Assessment of Priorities in Icelandic Erasmus+ Applications

June 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction: Erasmus+ in Iceland

The Erasmus+ programme[1] is one of the European Union's greatest success stories. Starting in 1987 as a mobility programme for higher education institutions, now in its current form as Erasmus+, covering all levels of education and training, the programme has had an immense impact on the education and learning mobility of Europeans. The current programme, Erasmus+ covering the period of 2021-2027, has almost double the funding (26.2 billion €) of its predecessor programme 2014-2020 and is well on its way to achieving its objective to support educational, professional, and personal development in Europe through lifelong learning. This assessment will analyse how submitted proposals of Erasmus+ projects in Iceland, from the start of the current programme in 2021, have used different approaches to highlight the programme's four cross-cutting priorities: inclusion, digital transformation, environment and fight against climate change, and participation in democratic life. This assessment will also give a few good examples of Icelandic Erasmus+ projects that have received funding and could be used as inspiration for future proposals[2].

What is Erasmus+?

Building on 35 years of European programmes for education, training, youth and sport, the European Union's Erasmus+ programme highlights these four key areas of society to support its citizens in their personal and professional development. By supporting and facilitating transnational and international cooperation between organisations in the fields of education, training, youth and sport, the programme aims to empower European citizens by enhancing their key competences, reducing early school leaving and recognising competences gained through formal, informal, and non-formal learning.

By doing this, the programme also aims to contribute to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to drive innovation, and to strengthen European identity and active citizenship. The programme is thus instrumental for building a European Education Area, supporting the implementation of European strategic cooperation in the field of education and training. In addition, it is key to advancing youth policy cooperation under the European Union Youth Strategy and developing the European dimension in sport.

The Erasmus+ programme's specific objectives are to:

- Promote learning mobility of individuals and groups, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity, and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of education and training.
- Promote non-formal and informal learning mobility and active participation among young people, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion, creativity, and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of youth.
- Promote learning mobility of sport staff, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion, creativity, and innovation at the level of sport organisations and sport policies.

---

[1] Information on the Erasmus+ Programme has been provided by the *Erasmus+ Programme Guide* Version 3 (2023): 04-04-2023. https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide.
[2] The analysis covers both Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, which technically is a separate programme. For reasons of simplification, when the text refers to Erasmus+, it should be understood as referring to ESC as well.

Erasmus+ in Iceland

Although not a part of the European Union, Iceland takes active part in the Erasmus+ programme through the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). Iceland has thus been active in implementing the Erasmus+ programme for its citizens since the signing of the EEA Agreement in 1992. Since then, thousands of Icelanders have been given the opportunity to broaden their horizons via Erasmus+ projects. The implementation of the Erasmus+ programme is mainly done through indirect management, meaning that the European Commission entrusts budget implementation tasks to National Agencies. The Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannsóknarmiðstöð Íslands – Rannís) hosts the Erasmus+ National Agency in Iceland and oversees the implementation of the programme at the national level.

Erasmus+ Priorities 2021-2027

The four cross-cutting priorities of the current iteration of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 are as follows: inclusion, digital transformation, environment and fight against climate change, and participation in democratic life. Each of the projects funded by the Erasmus+ programme targets one or more of these four priorities.

1 – Inclusion

The programme seeks to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity, and fairness across all its actions. Organisations and participants with fewer opportunities are at the heart of these objectives and with these in mind, the programme puts mechanisms and resources at their disposal. When designing their projects and activities, organisations should have an inclusive approach, making them accessible to a diverse range of participants. Types of barriers facing participants include disabilities, health problems, barriers linked to education and training systems, cultural differences, social barriers, economic barriers, barriers linked to discrimination, and/or geographical barriers.

2 – Digital Transformation

The Covid-19 pandemic shed light on the importance of digital education for the digital transformation that Europe needs. It particularly emphasised the increased need to harness the potential of digital technologies for teaching and learning and to develop digital skills for all. Here, the Erasmus+ programme seeks to be a concrete example of the European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027). The Erasmus+ programme fosters the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem and enhances digital skills and competences for the digital transformation. To support both areas, the European Commission has launched a European Digital Education Hub strengthening cooperation and exchange in digital education at European level.

3 – Environment and Fight Against Climate Change

The Erasmus+ programme is a key instrument for building the knowledge, skills, and attitudes on climate change and support sustainable development within Europe and beyond. The programme strives to increase the number of mobility opportunities in green forward-looking domains, which foster the development of competences, enhance career prospects, and engage participants in areas, which are strategic for sustainable growth, with special attention to rural development (sustainable farming, management of natural resources, soil protection, bio-agriculture).

With mobility at its core, the Erasmus+ programme strives for carbon-neutrality by promoting sustainable transport modes and more environmentally responsible behaviours. This is in line with the European Green Deal approved in 2020. Moreover, the Council recommendation on learning for the green transition emphasises the need to provide learners of all ages with opportunities to gain knowledge about the climate crisis and sustainability in education (formal and non-formal) and to prioritise green transition in education and training policies and programmes.

Erasmus+ funded organisations and participants involved should strive to incorporate green practices in all projects when designing the activity, which will encourage them to discuss and

learn about environmental issues, to reflect about local actions and to produce alternative greener ways of implementing their activities.

4 – Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values and Civic Engagement

By addressing the limited participation of citizens in its democratic processes and their lack of knowledge about the European Union, the Erasmus+ programme tries to help them overcome the difficulties in actively engaging and participating in their communities or in the European Union's political and social life.

Priority is given to projects that offer opportunities for people's participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement through formal or non-formal learning activities. The focus is put on raising awareness of and understanding the European Union context, notably as regards common EU values, the principles of unity and diversity, as well as their social, cultural, and historical heritage.

Key Actions and Fields of the Erasmus+ Programme

Key Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme covers *Learning Mobility of Individuals*. Under this key action the programme aims to bring a long-lasting effect on participants and organisations involved. These participants may include pupils, students, trainees, apprentices, adult learners, and young people.

Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ programme concerns *Cooperation among Organisations and Institutions*. Under this key action the programme aims to support various partnerships for cooperation, excellence, innovation, capacity building projects, and not-for-profit European sport events.

The key fields of the Erasmus+ programme are the following: Adult Education (ADU), Higher Education (HED), School Education (SCH), Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Youth (YOU).

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is a specific programme divided into Volunteering projects (VOL) and Solidarity projects (SOL).

This analysis covers action types managed by the Icelandic National Agency for Erasmus+, namely Mobility Projects in Key Action 1 and Small-scale Partnerships and Cooperation Projects in Key Action 2. Both Volunteering projects and Solidarity projects in European Solidarity Corps are covered as well. Due to the limited experience in Sport mobility, which was only available to applicants in 2023, this field has been omitted from the analysis.

Icelandic Erasmus+ Projects

Project Statistics

From the start of the current iteration of the Erasmus+ programme in January 2021 until June 2023, a total of 411 applications have been submitted to the Erasmus+ National Agency of Iceland, in hopes of receiving an Erasmus+ grant.[3] As the application year of 2023 is still active when this analyses is carried out, the years of 2021-2022 and 2023, respectively, will be separated in the discussion below. Further, as there are several applications that are still eligible for acceptance in the 2023 year, the discussion on success rate will only include the applications from 2021-2022.

Of the 411 applications, 102 were submitted in 2021, 138 in 2022, and 172 in 2023. It is easy to see the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic on the number of applications in the years 2021-2022. Although the application year of 2023 has only reached its halfway point, the number of applications has already surpassed the previous two years. From 2021-2022, 169 projects have been accepted, 61 have been rejected, 3 have been annulled or cancelled and two have been rejected yet put on a reserve list. This means that the success rate is around 70,4%. A positive outlook for prospective Erasmus+ applicants.

Table 1.1: Application status 2021-2022

Application Status	2021	2022	All
Accepted	74	95	169
Rejected	24	37	61
Annulled	3	5	8
On Reserve List	1	1	2
Total Applications	**102**	**138**	**240**

Arranged by action, applications are equally spread over the two Key Actions receiving a combined 210 applications. By nature of the different Key Actions, it is clear that Key Action 2 is much more competitive as those who apply for Key Action 1 and are members of Erasmus+ automatically get accepted. Thirty applications were submitted to the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) out of which 23 received funding.

Table 1.2: Application status 2021-2022 by action

| Applications Status	Key Action 1	Key Action 2	ESC
Accepted	96	50	23
Rejected	11	46	4
Annulled	2	3	3
On Reserve List	0	2	0
Total Applications	**109**	**101**	**30**

---

[3] Not included in the 411 submitted applications is one application in the field of Sport submitted and accepted in 2023. As the only application in this field, it has been removed from this assessment as it is a statistical outlier.

For the application year of 2023, so far 172 applications have been submitted. Of the submissions, around 84 applications have so far been accepted with most of them within Key Action 1.

Table 1.3: Application status 2023 (as of June)

Application Status 2023	All Applications	Key Action 1	Key Action 2	ESC
Accepted	84	79	0	5
Rejected	7	5	1	1
Annulled	3	2	1	0
On Reserve List	4	4	0	0
Elligible	73	19	47	7
Grand Total	172			

Chart 1: Submitted applications by field

2021-2022 ERASMUS+ APPLICATIONS

ADU 14%
ESC 12%
HED 12%
SCH 28%
VET 11%
YOU 23%
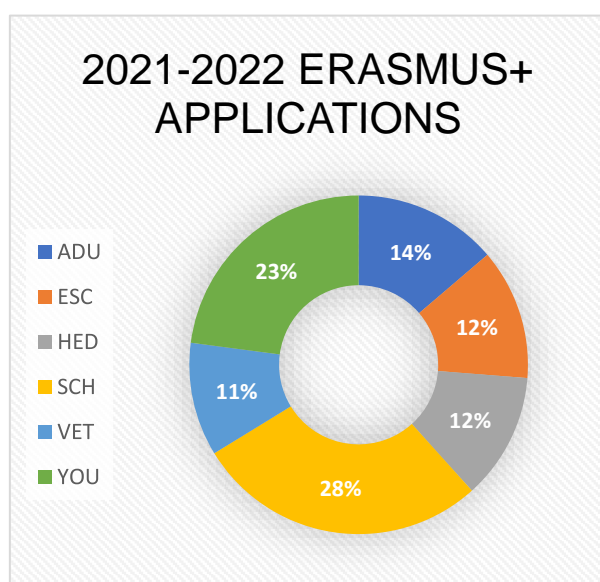
The number of applications grouped by field show a reasonably even distribution amongst fields, with the fields of Youth and School Education having the highest number of applications; 23% and 28%, respectively.

In Table 1.4 we can see the even distribution of applications clearly. The number of accepted and rejected (KA1, KA2 and ESC included) is also relative to the number of submitted applications with no obvious outliers.

Table 1.4: 2021-2022 Status of total applications by field

Field	Number of Applications	Accepted	Rejected	Annulled or On Reserve List
Adult Education	33	20	11	2
European Solidarity Corps	30	23	4	3
Higher Education	29	24	5	0
School Education	67	45	17	5
Vocational Education and Training	26	24	2	0
Youth	55	33	22	0

To get an accurate reading of the success rate of submitted applications that come from organisations that do not have Erasmus+ membership, it is best to look solely at Key Action 2 (KA2). Of the total 101 KA2 applications, 50 were funded. This results in a success rate of around 49,5%. This result shows us the competitive nature of KA2 applications relative to other actions of the programme.

Table 1.5: 2021-2021 Key Action 2 total success rate

|	Applications	Funded KA2	Success Rate
Only KA2 Applications	101	50	49,5%
All Applications	240	50	20,8%

When grouped by field, there is an interesting trend. Despite being the largest group, the field of School education had the lowest success rate of 44,1%. On the other hand, surprisingly, the second smallest group of applications from the field of Vocational Education and Training had by far the highest success rate of 88,9%. Of 9 applications for VET, only one was rejected.

Table 1.6: 2021-2022 Key Action 2 success rate by field

Field	Accepted	Rejected or Annulled	Success Rate
Adult Education	11	13	45,8%
Higher Education	5	5	50,0%
School Education	15	19	44,1%
Vocational Education and Training	8	1	88,9%
Youth	11	13	45,8%
Total	50	51	49,5%

The chart below shows a visualisation of the success rate of KA2 applications for VET compared to the other four fields.

Chart 2: Success rate of 2021-2022 KA2 by field
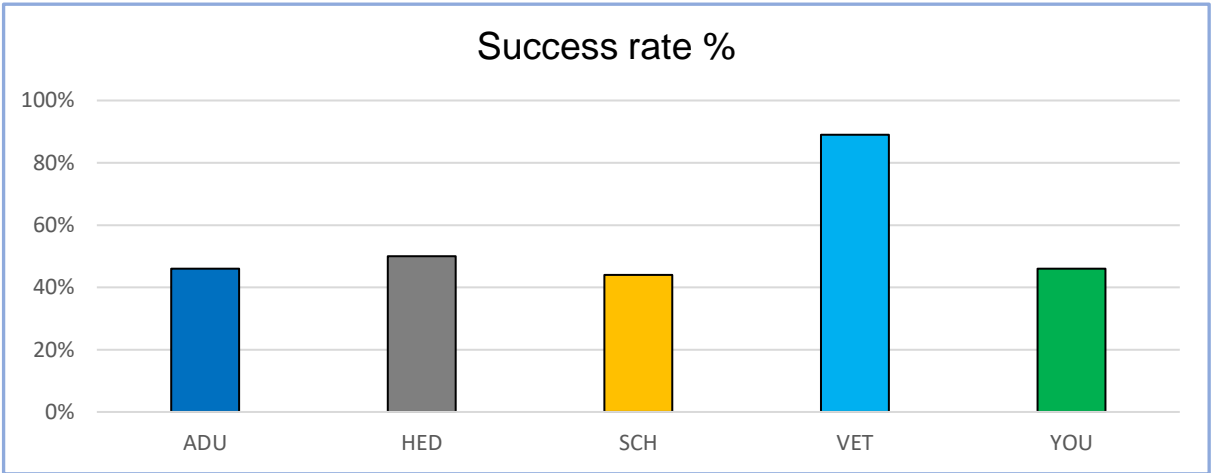
Priorities Targeted in Applications

Applications submitted for Erasmus+ funding are requested to frame their work in relation to at least one of the four main priorities of the Programme: inclusion, digital transformation, environment and the fight against climate change, and participation in democratic life. This is especially important for projects within Key Action 2. Furthermore, good examples of Erasmus+ projects that have been accepted for funding by the Icelandic National Agency often highlight and target multiple priorities through their projects. This section will assess how each submitted application (accepted or rejected) for Key Action 2 targets one or more of the four priorities. Included at the end of this section is a brief list of example project references that tackle each priority across the three different actions (KA1, KA2, and ESC).

Table 2.1: 2021-2022 Key Action 2 priorities by application status

Erasmus+ Priorities	Total Applications	Accepted	Rejected or Annulled	Success Rate
Inclusion	48	25	23	52,1%
Digital Transformation	27	16	11	59,3%
Environment and Fight Against Climate Change	32	16	16	50,0%
Participation in Democratic Life	26	11	15	42,3%

Inclusion

Of the 101 submitted KA2 applications in the years 2021-2022, 48 targeted the priority of inclusion. This is the largest group of the four priorities by far. Around 52,1% of applications that targeted inclusion were funded. Interestingly, this is the second lowest success rate. Below are three examples of funded projects and their linked topics.

*Table 2.1.1: Examples of funded projects targeting **Inclusion***

Call Year	Project Reference	Project Title	Project Coordinator	Topics Linked
2022	2022-1-IS01-KA220-YOU-000085076	"Developing the Entrepreneurial Capabilities Of Young Women" (DECOY)	Samband sveitarfélaga á Suðurnesjum	Employability, Entrepreneurial learning - entrepreneurship education, Promoting gender equality
2022	2022-1-IS01-KA220-SCH-000085919	ErasmusFest	Grunnskólinn í Hveragerði	Bridging intercultural, intergenerational, and social divide, Digital skills and competences, Environment, and climate change
2022	2022-1-IS01-ESC30-SOL-000066918	Pílufélag Hvammstanga	Pílufélag Hvammstanga	Community development, Inclusion of marginalised young people, Physical and mental health, well-being

Digital Transformation

Of the 101 submitted KA2 applications in the years 2021-2022, 27 targeted the priority of digital transition. Around 59,3% of applications that targeted this priority were funded. This is the highest success rate among the priorities. Below are three examples of funded projects and their linked topics.

*Table 2.1.2: Examples of funded projects targeting **Digital Transformation***

Call Year	Project Reference	Project Title	Project Coordinator	Topics Linked
2021	2021-2-IS01-KA210-YOU-000050639	Best Practices in Esports Youth Programs - A Handbook	Rafíþróttasamtök Íslands	Digital youth work, Physical and mental health, well-being, Quality and innovation of youth work.
2021	2021-2-IS01-KA220-VET-000050555	Methodology for Online Training in Innovative Virtual Environment.	Símenntunarmiðstöðin á Vesturlandi	Digital content, technologies, and practices, Digital skills and competences.
2022	2022-1-IS01-KA220-HED-000089316	CUTIE - Competencies for University Teaching & Institutional Empowerment	Háskólinn á Akureyri	Cooperation between educational institutions and business, Digital skills and competences, New learning and teaching methods and approaches.

Environment and Fight Against Climate Change

Of the 101 submitted KA2 applications in the years 2021-2022, 32 targeted the priority of environment and fight against climate change. Around 50% of applications that targeted this priority were funded. Below are three examples of funded projects and their linked topics.

*Table 2.1.3: Examples of funded projects targeting **Environment and Fight Against Climate Change***

Call Year	Project Reference	Project Title	Project Coordinator	Topics Linked
2022	2022-1-IS01-KA210-ADU-000082814	Nature based education for adult learners' communities	Reykjanesbær	Environment and climate change, Green skills.
2022	2022-1-IS01-KA210-YOU-000082583	ReduceYourCO2_ HelpPlanet	Félagasamtök Projekt:Polska	Environment and climate change, Green skills.
2021	2021-1-IS01-KA220-VET-000024804	ELECTRO ECO TEAM: Electro Technicians for a Green World	Verkmenntaskólinn á Akureyri	Energy and resources, Environment and climate change, Research and innovation.

Participation in Democratic Life

Of the 101 submitted KA2 applications in the years 2021-2022, 26 targeted the priority of participation in democratic life. Around 42,3% of applications that targeted this priority were funded. This is the lowest success rate of the four priorities. Coincidentally, this is the smallest group of applications. Below are three examples of funded projects and their linked topics.

*Table: 2.1.4: Examples of funded projects targeting **Participation in Democratic Life***

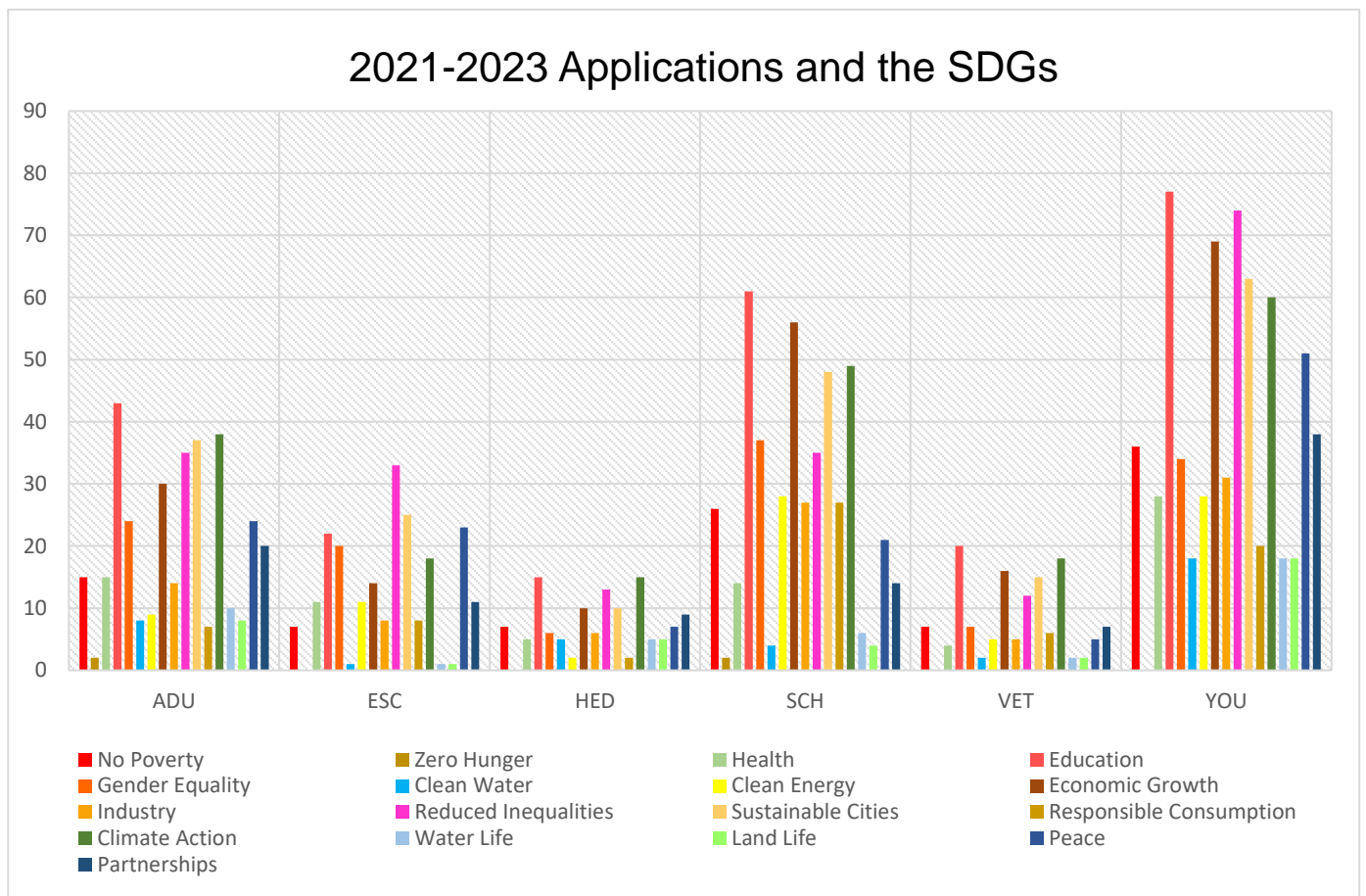| Call Year	Project Reference	Project Title	Project Coordinator	Topics Linked
2021	2021-2-IS01-KA220-SCH-000050367	HUMAN-EUROPE-DEMOCRACY-ART	GeoCamp Iceland	Creativity, arts and culture Democracy and inclusive democratic participation European identity, citizenship and values
2021	2021-1-IS01-KA154-YOU-000020236	Landsþing Ungmennaráðs Samfés 2021	Samfés – samtök félagsmiðstöðva og ungmennahúsa á Íslandi	Democracy and inclusive democratic participation Promoting gender equality Reaching the policy level/dialogue with decision makers
2021	2021-2-IS01-KA220-HED-000049245	Designing future WELFARE systems	Háskóli Íslands	Community development Development of training courses Entrepreneurial learning - entrepreneurship education

Conclusion

The implementation of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme in Iceland is developing well into its third year. Several exemplary projects have received funding, and some have already produced results. Out of the total 411 submitted applications, around four out of five have either received funding or are still eligible at this point. From the years 2021-2022, 240 applications have been submitted with 169 receiving funding, for projects that may take up to three years to produce results. The fields of School Education and Youth are the most popular amongst submitted applications. Of the four priorities of the Erasmus+ programme, the success rate of projects targeting digital transformation was slightly higher than the other three, however, the total number of applications targeting inclusion was much higher than the others. It must be kept in mind, that as of the current year of 2023, more than two thirds of the period covered by this assessment were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and as such may differ vastly from future assessments.

Annex I

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations

The United Nations' Goals for Sustainable Development are an important aim of any Erasmus+ project. Adopted in 2015 by the members of the United Nations under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 17 goals are an urgent call for action to develop a partnership amongst member countries with the common goal to end poverty by implementing strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth. Simultaneously, the 17 goals prioritise the fight against climate change and work to preserve our oceans and forest. (United Nations, 2023) The following bar chart illustrates how the 411 submitted Erasmus+ projects touch upon the 17 goals. A trend that can clearly be seen is the leadership of the Youth field. As the second largest field of the programme, it is interesting to see the greater agency to implement the 17 goals compared to the larger field of School Education.

Chart 2: Sum of Sustainable Development Goals by field

2021-2023 Applications and the SDGs

Legend:
- No Poverty
- Zero Hunger
- Health
- Education
- Gender Equality
- Clean Water
- Clean Energy
- Economic Growth
- Industry
- Reduced Inequalities
- Sustainable Cities
- Responsible Consumption
- Climate Action
- Water Life
- Land Life
- Peace
- Partnerships

Annex II

Examples of Icelandic Erasmus+ Projects

Below are a few examples of projects that have recently received an Erasmus+ grant approved by the Icelandic National Agency. The projects below are good examples for how to implement the four priorities of the programme using different approaches to achieve the common aims of the Erasmus+ programme. Halfway through the current timeline of Erasmus+ 2021-2027, the projects may take anywhere from three months to three years to complete and show results and as such, each project may not yet have any published results, the earliest projects starting from 2021.

Example 1 – Best Practices in Esports Youth Programs – A Handbook
Project Reference: 2021-2-IS01-KA210-YOU-000050639

EU Grant	Key Action	Start and End Date
60.000 €	KA2: Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices	01.03.2022 – 30.09.2022

Topics linked: Digital youth work, physical and mental health, well-being, quality and innovation of youth work.

Priorities linked:

- HORIZONTAL: Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth and sport
- YOUTH: Increasing quality, innovation, and recognition of youth work.

Participating countries: Denmark.

The project *Best Practices in Esports Youth Programmes* coordinated by the Icelandic Esports Association (Rafíþróttasamtök Íslands) in collaboration with Esport Denmark, is a project funded by the Erasmus+ programme with the intent to support electronic sports youth programmes, physical and mental health, quality, and innovation of youth work as well as promote diversity of participants. As a finalised project, the result of this project was a handbook on best practices in esports youth programmes.

Link to handbook: Esports Training For Youth

Example 2 – "bASic Stem compETences for MigrantS" (ASSETS)
Project Reference: 2021-1-IS01-KA220-ADU-000026464

EU Grant	Key Action	Start and End Date
195.000 €	KA2: Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices	01.11.2021 – 31.10.2023

Topics linked: Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination, Open and distance learning, Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Priorities linked:

- ADU: Creating upskilling pathways, improving accessibility, and increasing take-up of adult education.
- HORIZONTAL: Addressing digital transformation through development of digital readiness, resilience, and capacity.

Participating countries: Portugal, Austria, Turkey, Greece, Italy.

Basic Stem Competences for Migrants (ASSETS) is an ongoing project with an expected end date of 31 October 2023. The project aims to promote and develop relevant and high-quality skills and competences related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) for migrants. ASSETS works to provide social inclusion of migrants in European countries by empowering them to enter the job market. Examples of activities that ASSETS will implement in its 24-month project include publishing 24 newsletters throughout this period and organising big networking conferences.

Example 3 – ReduceYourCO2_HelpPlanet
Project Reference: 2022-1-IS01-KA210-YOU-000082583

EU Grant	Key Action	Start and End Date
60.000 €	KA2: Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices	01.09.2022 – 29.02.2024

Topics linked: Environment and climate change, Green skills.

Priorities linked:

- HORIZONTAL: Environment and fight against climate change
- YOUTH: Increasing quality, innovation, and recognition of youth work

Participating countries: Slovakia.

ReduceYourCO2_HelpPlanet is an ongoing project with an expected end date of 29 February 2024. The goals of the project are to help young board game players become aware of the amount of CO2 emissions created by daily actions. The project also aims to guide its participants on how they can minimise their CO2 footprint. To accomplish this, the project will focus on connecting Iceland and Slovakian board game players through collaboration and a fun board game.

Website: http://www.projektpolska.is

Example 4 – ELECTRO ECO TEAM: Electro Technicians for a Green World
Project Reference: 2021-1-IS01-KA220-VET-000024804

EU Grant	Key Action	Start and End Date
230.520 €	KA2: Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices	01.11.2021 – 31.10.2023

Topics linked: Energy and resources, Environment and climate change, Research and innovation.

Priorities linked:

- HORIZONTAL: Environment and fight against climate change
- VET: Creation and implementation of internationalisation strategies for VET providers
- VET: Increasing the flexibility of opportunities in vocational education and training

Participating countries: Hungary, Spain, Turkey, Slovenia, The Netherlands.

The Electro Eco Team project arose from the cooperation of a group of vocational schools with electricity and electronics programmes. The project is primarily focused on raising awareness of the deterioration of our planet and the development of more sustainable teaching and educational practices. The intent is to develop the internationalisation strategies of each institution, sharing knowledge and experiences, developing innovative approaches to their teaching experience to be more adapted to the current reality of climate change.

Website: https://elecoteam.eu/

Example 5 – Designing future WELFARE systems
Project Reference: 2021-2-IS01-KA220-HED-000049245

EU Grant	Key Action	Start and End Date
253.060 €	KA2: Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices	01.03.2022 – 29.02.2024

Topics linked: Community development, Development of training courses, Entrepreneurial learning – entrepreneurship education.

Priorities linked:

- HE: Building inclusive higher education systems
- HE: Promoting inter-connected higher education systems
- HORIZONTAL: Common values, civic engagement and participation

Participating countries: Belgium, Greece, Lithuania

The main objectives of the *WELFARE* project are to develop high quality Open Educational Resources, including curriculum, online/f2f content and training courses. The project also focuses on promoting and enhancing understanding of the importance of social innovation and entrepreneurship within partner countries' welfare systems. The final aim of the project is to

create an open university, training and networking environment for discourse, research and social innovation in the welfare system both within the partner countries and transnationally through the *WELFARE* platform. To accomplish this the project will host multiple conferences and meetings as well as create dissemination materials, documentaries, and training materials. Most importantly, a *WELFARE* platform will be developed for online support and training.