

Structural impact of Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects on Higher Education Systems in Partner Countries

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Why this study?

- Conducted between March and October 2020
- No previous comprehensive and comparative assessment of structural projects (in particular)
- Intended to provide input for the design of the new Erasmus+ programme and CBHE action
- Opportunity to assess, to some extent, the interrelation of HERE actions and E+ projects.

Methodology

- Survey of project Coordinators and Partners participating in completed Erasmus+ CBHE Structural Projects dating from the 2015/2016 award years (144 valid responses)
- Survey of national Ministries of Higher Education ('Ministry Survey') in all targeted Partner Countries (13 valid responses)
- Literature review, considering the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform and 'Cluster' and Monitoring Reports
- Nine focus groups (Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia, Russia, Morocco, Tajikistan, Lebanon)

Definition of Impact

- Coherent with E+ programme guide:
- ‘producing an impact on higher education systems and promoting reforms at national and/or regional level in the eligible Partner Countries. These projects typically focus on two different categories of activities:
 - modernisation of policies, governance and management of higher education systems;
 - strengthening of relations between higher education systems and the wider economic and social environment.’

Type of
impact and
degree:
National

Table 2: Q13 P&C Survey - Degree of Impact - Percentage of respondents that selected 'high or very high'

Impact	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents
Structural support to improve higher education internationalisation (international cooperation agreements, national mobility programme, university incentivisation programmes, etc.)	48	33%
Adoption of a new strategy for the higher education sector	28	19%
Adoption of international agreements, charters or standards (such as recognition conventions, etc.)	28	19%
Adhesion to the Bologna Process	23	16%
National measures to foster innovation in learning & teaching	23	16%

Type of
impact -
Institutional

Table 3: Q19 P&C Survey - Which of the listed impacts has the CBHE Structural Project actually made in your institution? Select a max. of 5 and rate the level of impact. [N=140]

Impact	Number of responses
Human resource capacity (academic and administrative staff) has been developed	67
Adoption of a new institutional strategy for the development of the HEI	55
(Better) Involvement in networks or associations of HEI (at national or international level)	46
Adherence to international standards and adoption of international tools (such as those of the Bologna Process)	41
The creation of a new structure, body, unit or support service within the HEI	36
New working modes and processes established across faculties or between faculties and support services	34
New or differentiated funding at institutional level related to processes, programmes, services, etc.	14
Change in an institutional bye-law or protocol	13
Widening access to under-represented groups (e.g. gender, disadvantaged students etc.)	13

Intangible impacts

- Human resource capacity
- Research capacity
- Mindset change
- International attractiveness of the HE sector

Scale-up/exploitation

Table 4 Q23, P&C Survey - How have the CBHE project results been scaled-up or exploited? [N=144]

	Number of responses
Other HEIs have used the project results	67
The outcomes have been widely disseminated as part of a national strategy or campaign	55
The project recommendations have led to further reforms at national or institutional levels	46
They have not been scaled-up or exploited	41
Other (please specify)	36

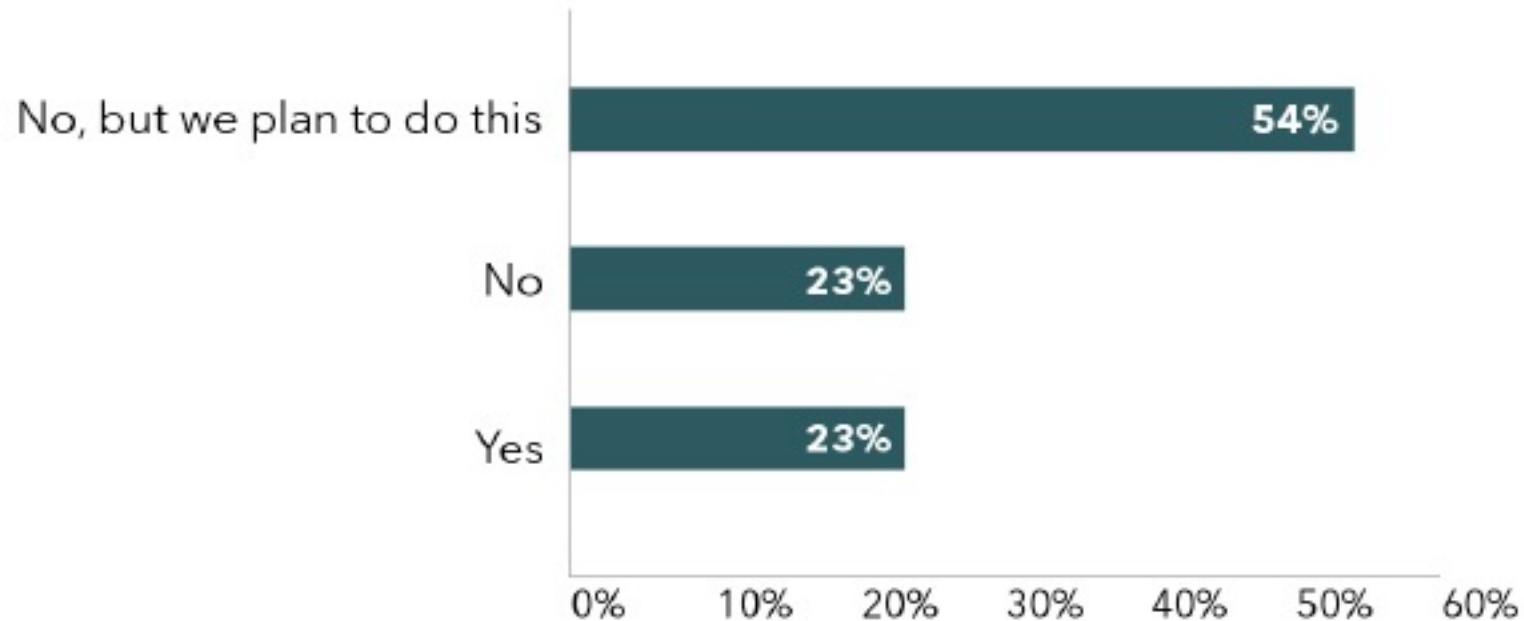
Compared to the Ministry Survey:

- 34 % - Yes
- 50% - I don't know

Measurement of Impact?

Graph 2: Q10 Ministry Survey

Q10. Have you as the ministry put in place mechanisms to assess the impact of the CBHE projects from which your country has benefited?



Longitudinal impacts? Unexpected impacts? Tracing back to Tempus....

- The first PhD accreditations in Ukraine dated from May 2020, but their origins could be traced back to the QUAERE and C3QA projects
- The ATHENA25 (Tempus) project in Moldova (2013-15) was important for expanding and redefining university autonomy, which became the basis for implementing Bologna reforms. These then inspired a new financing model for HE
- Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia, Serbia, and Uzbekistan, projects had directly enhanced the internationalisation of the HE system and institutions via new strategies and protocols. However, this had started to become measurable only recently (for example, by measuring increases in incoming international students).
- In Lebanon, the 2016 TLQAA+27 project was based on the 2011 Tempus project TLQAA. Both were dedicated to the creation of a national quality assurance agency. The procedure for the establishment of the agency had since lost its momentum in Parliament, but universities had subsequently developed their own QA systems and generated the capacity to seek international accreditation
- The EXPERES project focused on virtual learning in Morocco and had been helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic, notably by ensuring the continuity of practical assignments and laboratory work delivered online. The project developed a methodology for online laboratory practice and also equipped universities to deliver MOOCs and SPOOCs

Causality?

- E+ CBHE projects do not operate in a vacuum but are part of a complex web of external influences and internal pressures for change in the Partner Country
- A project as a primary driver of change? Contributing to a change in motion?
 - 51% said project was a primary driver*
- *Projects as part of a process*
- *Impact to be assessed over time (ex-post assessment, national monitoring plans/role of NEO and HERE?)*

Programme design: CBHE as a unique action

- The possibility to learn and exchange with and from Europe, as well as within the region and with Neighbourhood countries;
- The emphasis on cooperation with national authorities;
- The possibility to generate projects that include the whole HE sector and to promote cooperation between HEIs in the same country, which otherwise compete;
- The possibility to engage HEIs which have lower capacity and which may not usually benefit from international funding and support measures;
- The possibility to tackle a variety of different higher education needs and challenges, with a relative degree of flexibility;
- The emphasis on institutional collaboration as opposed to collaboration between individual professors and researchers only;
- The possibility for knowledge transfer to be multi-directional

Recommendations (1)

- Ministry participation and engagement must be better incentivised and monitored at the programme level in order for it to be systematic and meaningful.
 - designing a stronger feedback mechanism for the Ministry at the project preparation stage,
 - creating more explicit modalities by which the Ministry can co-finance a SP,
 - designing a specific monitoring mechanism for Ministry engagement,
 - imparting greater flexibility in the programme, to bring in new ‘structural’ actors into the formal partnership (regional authorities)

Recommendations (2)

- Priority setting (national and regional):
 - Should not be binding or static
 - Allow project applications to define their relevance against existing strategies and objectives at different levels (inter-country regional, national, EU, international) is a more flexible approach that may render a more rich and adaptive range of projects while also eliminating the need to establish priorities solely for the CBHE action.

Recommendations (3)

- National Structural Projects that incentivise collaboration between diverse HEIs should be emphasised in the forthcoming Erasmus+ programme (avoid ‘usual suspects’ only)
- The EC should explore ways of bringing national and multi-country projects/joint and structural projects into a more productive relationship, rather than treating them as discrete funding opportunities.
 - Starter projects? Follow-up grants? Upscaling from Joint to Structural?
 - No one-size-fits-all grant amounts

Recommendations (4)

- Further incentivisation for EU partner participation
- Further incentivisation for Partner Country coordinators/capacity building for Partner Country coordinators
- NEOs can have a role in accompanying the E+ Programme in Partner Countries and support, promotion, impact assessment and synergies. Similar structures should be considered for other regions of the world in which the E+ CBHE action is active.
- Identifying and promoting synergies: Importance of HERE teams

More systematic/complex assessment

- Beyond neighbourhood region
- Longitudinal
- Considering interplay of joint and structural projects as well as other funding sources
- Considering EU international relations, development cooperation and international research strategies and programmes
- Considering impact in EU partners

*Thank you NEO and HERE! Keep working hard at
what you do for meaningful impact in your systems!*

Impact Study Report: https://supportthere.org/sites/default/files/sphere_1.pdf

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