and research reports

over **20** eTwinning publications

over **20** publications on supporting initiatives

7 jubilee publications

6 annual reports on the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Poland

6 publications prepared by Eurodesk Poland

4 academic planners for international Erasmus+ students in Poland

RESEARCH



PHOTO: KRZYSZTOF KUCZYK



Research into the implementation and impact of programmes managed by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System aims to contribute to meeting the European Commission's guidelines for implementing evidence-based policy

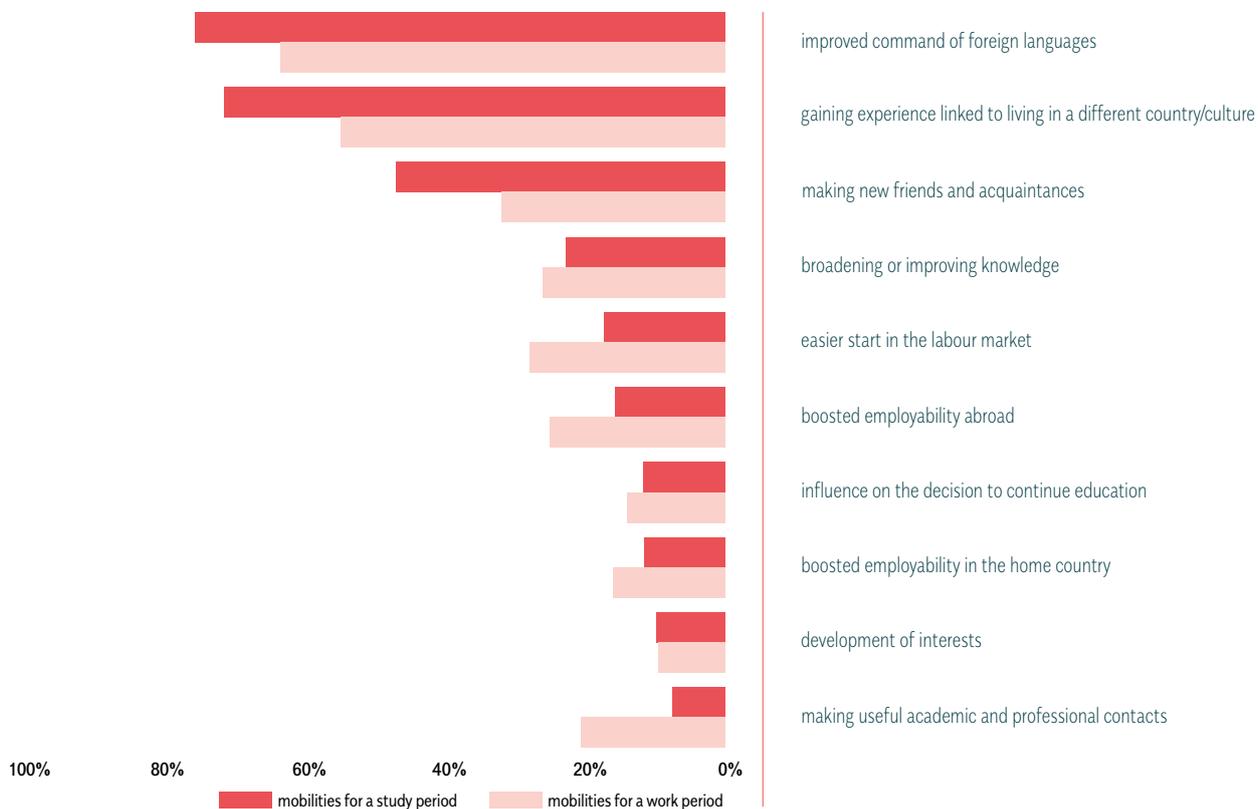
Source: Erasmus+, Program Operacyjny Wiedza Edukacja Rozwój, Europejski Korpus Solidarności – raport 2019

Erasmus+ in figures

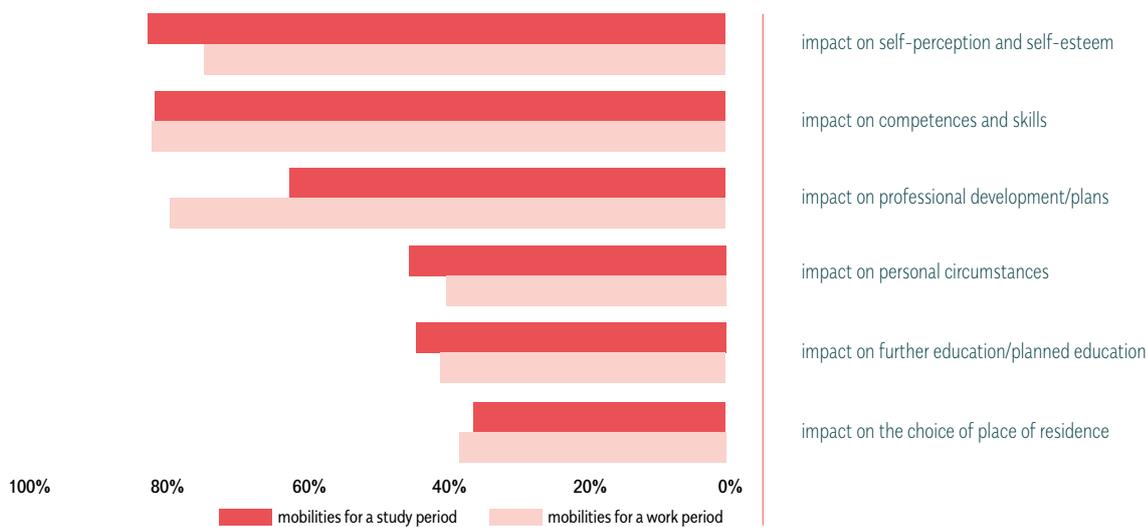
Positive changes described by the beneficiaries are reflected in research results. In the 2014–2020 framework, the Polish National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme established a team, which is unique on the European scale. The team has been tasked with analysing various aspects of the programme. The scope of the team's interests covers all Erasmus+ sectors, especially decentralised actions, which are managed at national level. The results of the analyses allow to assess the outcomes of European programmes and benefits resulting from the projects. Research results are the source of reliable information, which in the long run will enable effective planning and management of projects by beneficiaries, and at the same time will contribute to more effective activities related to the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in Poland. The research focussed on the effects of the undertaken activities and the impact of the projects carried out under the programme on individual participants and institutions. The aim was also to diagnose the needs of individual target groups, and to verify the methods of improving the competences of participants supported by the programme.



The most important benefits derived from mobility – breakdown by type of mobility



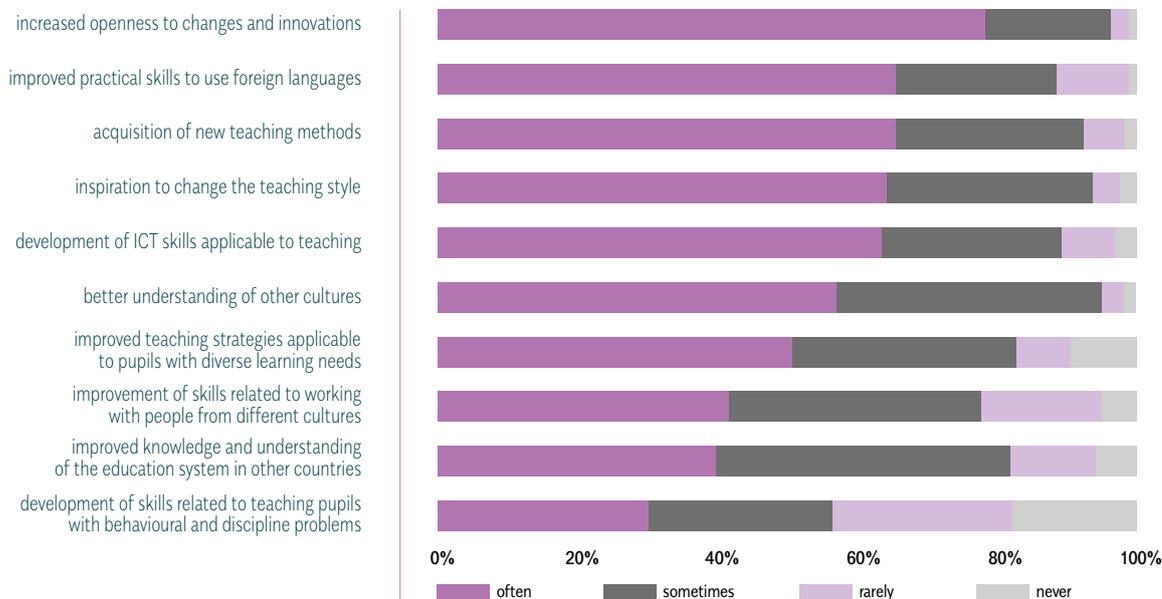
Percentage of responds of those agreeing that the mobility influenced a given aspect of life



n = 6,877. The respondents could choose several answers. Source: Dąbrowska-Resiak, J. (2019). *Erasmus... and what next? Tracer study on education and careers of Polish students participating in Erasmus mobility projects*. Warsaw: FRSE Publications, pp. 35 and 40.



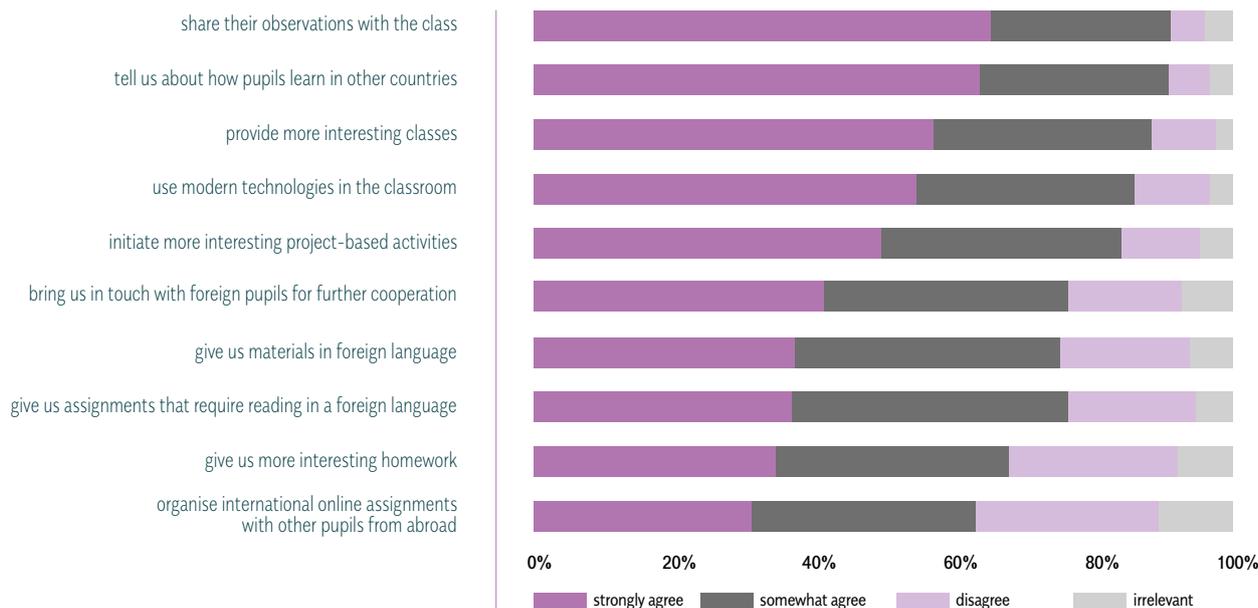
Frequency of using newly acquired competences in teachers' everyday work



n = 156; survey conducted in 2018. The respondents could choose several answers. The figure reflects Figure 7, presented in the publication: Pachocki, M. (2019). *How did mobile teachers change their schools? Research report on the long-term impact of international mobility on Polish school education staff*. Warsaw: FRSE Publications, p. 26.

Teacher's mobility results as perceived by students

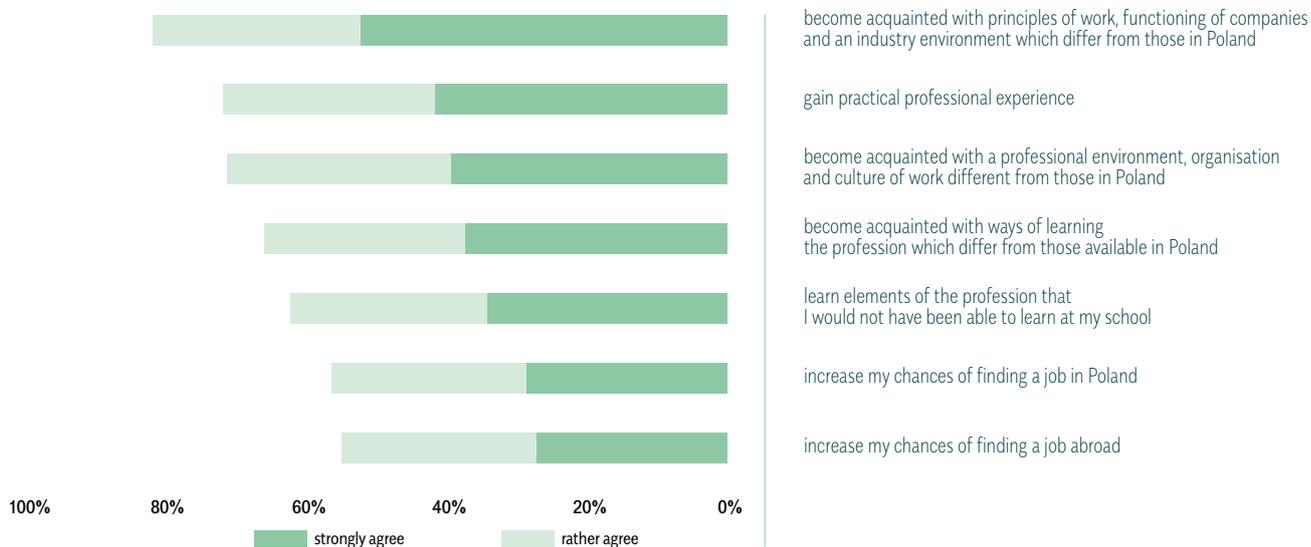
Answers to the question: "Do you agree that after mobility completion your teachers..."



n = 596; survey conducted in 2015. The respondents could choose several answers. The figure reflects Figure 14, presented in the publication: Pachocki, M. (2019). *How did mobile teachers change their schools? Research report on the long-term impact of international mobility on Polish school education staff*. Warsaw: FRSE Publications, p. 43.

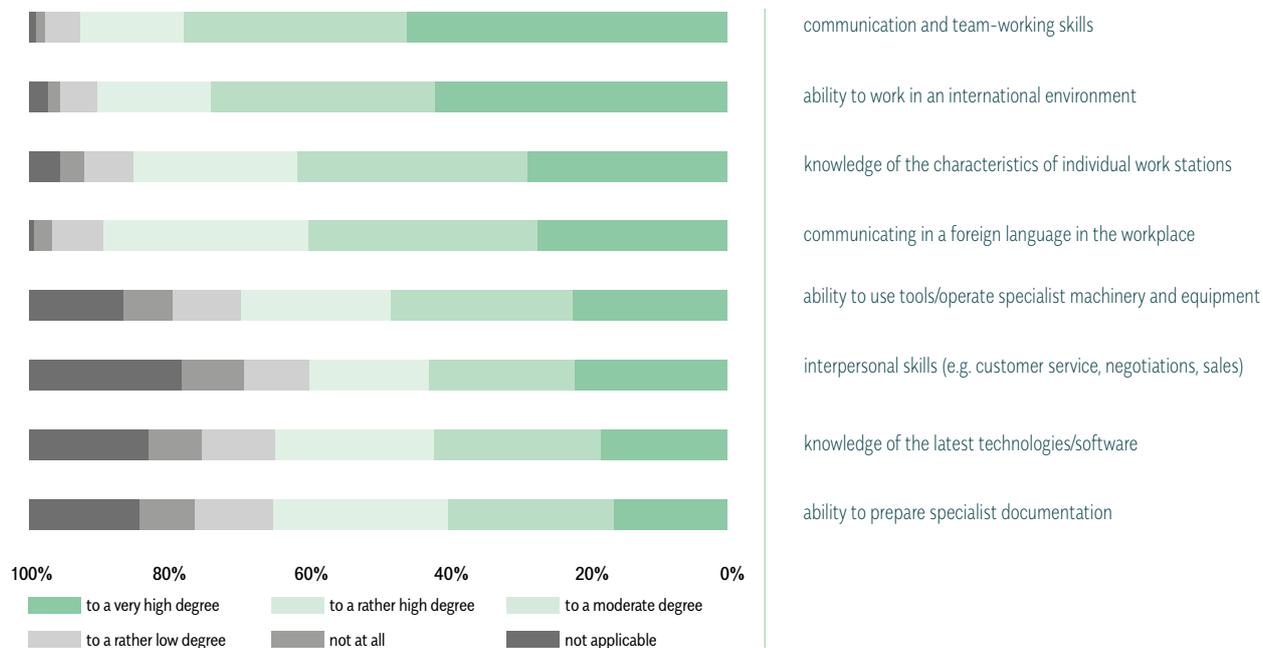
The benefits of mobility in the context of vocational training offered in Poland

A summary of answers to the question: "Taking part in transnational mobility allowed me to..."



Impact of mobility on occupational competences

A summary of answers to the question: "To what extent did the internship/traineeship abroad allow you to acquire or develop the following competences?"

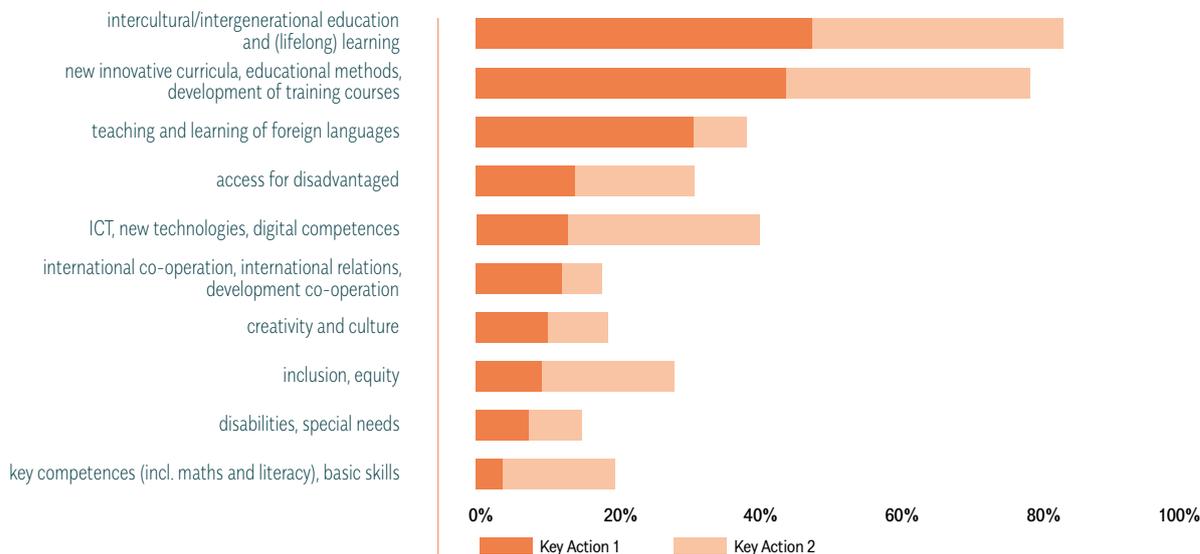


n = 2,592. The figures show the percentages of responses of those who agreed with particular statements. The choice of several answers was possible. Respondents took part in international traineeships and placements organised under the Erasmus+ Programme in the Vocational Education and Training sector (2014–2016) and the Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme of the Lifelong Learning (2012–2013).

Source: Pachocki, M. (2018). *Is mobility the key to a successful career? Tracer study report on vocational learners with transnational mobility experience*. Warsaw: FRSE Publications, pp. 34 and 46.

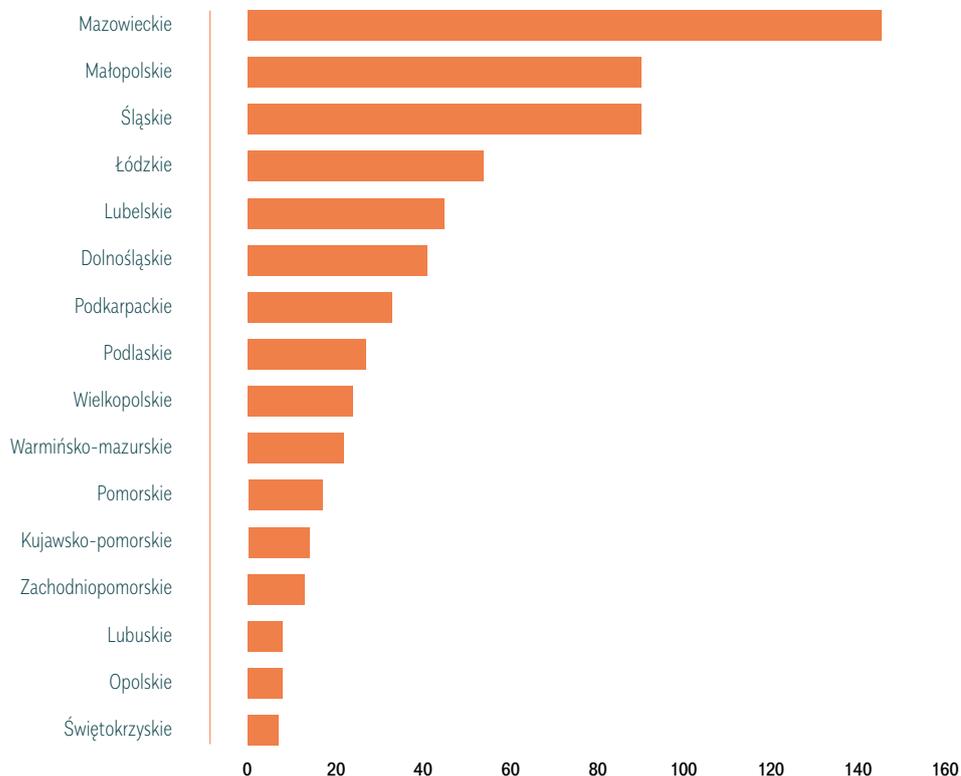


The most often topics chosen in projects implemented in the sector



The institutions applying for funds could indicate more than one project objective. Source: EPlusLink database as at 25 August 2020.

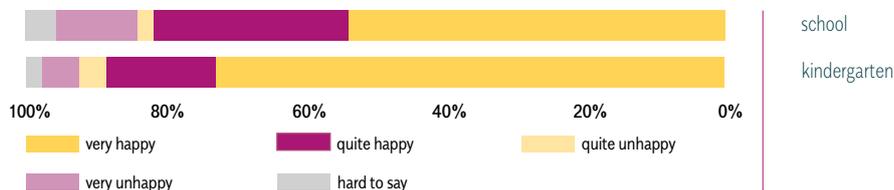
Number of Key Action 1 and 2 projects completed by voivodships



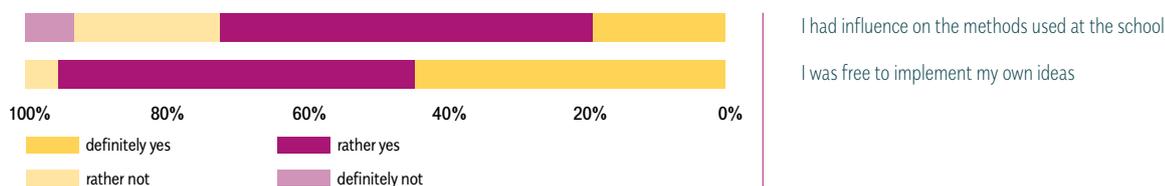
n = 638. Source: EPlusLink database as at 25 August 2020.



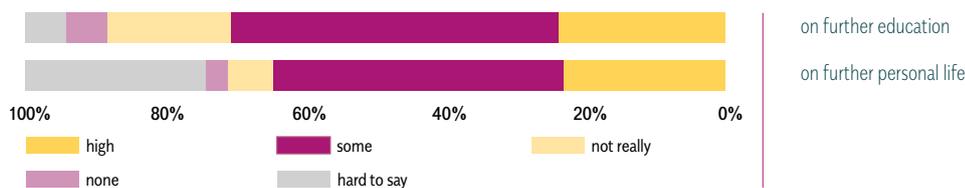
Satisfaction from long-term volunteering project. Responses from former volunteers by type of hosting organisation



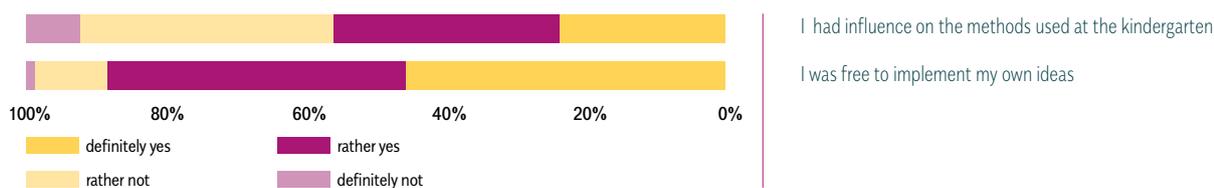
Volunteers' influence on everyday activities in schools



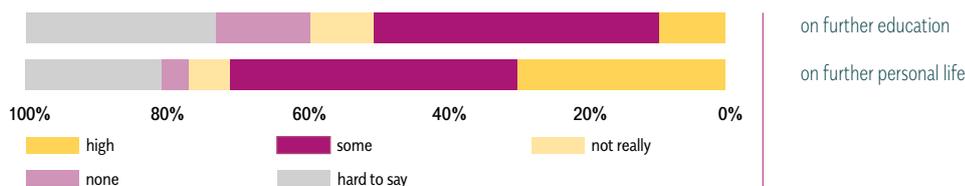
Impact of the volunteering project on professional life and further education of former school volunteers



Volunteers' influence on everyday activities in kindergartens



Impact of the volunteering project on professional life and further education of former kindergarten volunteers



Answers were provided by 43 respondents who volunteered in schools, and 77 former volunteers who worked in kindergartens. The survey concerned participants in projects implemented as part of the European Voluntary Service, which in 2014–2018 formed an element of the Youth sector of the Erasmus+ Programme, and is currently implemented under the European Solidarity Corps.

Source: Jeżowski, M. (2020). *International volunteers in Polish schools and kindergartens. Research report on the impact of long-term Erasmus+ volunteering projects on schools and kindergartens in Poland*. Warsaw: FRSE Publications, pp. 22, 39, 44 and 63.

