

Erasmus+ Impact Handbook

How to work towards impact
in the programme Erasmus+



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Introduction

Background

In the dynamic landscape of international education and cooperation, the Erasmus+ programme stands out as a beacon of opportunity, fostering mobility, collaboration, and innovation across borders. The true success of the Erasmus+ programme lies not merely in the number of participants, or the number of projects funded, but in the lasting impact it generates. Therefore, understanding impact (what it is and how to achieve it) is crucial for maximizing the effectiveness of Erasmus+ initiatives and ensuring their relevance and sustainability. Impact is an important aspect of Erasmus+ applications and is assessed accordingly.

The following topics are covered in this **Erasmus+ impact handbook**:

1. Understanding impact
2. Defining impact before application
3. Monitoring and evaluation of impact
4. Managing for impact

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook has been developed for anyone involved in the Erasmus+ programme. This includes:

- Employees of National Agencies.
- Individuals or organisations interested in applying for Erasmus+ funding.
- Individuals or organisations currently implementing an Erasmus+ project or programme.
- External Erasmus+ project assessors.

Impact is an important criterion during the application stage. This handbook will help you prepare a well-formulated project. It can also support you during the implementation phase by helping you manage for impact and presenting your results in high-quality reports. This handbook is relevant for Mobility (Key Action 1) and Partnership (Key Action 2) projects in the following sectors: School Education, Higher Education, Adult Education and Vocational Education and Training, Youth and Sport.

How to use this handbook?

We recommend using this handbook from the moment you start designing your Erasmus+ project. If you already receive funding or are an accredited institution and have started implementing your project, you will also find practical tips in this handbook that support you in achieving impact.

This document is developed to provide different groups with a short, concise, and accessible guide on impact. You can read it in full or focus on the (sub)chapters that are relevant to you: you decide!

Would you like to dive deeper into the content? Then have a look at our suggestions for further reading which are provided at the end of every chapter.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Understanding Impact

Implementing a project can be a great opportunity for an organisation, but it requires time, energy and money. There are usually various reasons for deciding to carry out a project: you want to achieve something, whether that is making a change in the lives of students, staff, parents, and youth, or within your organisation, the community your organisation is based in, or even at societal level. But what type of results are you aiming for? And what is the difference between a project result and project impact? This chapter guides you through the terminology that is important when you want to make an impact with your Erasmus+ project.

1.1 What is a result?

Have a look at the story below of a secondary school in Austria that implemented Mobility and Partnership projects. The school director highlights the variety of changes that resulted from this engagement.



We started implementing Erasmus+ mobility programmes a few years ago. We have seen lots of change in our school! The school is now an accredited organisation with various mobility programmes (KA1) and partnership (KA2) projects. Before we started working with Erasmus+, we used to organise "language trips", where students could participate in language courses abroad. We stopped doing that, as exchange programmes where students stay with guest families provide so much more exposure for students to foreign cultures (peer-to-peer learning). This really contributes to our students developing European social, cultural and language skills, of course! We have observed that the future prospect of participating in mobility programmes has a positive effect on students in another sense. They are much more motivated and dedicated to participating in regular school activities.

Besides the accreditation, our school's changes are that we now have a European Strategy, which is equally important as our School Development Plan. As a result of the implementation of this strategy, our school now "breathes" Europe. All classes now undertake specific Europe-related activities.

Specific results that we achieved via partnership projects include the development of a comic book, the development of a school project website, and plastic clean-up activities. This contributes to environmental awareness amongst students and to a cleaner school, cleaner communities and to positive change at society level.

Perhaps the most important change is that the school is now well-known to the outside world for its European Environmental Sustainability profile.

As you can read in the story, Erasmus+ projects can lead to a variety of results (change)! Let's have a look at the types of results that can be distinguished in an Erasmus+ project:

- The deliverables, products or services or other results that directly result from a project, such as training materials, curricula, websites, digital tools, increased knowledge and awareness. These are called: **outputs**.
- The use or adoption of these project outputs by the target group (or direct beneficiaries), such as students, teachers, learners, parents, or organisations. How have the outputs changed what people think and do? For example, students start actively cooperating in youth work, staff and teachers are utilising new skills, and organisations (for example schools) are promoting new digital tools. These types of results are called **outcomes**. Outcomes are about behavioural change!
- The broader, long-term effects of the project on individuals, organisations, society, or systems. These are the changes a project intends to contribute to. Note that your project can only contribute to this change and will not produce the change directly, as one project will not achieve these longer-term effects all by itself. For example: active citizenship, improved employability, improved economic development, shifts in cultural norms and values, policy reforms. These types of results are called **impact**.

We use the terms output – outcome – impact in this handbook, but it is important to note that in the planning of projects, different terms are often used for similar things. Even within the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, the choice of words changes. To make sense of these different terms, you can use Table 1¹:

Table 1. Terms used for project/programme results.

Impact tool / Erasmus+ Impact handbook	Erasmus+ programme guide	Alternative terms
Impact	Desired impact	Goal, overall objective, general objective
Outcome	Expected impact	Specific objective, project purpose, strategic objective
Output	Output, deliverable, milestone	Results, intermediate results
Activities	Activities	Activities
Input	Input	Resources

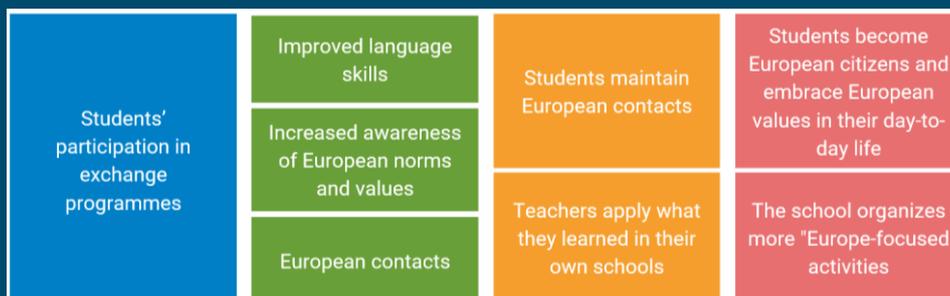
Every project has a variety of outputs and outcomes that contribute to a longer-term impact. Linking your project's outputs to outcomes and impacts can also be referred to as its "pathway of change". A pathway of change shows how your project activities produce a series of interconnected changes, in the shorter and the longer term. It shows how your stakeholders change their behaviour by using your outputs, and how these changes, in turn, contribute to wider levels of change (inside and outside of your organisation).

¹ This table has been developed in relation to the Erasmus+ impact tool, and can also be accessed on the [website of the impact tool](#).

What do pathways of change look like? Have a look at some examples:

Example of a mobility project

Students' participation in Erasmus+ exchange programmes (activities) lead to improved language skills, increased awareness on European norms and values, and European contacts (outputs). This leads to students maintaining European contacts (outcome), teachers applying what they have learned in their own schools (outcome) and continued exchange with fellow students abroad (outcome). This contributes to more attention on Europeanness within local education institutions and communities (impact) as well as a more inclusive Europe (impact).



Example of a partnership project

Carrying out a joint activity to clean up plastic waste, as well as building a website (activities) will lead to students and local communities who have experience of clean-up campaigns, and the existence of the website (output). This will lead to students and staff keeping the school clean (outcome) as well as the surrounding local community actively supporting the school environmental practices (outcome). This in turn will contribute to the development of school environmental policies (impact), identification of new projects to improve the environment (i.e. partnerships between school and surrounding community), and, in the longer term, less waste in the school and its surrounding area.



Every project in the Erasmus+ programme contributes to at least one of the overarching objectives or impacts of the Erasmus+ programme. This can be at individual, organisational, community and/or systemic level:

- 1) *Individual level*, e.g. willingness to work across borders, increased capacity of staff to trigger modernisation, increased opportunities for career development.
- 2) *Institutional/organisational level*, e.g. long-lasting partnerships, internationalisation of organisations, adaptability to digital transformation.
- 3) *Community/society level*, e.g. change of norms and values, inclusive or sustainable practices by communities, youth participation in local communities.
- 4) *Systemic/policy level*, e.g. Europeanisation of the educational system, more inclusive, innovative and digital education and training systems, increased youth policy cooperation.

UNFORESEEN VERSUS FORESEEN RESULTS, POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESULTS

The results mentioned in section 1.1 are all planned (and desired) results, meaning that you expect and want these results to be achieved when you implement your Erasmus+ project. However, despite thorough planning and preparation, every project can produce unforeseen results, meaning: a change that you did not expect, but did happen. Sometimes, the unintended results are many and have a much bigger effect than you initially had foreseen. Some unforeseen examples are shared in the box below.

Examples of unforeseen results of Erasmus+ projects:

- Materials developed are used by other organisations (not foreseen by the school that initiated the policy).
- Development of a European School Strategy (example of institutional impact).

All the results you defined before starting the project are probably positive. However, it is good to be aware that projects can also bring negative results (see the box below). To record unforeseen positive and negative results, it is essential to include this in your monitoring during project implementation. How you can do this is outlined in Chapter 3: Monitoring and Evaluation.

Examples of negative results of Erasmus+ projects:

- Negative impact on students who were confronted with racism during a mobility activity.
- Students who could not participate in mobility projects face difficulties in participating in classrooms activities.
- A large influx of international students in a popular course creates friction with regular students.
- The introduction of an AI tool for education administration leads to a data leak.
- Project coordinators do not receive sufficient support from their organisations – they have to manage the Erasmus+ project alongside their regular work, which increases their risk of a burnout.

IMPACT VERSUS DISSEMINATION, REACH AND SUSTAINABILITY

It is important to distinguish impact from other related concepts such as dissemination, reach, and sustainability. *Impact* is the wider change your project contributes to, while *dissemination* focuses on sharing project results with relevant stakeholders, and *reach* refers to the number of people who participated or who were directly or indirectly reached by the project. *Sustainability*, on the other hand, is about the project's ability to maintain its benefits and impact over time.

1.2 Why do we want to know our results?

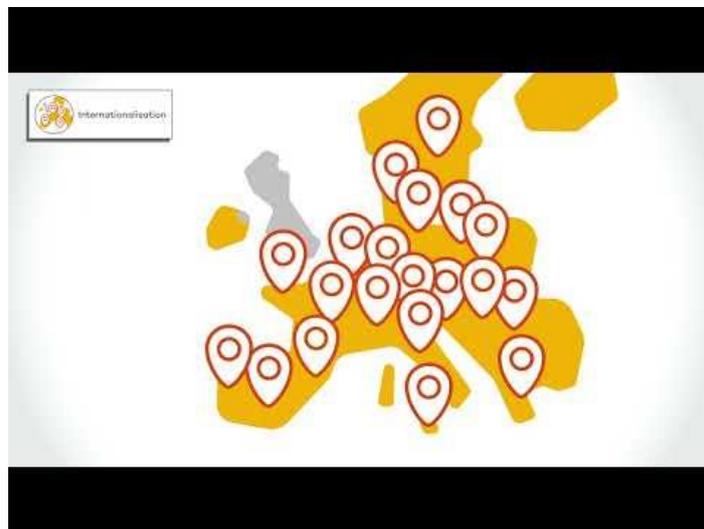
Understanding, defining and documenting the various types of results of your project is useful throughout all phases of your Erasmus+ project. In the table below, you see the advantages of defining and documenting your project results.

Before application	During project implementation	During evaluation and reporting
A clear understanding of the expected results informs the design and planning of your project, and helps to set realistic goals, allocate the necessary resources effectively, and develop relevant monitoring and evaluation frameworks.	Continuous monitoring of results allows you to track progress and identify emerging challenges. While some results may be foreseen and aligned with project objectives, others may emerge unexpectedly.	Evaluation of your project can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of your project interventions, including the effects on your target/beneficiary group.

<p>In addition, if you clearly define outcomes and impacts, it is more likely that key stakeholders will understand the importance of your project.</p>	<p>Monitoring actual project results allows you to adjust project strategies or activities where needed.</p>	<p>Information about achieved results is requested by your national agency, and is important for the justification of the programme and the investment made at EU level.</p> <p>In addition, evaluation results can be useful for your own reflection about why the project was (or was not) successful. You can use this information when planning a new project.</p>
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EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF RESULTS

- Information about collecting plastic waste was shared on the Austrian's school website to showcase what the school has been doing to address environmental issues.
- Stories about students going on mobility trips are shared with other students, to create interest from other students to apply for mobility programmes.
- Results of the Erasmus+ projects in Finland are used in attractive brochures (Facts Express) to inform the general public about the added value of the programme. [See here](#) an example of a Facts Express.
- Improved staff skills have been used to initiate new activities and new results, such as a new curriculum, environmental school policies, and new partnerships.
- Video outlining the project results of eTwinning on schools (see below).



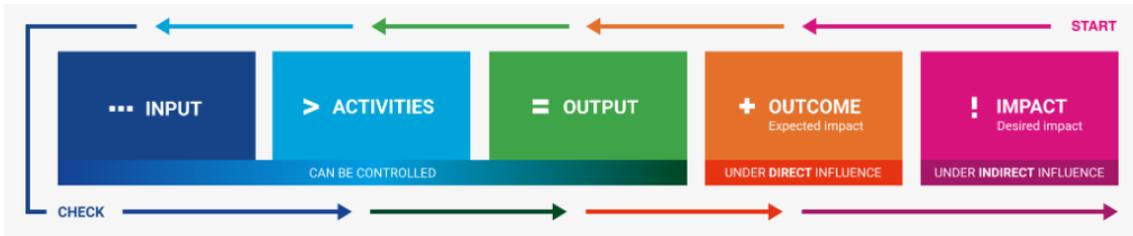
In summary:

Every Erasmus+ project is aiming to achieve a variety of results. These results include not only the direct deliverables, services or products (**output**), but also how these outputs are used by the target group / direct beneficiaries (**outcome**) and which broader long-term change they contribute to (**impact**). By describing these results, you can increase the success of your project, while also contributing to meaningful and lasting transformations in education, youth work and society as a whole.

----- INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE? -----



Do you want to learn more about outputs-outcomes-impact? Have a look at the [Erasmus+ Impact Tool](#), which explains each type of result, including some concrete examples.



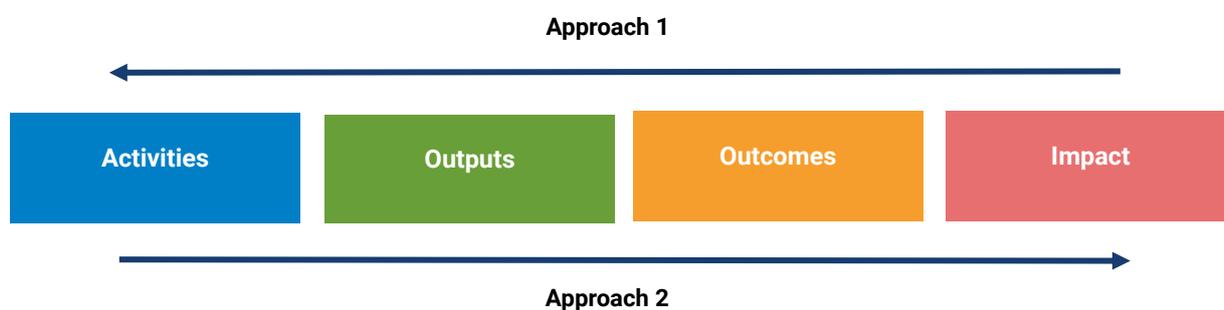
Are you interested in all objectives and envisioned results of the Erasmus+ programme? Look them up in the [Erasmus+ programme's intervention logic](#).

Chapter 2: Defining Impact Before Application

Thinking about and managing for impact is not something that should happen after project completion; it begins the moment you start thinking about applying for Erasmus+ funding. In this chapter, we guide you through the process of fully integrating impact into your proposal. If you have already started your project, this chapter may be useful to rethink your project and improve the impact focus of your already existing project.

We present two possible approaches to arrive at an impact-oriented proposal. **Approach 1** starts with defining impact and then reasons backwards. **Approach 2** starts with defining your activities and/or your direct beneficiaries, and then moves towards impact.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach. The main advantage of approach 1 is that it will best support you in working towards impact, as you first define your intended impact and then work backwards to decide on your activities. This can lead to more innovative and relevant project activities. Approach 2 is considered easier, and especially useful when designing smaller projects.



2.1 Approach 1: From impact to activities

The steps for this approach include:

1. Describe your dream/vision (impact)
2. Define who and what needs to change (outcomes)
3. Determine the project deliverables & other direct project results (outputs)
4. Describe what you will do (activities)
5. Check the logic (from activities to impact)

This approach starts with developing a **vision** of the desired future situation the project intends to bring about or contribute to. It then *reasons backwards* to the project design with activities, responsibilities, and budget requirements. This approach helps you to focus the design process on the reason why the project is needed.

Step 1: Describe your dream/vision (desired impact)

In developing a vision of the desired future situation, you must be specific about 'whose' future you are talking about. Is it the future of society, the future of individuals, or the future of an organisation? Mobility projects principally concern the future of participants who benefit from these projects (e.g. students, staff), while partnership projects concern the future of the participants, as well as the organisations involved and/or their local communities.

Once you are clear and agree on whose future is concerned, you can be more specific about what kind of future you aim to contribute to: this is the issue the project aims to address / improve. You want this issue to be sufficiently "big"; a longer-term, higher-level ambition that your project will contribute to, something broader than what the project itself can deliver. In the boxes below we provide some examples.

IN THE CASE OF AN ORGANISATION

- Improved quality of education
- Fostering international cooperation
- Sustainability in education systems
- Social cohesion
- Inclusion and gender equality
- European integration in the field of TVET schooling

IN THE CASE OF AN INDIVIDUAL / SOCIETY

- Employment opportunities
- European mindset
- Establishment of a European network

When the who and the issue are defined, the actual 'envisioning' exercise can start. This can take different shapes.

If there is a strategic framework - this can be an inclusion strategy, an internationalisation strategy, or an environmental policy - it is important to use this as a basis for the design of the project. This will align your project to an existing and approved strategic vision. This not only saves time and trouble, but also makes it easier to justify and get support for your project from senior management.

If there is no pre-existing strategic framework, there are different ways to arrive at a joint vision (= description of desired impact)². A joint vision may be developed together, during multi-stakeholder workshops or meetings (see the box below for some practical suggestions). The result of an envisioning exercise is captured in a short vision statement describing an ambitious but achievable desired future situation. Some examples are:

- *Erasmus+ mobility participants have more international employment opportunities.*
- *The quality of education and/or research at the partner institutions has improved in the eyes of students and teaching staff.*
- *The school community (parents, teachers, students) is more open and appreciative of international cooperation.*

Practical suggestions in organising / undertaking an envisioning exercise include:

1. Ensure the right participants are present, as you want to arrive at a jointly agreed and understood picture of the desired future situation, that is supported by all key stakeholders.
2. Create time and space to dream, reflect and describe this desired future situation. Usually, 1- 2 hours should be enough.
3. Consider using visualisation techniques. Start by asking stakeholders to draw / describe their own vision, which serves as inputs and inspiration for a joint vision.

When facilitating an envisioning exercise, consider the following steps (duration is indicative):

1. Explain the 'what', 'why' and 'how' (5-10 minutes)
2. Ask questions and collect individual contributions to create a joint image (60 minutes)
3. Formulate your team vision statement (20 minutes)

Step 2: Define who and what needs to change (outcomes)

Once your vision is clear, it is important to understand who (which stakeholders) needs to change to make this vision a reality. This is often a broader group of stakeholders than the direct beneficiaries of the project.

A useful tool is **stakeholder mapping and analysis**. This starts with mapping the most relevant stakeholders in relation to the formulated vision. This can be (a combination of) external and internal stakeholders (e.g. teachers, board, management, support staff). Internal stakeholders are those actors who may participate in or benefit from the project within the organisation (or partnership), whereas external stakeholders are located outside of the organisation (or a partnership). The crux of developing a stakeholder map is to identify who needs to change their behaviour to ensure

² E.g. <https://mbspguide.org/2022/03/18/visioning/>

your vision becomes a reality. If you are interested in learning how to map and analyse your stakeholders, look at chapter 4.2 > Stakeholder involvement.

Figure 1 shows there are usually various stakeholders who will need to do something different to achieve your desired impact (vision). Have a look at the following project example that intends to improve the quality and inclusivity of education in the whole organisation (vision).

This means teachers (stakeholder 1) need to change. They have to increase the quality and inclusivity of their lessons. At the same time, the school board (stakeholder 2) needs to allow and support these new ways of teaching. Also, other teachers who were not part of the project (stakeholder 3) need to be brought on board. In addition, other closely related stakeholders (e.g. parent-teacher council and students) have to appreciate, accept, and cooperate with the proposed teaching methods. In short: many stakeholders will need to change their behaviour on the road to impact!

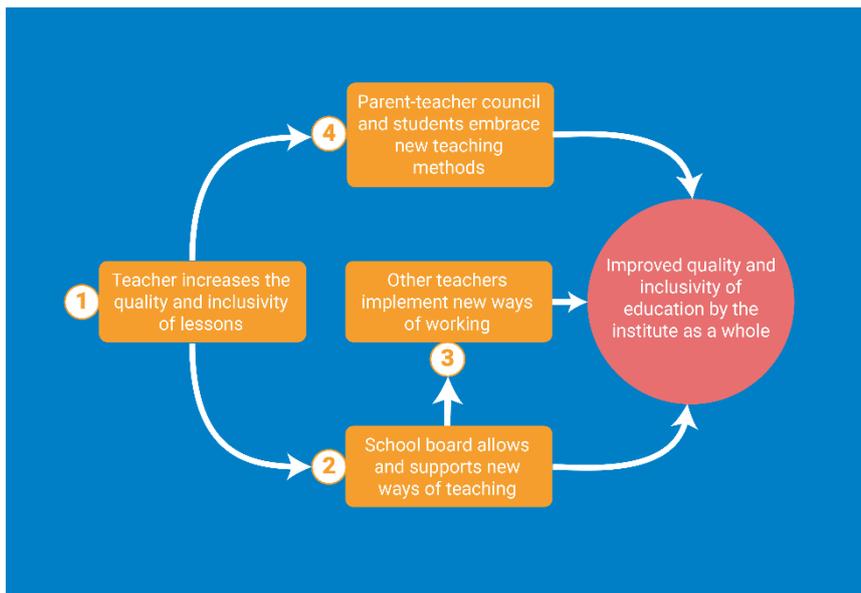


Figure 1: Stakeholder map

Note: Stakeholders’ actions will influence the behaviour of other stakeholders: i.e. a supportive school management team will influence teachers to implement new ways of working. This is illustrated by the arrows between the stakeholders (see Chapter 4 for more information on stakeholders and stakeholder analysis).

So, the mapping identifies the targeted stakeholders and their behavioural change. You can formulate this change in an outcome statement: a description of the **desired behaviour of the targeted stakeholders**, leading towards the impact you are aiming for. Writing outcome statements is a key stepping stone to connecting the direct results of your project activities with the project impact. At this stage, you should formulate outcome statements for each stakeholder in your project. An outcome statement is described as follows (Figure 2):

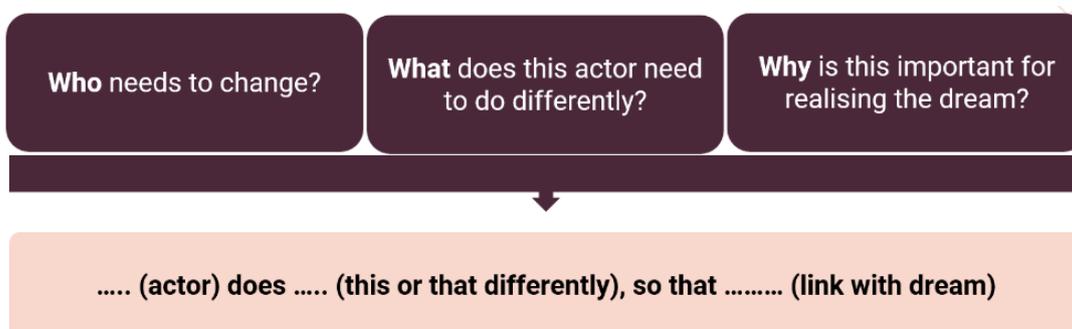


Figure 2: Describing outcome statements

Examples of outcome statements are shown in the box below:

Examples of outcome statements:

- The school board approves new teaching methods, so that
- Senior management allocate resources, so that ...
- Learners are more active in expanding their network, so that
- Teachers adopt different teaching methods in the field of , so that
- Parents more actively involved in ... so that
- Students learn and apply new knowledge on ... , so that
- School dropouts enrol in adult education ..., so that ...

Step 3: Determine the project deliverables & other direct project results (outputs)

When you know what kind of behaviour you want to change (outcome), you can take the next step: identify the **outputs to be produced/delivered by your project** that will lead to the desired behavioural change of the targeted stakeholders. These outputs are the direct results (products, services or increased capacities) your project needs to deliver. This is why these are sometimes called 'deliverables'. Examples of outputs are:

- Improved knowledge, skills and attitudes of professionals/volunteers/pupils/youth
- Professionals and youth with international exposure
- Online tools or toolkits
- Publications or journal articles
- Policy documents / research findings
- Online platforms.

Step 4: Describe what you will do (activities)

The next step is to identify and plan the activities that will deliver the outputs. A budget can also be prepared. The nature of your activities depends on the outputs to be delivered. Activities can include:

- Conduct a training (to develop skills)
- Conduct training of trainers (to establish a pool of trainers)
- Develop a school website (to produce a website)
- Organise an excursion (to increase exposure)
- Conduct a promotional campaign (to increase awareness).

Seeing that you have defined the outputs first, you can think of alternative ways of producing the concerned outputs. For example, what else could we do to develop skills, apart from conducting a training? Or what are alternative activities to increase exposure?

Step 5: Check the logic (from activities to impact)

Once impact, outcomes, outputs and activities have been formulated, do conduct a check:

- Will the activities lead to the outputs? If not, then adjust the activities.
- Will the outputs lead to the desired outcomes? If not, then adjust the outputs (and corresponding activities).
- Will the outcomes contribute to the desired impact? If not, or not sufficiently, then see if you adjust the outcomes (and the corresponding outputs and activities).

Designing a project for impact is an iterative process, and therefore the above questions can be asked at any moment of the planning exercise.

2.2 Approach 2: From activities to impact

The second approach starts with identifying project activities that help resolve specific needs/problems (linked to the Erasmus+ programme priorities). Based on the identified activities, you will determine your results (outputs, outcomes and impact), and subsequently check whether the impact pathway makes sense or needs improvement. This is an iterative process and helps create a set of impact-oriented activities.

1. Who is your target group and what are your activities?
2. What is going to change? (outputs and outcomes)
3. What wider change does this contribute to? (impact)

Step 1: Who is your target group and what are your activities?

When you want to apply for Erasmus+ funding, you start by reading the programme guide, knowing the objectives and programme's priorities, and realising the opportunities that the Erasmus+ programme offers to bring about important changes for your organisation, your learners, your communities, etc. In addition, conducting a needs analysis or problem analysis will help inform the design of a sound project.

So, what do you want to do? What are the activities that you would like to conduct/carry out, linked to which Erasmus+ objectives? Who will be targeted by the activities? (learners, teachers, students, departments, organisations, etc.).

List the target groups first and then write down the corresponding activities, for example:

Target group / direct beneficiary	Activity
Teachers	Train teachers in the use of inclusive teaching methods
Working group	Provide technical support to the working group to adjust teaching methods for use in school
Students	Participate in classes where inclusive teaching methods are tested

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Are these all the direct beneficiaries and/or the targeted stakeholders of the project?
- Are these the most innovative and relevant activities? Can these activities be implemented, are they realistic?

Depending on your answers, you might need to adjust target groups/direct beneficiaries and/or activities.

Step 2: What is going to change? (outputs and outcomes)

Once you have defined your activities, you can start elaborating the project's outputs (the products, services or increased capacities the activities will deliver) and outcomes (the behavioural changes in the target groups/direct beneficiaries). Describe the defined outputs and outcomes (see example below).

Activities	Output	Outcome
Provide technical support to a working group for developing / adapting inclusive teaching methods	Inclusive teaching methods developed/tested and adjusted	Teachers educate students by using inclusive teaching methods and skills/ knowledge in the classroom
Test inclusive training methods in a classroom setting		
Train teachers in the use of inclusive teaching methods	Teachers have new knowledge/skills related to the use of inclusive teaching methods	

Note: Read from left to right. Activities need to lead to the concerned outputs; outputs should lead to the described outcomes.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Are the outcomes in line with our organisational priorities/policies/needs?
- Will the outputs lead to the desired outcomes? If not, why not?

Depending on your answers, you might want to adjust your activities and outputs.

Step 3. Define the wider change your project contributes to (impact)

Once you have defined the activities, outputs and outcomes, it is time to look at the wider-level change (impact) that your project may contribute to. If outcomes are achieved, then what changes will the project contribute to? This may be at different levels:

- Within the organisation
- Within the partnership
- In surrounding communities
- In society
- In educational systems

Describe impacts in an achieved manner, and preferably linked to the thematic areas of the programme.

Add impacts in the table (see example below):

Activity	Output	Outcome	Impact
Provide technical support to a working group for developing/adapting inclusive teaching methods	Inclusive teaching methods developed/tested and adjusted	Teachers educate students, making use of inclusive teaching methods and their related skills/knowledge in the classroom	Students feel more "at home" / "appreciated" / "valued" / "respected" in school
Test inclusive training methods in a classroom setting			Improved learning outcomes
Train teachers in the use of inclusive teaching methods	Teachers have sound knowledge/skills related to the use of inclusive teaching methods		More inclusion / less marginalisation
			Institutional policies developed on inclusion
			Communities see that school is making a lot of "inclusion" efforts / wider inclusion effects on communities

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ON IMPACT ORIENTATION:

- Are all important impacts listed?
- Are the impacts in line with your organisational priorities/policies/needs?
- To what extent will the outcomes contribute to the expected impacts?
- Is it possible to increase the impact by revising the outputs and outcomes? For example, to improve the environmental impact of the project in the community, it may be necessary to reformulate the outcomes (or add another outcome). That also means that activities and outputs may need to be modified.

Based on the above reflections, you can adjust activities and outputs to improve the impact orientation of the impact pathways.

In summary:

Integrating impact into your project development starts from the very first design of your project. You can do this via two different approaches: 1) Define your vision/impact first, then outline the (behavioural) changes that are needed to achieve this impact, and lastly decide what activities you could implement to bring about these changes, or 2) Start with your project idea (activities), then define what changes this will bring about and to what impact it can contribute. For both approaches, it is most important that the impact pathways (from activities to output to outcomes and impact) follow a certain logic.

----- INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE? -----



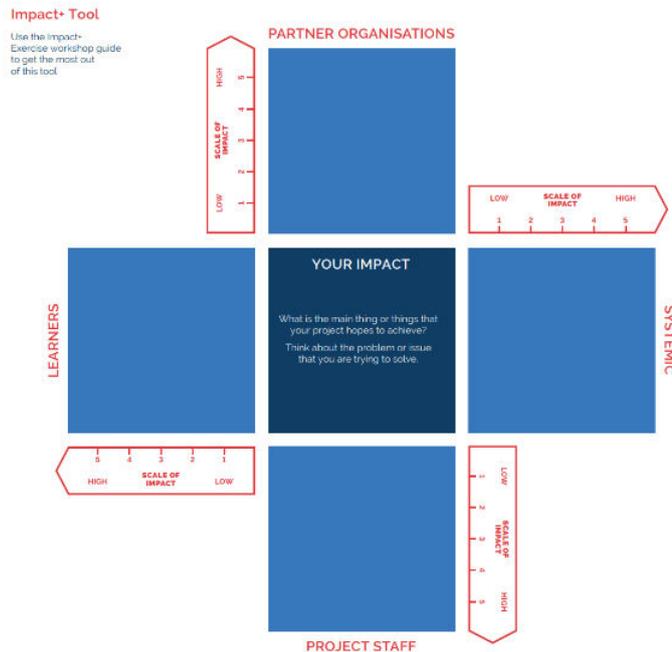
Use the [project design form](#) (page 1) from the Erasmus+ Impact Tool to write down the main results of the 5 steps as described in this chapter.



The above steps relate to the first steps in the UK's Impact Tool for mobility projects: Aims, Outcomes and Impact:

<https://erasmusplus.org.uk/impact-and-evaluation.html>.

This tool works with five boxes, whereby the central box describes what you aim to achieve: your impact. The four boxes on the outside are then filled with the changes that are needed for the impact to be realised. These can be behavioural changes of key stakeholders (learners, partners, and project staff) and systemic changes (e.g. policies, rules), and are similar to the changes on outcome level as described above. It also applies to the suggested systemic change as the above process is based on the principle that systemic change is the result of behavioural change from a key stakeholder (e.g. a new rule set by the school board, or a policy change initiated by the Ministry).



In addition, the UK's Impact Tool includes an impact scale, which helps to prioritise the most important behavioural changes per stakeholder and these are presented as outcomes in the project design. This underlines the importance to be as specific as possible in describing the behavioural change that you are pursuing with your project.



If you want to make an more detailed overview of all possible outputs, outcomes and impacts for your project or programme, a Theory of Change can be a useful tool. The Dutch national agency has developed a Theory of Change for KA1 and KA2 programmes, available in Dutch and English: <https://toc.erasmusplus.nl/>.



To help identify outputs, you can use the COM-B model, developed by J. Mayne. This universal model for behavioural change illustrates that behaviour is influenced by three interrelated factors: *capabilities, opportunity, and motivation*. In other words, for behavioural change to occur the targeted actor needs to be capable, willing and have the opportunity to do things differently. In impact-oriented project design, we therefore recommend formulating outputs that cover these three aspects. Read more about the COM-B model for behaviour change here: <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/organizational-behavior/the-com-b-model-for-behavior-change> and https://social-change.co.uk/files/02.09.19_COM-B_and_changing_behaviour_.pdf.



If you don't know which issues your project could help resolve, you can start by drafting a problem and/or objective tree. A problem tree is a graphic tool that helps to hierarchically structure problems identified (the negative situation), clarifying their cause-effect relationship. The objective tree is the positive interface of the problem tree, hierarchically organising the corresponding objectives (positive situation). Read more about this on the [EC Wiki](#).

Chapter 3: Monitoring & Evaluation of Impact

Monitoring and evaluation sometimes seem to be about filling checkboxes on a project plan or in a report, but when done properly and effectively, monitoring and evaluation supports you in enhancing the results of your Erasmus+ programme.

In this chapter, we guide you through the basics of monitoring and evaluation:

1. What is monitoring and evaluation?
2. Why monitor & evaluate?
3. Different types of monitoring and evaluation
4. Practical tips

3.1. What is monitoring & evaluation?

Monitoring involves continuous collection, analysis, and use of information to track the progress of your project activities and results during project implementation.

Evaluation, on the other hand, is more like an assessment, done at the end of the project, or during the project at a planned moment (e.g. mid-term). It delves into the project's design, implementation, and results, providing insights that may shape future projects.

So, what are the main differences between monitoring and evaluation? These relate to the following 3 elements: Focus, Timing and Purpose.

	Monitoring	Evaluation
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on tracking the progress and implementation of activities. • Looks at inputs (budget, time, human resources), activities, outputs, and outcomes to ensure that the project is on track. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability. • Looks at the outcomes and impact achieved. • Provides an analysis of the project's performance.
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted continuously throughout the project cycle, from planning to implementation and completion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically conducted at specific points in time, such as at the end of a project or at key moments. Evaluation might also be done some years after the end of the project.
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily aimed at tracking progress, identifying issues or bottlenecks, and ensuring that project activities are being implemented as intended. • Helps project managers make timely decisions and adjustments to improve project efficiency and effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at assessing the overall outcomes, impact, relevance, and sustainability of the project. • Helps stakeholders understand what worked well, what could be improved, and what lessons can be learned for future projects. • Provides justification for project spending towards funders and taxpayers.

3.2. Why monitor and evaluate?

What are the main reasons to monitor and evaluate your project? Is it to report back to your National Agency? To adjust your project? To share your successes on social media? All of these are valid reasons! The purposes of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are as diverse as the projects themselves. Defining the purpose for monitoring and evaluation at the start of your project helps you to make choices as to what, when and how you want to monitor and evaluate. And you define your own M&E purposes as you will be the main user of your monitoring and evaluation data!

Have a look at the following 5 purposes:

1. **Accountability:** As you are receiving European funding, it is important to be transparent about your results and use of funding. By systematically tracking your activities, outputs and outcomes, you are gathering the data to report if you have achieved your planned results.
2. **Decision-making/steering:** If you need to adjust your strategy, reallocate resources, or address arising challenges, M&E data can help you make evidence-based decisions and ensure that your project stays on course and delivers its desired outcomes.
3. **Visibility and fundraising:** M&E data can be used to showcase success stories, and to boost the project's reputation and credibility within the broader European community.
4. **Promote learning processes:** By systematically collecting data and insights throughout your project's lifecycle, you can identify what works well and what could be improved. This information is invaluable for refining strategies, enhancing methodologies, and sharing best practices with various stakeholders.
5. **Stimulate dialogue:** By presenting findings, sharing insights, and discussing implications with a variety of project stakeholders, M&E activities can create opportunities for reflection, debate, and collective problem-solving.

3.3. Different types of monitoring and evaluation

When it comes to M&E, one size does not fit all. You have probably heard of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods offer numeric insights, often through well-defined indicators. Think of them as the numbers on a scoreboard, telling you how well your project is unfolding. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, are more about words and images: they are descriptive and illustrative, and show the human side of your project results.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Quantitative indicators

When talking about M&E, we often talk about indicators, but what are indicators exactly, and how do you define a good indicator?

A quantitative indicator is a variable that helps you measure whether or not a result has been achieved. By gathering information about specific indicators over time, you can assess the extent to which your results have been achieved. It can therefore provide you with information about the effectiveness and efficiency of your project.

You mostly define the indicators of your project in the design phase and use them during your monitoring and evaluation. When defining the indicators, the following information should be considered:

- Who is changing? (your target group or other key stakeholder)
- What is changing?
- Where will the change take place? (*if relevant*)

Examples of quantitative indicators could be:

- Number of new curricula developed by the teachers who participate in the exchange project
- Number of schools that have adopted the new curricula in region XXX
- Percentage of graduated students who indicate that the curricula at the University of XXX, Faculty of Social Sciences are relevant for their future careers

In the first example, the indicator measures what changes (the curricula), followed by who is responsible for producing the curricula (teachers): a typical output indicator. The second example measures the who (schools), followed by what they have done differently (adopted new curricula): a typical behavioural change indicator (outcome or impact indicator - in this case most likely an impact indicator, as it may indicate a systemic change as a wider effect of what happened in one school).

As you can see, indicators can be defined for any type of project result. This implies that you can have output, outcome and impact indicators. By identifying indicators for each type of result, you can track if your project is on track towards achieving impact. Have a look at the following box for some more indicators for the example project.

Indicator example Mobility projects

- % of students who have examples of how participation has affected their lives positively
- Average score on “extent to which your participation in the mobility programme has been useful to you”

Indicator example Partnership projects

- # of teachers that participated in training on new education tool
- Integration of new teaching methodologies within the school
- # of cultural activities that have been organised by teachers after training
- Active engagement of youth in their communities (via volunteering or work)

Have you noticed that we did not define any numbers or dates in these indicators? That is on purpose! The baseline and target information, as well as your plan on how you will collect your data, is mostly added in your M&E plan.

See an example of a M&E plan below. The specific result is followed by an indicator, represented by a % of students. The baseline value (at the start of the project) is 60%. In the next column, targets for the following years are added, so you can compare the actual changes with your expected changes over the years. The source of verification explains how you obtain the indicator information. In this case it is by means of a graduation survey shared with all students graduating from University XXX, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Result	Indicator	Baseline (2024)	Target(s)	Source of Verification
Curricula are better aligned with the reality of the current labour market	% of graduated students who indicate that the curricula at the University of XXX, Faculty of Social Sciences are relevant for their future careers	60%	2025: 62% 2026: 65% 2027: 70% 2028: 75%	Graduation survey (3 years after graduation)

Quantitative data collection methods & tools

Any quantitative data collection method can be used to collect data for quantitative indicators. Think of surveys, (structured) key informant interviews or focus group discussions, and structured observations.

QUALITATIVE METHODS OF MONITORING & EVALUATIONS

Qualitative indicators

In some projects, it can be useful to define qualitative indicators in addition to quantitative indicators. The main difference is that qualitative indicators are reported as words, in statements, paragraphs, case studies and reports, while quantitative indicators are reported as numbers, such as units, prices, proportions, rates of change and ratios. A qualitative indicator is not so much about measuring change (for which you need numbers of percentages), but more about finding out whether change is actually taking place or not, and for understanding the nature and depth of a change.

An example of a qualitative indicator is: “Students express to have grown professionally during their studies”. This could for example be verified by analysing personal reflection reports of graduating students. In this case, it would mean looking for words, statements and examples that show the professional growth of these students. Numbers may not be useful to establish this type of change.

The advantage of gathering qualitative data is that it provides more in-depth information on the underlying reasons why change has happened. This is why it is often collected in addition to quantitative data. Qualitative data collection methods also allow for better gathering of data at outcome level and uncovering unforeseen changes.

Qualitative data collection methods & tools

To collect qualitative data, you can ask open questions in surveys or interviews, but there are also specific qualitative data collection methods.

Storytelling is a powerful qualitative data collection method that involves capturing thoughts, emotions and experiences from individuals or specific groups. It helps to understand people's lives and feelings, and how they have experienced a specific change because of the project. Stories can be collected in written form, but also via video or audio recording. It is even possible to combine these formats!

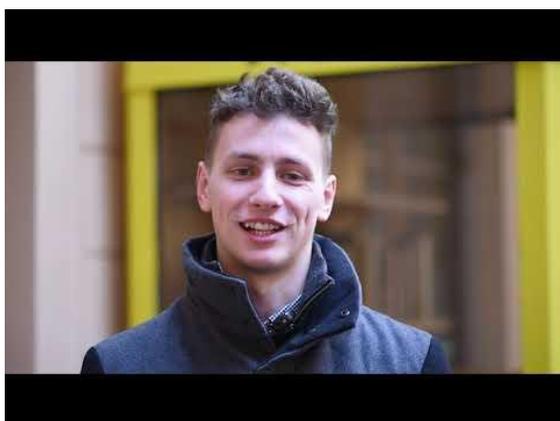
See some examples below:



Art of Swimming: mobility of Staff in the field of grassroots sports



Empowering young people through mobility and other initiative



About the traineeship with Kateřina and Štěpán |
Erasmus+ Vocational Education and Training



Erasmus+ works towards better care for people with disabilities

While storytelling as a data collection method can provide valuable insights, it also has some challenges, such as subjectivity, representation (certain voices or experiences may be overrepresented or marginalised), and the time needed to collect and analyse the data. To overcome these challenges, it is essential that you know what type of information you are looking for and that you provide clear instructions to the people who collect the stories. You can prepare your storytellers beforehand by giving clear information of what type of stories you are looking for. You could, for example, invite them to take pictures of the most important changes in their lives as a result of the project, and to tell their story in relation to these pictures.

Peer review is a qualitative monitoring and evaluation method that involves external experts, e.g. representatives from similar organisations/institutions, who perform a quality review of the changes/results that you have achieved with your project. It is often used to see whether the experts consider an output to be in line with international (European) standards. Experts may also help with providing recommendations on how to improve on quality of the outputs. Peer

review is not something that is used frequently within the context of Erasmus+ programs, but it could be included in a partnership project as a joint learning activity.

Focus group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative data collection method. A FGD brings together a group of persons, for example students, teachers or community members. In a FGD personal experiences and changes can be discussed by using semi-structured interview methods to keep the discussion going, possibly combined with a scoring of specific aspects of the issue that is discussed. The advantage of focus group discussions over storytelling is that a FGD brings together different perspectives, thereby giving a more representative and realistic view of the changes that have taken place. Any lessons learned that come out of the FGD can be used for adjusting the project strategies.

When preparing for qualitative data collection, you can review already existing documents. Think of satisfaction surveys with comments from participants, or participant and practice reports. Interesting insights from these documents could be the starting point for delving deeper during a peer review session, focus group discussion or story gathering.

3.4. Practical tips

Does this sound a bit overwhelming to you? Don't worry, you don't need to do extensive research to know all your project results! Even if time and other resources do not allow you to do a thorough evaluation of your project, you can likely still get some valuable information by carefully selecting which information is really useful for you.

Here are some practical tips to keep the monitoring & evaluation of your project practical and useful, instead of a burden:

- Clarify how you intend to use your M&E information from the outset.
- Keep it simple and practical: M&E is managing information, not rocket science.
- Formulate only necessary indicators to avoid drowning in data: focus on those results that you really would like to know.
- Validate and check information with key informants to ensure its accuracy and relevance.
- Use existing processes and procedures in your organisation for monitoring and evaluation practises.

Monitoring & Evaluation is like having a guide on your journey. It helps you stay on track, learn from the trip, and make your next adventure even better. With simple tools and smart tips, you can make the most of your Erasmus+ projects and create positive change.

In summary:

Through monitoring and evaluation, you can obtain information that will help develop insights into the change processes resulting from your Erasmus+ projects. This is useful for improving actual and future projects and for sharing success stories. By using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, you can capture the size of your project results as well as the reasons underlying the occurrence of these changes.

----- INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE? -----



There are many different types of formats for outlining your M&E plan. For example, you can use the format as outlined in the [Erasmus+ project design tool](#) (page 2), or make a similar version for yourself in Excel by adding columns for baseline and target data.



One structured and elaborate method that includes storytelling is the '**Most Significant Change Technique**'. It is a participatory technique, consisting of 10 steps, in which people are invited to tell their most significant change stories. Subsequently, different people will read and analyse these stories, and discuss which of the stories is selected as the most significant. The whole process of preparation, collection, selection and analysis is time-consuming, but can provide new insights for the project team as well as the storytellers. Read more [here](#).



There are many different ways to plan and conduct focus group discussions. A resource that we suggest is [the Focus Group page on the Better Evaluation website](#).

Chapter 4: Managing for Impact

Managing for impact in Erasmus+ financed projects is not something you do alone. You do this with a combination of internal and/or external stakeholders and (possibly) partner organisations. This has consequences for how you plan, monitor, and evaluate your project. This chapter focuses on this organisational aspect of managing for impact throughout the different phases of project planning, project implementation and evaluation.

Some key considerations for managing for impact are:

- Leadership
- Stakeholder involvement
- Partnerships
- Joint learning and adaptive management
- Organising monitoring & evaluation processes
- Dealing with risks

4.1. Leadership

Impact-oriented planning is about jointly developing a plan/proposal that is owned and/or supported by the key stakeholders of a project and which will lead to the desired changes/impacts. This means the person in charge of the planning process should be both **content** (project) and **process** (involving stakeholders) focused. This requires a specific type of leadership, a supportive yet focused (impact-oriented) type of leadership.

The **content** is about the proposal/plan, about what the project will be doing (activities) and about what the project intends to achieve (results/change).

The **process** is about how the proposal/plan will be prepared, involving internal and external stakeholders in such a way that there is joint ownership of the project and its chance of successful implementation improves. This means that different ideas, opinions, and positions need to be understood and dealt with. In the process, decisions need to be made. Some decisions that will need to be made are the following:

- Who will participate in the planning process?
- Who will decide what the results will be?
- Who will decide what the activities are?
- Who will decide who will be doing what?
- Who will decide on the budget?

When you design a project, the basis for the collaboration is established in the implementation phase. Below you can find several tips for making a good start.

Tips for managing the planning process:

- Map the planning process: when will you do what?
- Check decision-making power of participants.
- Agree on how decisions will be made: who is/needs to be responsible, involved or consulted?
- Use a supportive approach towards the participants and listen to their needs/concerns.
- Acknowledge and respect personal and organisational interests.
- Organise (online / face-to-face) meetings for more formal agreements.
- Organise workshops (online / in-person) to exchange experiences and generate project content.
- Bring in an external facilitator for workshops, if necessary (especially if there are conflicting interests).

Tips for organising and conducting workshops:

- Be clear on workshop outputs.
- Agree on decision-making regarding workshop products.
- Bring in an external facilitator (if you need to balance different interests).
- Develop a workshop outline with sufficient time for stakeholder discussions.
- Establish basic “rules of the game” with the people participating in the workshop.
- Agree on next steps.
- Produce a (brief) workshop report.

Important to note: Leadership style is key during the implementation of Erasmus+ projects. Many of the stakeholders join in with Erasmus+ activities on a voluntarily basis or on top of their daily workload. This means it is important to inspire and support, not to manage and control. In fact, there is a big risk that people might stop actively participating in, or collaborating with, the project if they are “given orders” or feel their contributions are not appreciated or respected.

4.2. Stakeholder involvement

Definition of a stakeholder

A stakeholder is an individual, community, group, or organisation with an interest in the results of an intervention or policy, because they are affected positively or negatively by it, or are able to influence it positively or negatively.

The planning and implementation of a project involves a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders (see Chapter 2 for the distinction between internal and external stakeholders). It consists of bringing them on board as well as keeping them engaged throughout the implementation of your project.

Why is this important? Well, if a powerful stakeholder supports the project or decides to stop the project, this will determine the success of the project. It is therefore useful to map stakeholders based on their power and interest. The **stakeholder analysis matrix** (Figure 3) may be of help. The vertical axis illustrates your stakeholders’ level of power and the horizontal axis illustrates whether their interests may be affected positively or negatively.

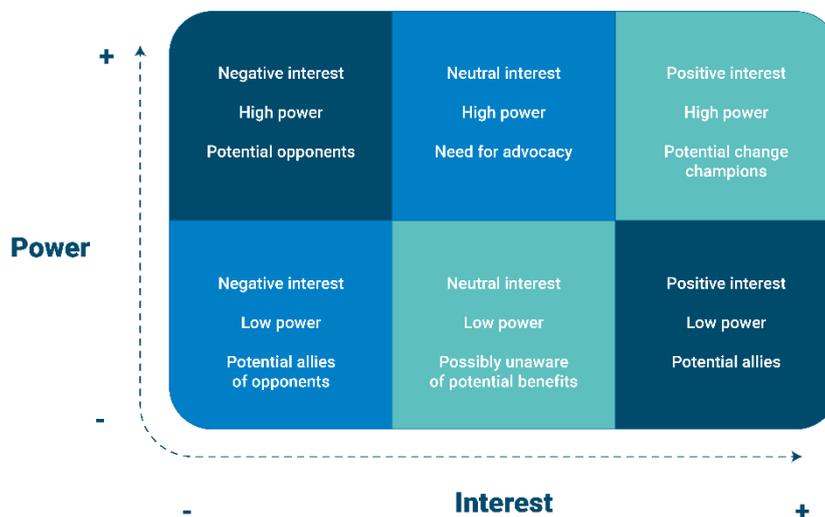


Figure 3: Stakeholder Matrix

Below an example of how stakeholders can be placed on the matrix using the story from the secondary school in Austria (from Chapter 1). The exact mapping will be different for different projects/organisations/contexts:

- **Erasmus+ coordinator:** high interest (personal) and relatively low power, as the Erasmus+ coordinator may depend on the involvement of many other stakeholders for the success of the project.
- **School principal:** high interest and high power. High interest (hopefully), because the project will bring lots of benefits for the school. High power because the school principal will be able to involve others.
- **Teachers:** High power and medium interest. High power because without them the project cannot be implemented. Medium interest because it may be perceived as an additional burden.
- **Community members:** low power and medium interest.
- **Provincial authorities:** high power and high interest. It is in their (high) power and (high) interest to see that the approach is successful, and they are instrumental in bringing the project outputs to other schools.
- **Parents:** high interest and relatively high power. High interest because their children are directly affected by the school activities. High power, because they may communicate positive or negative opinions about the school.
- **Social peers:** High power because they may influence students in participating or not. Medium or neutral interest as they may not immediately see the benefit of the project for them (benefits are unclear).

Mapping stakeholders will help you determine how to engage with the different stakeholders. For example, you want to create positive vibes around the Erasmus+ activity to help create positive social peer behaviour. But also, you want to inform the parents regularly about the activities that will be conducted. The better you engage with the various stakeholders, the bigger your chances of achieving impact.

Tips for engaging stakeholders:

- Keep a close eye on potential opponents and allies of potential opponents.
- Neutralise negative interests by (if possible) creating specific benefits for them.
- Establish partnerships with potential change champions.
- Make sure stakeholders with high power and neutral interests also benefit from the project. Bring them on board. It will enhance stakeholder support.
- See if it is possible to strengthen potential allies.
- Develop a communication plan linked to your engagement strategy.

Example of successful stakeholder engagement

In many countries, Erasmus+ coordinators work closely together with the Erasmus+ national agency and local and provincial authorities across several networks. The coordinators make use of these networks to bring the project to a "higher", more regional, or even national level. Authorities often play an important role in project events and coordinators have supported authorities in their efforts to change existing government policies and educational approaches. What is important here is a mutual interest in, and development of, joint ownership over project results!

4.3. Partnerships

Definition of a partnership

Partnerships are collaborative relationships between institutional actors that combine complementary strengths and resources to achieve common goals and objectives (IFAD-2019)

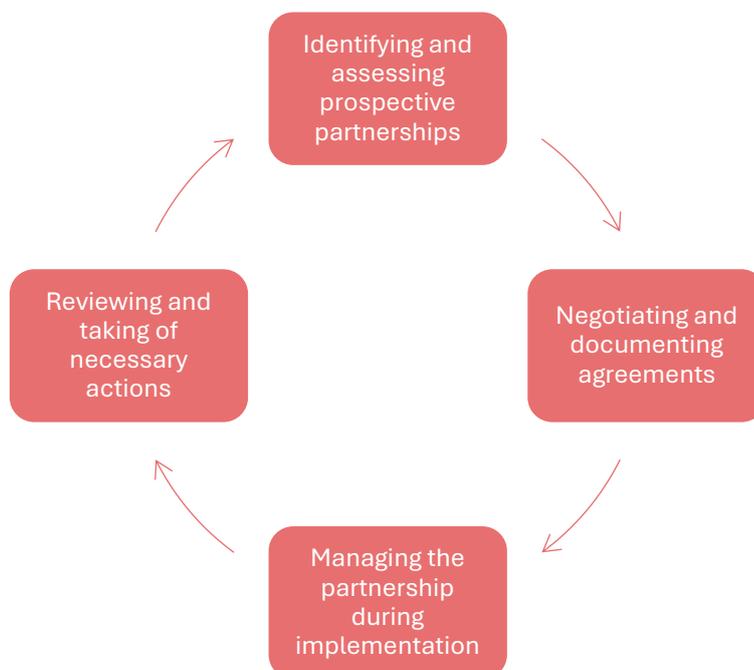
A partnership is usually established when you want to work together with an external stakeholder and achieve common goals. It is important to structure the partnership. During the planning phase you will need to think about the kind of partnership you want to have for the implementation of a successful project.

Common interests are at the basis of all partnerships. Partners make a conscious decision to establish a partnership, based on the premise that together you can do/achieve much more than alone. The idea is to join strengths (knowledge and resources) and work together towards joint goals. In Erasmus+ projects, this often means the development of innovative initiatives.

In establishing a partnership, you need to decide: **1)** how you will work together, **2)** how decisions will be made, **3)** what the project strategies will be, **4)** how roles/tasks will be divided, and **5)** how learning will take place. In other words, you work out together what your “collaboration system” will be like.

Key to a successful partnership is for partners to realise there is no inherent hierarchy within partnerships; that partners can and will decide for themselves whether they want to continue (or not) in a partnership, even if there is a partnership agreement. If vital individual and/or organisational interests are not respected, this often means the end of a partnership. It is essential to manage the dynamics and energy in a partnership, expressed in commitment and smooth project operations. If managed properly, partnerships will extend beyond the life span of a project and may generate a lot more impact, far beyond what you expected initially! An example is the adoption of a nationwide educational strategy that was developed in an Erasmus+ project and was found so successful that national authorities decided to adopt it as a national policy.

Different phases in a partnership



Tips for establishing an effective (and impactful) partnership:

- Take the time to get to know each other. Inspire each other.
- Agree on the impact you want to achieve together (contribution to ...).
- Agree on roles and responsibilities.
- Agree on how you make decisions together.
- Decide on periodic reviews of the partnership.
- Respect the vital interests of the partners.
- Make sure everybody is happy with the partnership agreement!

4.4. Joint learning and adaptive management

The way decisions will be made (during project implementation) is determined when you start working together in the planning phase. This can be described and formalised in a partnership agreement. How the project will be steered/managed is part of the partnership agreement. Joint learning is necessary, as learning may lead to project decisions that will enhance impact.

A steering committee could be established, composed of key internal stakeholders (partners) and external stakeholders, e.g. representatives of local authorities. Who to include in the steering committee depends partly on the desired impact. Consider including people/actors who might be instrumental in enhancing your impact (inside as well as outside of the organisation).

The frequency of steering committee meetings will vary, depending on the nature of the project. It can be every 3 months (if there is a need for learning/decision-making in relation to project activities), or every 6-12 months. This may be the case when the learning/decision-making relates to policy development or expanding the scope of project activities/approaches.

Implementing a project is (also) about creating a (joint) space in which (joint) learning can take place. This learning can lead to changes in your project strategies during project implementation, or to organisational policy development during and after project implementation. Changes may mean: "Let's adapt our activities/strategies, so that we will have more impact". Learning may need to be formally organised and lessons learned can be shared with the steering committee, again to enhance impact.

Tips for organizing joint learning and adaptive management:

- Agree on how monitoring and evaluation data will be shared and used during steering committee meetings.
- Develop a learning agenda. This agenda can include all kinds of topics that may be relevant for working towards impact. E.g. how to make best use of project results for achieving systemic change?
- Discuss information gathered on learning agenda topics during steering committee meetings.
- Do not make your partnership agreement too rigid: allow some flexibility. When learning occurs, you can adjust your project activities accordingly (but keep aiming for the same outcomes and impacts).
- Allow time for learning.

4.5. Organising monitoring & evaluation processes

Data/information needs to be collected, analysed and interpreted in a timely manner, and linked to decision-making and other uses of data/information, such as communication with internal and external stakeholders. That means that the collection and interpretation of data/information needs to be planned in line with the intended use of the information.

Data collection usually takes place through specific data collection methods and tools, like surveys or specific studies. The key is to make sure that these data collection methods and tools produce reliable data. This means testing them before actual use, and checking if the provided information is correct/accurate.

Data also needs to be interpreted. Simply put that means asking the question: "What does this data tell us? Do we see the change we want to see? Is there progress towards outcomes and impact?". The interpretation of data is best

organised together with the person(s) responsible for collecting the information. If the data is difficult to interpret, then it can be complemented with site visits, or focus group discussions with representatives of the group of persons who were interviewed/surveyed.

Tips for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data:

- Integrate data collection and analysis into your regular activities, to save time and make it less of a burden.
- Stress that the data is gathered for learning purposes and your own decision-making process.
- Avoid making data gathering feel controlling or linked to accountability, as this will negatively affect the data quality.
- Provide feedback on information that is collected/analysed together. This shows that the information is used and therefore considered important, and enhances the quality of your data/information.

Key message: *The reliability of data/information depends on the way the data/information collection process is organised.*

Other factors that determine the quality of a good M&E system:

Staff capacity	You may not have enough staff to do “heavy” monitoring and evaluation activities (from collection to data analysis and interpretation). Or your current staff members may not have the capability to set up and manage a “heavy” system.
Data reliability	The GIGO principle describes what may happen in monitoring and evaluation. GIGO stands for Garbage In, Garbage Out. If the data entered for analysis is not reliable or not good (i.e. garbage), then the information produced from it can only be garbage too. In other words, the information is then useless for the purpose of learning and decision-making for enhanced impact.
Data storage	For storing data/information, it is best to use (or develop) your own organisational systems. This enhances the sustainability of data collection and enables other internal stakeholders to use the data. If there are no adequate systems in place, you can develop your own. However, don’t make it overly complicated, as the system may need to be transferred to the organisation.

Key M&E Tips:

- Agree on what you really need to know (how data/information will be used).
- Prepare your own formats/surveys. Keep these simple/short.
- Design for easy aggregation/disaggregation of data.
- Test surveys/data collection mechanisms.
- Test aggregation/disaggregation (in relation to possible use of data/information).
- Prepare your own M&E guidelines (what and how).
- Store data/information in such a way that the data is easily accessible to others.
- Avoid big spreadsheets/databases.
- Make sure data collectors have the capability to collect the data and are using of the data collection tools that have been decided upon

4.6. Dealing with risks

Definition of risks

Risks are unexpected events that may affect the successful implementation and achievement of your project results. They are uncertain and out of your control.

In projects, it is wise to be aware of possible risks. For example, travelling abroad for a mobility project creates health and safety risks. In partnership projects, there may be risks in relation to partnership commitments. There may be unexpected events that disrupt your project activities or lessen their effect (or worse!).

In other words, dealing with risks is key to achieving impact. To deal with risks, it is best to take action (called a risk response) to avoid these risks or to mitigate any possible negative effects if one of them becomes a reality. Some examples of frequent risks in Erasmus+ projects and a response strategy are shown below:

Sociocultural risks. Students may not feel comfortable abroad, due to existing sociocultural differences, creating a negative personal impact. *Risk response:* prepare students, be aware of differences, and monitor during exchange. Provide individual support when necessary.

Risk of exclusion. Students of specific backgrounds or characteristics may not be able to participate fully in the project. *Risk response:* take this into consideration during design, develop policies and monitor during implementation, take corrective measures if necessary.

Risks in personal/institutional commitments. Organisations and persons may have other priorities. *Risk response:* show leadership, motivate people around common objectives, and facilitate discussions on how to move ahead.

Tips for dealing with risks:

- Map your risks in a risk matrix (see Figure 4) according to the probability of occurrence (low, high or 50/50) and harm potential (unimportant, existence-threatening or 50/50)
- Try to avoid risks in the red squares becoming a reality, as these are dangerous for your project. What can you do to reduce the probability of occurrence or the harm potential?
- Monitor risks in the yellow areas and agree on a risk response: what to do when these risks become a reality. Assign risk response responsibilities to persons and include these in the project plan.
- Continue identifying new risks. As the project evolves, you will become aware of other potential risks.

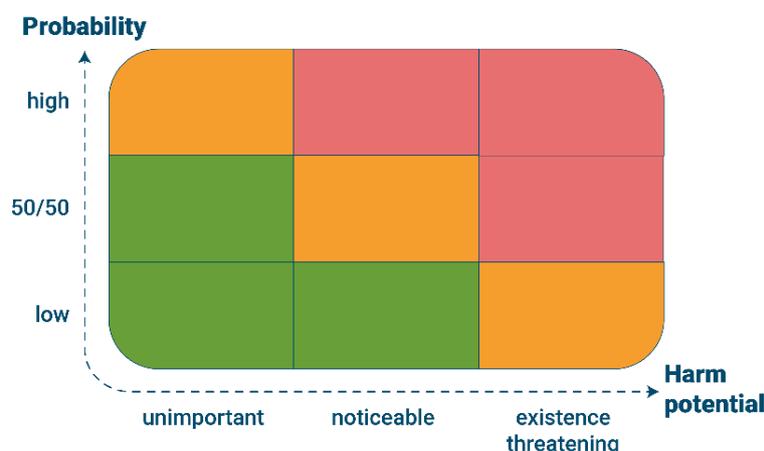


Figure 4: Risk Matrix

The colour coding is important in the risk matrix as it can help you determine what to do about a specific risk.

Green = No need for a lot of action for risks in these boxes.

Orange = Keep an eye on these risks as they can potentially affect your project. Monitor these risks and implement risk response strategies when necessary.

Red = Deal with these risks straight away.

- What can/will you do to reduce the risk from becoming a reality?
- What can/will you do to reduce the harm potential of the risk, in case it becomes a reality?
- Do you accept the risk and take the chance?

Ideally, you want to move the risks from the red boxes to the orange and green boxes.

In summary:

Manage for impact by organising and managing your planning, monitoring and evaluation processes in such a way that key internal and external stakeholders are involved, and that ownership over the project and its results (impacts) is developed. This will greatly enhance the impacts of the project. And do not forget to monitor key risks and develop a risk response strategy, if you want to manage for impact.

----- INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE? -----



There are many different tools for defining how to work with your key stakeholders. For example, you can use the format as outlined in the [Erasmus+ project design tool](#) (page 3).



Several advanced stakeholder analysis methods and tools exist to gain deeper insights in the potential support or opposition from other stakeholders. These tools for instance map the various levels of interest and power of key stakeholders, which in turn can help your project design, as this can guide you towards a more elaborate strategy for dealing with those stakeholders throughout the project cycle. We would like to share with you a resource prepared by MDF (to be added later), and one link that may be useful for the development of a [stakeholder engagement plan](#).



Partnership management. There are many resources on partnership management. Two resource books that have been around for a while are [the partnering tool book](#) and the [multi-stakeholder partnership guide](#).



Risk management. A useful guide from the European Commission (INTPA/EC essential methodologies) can be accessed here: [Risk management in the Commission, Implementation Guide \(2018-2019\)](#).

Conclusion

With Erasmus+ projects, we aim to achieve a positive impact for individuals, organisations and society. You can contribute to this by:

- defining the impact of your project in the design phase. Do this together with your project stakeholders.
- keeping an eye on impact during project implementation: regularly collect information on the changes you aim to achieve during implementation.
- involving stakeholders, dealing with risks and learning together, creating even more impact.

We hope this handbook offered you a roadmap to create and manage projects that achieve significant and lasting impacts. Your project doesn't need to be complicated or large to achieve meaningful impact!

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Related websites

Impacttool

www.impacttool.nl

Inclusion tool

www.inclusiontool.nl

Erasmus+ Research

www.erasmusplusresearch.eu