

May 2021

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

Final Report

Luisa Bunescu, Elizabeth Colucci, Howard Davies
and Michael Gaebel

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Table of Content

Acknowledgements 3

1. Executive summary 4

2. Overview of the Study and Methodology 8

1. Scope 8

2. Definition of Structural Impact 9

3. Approach 9

a. Surveys

b. Focus Groups 11

4. Methodological limitations/bias and corrective measures 12

3. Structural impact of CBHE projects 14

1. Areas and degree of impact 14

a. Tangible impacts

b. Intangible impacts

c. Spin-offs/exploitation/scaling-up 18

2. Measurement of impact 20

a. What is measured and how 20

b. Results upon project completion versus longitudinal results 22

c. Causality 23

4. CBHE programme design 25

1. CBHE Structural Projects as a distinct action? 25

a. CBHE as a unique action for institutional engagement and structural change 26

2. Structural impact of Joint Projects? 27

3. National and regional priorities 28

4. Engagement of stakeholders: Ministry as formal partner? 30

5. Project size and length and funding: Specific features 32

6. National versus Multi-Country projects 33

7. Project coordination and ownership 34

8. Synergies: Implications for impact 34

5. Conclusion & Recommendations 37

1. Indirect, intangible and unexpected impacts: An important feature of higher education capacity building Structural Projects 37

2. Project impact over time 37

3. Recommendations 38

6. Areas to be explored in the future studies 43

Annexes 44

Annex 1 Partner and Coordinators Survey 44

Annex 2 Ministry Survey 50

Annex 3 List of projects represented amongst respondents 54

Annex 4 Focus Group Guidelines 58

Annex 5. Projects Referenced in Focus Groups 63

Acknowledgements

The SPHERE Team would like to recognize and thank the staff of the NEOs, who have been particularly supportive in promoting the study, and also in organising the Focus Groups which have been conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Moldova, Morocco, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. They have shown a deep commitment to the Erasmus+ programme and to the assessment of impact of CBHE projects in particular.

In addition, the SPHERE Team would like to recognize Nicolas Patrici, formerly the SPHERE Team Lead at the University of Barcelona, for his contributions to the development of the study methodology.

1. Executive summary

The SPHERE consortium (University of Barcelona and the European University Association) was tasked by the European Commission/EACEA to undertake a **study of the impact** of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action, with a particular focus on Structural Projects (SP), on the higher education systems in Central Asia, the Eastern Partnership, Russia, the Southern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans. The study was requested at a moment when the Erasmus+ programming period of 2014-2020 was closing and plans were underway to shape the new generation of actions for the period 2021-2027.

Structural Projects aim at 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.¹

This comprehensive report examines the type of impact achieved, the degree of impact, tangible versus intangible impacts, and immediate versus long-term impact. It also explores whether the causal relationship between projects and impact is direct or indirect.

The report is based on **three categories of source material**:

- ◆ A literature review, including material supplied or recommended by the EACEA and the Erasmus+ Results Portal;
- ◆ Separate online surveys of Ministries and Coordinators/Partners involved in completed CBHE (SP) projects initiated in 2015 and 2016;

- ◆ Online Focus Groups of relevant stakeholders in a sample of nine Partner Countries.

Summary of findings

- ◆ As far as the tangible impacts of Structural Projects were concerned, Ministries, project partners and Focus Group participants all tended to agree that there have been three areas of direct benefit: (1) **reforms or amendments of national legislation** on higher education; (2) significant developments in **quality assurance systems**; (3) greater **alignment with the Bologna Process**.
- ◆ There were also important structural changes observed at the **institutional level**, such as new structures, strategies and policies in line with the impacts identified above.
- ◆ Many of the tangible impacts were successfully scaled up by **dissemination** to other national or regional regulatory authorities and related bodies operating in the higher education sector, or by spawning spin-off projects and ventures.
- ◆ Less tangible, but not less significant, were project outcomes affecting **staff development** and the pool of human resources (both in the Ministries and in the Higher Education Institutions), **research capacity**, processes of **internationalisation**, and wider attitudinal changes underpinning all these developments.
- ◆ The study found that while the definition of impact, as set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, was relatively clear, the **measurement of impact** by project participants was less precise. In the majority of cases, Ministries had no appropriate instruments or methodologies for measuring the impact of the CBHE projects. At project level,

1 Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2020, vol.3, p.167

various external and internal mechanisms were deployed to monitor the projects' progress. These, however, stopped short of identifying many intangible impacts and did not extend beyond the project lifetime. The lack of standard protocols for impact assessment raises questions about the extent to which institutions have incorporated project assessment into their internal quality assurance (QA) procedures and about the extent to which Ministries feel ownership of the CBHE projects in which they participate. The lack of protocols also puts a question mark over the participants' ability to distinguish between outcomes and impact.

- ◆ One important factor is the **difficulty of ascribing impact** to a particular CBHE project, when in reality its motivation and results might derive from a wide range of national and international policy initiatives and pressures, which together generate a combined impact making discrete inputs hard to isolate.
- ◆ Accordingly, informants to the study regularly stressed the fact that CBHE Structural Projects were **part of a change process**. Tempus programme projects were repeatedly cited as important precursors of Erasmus+ CBHE projects. Participants recounted their personal journeys through the Tempus programme and the Erasmus+ CBHE action, tracing how their institutions' internationalisation, research or teaching and learning capacity had grown over time, to a large extent due to input by a sequence of different EU projects. This was also clear at the level of national legislative changes: numerous countries had built their quality assurance systems gradually with the support of Tempus and Erasmus + projects. In some cases, Tempus projects were the testing ground for initiatives that were later rolled out via Erasmus + CBHE projects. In addition, prior projects allowed some countries to put in place the conditions (in mindset and project management capacity, in terms of amendments to laws regarding university autonomy or to national HE strategies and benchmarks) for the subsequent implementation of deeper structural changes.
- ◆ In this connection, many respondents spoke of the **desirability of ex-post impact assessments** undertaken at a sufficient distance in time from project completion to allow for a clearer view of changes in the policy landscape and institutional practice.

- ◆ The issue of **priority setting** in the CBHE action evoked strong feelings among some respondents. Their concerns related to how priorities for the Erasmus + programme were set, by whom, and how relevant they might remain over a longer period of time. They considered that they had insufficient scope for demonstrating the relevance of the topics and themes that they addressed in their applications.
- ◆ These concerns were accompanied by reservations expressed – particularly in the Focus Groups – concerning the formal **role of the Ministries in projects**, which is a requirement of the CBHE Structural Projects. While participants appreciated the political importance of the Ministries in generating structural impact, they often felt that there was a need to specify the Ministries' role in terms of component tasks (e.g. preparation, endorsement, implementation, dissemination, follow-up, etc.), as well as for mechanisms to overcome the often rapid turnover of Ministry staff and its consequent lack of institutional memory. Related to this was the view that the CBHE action as it stands is insufficiently sensitive to the relevance of regional development authorities and other official bodies other than central governments. While such authorities can be involved as partners, it is only the formal participation of the central Ministry charged with higher education that allows the project to be eligible as 'structural'. This, reportedly, did not correspond to the nuances of higher education policy-making structures in different countries.
- ◆ The study found that Partner Country representatives in general seek **greater flexibility**. This meant, variously, a reduced administrative burden, the design of shorter projects, the existence of extension projects, short grants for dissemination and exploitation, and a special provision for countries in transit from Partner Country to Programme Country status (for example, Serbia). It was also felt that co-funding by national Partner Country governments should be more strongly stressed.
- ◆ All the above points are taken up in the main body of the report, with examples selected from relevant projects in the 2015 and 2016 cohorts, together with further explications and commentary. It must

be stressed that the overwhelming view of all project participants was that **Erasmus+ CBHE projects made a massive contribution to the development of higher education systems**; all the comments made and reservations expressed were intended to raise the level of impact at national and institutional levels.

Summary of recommendations

On the basis of its findings, SPHERE has made fourteen recommendations which are set out in detail at pages 36-40 below. They cover different aspects of the CBHE action:

- ◆ The Commission should consider revising the requirements of **project participation, project length and grant amounts** so as to provide a more robust and flexible range of possibilities, which can be tailored to the structural objectives of the specific project at hand. The positive impact of CBHE can be optimised if SP are inclusive of a wider range of stakeholders and if **project eligibility** is not based primarily on the Ministry's formal participation in the partnership. Partnerships might involve a greater number of higher education institutions (particularly in national projects), diverse national and regional authorities, as well as other civil society actors. The grant amount and allocation of funding should be applied flexibly to accommodate these different actors as the projects evolve.
- ◆ The Commission should further look into whether **EU (Programme Country) participation**, has waned in volume or in quality, as this was an impression of many project participants. If so, the Commission should assess means of incentivising such participation, given that Partner Countries deem exchange of practice with and support from EU partners to be a critical component of the CBHE action. Simplifying the project administration and encouraging synergies with other EU programmes, such as European University Alliances and other E+ actions, may be one way forward.
- ◆ More effective measures should be developed to consolidate the **role of Ministries**, in terms of either monitoring/oversight, active participation, or devolution to regional authorities.
- ◆ The current system of CBHE **priority setting** also merits reconsideration. Participants feel that it is too rigid and too slow to react to social and political change. Giving applicants greater scope to identify and justify the themes and topics that they intend to address could enhance the attainability of relevant and durable impact.
- ◆ The coexistence of **national and multi-country SP** is widely regarded as a positive feature of the CBHE action, though in some instances structural impact may be better achieved by first concentrating efforts at the national level, rather than working with complex policy processes in multiple Partner Countries. The SPHERE recommendations on priority setting apply to both, although necessarily in different ways. What is lacking is a mechanism allowing projects to evolve from one dimension to the other (from national to multi-country and vice versa), depending on how far an initial phase succeeds in rendering its objectives and outcomes transferable – either from national to regional/international or vice versa. In this sense, an explicit follow-up project should not be excluded from funding and may be a desirable EU investment in terms of deepening impact.
- ◆ The study found that the transition of a Partner Country (in this instance Serbia) to the status of Programme Country was positive in many senses but was also too abrupt. Given the presence of applicant and candidate countries among the countries covered, it is worth considering the introduction of a 'half-way house' or **transitional phase in participant status**, that would still allow countries with capacity development needs to benefit from the CBHE grant in the way that Partner Countries can (for example, equipment purchase).
- ◆ Increasing the emphasis on **Partner Country project coordination** is another measure likely to maximise impact, given that this generates greater ownership by Partner Countries and helps building their capacity to manage future projects.

- ◆ Building the capacity of Partner Countries to coordinate requires **investment in the Partner Country infrastructure, including the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) and the networks of Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE)**. Both groups of actors are well placed to take on more of the work of supporting applicants and beneficiaries and of identifying in-country synergies with other EU-funded activities. It was noted that they also have an important role to play in generating 'memory' for the legacy of projects and their impact.
- ◆ Clearly, these recommendations have **funding implications**, not only in volume, but also regarding flexibility. If, in order to maximise impact, projects become more versatile and more bottom-up in inspiration, the funding mechanisms must evolve accordingly. It cannot be true that one size will fit all. Moreover, given the variations in the speed at which impact matures, often going well beyond the project horizons, consideration should be given to the introduction of **competitive grants for project extensions, shorter projects, and ex-post impact assessments at country and project levels**.

The Commission is invited to take account of these recommendations - all of which are intended to consolidate and boost lasting project impact - in its planning of the next generation of CBHE projects.

Finally, a number of areas should be further explored going forward in order to **better assess the complex area of Structural Impact**, in the context of the E+ programme and other EU funding programmes, in the EU Neighbourhood Region and globally:

- ◆ **Impact assessment of the CBHE action beyond the European Neighbourhood Region**, given that other world regions do not have the benefit of NEOs and HERE teams supporting the action.
- ◆ A scan of **national level impact assessments of EU projects conducted by Partner Countries**, some of which are in train.

- ◆ **Longitudinal assessment of impacts at the level of secondary beneficiaries** of CBHE projects, for example employers and new graduates, facilitated by NEO and HERE teams, with comparable methodologies.
- ◆ **Longitudinal EU project impacts in transitioning countries** (Partner to Programme Country), especially as it is intended that other countries in the Western Balkans will graduate to Programme Country status.
- ◆ **Impacts of the CBHE action on EU partners.**
- ◆ **Including the CBHE action** (as well as the European Education Area and its global dimension) **within the scope of assessments of EU external relations.**
- ◆ An **assessment of EU international research collaboration strategies**, in view of the volume of research capacity generated by the CBHE action in HEIs and in HE systems, as well as in the context of the forthcoming Communication of DG Research on a global strategy for research, higher education and youth (due May 2021).

The concluding recommendation of this report advises that more regular, systematic CBHE assessment at project and action level will make a useful contribution to the action's overall impact. Together with similar assessments of other actions in Erasmus+ and in other EU programmes (Horizon), this could contribute to EU's strategic development and its assessment of the global dimension of the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), providing important messages to underpin EU foreign policy and development cooperation.

2. Overview of the Study and Methodology

1. Scope

This study was requested by the European Commission DG Education and Culture at a moment when the Erasmus+ programming period of 2014-2020 was closing and plans were underway to shape the new generation of programmes for 2021-2027.

It aimed to analyse how the Erasmus+ Programme's Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) action, and especially its Structural Projects (SP), have impacted higher education systems in the European Union's Partner Countries in Central Asia, the Eastern Partnership, Russia, the Southern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans (the 'ex-Tempus' countries)². It was conducted in the context of the SPHERE contract 2018-2020 - Support for Higher Education Reform Experts (www.supporthere.org) by the Implementing Team (European University Association and University of Barcelona).

CBHE is part of Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020. It offers two possible types of projects to applicants: 1) **Joint Projects (JP)**, which are intended to primarily benefit the participating organisations via curriculum development, modernisation of governance, management and functioning of higher education institutions (HEIs) and/or the strengthening of relations between HEIs and the wider economic and social environment, and 2) **Structural Projects (SP)**, which, with the involvement of the relevant Ministries of Higher Education in the Partner Countries, are intended to impact higher education systems, over and above the participating in the project.³

² Eastern Partnership: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine - Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro - Russia - Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan - Southern Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia. Serbia has also been included, though in 2017 it transitioned from being a Partner to a Programme Country for the purposes of Erasmus+.

³ Erasmus+ Programme Guide Version 3 : https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-programme-guide-2020_en

The **methodology of the study** consisted of:

1. A survey of **project Coordinators and partners ('Partners and Coordinators Survey')** participating in completed Erasmus+ CBHE Structural Projects dating from the 2015/2016 award years. The survey was designed to look at perceptions of impact at institutional and national levels. It was complemented by a **Survey of national Ministries of Higher Education ('Ministry Survey')** in all targeted Partner Countries, intended to examine the extent of their involvement and their perceptions of the CBHE action's impact at national level.
2. A **literature review**, considering the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform and 'Cluster' and Monitoring reports of projects, as provided by the EACEA. Major outputs and impacts as reported online and also in monitoring visits conducted by the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEO) were scanned. This information was primarily used to prepare and inform the Focus Groups.
3. A qualitative phase, where a set of selected countries (were examined in more depth through **nine, virtually conducted, Focus Groups (FG)** gathering a sample of project partners and stakeholder organisations in the higher education sector in each targeted country. Focus Groups were complemented by online interviews with the NEOs in each of the nine countries.

The study was conducted between March and October 2020, led by a research group from the SPHERE Team, in close cooperation with the EACEA, which coordinates the SPHERE contract on behalf of the European Commission, and with the support from the NEOs in the targeted Partner Countries, who promoted the surveys conducted and assisted in organising the Focus Groups.

The following report presents the results of the study, notably the combined input from the Surveys and Focus Groups. It looks at the different types

of impact, the degree of impact, tangible versus intangible impacts and immediate versus longitudinal impact, as perceived by Survey respondents and Focus Group participants. In addition, it provides an assessment of the E+ CBHE action itself, and in particular its Structural Projects. Different features of the programme are analysed as to the extent to which they facilitate structural impacts or potentially hinder them. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are provided, which offer elements to be explored in the design of the new E+ CBHE action for 2021-2027.

2. Definition of Structural Impact

Impact assessment generates high interest and scrutiny where projects are concerned, particularly those with a focus on development cooperation. Hearn and Buffardi (2016)⁴ suggest that impact is a multi-dimensional concept, arguing that how it is defined may greatly affect the design, management and assessment of development programmes. They contrast the different definitions of impact employed by a range of development cooperation organisations, including the European Commission:

*In an impact assessment process, the term impact describes all the changes which are expected to happen due to the implementation and application of a given policy option/intervention. Such impacts may occur over different timescales, affect different actors and be relevant at different scales (local, regional, national and EU). In an evaluation context, impact refers to the changes associated with a particular intervention which can occur over the longer term.*⁵

By way of focus for the study, the SPHERE Team agreed, at the suggestion of the EACEA, to follow the indicative reference to impact set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. The Guide defines SP as projects which aim at:

'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.⁶

As this definition disregards temporality (i.e. the duration or delayed onset of impact), the SPHERE research team employed an approach that aligns to the European Commission definition of impact and the complexity that it suggests. This is particularly relevant in the higher education context, where many impacts tend to be (1) not evidenced immediately, (2) intangible, (3) qualitative, (4) subject to multiple interventions over a longer period.

While this study did not directly cover the impact of Tempus⁷ (the programme prior to Erasmus+), the Focus Groups clearly evidenced the impact of Tempus in creating the conditions and planting the seeds for longer-term higher education reforms. The Erasmus+ CBHE action has largely built upon the change processes initiated or facilitated by Tempus.

In the final section of the report, a number of recommendations are made on how impact can be better captured in a future assessment of EU-funded higher education programmes, in both development cooperation and international relations contexts.

3. Approach

a. Surveys

The two surveys designed for this study were launched on 7 July 2020 and remained live until 20 September 2020. The invitations to participate and the links to the surveys were disseminated by EACEA to the contact points of project Coordinators and Partners in all the SP that had been awarded in 2015 and 2016. The surveys were limited to these two award years because they would have been completed or close to completion in 2020. For the Ministry Survey, all Ministry contact points for the 2015/16 projects were approached. In response to the launch of the surveys, several NEO commented (to the SPHERE Team and EACEA) that the Ministry contacts had changed and were no longer valid; they then provided alternative contact emails for the new officials who had taken over. The surveys were online, password-protected, and delivered using the 'SurveyMonkey tool'.⁸

⁴ S. Hearn and A. Buffardi, *What is Impact?*, Methods Lab Publications 2016: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10352.pdf>

⁵ Op.cit., p.8

⁶ Version 3, 2020, p.167

⁷ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/2007-2013/tempus-programme_en

⁸ Word versions are attached in Annexes 1 and 2

Respondents were able to preview, exit and re-enter the survey before finally submitting it. Respondents were anonymous and untraceable; nor was it possible to detect from which country the answers came.

Survey of Partners and Coordinators

The survey for Partners and Coordinators (P&C Survey) consisted of four parts, including two optional sections for a) project Coordinators (in general), b) project Coordinators specifically from Programme Countries. Each informant responded to one specific SP only. A list of the projects included in the survey can be found in Annex 3.

No responses were received for two SP based in Uzbekistan (NURSLIN on qualifications frameworks, and IMEP on internationalisation) and for three projects involving Morocco, one of which was a Joint Project with Tunisia (ΣRail⁹ on gaming for rail infrastructure). These projects were nevertheless mentioned in the Focus Groups organised for Uzbekistan and Morocco.

It should be noted that the list of CBHE projects included eight Joint Projects¹⁰ in which Israel was a participant. Given that Israel cannot apply for Structural Projects¹¹, it was agreed with the Israeli NEO to include these Joint Projects in the survey, as they were considered to have had a structural impact. They are also the subject of investigation of a national impact study that NEO Israel is presently conducting. NEO Israel expressed an interest in comparing the results of the SPHERE Impact Study with its own national impact study.

When the P&C Survey was closed, 272 responses had been received, of which 144 were valid (i.e. the survey had been completed, rather than merely previewed or partially answered). The analysis is based on these 144 valid responses. Thirty-one emanated from Project Coordinators, of which 13 came from Programme Country coordinators.

⁹ Serlous Games pour la MAintenance des infrastructures ferroviaires - ΣRail

¹⁰ The CBHE action of the E+ programme includes the possibility to apply for Joint Projects, where the impact is primarily intended to be achieved at the higher education institutional level, and Structural Projects, which should involve the Ministry of Higher Education as a formal partner and target more systemic national higher education changes.

¹¹ The NEO is currently part of the Higher Education Council - CHE - of Israel, the national regulatory body. In this sense, it is deemed a conflict of interest that the Israeli Ministry (namely, the CHE) would also be a formal partner in a structural project, notably as the NEO would both technically be a partner and also perform external project monitoring.

The profile of the respondents is indicated below (multiple entries were allowed):

Q6: What was your role in the in the project? (select all items that apply)	n=144
Involved in all or most project activities	72
Leader of a work package	55
Part of the project management team	52
Main actor in the coordination of the project	48
Involved in some project activities	22
Part of the quality committee or quality work package	17
Other	7

Survey of Ministries

The survey was designed to allow Ministries to record their perception of the impact of the E+ CBHE action in general, rather than in relation to a specific project. A Ministry could accordingly select several projects in which it was involved or with which it was familiar.

A considerably lower percentage of valid responses were received in the Ministry Survey: 31 responses were submitted, of which 13 were valid. The Council for Higher Education (CHE) in Israel submitted a written response separately, as opposed to filling out the survey. It is not included in the statistical analysis, but the comments made have been incorporated into the overall findings.

Nineteen SP from 2015/16 were not accounted for in the survey responses, including projects involving Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan¹². It should be noted that depending on the specific project, different contact points in the same Ministry may have been invited to participate in the survey.

¹² See Annex 4 for the full list of projects included in the Ministry Survey.

Hence, the absence of responses from the aforementioned countries in respect of certain projects does not mean that no answer at all was received from the Ministry in that country.

The low response rate could have been caused by various factors: (1) Ministry staff had changed positions and could not be reached, (2) the new Ministry staff contacted were not familiar enough with the E+ CBHE action, (3) Ministry staff were not actively engaged in the projects in which they were formal partners, and/or had inherited no institutional memory of the CBHE project, and (4) the timing of the survey (which took place between 7 July and 20 September - primarily in the summer months), was not conducive to generating responses from public officials.

b. Focus Groups

The surveys were complemented by **nine virtual national Focus Groups**, designed to assess the quality and relevance of the impact of CBHE Structural Projects. They targeted a wider range of actors and stakeholders in and around the national higher education sector (national agencies and regulatory bodies, NGOs, industry partners, university associations, etc.) in order to gather contextual information and perceptions that would allow for a more in-depth, qualitative understanding of the impacts of the CBHE action. The Focus Groups were not intended to assess the impact of a particular project in isolation or to provide a comprehensive country case study.

The Focus Groups consisted of two 1.5-hour sessions, each with a different target audience. The first focused on those persons who had had direct roles in project management, while the second addressed those who had had a wider system-level perspective, coming from different national Ministries and regulatory agencies, industry partners, associations, NGOs, and other university leaderships. The guidelines for the Focus Groups, which include the questions posed in the different sessions, are attached in Annex 5.

NEOs were asked to nominate participants for the Focus Groups based on pre-set criteria that the SPHERE team provided. The participant lists for both sessions were subsequently checked and approved by the SPHERE team. In terms of the profiles of participants, many were international relations officers or directors of their respective institutions, as well as some university

professors and department heads. Session 1 also frequently included a Ministry representative directly involved in projects. Session 2 included, for the most part, other national actors such as the national Quality Assurance or recognition bodies, national science or research agencies, business concerns, NGOs and student representatives. In some instances, the Ministry representatives also participated in Session 2. This depended on their level of engagement with the projects. Several Focus Groups were joined by past or present Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE). It should be noted that many participants had a strong knowledge of the Tempus and referenced past Tempus projects as precedents.

The Serbian and Lebanese Focus Groups were the only ones which did not include a current Ministry representative, despite the fact that invitations had been sent. The Ukrainian and Moldovan Focus Groups were the only ones to include a student representative.

The NEOs supported the organisation of Focus Groups by (1) nominating participants based on criteria provided by the SPHERE Team, (2) sending out invitations, and (3) securing an interpreter (if deemed necessary). The SPHERE Team subsequently sent the final agenda to all participants and provided the online platform for the Focus Groups (Zoom). In almost all cases, the two sessions of the Focus Groups were held back-to-back, with a break of only 15-30 minutes. They were coordinated/moderated by a minimum of two members of the SPHERE Team (Luisa Bunescu, Elizabeth Colucci, Howard Davies, Michael Gaebel and Nicolas Patrici).

All the Focus Groups were recorded with the consent of the participants. For each one, an internal outcome report was written and used to write the final report. Participants were informed that they would not be directly quoted and that the internal outcome reports would not be made public.

The following list of Focus Group countries was agreed with the EACEA, based largely on geographical distribution, including countries 'stronger' in CBHE project implementation as well as those with somewhat less capacity, and on HE system diversity (centralised versus decentralised, large versus small, etc.):

The final schedule was as follows:

Country	Date	Facilitators	Interpretation
Ukraine	10-Jul	E. Colucci, N. Patrici, H. Davies, L. Bunescu, M. Gaebel	No
Uzbekistan	09-Sep	L. Bunescu, H. Davies	Yes (Russian)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17-Sep	E. Colucci, L. Bunescu	No
Moldova	24-Sep	E. Colucci, L. Bunescu	Yes (Romanian)
Serbia	25-Sep	E. Colucci, L. Bunescu	No
Russia	01-Oct	E. Colucci, L. Bunescu	Yes (Russian)
Morocco	6 Oct (Session 1), 7 Oct (session 2)	E. Colucci, L. Bunescu	Conducted in French
Tajikistan	16-Oct	E. Colucci, H. Davies	Yes (Russian)
Lebanon	19-Oct	E. Colucci, L. Bunescu	No

In general, the Focus Groups ran smoothly with active participation by participants. Each session was capped at eight participants, although in some instances more participants joined (up to twelve attended), whereas in others fewer attended (as low as four in one session). Participants were encouraged not to prepare presentations of their projects, but rather to respond in an organic manner to the questions provided. This worked well, although in some cases (Russia, Ukraine) several participants did make pre-prepared statements. Instead of having the NEOs participating in the Focus Groups, it was decided to rather offer them separate interviews, where they were asked questions for clarification and where they also provided specific feedback on the CBHE action design.

As concerns the technical environment, the Zoom Platform was felt to generally be robust, user-friendly and widely familiar to all participants. Technical and connection problems did occur in some instances, but could be quickly resolved. In the case of the Tajikistan Focus Group, the NEO suggested that participants at one of the universities, as it was deemed that connectivity would be a concern for a number of individuals. This posed certain challenges, given that the interpreter, who was also present, had to provide a mix of simultaneous and consecutive interpretation; moreover, the acoustics were generally poor when channelling Zoom through a larger meeting room.

4. Methodological limitations/bias and corrective measures

Some methodological limitations of this study need to be mentioned, as well as the corrective measures that were taken to further validate and contextualise the results:

- ◆ The reference to impact quoted from the E+ Programme Guide leaves ample room for interpretation. Moreover, the notion of impact tends to be subjective. Project Coordinators, partners and other beneficiaries often confused outputs (e.g. the setting up of a new quality assurance agency) with impact (the enhanced quality and international recognition of study programmes). Outputs are mentioned extensively in the report, as they create the structural conditions for longer-term impact.
- ◆ Only the projects awarded in 2015/16 were covered in the surveys, but it became clear from the Focus Groups that projects should be looked at both holistically and longitudinally, with consideration both of those completed (in the CHBE action but also in the previous Tempus programme) and of those ongoing. The Focus Groups were able to some extent to adopt this perspective.

- ◆ Focus Group composition was based on nominations by the NEOs. While this was considered the most efficient way to organise the Group, it could conceivably result in an overly positive presentation of the projects and of their impact in the respective countries. There is thus the potential for an inherent bias. This said, the NEOs also know the CBHE action and the projects in depth, as well as the policy context, and are able to offer a broad picture as well as valuable, critical feedback. For this reason, it was important to include the NEOs' voice in the study.
- ◆ Depending on the country, the presence of the Ministry of Education in the Focus Group may have been an inhibiting factor in the participants' discussion of Ministry participation in projects.

However, the SPHERE team considers that its Impact Study has managed to overcome these limitations and collect a wide range of qualitative information related to the perception of structural impacts in Partner Countries in the EU neighbourhood. This is also due to the fact that the different methodological elements of the study were very complementary: The surveys gave the Coordinators and their partners a voice and revealed general trends in terms of the different modes of impact, as well as perceptions of the CBHE action design. The Ministry Survey was an attempt to capture from policy makers a

more general perspective on the collective impact of the projects at system level. The fact that a low percentage of responses was received from the Ministry Survey is a legitimate finding in itself and will be discussed later in the report.

The Focus Groups allowed the research team to look beyond the projects selected in 2015/16 and to consider impact as something best conceived as a process. In the semi-structured interview format that was used for the Focus Groups, accounts and examples of projects were collected along with testimonies of how capacity was built over time and how projects contributed to an overall change process in the HE sector, albeit sometimes non-linear and slow.



3. Structural impact of CBHE projects

1. Areas and degree of impact

The Structural Projects of the CBHE action are designed to facilitate cooperation in a wide range of areas, relevant to priorities established for different Partner Countries and Regions. These can range from “Improving management and operations of HEI” (related to governance, services, internationalisation, quality assurance, equity and research capacity) to “Developing the higher education sector within society at large” (lifelong learning, university-enterprise cooperation, knowledge triangle/innovation, new technologies in HE, implementation of reform processes). One of the objectives of this study was to assess in which areas impacts were observed, the relative degree of impact, and the extent to which impacts were both tangible and intangible, immediate or longer-term.

a. Tangible impacts

The study revealed that Coordinators and their partners, as well as policy makers, feel that a number of tangible structural impacts have been achieved by the E+ CBHE action, both at the policy level (in terms of legislative change and the establishment of new bodies) and at institutional level (in terms of creating and transforming study programmes, establishing or reforming strategies and procedures, and putting in place dedicated structures for Quality Assurance, learning and teaching, or its digital support).

Participants in the ‘Partners and Coordinators survey’ were asked about the types of impact that could be attributed to CBHE projects (at the national, structural level). The five options that were most frequently selected are set out below:

Table 1: Q13 P&C Survey - “To which of the previously listed impacts has your CBHE Structural Project actually contributed in your country? Please select a maximum of 5 options and rate the level of impact for each.” [N=143]

Impact	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents
Structural support to improve internationalisation of HE (international cooperation agreements, national mobility programme, university incentivisation programmes, etc.)	67	47%
Adoption of a new strategy for the higher education sector	66	46%
Change in national legislation related to the higher education sector	54	38%
Adoption of international agreements, charters or standards (such as recognition conventions, etc.)	52	36%
Adhesion to the Bologna Process	44	31%
National measures to foster innovation in learning & teaching	44	31%

Change in national legislation and implementation of the Bologna Process were clear tangible impacts.

Participants were also asked to assess the scale of impact from low to high. Improving internationalisation, adopting new strategies in the HE sector, signing up to international agreements/the Bologna Process were assessed as “high” to “very high” impact, in addition to ‘national measures to foster innovation in

teaching & learning’, which was selected by slightly fewer respondents:

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%

These figures are broadly replicated in the results of the ‘Ministry Survey’: the three types of impact most expected from the projects by Ministry respondents were:

- ◆ Change in national legislation in or related to the higher education sector (11 out of 13 votes);
- ◆ Reform of the quality assurance system (10 out of 13 votes);
- ◆ Implementation of the Bologna Process (nine out of 13 votes).

When asked about the *achieved* impacts, the 13 respondents selected as most relevant:

- ◆ Change in national legislations in or related to the higher education sector (13 out of 13 votes);
- ◆ Implementation of the Bologna Process (12 out of 13 votes);
- ◆ Reform of the quality assurance system (11 out of 13 votes).

One can conclude that, in the perception of the Ministries, the expected impacts were by and large translated into achieved impacts. What is more, the results show that Partners and Coordinators and the Ministries largely concur that **change in national legislation and implementation of the Bologna Process were clear tangible impacts**. These survey findings are consistent with the Focus Group findings, where a number of specific examples were provided that showed how one or several projects helped to advance the development of a national quality assurance agency, aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG),

to implement ECTS and a learning outcomes- based approach, to establish a national qualification framework (NQF) and/or to deliver outcomes in the 'social dimension' of the Bologna Process. It is worth noting that, while countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine (all Bologna signatory countries) indeed had numerous examples of projects dedicated to implementing Bologna reforms, so also did countries outside the EHEA, such as the Central Asian countries, Lebanon and Morocco. This demonstrates the clear interest of both Higher Education institutions and Ministries in these countries to undertake 'Bologna-like' reforms, despite not formally adhering to Bologna. Some examples of both Bologna and non-Bologna country projects included:

...while countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine (all Bologna signatory countries) indeed had numerous examples of projects dedicated to implementing Bologna reforms, so also did countries outside the EHEA, such as the Central Asian countries, Lebanon and Morocco. This demonstrates the clear interest of both Higher Education institutions and Ministries in these countries to undertake 'Bologna-like' reforms, despite not formally adhering to Bologna.

◆ QAERE (Ukraine) aimed to adopt many of the standards set at EHEA level that were previously unknown in Ukraine (student participation in QA, professionalisation and independence of a national QA agency);

◆ IMEP helped to advance mobility in Uzbek HEI using Bologna tools. NURSLING inspired the creation of a National Qualification Framework linked to the EQF and PAWER led to credit and module recognition procedures (Uzbekistan).

Legislative reforms also extended well beyond the areas of Bologna. Some further examples of legislative change that were provided are:

◆ The IF4TM project - *Institutional framework for development of the third mission of universities in Serbia* - included seven public universities

and one private. The fact that it was comprehensive in terms of university participation was important in generating a new law on HE in 2017. Results from other projects were also brought into the scope of this law. It integrated research, education and innovation activities as core elements of university missions. It allowed for the creation of innovation and technology transfer offices at most universities, the creation of employers' councils and encouraged the inclusion of industry experts in study programme design.

◆ The INCITE project (Morocco) contributed to the new national strategy for innovation, including the role of universities in its governance. On the latter, the Ministry for Research and Development is preparing Memoranda of Understanding with the universities for the setting up of university-industry incubators.

While structural impacts at the national level were indeed a primary point of interest for this study, **structural impact at the institutional** level was also evaluated. Impact can take the form of reform of processes and procedures or the introduction of new structures, centres, services and/or strategy documents. Human resource capacity development and the adoption of a new institutional strategies were found to be the most commonly cited forms of impact, with 'creating a new structure or body' and 'adherence to international standards' following close behind.

In the P&C Survey, in terms of 'high to very high impact', the following factors were selected:

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

Numerous examples of the above were also provided in the Focus Groups:

- ◆ The E-TALEB¹³ project in Lebanon led to the creation of Teaching and Learning Excellence Centres at all participating Lebanese HEIs; where

¹³ Professional Standards Framework for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Lebanese Universities

such centres already existed, their performance and activities were enhanced. Standards for Teaching and Learning were also developed, and a framework for the continuing professional development of teaching staff was created.

- ◆ The 2015 HARMONY¹⁴ project resulted in comprehensive research on the state of internationalisation in the Partner Countries involved (Armenia, Belarus, Russia), the drafting of a Framework for International Strategies with specific targets for HEIs, and international strategy guidelines, prepared in cooperation with the National Rectors' Conferences.
- ◆ SATELIT¹⁵ in Morocco resulted in the development of university centres for technology transfer and MIMIR¹⁶ created innovation centres and a doctoral school.
- ◆ The PAWER¹⁷ project (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) raised student awareness and led to the setting up of career advisory facilities in the HEIs. These career centres were networked, helping to establish lasting linkages between the Tajik universities.
- ◆ The Moroccan national Quality Assurance agency (ANEAQ) was a product of two projects in particular - EquAM¹⁸ and AMEL - in which it had been a partner. It also benefitted from the RECET project, which created QA standards for institutional evaluation. The agency is not yet formally operational, but the projects contributed to its setting-up and functionality as well as to its plans for sustainability.

¹⁴ Development of approaches to harmonisation of a comprehensive internationalisation strategies in higher education, research and innovation at EU and Partner Countries

¹⁵ Solutions Académiques pour le Territoire Euro-méditerranéen Leader d'Innovations et Transferts technologiques d'excellence - SATELIT (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria)

¹⁶ Modernisation of Institutional Management of Innovation and Research in South Neighbouring Countries

¹⁷ Paving the way to interregional mobility and ensuring relevance, quality and equity of access

¹⁸ Enhancing Quality Assurance Management in Morocco

b. Intangible impacts

The aforementioned questions posed by the surveys largely listed what could be deemed tangible, measurable outcomes and impacts. The study also revealed some important types of less tangible impact, which are not always captured in impact assessment or in the different CBHE monitoring indicators:

- a. **Human resource capacity** at the HEI and Ministerial/policy levels: the MERIC-NET project trained Ministry staff in recognition procedures. Note that 'human resource capacity' was listed as one of the highest impacts in the P&C Survey, Q19.
- b. **Research capacity:** the CNRST (national science body) of Morocco commented that projects have generally contributed to the modernisation of the Moroccan research system. This has to do with its ability to improve the strategic linkage of higher education and research and to create a stronger ecosystem for innovation.
- c. **Mindset change:** the widespread openness of staff to international developments, including professors and teachers, was also cited by several Focus Groups. In Russia, it was felt that university staff and project beneficiaries had developed an increased tolerance towards foreigners and appreciation of the benefits of internationalisation. In Ukraine, it was felt that certain values had been engendered in the HE sector, underpinned by the Bologna Process and the EU. One participant stated that it was helpful to look at where Ukraine was 10 years ago compared to the present: now there is greater interest in EU integration and an acceptance that stakeholders and students should be involved in Quality Assurance. This can be at least partially attributed to CBHE projects. Projects also provided a strong motive and incentive for more senior academics to develop their English language competence.
- d. **International attractiveness of the HE sector:** in the Russian Focus Group, it was felt that projects had contributed to the export of higher education services (for which a national strategy had been formulated). Structural Projects were thought to have increased the attractiveness of the Lebanese HE sector, which in turn had led to an increase in the number of incoming 'International Credit Mobility' (ICM) students.

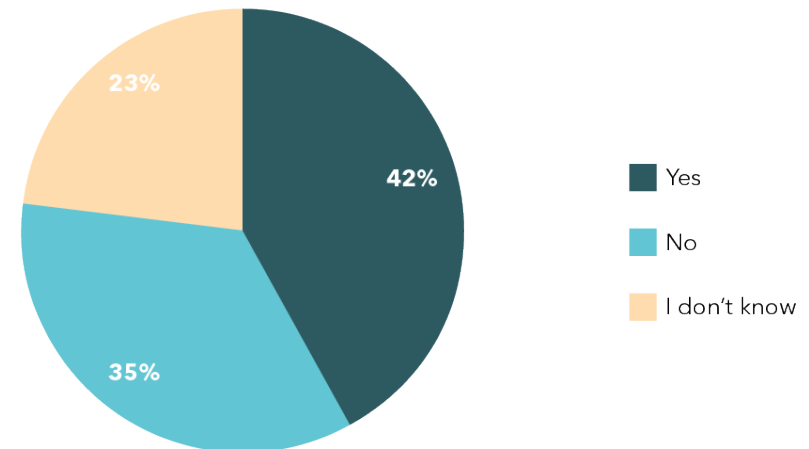
c. Spin-offs/exploitation/scaling-up

In addition to the perceived tangible and intangible impacts, the study revealed a relatively high level of confidence in the extent to which the SP generated spin-offs and also scaled-up and exploited results. This is another area of impact that is important to assess, particularly as it links to the sustainability of results.

Almost half of the respondents of the Partners and Coordinators Survey reported that there had been direct spin-offs from CBHE projects. However, it is possible that spin-offs go unaccounted or that they are incomplete at the end of a project, in which cases they will not feature in the monitoring.

Graph 1 Q21 P&C Survey

Q21. Have there been spin-off projects or initiatives?



When asked about the extent to which projects had been **scaled-up or exploited**, only 13 respondents indicated that the project results had not been scaled-up or exploited in some way.

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

These results vary to some extent from what Ministries reported in the Ministry Survey: when asked whether spin-offs have resulted from CBHE projects, 31% confirmed that this was the case (slightly fewer than in the Partners and Coordinators Survey). However, almost half did not know. This may be because staff have changed positions or have not followed developments in the HE sector. On the other hand, the Ministry officials who participated in Focus Groups were very aware of the follow-up to projects, as well as the spin-offs, which they were able to list. The Focus Group participants also gave numerous examples of scaling-up results more widely in the country/sector, as well as examples of exploiting new structural changes, strategies and processes at institutional and national levels. However, some lamented the fact that extension grants could not be requested under the E+ Programme; these would help consolidate and exploit results, a point that will be dealt with later in this report.

Examples of scaling-up project results from both the Focus Groups and P&C Survey included:

- ◆ Subsequent E+ CBHE applications, some successful, which included many members of the previous project consortium, thus consolidating working relationships;

- ◆ Subsequent applications to other EU funding actions (such as Knowledge Alliances or Horizon 2020 research projects);
- ◆ Subsequent applications for projects at national level, some of which have been awarded;
- ◆ Funding attracted from other international partners and donors (World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, French, German and Swedish Development Cooperation funding);
- ◆ The application of project outcomes to other courses and programmes (regarding approaches, guidelines, curricular reform, etc.);
- ◆ New joint or double degree programmes created with members of the project consortium;
- ◆ New institutes created at the level of the universities;
- ◆ New national programmes for higher education established.

Comments were made in the P&C Survey which illustrate the above:

- ◆ As a direct result of the CLEVER¹⁹ project, the Israeli Ministry of Economy published a call to set up a multi-year innovation community in the area of the creative economy.
- ◆ In the framework of the sustainability goals reached by the TUNED²⁰ project, an agreement was established between the Tunisian beneficiaries, financed by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to guarantee the funding of the project activities once the co-funding of the EACEA had ended (Projet de modernisation de l'Enseignement Supérieur en soutien à l'Employabilité (PromESSE-Tn).

¹⁹ Creative Leadership & Entrepreneurship - Visionary Education Roadmap https://clever.erasmus-plus.org.il/?page_id=278

²⁰ TUnisian Network for Employability and Development of graduates' skills <http://www.tuned-project.eu/>

- ◆ A national consortium was formed to develop software for training on accessibility (Margish Li Nagish - Israel).

2. Measurement of impact

a. What is measured and how

Measurement of impact proved to be a somewhat problematic area. It was not always undertaken systematically by the HEIs involved in a CBHE project, or by the Ministries or other relevant stakeholders. It was also found that many of the measurement and assessment indicators established by the projects themselves tended to miss intangibles and spin-offs. It is clear that a strong mechanism for ex-post assessment should be integrated into the E+ CBHE action itself, at action and project level, as well as attention to how beneficiary countries perform in international benchmarking and monitoring processes for structural reform, such as in the Bologna Process.

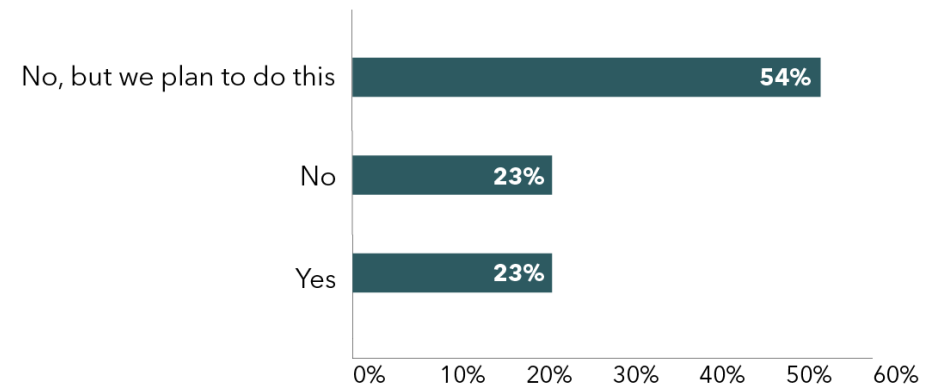
The Focus Groups cited the following mechanisms for measurement and monitoring of project impact, currently in use:

- ◆ Project monitoring indicators established by the project team/quality plan;
- ◆ Reporting to the EACEA (mid-term and final);
- ◆ The NEO monitoring visits;
- ◆ Monitoring instruments linked to the internal QA procedures at universities;
- ◆ Specific university structures or data collection offices.

In the Ministry Survey, more than half of the respondents indicated that they had put in place no measures to assess the impacts of projects but that they planned to do so, while 23% said they had already done so.

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?



Despite the seemingly positive intentions to implement more systematic impact measurement, none of the survey responses suggested that this was actually taking place. Focus Group participants generally criticised the lack of systematic measurement and assessment.

In terms of *what* is measured, the Focus Groups cited tangible outputs, such as the creation of new national or institutional structures or bodies or new legislation, as 'measurable and quantifiable':

- ◆ The setting-up of a national QA agency and QA units and policies in universities (Moldova, Ukraine);
- ◆ A new national foundation for funding mobility (Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- ◆ A new law on a quota of industry representatives on examination boards (Russia);

- ◆ The setting-up of a national platform acting as an Open Science repository (Serbia - BE-OPEN²¹ project).

It was found that many projects could also be measured by certain quantitative indicators at the institutional level, such as the number of student and staff mobilities linked to CBHE projects, new strategy documents for internationalisation and guidelines/protocols for student exchanges and recognition. The STINT²² (Bosnia and Herzegovina), MILETUS²³ (Ukraine), PAWER (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) and HARMONY (Russia) projects were given as examples, amongst others. However, it was also pointed out that there needed to be assessment of how such strategy documents would be used by the universities after the termination of a project. In several Focus Groups, participants observed that these were rather outputs, and that a systemic longer-term measurement of the impact of outputs seemed to be lacking.

This said, in Lebanon, Moldova and Serbia, Focus Group participants representing institutions were able to clearly quantify the increase in international incoming students, which they cited as a direct impact of CBHE projects related to internationalisation. In other Focus Groups (Lebanon, Morocco, Russia), it was suggested that the longer-term quantitative impact of projects on student employability and the labour market was typically unknown; this was a function of poor graduate employment tracking. This suggests that the national policy environments of the Partner Countries do not consistently require or support impact assessment. In the Focus Groups, institutional participants placed some blame on themselves: many universities did not have the capacity at this stage to integrate project outputs into their formal QA processes. There seemed to be a dependence on the European Commission and the NEOs to take the lead in the measurement of impact, given the lack of institutional capacity for monitoring or a monitoring by national authorities.

²¹ Boosting Engagement of Serbian Universities in Open Science <http://beopen.uns.ac.rs/>

²² Strengthening of Internationalization in B&H Higher Education: <http://www.stint-project.net/>

²³ Students' Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia

One suggestion from the Ukraine Focus Group was that the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and its various procedures, including the Bologna Process Implementation Reports (BPIR) could be used as a source of measurement for system level impact. The BPI Reports for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) were highlighted as an important reference point for structural impact assessment in the Moldovan, Serbian and Ukrainian Focus Groups. This was most evident in terms of establishing national QA systems, designing qualifications frameworks, implementing ECTS and adopting competence-based approaches, all of which are covered in the BPIR.

Many participants felt that it was important to have an ex-post project assessment conducted by the European Commission/Agency - one, three or even five years later. This was consistent with the consensus view that project impacts were often not very visible when the project first closes, particularly given that the Partner Country institutions and Ministries do not always have the capacity or the mechanisms at their disposal to assess them.

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b. Results upon project completion versus longitudinal results

Projects were generally seen by Focus Groups as part of a longer-term process. While some immediate effects were apparent when the project ended, more tangible reforms might come only later. Examples from the Focus Groups were the following:

- ◆ The first PhD accreditations in Ukraine dated from May 2020, but their origins could be traced back to the QUAERE and C3QA projects, which had been completed well before this date.
- ◆ The DualEdu²⁴ project (2017- 2021), although still ongoing, has already led to the adoption of national legislation on dual education in Serbia, approved by Parliament in 2019. These programmes would start in the following academic year.
- ◆ In 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).
- ◆ Projects had generated greater international recognition of the HE systems. This had become discernible in institutional performance in university rankings (in Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) and in the ability to generate Knowledge Alliances and Horizon 2020 projects (Serbia, after converting from a Partner Country to a Programme Country).

Many participants even traced current reforms back to the Tempus projects which had initiated them:

- ◆ A new law for HE was approved in Ukraine in 2017, which established a new system for QA and also the doctoral education cycle. This could be traced to an initial Tempus project and several follow-up projects.

- ◆ The development of competence-based curricula was also clearly traced first to Tempus projects (Ukraine).
- ◆ The ATHENA²⁵ 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.
- ◆ In Serbia, the SIPUS²⁶ project created QA offices in universities and established accreditation standards, while PESHES (Tempus) developed QA indicators that are now taken into account in the funding of HEI. FUSE created manuals for internationalisation, which led to the production of the first manual in English as a medium of instruction. Now, many more courses are taught in English in Serbia.
- ◆ 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.

24 Implementation of Dual Education in Higher Education of Serbia

25 Fostering Sustainable and Autonomous Higher Education Systems in the Eastern Neighbouring Area - Tempus Project
 26 Strengthening of Internationalisation Policies at Universities in Serbia
 27 Programme Evaluation for Transparency and Recognition of Skills and Competences
<http://plus.tlqaa.org/>

Several Focus Groups pointed out how previous CBHE projects on digitalisation, online learning and virtual mobility had been particularly instrumental in helping universities make an easier and faster transition to online learning (during the pandemic).

Unexpected developments can also directly affect the timing and strength of project impact. The present study was carried out in the midst of the global Covid-19 pandemic, which undoubtedly and dramatically influenced how universities work and teach. In this context, several Focus Groups pointed out how previous CBHE projects on digitalisation, online learning and virtual mobility had been particularly instrumental in helping universities make an easier and faster transition to online learning (Lebanon, Moldova, Morocco, Serbia and Ukraine). Some examples include:

- ◆ MILETUS²⁸ was mentioned as being particularly timely for Ukraine; it focused on virtual mobility, which is now so important when student exchange is stifled.
- ◆ The EXPERES project²⁹ 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.

Past Tempus projects were also noted for their importance in building institutional capacity for e-learning. In this connection, the Lebanese Focus Group cited the CONECTE³⁰ project, which had derived from Tempus.

c. Causality

In some cases, Focus Group participants and Survey respondents alluded to the difficulties in proving causation, i.e. the extent to which impact could be directly and/or exclusively ascribed to a particular project.

28 Students' Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia

29 Les TICE appliquées à l'expérimentation scientifique

30 Connecting Employment and Education <https://www.iul.edu.lb/conecte/>

It has become clear through this study that 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**. This configuration consists of a combination of: (a) increased university autonomy and enhanced transparency, as encouraged through the opening of a system to the Bologna Process, or to other types of external support and intervention (OECD, World Bank, etc); (b) a push to internationalise the HE sector and to render it more globally relevant and more widely recognised; and (c) geopolitical factors (political and economic relations between the Partner Countries and the EU). These may all affect the degree to which a CBHE project generates impact at a given point in time, as well as the forces which have combined to cause this impact.

In some of the impact assessment methodologies deployed in the world of development cooperation, the degree of causality is an important indicator. For example, the World Bank has defined impact as

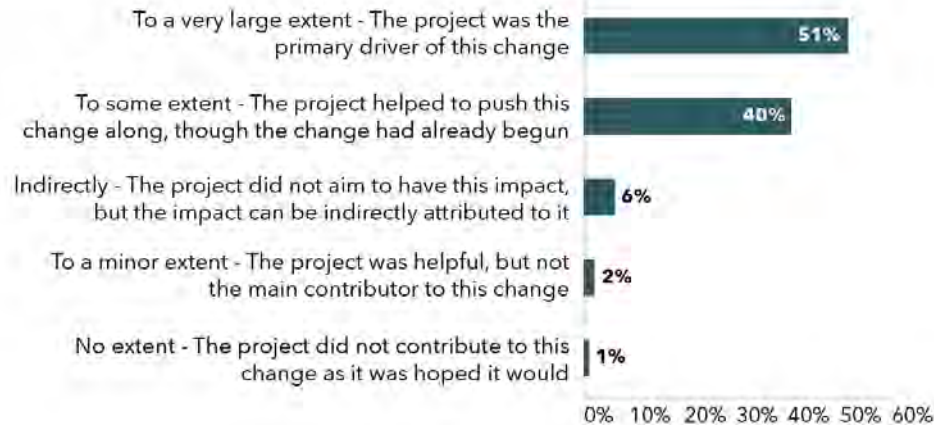
*The difference in the indicator of interest (Y) with the intervention (Y1) and without the intervention (Y0). That is, impact = Y1 - Y0.*³¹

While the present CBHE Impact Study has not taken such a schematic approach to causality, it has attempted to gauge it, at least in terms of perceptions. In the Ministry Survey, when the Ministries were asked "To what extent do you attribute the above impacts directly to the Erasmus+ CBHE action?", nine out of the 13 respondents reported "To some extent - CBHE helped to push this change along, though the change had already begun", while only one said that "CBHE was the primary driver of this change". The remaining three said that the projects had (1) indirectly inspired change, (2) only to a minor extent driven change, and 3) to no extent, respectively. This contrasted with the Partners and Coordinators Survey, where respondents were much more convinced and enthusiastic about projects as the primary driver of change:

31 World Bank, Impact Evaluation in Practice (2016): <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25030>

Graph 3 Q20, P&C Survey

Q20: To what extent do you attribute the impacts which you have identified above directly to the Erasmus+ CBHE projects?



It is possible that the Coordinators and their partners have a more linear, focused vision of the impact of their project, while the few Ministry respondents who participated have a broader view of different legislative change processes and influencing factors. This said, the Focus Groups showed that a more consistent vision of the longitudinal impact of projects and the reforms they inspire often comes from the universities themselves; they have been involved in numerous projects over time, as opposed to Ministry officials who often change.

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In the Focus Groups, it was also suggested that national reforms might sometimes occur which cannot be directly linked to one CBHE project, but which have clearly been influenced by the outcomes of several projects. When asked how this could be demonstrated, participants pointed out that the drafting, approaches and terminology of certain laws and national strategies appeared to be directly taken from project reports and project recommendations:

- ◆ In 2017, the president of Uzbekistan approved the Strategy for HE Development 2017-2021, with nine priorities outlined. Some of these priorities, for instance, enhancing international cooperation, were derived from recommendations drafted for Structural Projects, such as the IMEP³² project.
- ◆ In Russia, a new programme for excellence in higher education had been launched, replacing the previous 'Top 500' programme. Employer engagement and internationalisation were now heavily weighted in this programme. Participants of the Russian Focus Group said that several Structural Projects had undoubtedly influenced it, such as the indicators used to assess 'excellence', although it was hard to establish a direct causal link.

Hence, while causality remains complex, there is clear anecdotal and qualitative evidence that CBHE projects either initiate, contribute to or reinforce a structural change process or a new legislative framework in the HE sector.

32 Internationalisation and Modernisation of Education Processes in Higher Education in Uzbekistan: <https://dbase.caep-project.org/project/internationalisation-and-modernisation-of-education-and-processes-in-the-higher-education-of-uzbekistan-imep/>

4. CBHE programme design

CBHE Structural Projects were designed with specific features and eligibility rules, intended by the European Commission to ensure national political buy-in. The SPHERE Impact Study has explicitly examined a number of these features, in order to determine whether they have been conducive to yielding structural impacts. The overall added value and uniqueness of the CBHE action was also a point of assessment.

1. CBHE Structural Projects as a distinct action?

In both the Surveys and the Focus Groups, there was an overwhelming consensus that the Erasmus+ CBHE action was a very important funding action. It was repeatedly stated that the EU capacity building programmes in higher education, dating back to Tempus, had contributed to the development and modernisation of higher education in all the Partner Countries targeted by this study, as well as the alignment of HE to EU and Bologna Process structures and values (both in Bologna and non-Bologna signatory countries). One Focus Group even said that EU funding was the “salvation of HE in Moldova” and had helped to keep the HE system relevant.

In the Partners and Coordinators Survey, when asked “Is a CBHE Structural Project an appropriate tool and/or funding mechanism to drive change at system level?” (Q16), respondents confirmed that this was very much the case (average 4.2 out of 5 ‘totally agreed’). In terms of structural impacts at the level of higher education institutions, the average rating (on a scale on 1-5, where 5 was a “very high” impact), was 4.2.(Q.17 from the same survey).

When asked, “What makes the CBHE action attractive for you, in particular and also in comparison with other funding schemes?” (Q32, Partners and Coordinators Survey), several written answers were provided by the Coordinators themselves, providing perceptions of the action’s unique added value. Examples include:

“The possibility to build up competencies in developing regions in a critical situation, such as the Gaza Strip or Syria... is a concrete vision. The CBHE geographical targets contain rich and poor regions, affected by fast

changes with a high potential of development and enhancement as well as collaboration.”

“It is highly motivational to see how relatively limited budgets and targeted actions can produce a significant impact at the Partner Country level, through capacity-building activities that allow Programme Country institutions to share their best practices and receiving in return lessons and useful insights for better and tailor-made international cooperation activities.”

“After participating in the first Tempus programmes, I found it important, for my institution and myself, to cooperate for enhancing HE in my country and in different regions of the world. This approach has become a key element for achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the UN, which are a moral duty of states, institutions and citizens.”

- ◆ These sentiments were largely echoed in the Focus Groups, where participants applauded the following features of the CBHE 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; Programme Country partners have, in many cases, learned from Partner Countries, just as Partner Countries have learned from Programme Countries.

Several questions of the P&C Survey were directed solely at the Programme Country partners/coordinators. It was therefore possible to gain some insight into the motivation of the Programme Country partners, even though this was not the main focus of this study:

Table 6, Q31 P&C Survey - How would you describe the motivation to coordinate the CBHE project? [N=13]

	Number of responses
The project served to build upon an existing relationship in a country or region, in the hopes of further expanding it	8
The project was an institutional initiative, part of an effort to strengthen the institution’s strategy for cooperation for development	7
The project was intended to generate visibility for our university in the world	4
The project served to develop a new presence in a country or region, in the hopes of further academic collaboration	2

It is noteworthy that most Programme Country partners felt it important to have a pre-existing relationship with a Partner Country and that development cooperation outweighed prestige and visibility in the list of motivations. Despite this positive feedback from the Survey, some of the Focus Groups noted the perception that Programme Country universities were not as motivated to participate in or lead projects as they had been in Tempus. They felt that, despite the doubling of project funding in the transition from Tempus to E+, the financial burden on EU partners had actually increased. The financial incentives were less attractive, and the administrative management was deemed to be highly bureaucratic (see also the response to Q28 of the P&C Survey, where 13 out of 31 coordinators who responded indicated that “The rules and procedures for the E+ CBHE action were very cumbersome, which

was a burden for the Coordinator and for Partners”). As if to confirm this view, the Serbian Focus Group provided a unique insight on a country that had recently transitioned from Partner to Programme Country³³. Participants indicated that the interest of Serbian HEIs to participate in the CBHE action appeared to have dropped, specifically because the benefits and prestige in coordinating such a project were not as high as when participating as a Partner Country. They lamented the inability to buy equipment (as this is only reserved for Partner Countries).

CBHE is a unique action, particularly as no other funding actions emphasise the institutional importance of the partnership or explicitly address structural change.

a. CBHE as a unique action for institutional engagement and structural change

All the Focus Groups stressed that **CBHE is a unique action, particularly as no other funding actions emphasise the institutional importance of the partnership or explicitly address structural change**. As relevant examples:

- ◆ In Serbia, HEIs had in the past not been integrated and faculties were separate legal entities. The CBHE action had contributed to more integrated governance approaches, with appropriate financial rules. CBHE had also influenced a new law on HE in Serbia related to governance.
- ◆ In the Lebanese Focus Group, it was unanimously agreed that the concept and approach of CBHE Structural Projects was unique, as it had enhanced the international dimension of Lebanese HE. It had led to the introduction of new tools and approaches in learning, teaching, research and innovation that were developed jointly by the Lebanese universities. This was new, since Lebanese HEIs were usually in competition with each other (all except one were private). The international partners and donors participating in this Focus Group (DAAD/HOPES Project, AUF and the UNHCR) confirmed this.

³³ Serbia signed the Erasmus Charter in 2017 and is no longer classified as a Partner Country in the E+ programme.

- ◆ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the STINT³⁴ project was regarded as being particularly successful because it involved all eight public universities, who came together for the first time. Their vice rectors were involved in the preparation of the project. Their International Relations Offices continued to meet and collaborate. This showed the wider impact on the sector, including on its leadership, which was particularly relevant in a fragmented country like Bosnia and Herzegovina, with many different higher education regulatory spaces³⁵.
- ◆ In the Tajikistan Focus Group, participants pointed out that E+ CBHE projects were the only targeted external support available to develop the HE sector structurally.

When asked about HE project funding offered by other external funders, Focus Group participants once again emphasised that the E+ CBHE action was unique in that it was the only funding mechanism to require an institutional endorsement and an institutional partnership approach.

2. Structural impact of Joint Projects?

In the Partners and Coordinators Survey and in the Focus Groups, respondents suggested that **CBHE Joint Projects (JP) could often operate structurally and also have structural objectives**. In several countries (Lebanon, Morocco, Ukraine, Uzbekistan), it was reported that Ministries also directly support Joint Projects. In Lebanon, the Ministry reported being a full partner in two JP, in addition to the SP.

Moreover, it may be that a project conceived as a Structural Project ends up being submitted in the application phase as a Joint Project, due to a last-minute problem in obtaining a signature from one of the Ministries in the project (in the case of a multi-country project).

³⁴ Strengthening of Internationalization in B&H Higher Education: <http://www.stint-project.net/>

³⁵ In accordance with laws and regulations, higher education institutions in B&H are funded by the corresponding Republica Srpska (RS) or the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) authorities. Higher education activities are thus governed by either RS or FBiH legislation, with the state level Ministry of Civil Affairs assuming the task of coordinating the higher education activities of the two entities.

In this case, the CBHE project is eligible, technically, as a Joint Project, but in practice does not differ from a Structural Project. This is relevant to impact assessment, since separating JP from SP in terms of their impact may lead to an incomplete picture.

To illustrate this, in the Partners and Coordinators Survey, respondents were asked whether JP could have a structural impact. Twenty-four positive responses were received, listing examples which included the following:

- ◆ The CURE project³⁶ had had an impact in the educational sectors of Georgia and of Israel: it had created a new curriculum to promote Civic Education and Democracy and set up centres of Social and Civic Involvement in the participating HEIs.
- ◆ In the RENES project (Development of Master Programme in Renewable Energy Sources and Sustainable Environment) in Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Education had promulgated policies in line with the project outcomes in curricula design and implementation, the financing of PhDs in a *co-tutelle* arrangement and a methodology for university-industry cooperation.
- ◆ The 2017 IQAT project (Capacity Building for the Implementation of Institutional Quality Assurance Systems and Typologies Using the Bologna Process Framework) prompted the establishment of a new governmental body to oversee QA in Uzbekistan. As a result of the project, trained staff for external QA developed new methods for determining and ensuring the quality of higher education.
- ◆ The ASSET project (Assessment Tools for Higher Education Learning Environments)³⁷ built on Tempus and E+ projects in Israel, providing a national approach and toolkit for evaluating and piloted learning environments, by means of Formative Assessment (FA).

³⁶ <https://cure.erasmus-plus.org.il/>

³⁷ <https://www.asset-erasmus.com/>

❖ The DIREKT project (Developing Trans-regional information literacy for lifelong learning and the knowledge economy), located in Kazakhstan and Russia, had developed an online Information Literacy Platform which was promoted not only in university curricula but also more widely with local civil society partners. It had also furthered a national discussion on the recognition of lifelong learning in the Partner Countries targeted.

In the Lebanese Focus Group, it was stated that given the political troubles in the country, the intricate decision-making processes, endemic corruption and lack of institutionalisation of results at the level of the Ministry, it was often the case that the impact of SP was much more visible at institutional level than at national level. This was also due to the fact that the HE sector in Lebanon is predominantly private and that the government has limited regulatory power. Examples were given of how the universities had collectively, through the rectors' council and other national networks, agreed to implement results of SP, even when formal legislative approval was still pending in the Parliament.

Finally, it was also pointed out that a project starting as a JP might stimulate the interest of national authorities and thereby generate more structural impact (Ukraine Focus Group). This is another argument for rethinking the distinction between JP and SP and for considering more systematically the structural impact of both, in order to reach an overall assessment of impact.

3. National and regional priorities

As another aspect of the CBHE action design, the study probed perceptions of the role of national and regional priorities. For the Neighbourhood countries, national priorities were established by consulting the Ministries of Education, and regional priorities were fixed by the Commission³⁸. However, the study showed that there are differing opinions and perceptions of the way in which priorities were set and the extent to which they influenced project selection. This suggests that there is a preference for revising the current process for agreeing national and regional priorities.

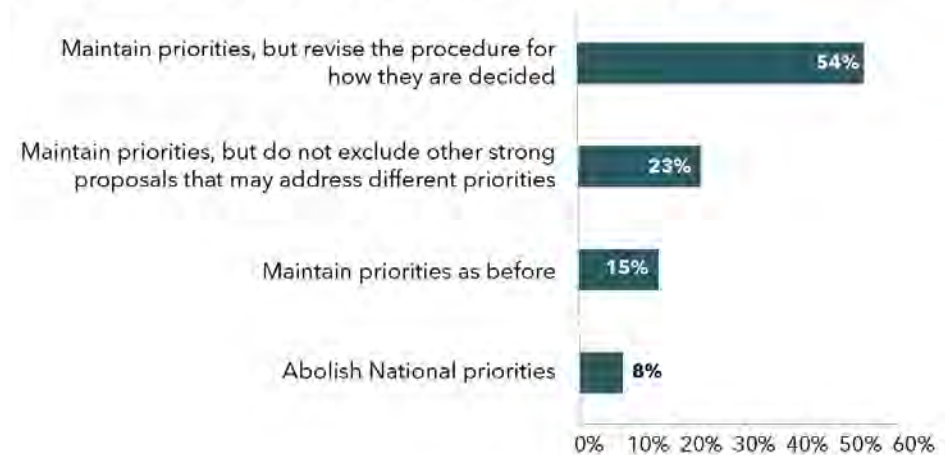
The Focus Groups and NEO interviews suggested that government approaches in defining the priorities varied in practice, depending to a large extent on the commitment and interest displayed by Ministry officials. Higher

education institutions were not formally consulted, although sometimes the NEO attempted to bring the HE sectors perspective into the process, by advising the Ministry accordingly.

Fifty-four percent of respondents from the Ministry Survey felt that the current system for defining national priorities needed to be revised. Moreover, 23% considered that strong applications should not be rejected, if they were well justified in terms of relevance, even if not adhering directly to the priorities.

Graph 4 Q22, Ministry Survey

Q22. In the next CBHE, would you prefer that the concept of national and regional priorities be maintained to channel the thematic focus of the applications or shall the priorities be abolished to permit a wider thematic variety in the projects?



38 Priority-setting is described in detail in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide (*op.cit*), p.174

The issue of national priorities was also discussed at length in the Focus Groups. Participants generally agreed that project applications should be 'directed towards' or 'guided by' some sort of priorities but that some flexibility should also be granted. They lamented that, in the past, strong and well-justified projects appeared to have been penalised simply because they did not directly address one of the established priorities. Certain Focus Groups offered suggestions on how to improve the national and regional priorities with regards to both how they are decided and how they affect project selection:

- ◆ In the Moroccan Focus Group, one impression was that the evaluation committees do not always understand the national relevance of a proposal and that the project is perhaps rejected on the basis of more trivial details in the project design. It was suggested that **project applicants should be able to defend the relevance of their projects in the selection phase**, once they have been short-listed. One participant suggested to organise interviews with the project coordinator and Ministry involved, prior to selection.
- ◆ In the Russian Focus Group, emphasis was placed on priorities for **Russian regional development**, where a Structural Project could have a very targeted impact. The example of the SUSDEV³⁹ project was given, which had contributed to the Federal Programme for Development of Rural Areas, developed legislative proposals at the regional level for a green economy, enhanced access to educational resources that promote a green economy through Lifelong Learning (LLL) and enhanced visibility of how certain regions in Russia were reaching the SDGs. One of the most important priorities in Russia was better connecting HEIs with the regions to which they belong. This was important when assessing impact, as many universities had sectoral or regional affiliations.

- ◆ In the Ukraine Focus Group, it was suggested that instead of establishing new priorities for the CBHE action specifically, proposals should rather have to justify how they align with and fulfil **pre-existing national and regional strategies for higher education and development, EU policy objectives and other international objectives**, such as the Bologna Process or the SDGs, for example. This would be a lighter-touch approach, which would also ensure relevance, while granting projects flexibility to decide which policy frameworks and agreements to address.

A balance should be found between providing a guiding framework for proposal selection, which establishes the project's relevance both to Partner Countries and the EU, and affording the HE sector in Partner Countries an opportunity to judge what it deems relevant at different points in time.

These different angles on the issue of national/regional priorities suggest that the European Commission and Partner Country Ministries should look again at the process of priority setting, with a view to clarifying for applicants how they were set, in what policy context, how they should be addressed in proposals and how these would be evaluated. It would also be worth considering the **framing of CBHE within current EU policy priorities for the Neighbourhood, as well as overarching EU strategies related to development** (the Green Deal, for example, or the global dimension of the European Education Area), as opposed to inventing new priorities for one specific funding action.

In summary, a balance should be found between providing a guiding framework for proposal selection, which establishes the project's relevance both to Partner Countries and the EU, and affording the HE sector in Partner Countries an opportunity to judge what it deems relevant at different points in time.

4. Engagement of stakeholders: Ministry as formal partner?

One of the unique features of CBHE Structural Projects is its insistence on the participation of the Ministry of Higher Education (or other relevant Ministries responsible for Higher Education) as a formal partner in the project. This requires the signing of a Mandate Letter and Partnership Agreement and implies that Ministries can benefit from some budget lines of the grant.

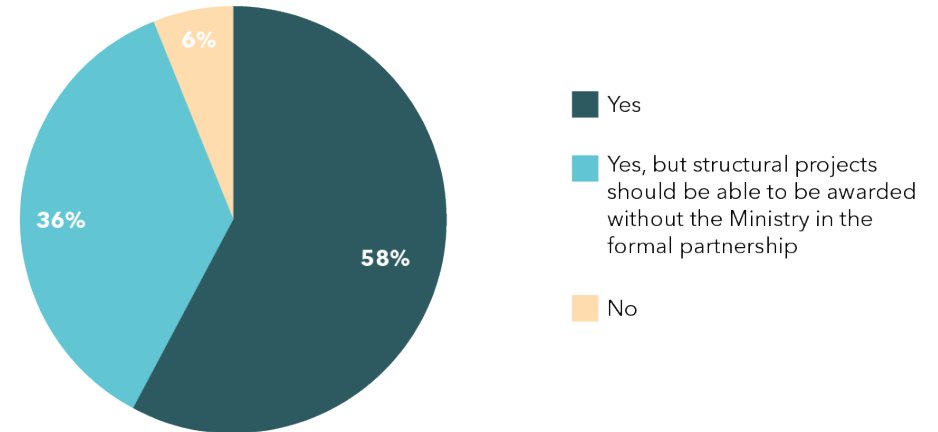
It was almost unanimously felt that the Ministry participation in SP was important for the wider political level buy-in of a project, even if the Ministry was not always active in the project. Participants in the Uzbekistan Focus Group were particularly positive about the Ministry participation and emphasised that it ensured efficiency in the delivery of project results and their integration into national legislation and strategies.

This was not the case with some countries that were more decentralised and/or had less political stability or consistency (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon). Many of the comments received in response to the P&C Survey Question 10 expressed frustration with the inefficiency of Ministry participation and felt that at times the Ministry was little more than a symbolic partner.

As for the Ministries which responded to the Survey, 11 out of 13 respondents said that **Ministries should remain as formal partners**, while two respondents felt that projects could be structural without the Ministry formally participating in the partnership.

Graph 5, Q9 Ministry Survey

Q9. Do you think it is important for Ministries of Education to be formal partners in Structural Projects in order to generate a structural/systemic impact of the CBHE project?

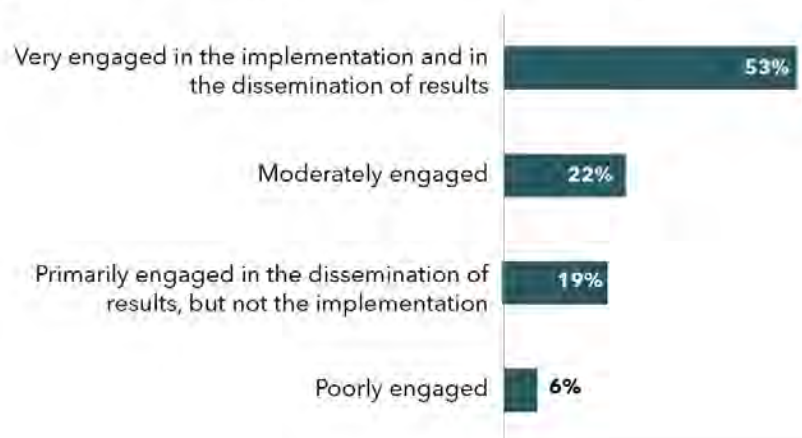


These results were largely confirmed in the Focus Groups. Many Focus Group participants offered alternatives to the mandatory Ministry participation in the partnership, which are presented later in this section. They also discussed the level of Ministry engagement and expressed some concerns, notably that formal Ministry participation in the partnership does not necessarily guarantee a higher degree of commitment. They thought that more emphasis should be placed on the **means of engagement of the Ministry and monitoring of the Ministry participation**, than on their purely formal participation in the project partnership.

In the Partners and Coordinators Survey, about 75% of the respondents felt the Ministry was very or moderately engaged, and only 6% poorly engaged. Results show that most Ministries contributed to dissemination measures:

Graph 6, Q7 P&C Survey

Engagement of the Ministry of Education in the Partner Country



Ministries, as per the Ministry Survey, felt they were quite engaged. When asked, "How engaged has your Ministry been in the CBHE projects?", eight out of the 13 respondents stated that it had been very engaged (day-to-day involvement in dissemination and implementation), while two undertook only 'periodic monitoring', and just two provided 'occasional consultation and advice'. It must be considered that those who actually answered the survey were likely to be more enthusiastic about the CBHE projects, and hence probably had a high level of commitment, confirmed by the fact that they responded to the survey.

However, in the Focus Groups, it was suggested that consistent Ministry engagement in the project was often difficult, due to limited capacity in the Ministry, staff changeover or the fact that the Ministry may not fully understand its role. While this varied from project to project, there was a general consensus that Ministry turn-over is problematic⁴⁰.

The general impression was that Ministry participation in the preparation of the project was important to ensure its active participation during the implementation. It was also suggested to establish a project team at the Ministry to liaise with the coordination of the project, in order to ensure that the project is more strongly rooted in the Ministry rather than merely lodged with one individual representative (Serbian Focus Group). The Lebanese Focus Group participants highlighted the importance of committed individuals, citing the example of a dynamic Director General for higher education in the Ministry who had unfortunately recently left the position.

The involvement of other national policy bodies, agencies and associations in projects was deemed crucial in terms of national policy buy-in. One example is the National QA agency in Ukraine, which has been involved as a formal partner in a number of projects. This has allowed it to develop procedures, guidelines and documents that it now uses in the assessment and accreditation of HEIs.

One question that surfaced had to do with the requirement of the the Ministry of education (or equivalent body), under the regulations of Erasmus+ 2014-2020, to be a formal project partner.

⁴⁰ In the Partners and Coordinators survey, coordinators were asked about challenges in implementation (Q28). Turn-over in Ministry or government change were obstacles that were cited consistently in the Focus Groups. In addition, the fact that the Ministry Survey received a low response rate could also be linked to this observation.

While Ministry support and involvement was seen as very important, the Focus Groups demonstrated that different systems have different dynamics which may need to be considered when deciding which national policy body should be the required partner in the project consortium. It was found that in some cases, the requirement that the central Ministry of education sign on as a formal partner can be too rigid and impede or delay the submission of strong projects with a structural nature. More flexibility may be desirable, depending on the national system, given that some countries are more decentralised, or potentially because the Ministry finds legal problems with signing onto an EU project grant as a full partner. Participants suggested that **the political structure and culture be taken into account when determining who should be the formal 'national policy' partner**, e.g. the equivalent of the Ministry, in accordance with the objectives of the project and with what is feasible. For example, the cantonal division of Bosnia and Herzegovina and complicated governance structure means that different Ministries or agencies at different levels may be more relevant to certain projects. In Russia, the importance of **regional authorities** was stressed, as the CBHE projects have had strong impacts at the regional level.

5. Project size and length and funding: Specific features

The Surveys and the Focus Groups were also used to generate feedback on how the size, length and funding of the CBHE projects could be better shaped going forward, so as to enhance impact. Noteworthy suggestions included:

Starter projects and the possibility of shorter projects and smaller grants

It was mentioned in the Focus Groups of Lebanon, Serbia and Ukraine, as well as in the P&C Survey (Q25) that it might be useful to offer a two-track programme, which accommodates projects of different sizes and lengths. Offering a smaller grant for projects of 1.5 to 2 years, for example, could attract new project applicants who might not have participated before, as it would be more feasible to manage. It could also allow for projects that require shorter interventions and smaller project consortia. The same logic could be applied to smaller 'follow-up' projects.

Extension grants for dissemination measures and exploitation

In the same line of thinking, it was also stated that three-year projects are usually insufficient to consolidate and exploit project results (Serbia FG, Ukraine FG, Lebanon FG, Morocco FG, Q25 P&C Survey). One suggestion was to reserve a portion of the grant for an optional grant extension, dedicated to exploitation and dissemination, which could only be released if the partnership demonstrates that it has met the project objectives and produced the main outputs. Alternatively, the CBHE programme could provide smaller 'Dissemination and Exploitation Grants', which ongoing or recently completed projects could apply for. Some comments from the P&C Survey (Q26) that reiterate this point include:

"Structural Projects, even those very successful, risk to be forgotten very soon. Each project should foresee a one/two years 'consolidation phase' where the application of the main outputs is monitored and financially supported. This would highlight the degree of involvement of the decision makers."

"Possibility of post-project sustainability funding, as many project results 'die out' immediately after the project end."

"Usually, the Ministries of Education in the CBHE countries are under-funded and therefore a "post project-sustainability funding" will help them mainstream what has been achieved during a very successful project. If a project, in the final evaluation stage receives a high score then it could be eligible for "post-project-sustainability funding"."

"Extra funding possibility for sustainability of the project outcomes that have been proven to have systemic impact."

Follow-up projects

Some Focus Groups participants and survey respondents regretted the fact that 'follow-up projects' tended not to be selected and financed. They were unclear as to why, given that one way to sustain and build impact is to continue to support a process that is already in motion:

"I would propose modifying and upgrading already existing processes --- this takes the financial burden off of "sustaining" new mechanisms.... Upgrading what exists is a temporary investment that builds upon what is already in place and what is already committed to." (Q26 P&C survey)

Co-funding by the Ministry?

Related to the previous point, many participants felt that the only way to truly sustain results was to guarantee a form of national, political and financial buy-in. In response to: *What other tools or funding mechanisms would you propose in order to have a systemic impact?* (P&C Survey, Q26), the following was stated:

"Structural Projects should be jointly (partially) funded by the government in the Partner Countries. This, in turn, may enhance the impact of such projects and generate more national ownership."

While co-funding by the Ministry is of course already feasible under the present action rules, the extent to which it is quantified, demonstrated and even encouraged is very limited. Ministry co-funding could therefore be a favoured element in the project selection process, which it is not at present.

6. National versus Multi-Country projects

The CBHE action allows for both Multi-Country projects and National Projects in the former Tempus countries (Russia is an exception). The Surveys and Focus Groups indicated that Multi-Country projects are important because they

- ◆ Allow a country to compare itself and benchmark with other countries and generate international practices;

- ◆ Address similar development challenges for systems in the same Region (this was stressed for the Western Balkans in particular);
- ◆ Reaffirm academic diplomatic ties in conflict regions and facilitate collaboration between Ministries of different countries.

Multi-Country projects were emphasised as particularly relevant in the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina Focus Group / Serbian Focus Group), where there is a strong regional agenda and a delicate regional cohesion process.

This said, in several Focus Groups it was stated that **Multi-Country SP are not as efficient for generating national reform**, given that some of the efforts go into managing an international consortium with diverse systems and Ministries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Morocco, Serbia, Ukraine FGs).

Maintaining the possibility to have both National and Multi-Country SP was nevertheless stressed as important. This said, the objectives and methodology of a given project should be tailored either to its multi-country or national dimension. For example, the MERIC-Net⁴¹ project was cited by the Morocco Focus Group as an SP that required a multi-country character, due to its primary objective of creating a network of recognition centres in the Southern Mediterranean. It directly facilitated continuing professional development of Ministry employees on the recognition of qualifications. Other projects, however, seemed to be more appropriate when focusing explicitly on the national context.

The Russian Focus Group regretted that Russia was not eligible for National Projects. It was felt that, given the huge size of the Russian HE system, more universities could be reached, and more concerted impacts achieved if national projects were permitted.

41 <http://www.meric-net.eu/en/index.aspx>

7. Project coordination and ownership

Flexible funding and administration rules

The Focus Groups also generally advocated more flexibility with regards to the grant usage and general rules of administration. Specific concern was raised about the limitation in the staff rates (Moldova, Morocco FG) and the fact that the grant could not be used to support the participation (in project events) of important structural and political actors beyond the project partnership.

In response to the concern about what were generally considered low ceilings for staff costs, other respondents expressed interest in some sort of professional recognition mechanism – in line with national salary scales – for participation in E+ projects.

There was also strong support for reducing bureaucratic project administration, thus freeing up more time and resources for project implementation and dissemination measures. The P&C Survey (Q25) largely confirmed this in the open answers. They pleaded for more simplified application forms, as the current versions seemed increasingly redundant and lengthy. This frequently discouraged HEIs from participating in the action or coordinating a project. When asked in the P&C Survey about challenges to implementation, the second most frequently chosen answer commented that “The rules and procedures for the E+ CBHE action were very cumbersome, which was a burden for the coordinator and for partners” (Q28).

Project writing and coordination

Cumbersome project preparation and administration were also directly linked to the ownership of projects in Partner Countries. It was suggested that the ability of universities from the Partner Countries to be coordinators and ‘writers’ of proposals was very important for generating ownership and relevance. However, in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova, many universities had shied away from this or simply did not

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have the capacity. By contrast, in other countries such as Serbia and Ukraine, certain universities and individuals had developed expertise in navigating the complexities of writing an CBHE proposal and the bureaucracy of managing it. This had served the country more broadly in terms of writing and managing SP that are inclusive in the HE sector. It was generally felt by Focus Groups and survey respondents that that Partner Country capacity to write and manage projects should be given greater recognition in the proposal

selection process. The respondents did not, however, indicate how this might go beyond the online training already provided by the Commission. Nevertheless, the capacity to write and manage projects has evolved over time and can be regarded as an impact in itself. In several countries, the shift of focus from being ‘recipients’ to being initiators of projects is worthy of note.

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8. Synergies: Implications for impact

Role of the NEO

In all Focus Groups, participants stated the importance of having a national structure that provides a platform for support in preparing and managing projects, sharing results and ensuring political relevance. They also highlighted the NEO’s role, which goes beyond that of project monitoring; in many cases, the NEO is consulted on the national priorities of the programme by the Ministry, conducts his/her own impact assessments (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Moldova), promotes the E+ Programme across the HE sector and supports dissemination measures. Focus Group participants made the following comments:

- ◆ The NEO in Tajikistan helps give universities a say in shaping the national priorities, which is important in ensuring that the priorities reflect not just the Ministry perspective but the perspective of HEIs themselves.

- ◆ The role of the NEO (and the HERE) is exceedingly important in a country like Lebanon, where there is a lack of national HE strategy and where the government has been shown to be unstable or highly inefficient.

The NEO also embodies a certain memory of the history of the CBHE action/Tempus programme, can identify synergies, and can also provide important feedback on the rules and procedures of the action/programme and the manner in which they are taken up at national level. NEOs can thus make a major contribution to the communication and networking of key stakeholders in the sector.

Role of the national HERE Team

A number of Focus Groups stressed the importance of the HERE Team, particularly in supporting national impacts but also in designing projects. In Serbia, the HERE were seen as very useful and instrumental in bringing home ideas for projects and working on areas that required structural reform, such as recognition. Some of the HERE publications had inspired projects. This was echoed in the Lebanese, Moroccan, Serbian and Ukrainian Focus Groups, where participants felt that the HERE Team should be granted more resources. It was suggested that there should be a stronger link between the HERE Team and the CBHE projects, as the HERE could help assess the impact of projects and promote synergies. It was also suggested that the HERE might receive funding to undertake project monitoring.

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CBHE as an isolated action?

One point of interest in the Focus Groups was the extent to which the CBHE projects interact with and complement other programmes and funding actions for the HE sectors in Partner Countries.

a. Synergies with national initiatives and funding schemes

The importance of using CBHE to complement other national initiatives was highlighted:

“National and local funding mechanisms could support at local level the sustainability of the results and actions achieved by the project. Socio-economic actors should have been more involved in this kind of projects.” (Q26 P&C Survey)

b. Synergies with other donors and partners

The participation of other donors and partners was encouraged in the second session of the Focus Groups. However, few Focus Groups reported any success in this direction, the Lebanese Focus Group being the most notable.

In many Focus Groups, mention was made of other international funding sources for higher education (ranging from the World Bank to foundations, regional development banks, and development cooperation agencies of EU countries and other important geopolitical actors outside the EU). Some Focus Groups cited the funding made available to support accession to the EU, but such funding did not necessarily target structural change in the HE sectors in the same way, and the extent to which synergies were established with the EU programmes seemed limited. Exceptions were the following:

Lebanon: Workshops were organised by DG Higher Education of the Ministry to coordinate the various donors and funding. The *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* (AUF), for example, was contacted to provide advice and expertise on the RESUME⁴² and E-TALEB⁴³ projects. The director of the Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians (HOPES) project had been involved in the design and launch of the MERIC net project, had a close working relationship with the RESCUE⁴⁴ project, which promoted recognition of learning of refugees and online education, and had advised on LEBPASS (a new SP to develop a common diploma supplement).

The AUF representative in the Focus Group reported that some AUF programmes had been inspired by the CBHE action.

Ukraine: A sectoral support group was being created by the Ministry as a means to coordinate donors. This included the World Bank, the British Council, the Foundation for Polish Science, the AUF and the French embassy. However, the Focus Group was reluctant to assess how effective or reliable this would be.

It was suggested that donor cooperation was needed from the writing and inception of the project, and not only after a project is awarded.

c. Synergies with other EU actions

It was also mentioned that it would be important to look at how to link different EU funding actions in the future; it was felt that CBHE could be better justified and connected to mobility projects (ICM), Strategic Partnerships, EU Research projects (Horizon) and other actions. The demonstration of such synergies could also be favoured when selecting proposals. This would have to be applied with care, in order to avoid the concentration of funding on a few high-performing institutions. The European Commission might envisage protocols which encourage synergies without making this a first-order requirement, thus avoiding the twin risks of penalising innovative initiatives and accentuating the bias towards the dominant HEIs.

42 RESeaU Méditerranéen pour l'Employabilité

43 Professional Standards Framework for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Lebanese Universities

44 Refugees Education Support in MENA Countries <https://www.rescuerefugees.eu/>

Transitioning from Partner to Programme Country: the case of Serbia

The unique case of Serbia offers a different way of looking at the concept of impact. Serbia has recently transitioned from being a Partner to a Programme Country.

While participants lamented not being able to benefit from CBHE in the same way, it was also pointed out that Serbia had become an attractive partner for a number of actions for which it was now eligible: Knowledge Alliances, Strategic Partnerships, etc. The impact of previous CBHE projects had contributed to this process. In the words of a Serbian Focus Group participant: "CBHE projects have been critical for raising the visibility of Serbia in Europe and pushing Serbia into the EHEA."

Nonetheless, it was also stated in the Focus Group that it would be beneficial to have a sort of 'transitional' status. Many universities still needed the Capacity Building projects and would also still need equipment (which they cannot purchase as Programme Country partners). As mentioned previously, it was observed that CBHE had lost some relevance when Serbia became a Programme Country. It continued to be an important action in the context of Western Balkan cooperation (Serbia was now helping to build capacity in its neighbours) and for reputation-building abroad, but the institutional relevance of the projects seemed to have diminished. It was suggested that more thought should be given to how to incentivise Programme Countries, not just those in transition, but also long-established EU Programme Countries that seemed to have partially lost interest in the CBHE action, notably due to the limited financial compensation (and the limitations on staff rates that the grant rules specify) and high management load required.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

1. Indirect, intangible and unexpected impacts: An important feature of higher education capacity building Structural Projects

The study revealed a number of concrete outputs of CBHE projects that have generated tangible structural impacts, at both national and institutional levels. Numerous examples were cited in this report, however, the most noteworthy, categorically, have included:

- ◆ The establishment of a national quality assurance system, characterised by a national QA agency which has been capacitated in line with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ESG), and the corresponding development of QA Units or Centres within HEI;
- ◆ The development of new national and institutional strategies for internationalisation, accompanied by guidelines, procedures and tools for student mobility, internationalisation at home, teaching in English and in other foreign languages, and student services;
- ◆ The passage of new legislation related to higher education autonomy, funding, student admission and examination, recognition of foreign degrees and qualifications, degree structures and credit systems, recognition of on-line learning and research and innovation;
- ◆ The establishment of centres and incubators for innovation, technology transfer and university-industry cooperation and related national networks and frameworks;
- ◆ Digital preparedness, in the form of national platforms for MOOCs and distance education and university ICT infrastructure;
- ◆ Compliance with and implementation of the Bologna Process (encompassed in some of the above-mentioned points).

Equally noteworthy were a number of **intangible impacts**, such as

- ◆ Change in mindsets and international openness of teaching staff;
- ◆ Human resource training and continuing professional development of university administrative and teaching staff;
- ◆ International visibility, attractiveness and connectivity of the higher education sector;
- ◆ Capacity to generate and manage new projects and operate in international networks.

It is important to note that many of the 'impacts' cited above correspond rather to what would be considered as an output: a new law, structure, centre or strategy. The impacts of such outputs are often not measurable at the time of the project closure. Measurement of impact has reportedly been a relative weakness of both the E+ CBHE action and of the beneficiary countries, Ministries and participating institutions. This can to some extent be attributed to the lack of capacity and resources of the beneficiary institutions and countries but is also a natural consequence of the programme design and monitoring, which tends to favour project assessment during the project lifetime as opposed to longitudinally, after the project closure.

2. Project impact over time

It was repeatedly stressed that project impact can only be assessed over time. This requires ex-post assessment, which can indeed be undertaken at a decentralised level by the beneficiaries (although often it is not), but should also ideally be done by the project consortium, the E+ Programme and the EC/EACEA itself. The NEO and the national HERE Team could play an important role in ex-post project assessment.

Relatedly, the study results reiterated the view that **projects are part of a medium to long-term change process**. Tempus projects were repeatedly mentioned as important precedents. Many Focus Group participants recounted their personal journeys through the Tempus programme and the CBHE action, tracing how their institutions' internationalisation, research or teaching and learning capacity had grown over time, attributed to a large extent to different projects. This was also clear at the level of national legislative change: numerous countries had been building their quality assurance systems gradually through Tempus and E+ CBHE projects, for example. In some cases, Tempus projects were the testing ground for initiatives that were later rolled out in CBHE projects. In addition, Tempus projects allowed some countries to establish certain conditions (both in mindset and project management capacity, but also in terms of prompting initial changes in laws regarding university autonomy or, for example, inspiring national HE strategies and benchmarks) to later implement deeper structural changes.

In this sense, impact assessment must be conducted **longitudinally**: prior projects and programmes must figure in the assessment, as well as **other factors that influence the change process** (for example, adherence to the Bologna Process, geopolitical considerations related to the political and economic relations of the EU with Partner Countries, and the role of other donors and partners). Both tangible and intangible outputs must be weighted accordingly. This includes the extent to which institutions build capacity in project management and coordination, the extent to which national policy actors engage consistently over time and build institutional memory, and the ability to attract and generate further funds for sustaining results. The case of Serbia, which transitioned from being a Partner to a Programme Country, is an interesting illustration of this.

Finally, it is clear that projects may also generate the **capacity to face unexpected challenges**. This is, once again, not measurable at the time of project completion. The most vivid example for this study is that numerous Partner Country institutional representatives and Ministries felt that Tempus and E+ CBHE projects on the theme of digitalisation and e-learning had better prepared them to confront the current global health pandemic, as well as to implement online teaching in a more democratic, rapid and robust manner in Spring 2020.

3. Recommendations

A number of important recommendations for improving the structural impact of the CBHE action can be generated from this study. They pertain in large part to how projects are designed and aligned with policy priorities, who participates in them and how synergies are established, as well as how longer-term assessment is undertaken:

Recommendation 1: Ministry participation and engagement must be better incentivised and monitored at the programme level in order for it to be systematic and meaningful.

Commitment from national authorities is critical for SP projects and their longer-term impact at system level. Yet there was a general consensus that Ministry turn-over and/or lack of consistent engagement is problematic. This is particularly true when there is a government change and/or staff involved in the project is of a lower rank. The extent to which one project coordinator can control and influence the stability and consistency of the Ministry participation is minor if not negligible.

Ensuring more systematic and meaningful participation of the Ministry and national authorities could entail (a) designing a stronger feedback mechanism for the Ministry at the project preparation stage, (b) creating more explicit modalities by which the Ministry can co-finance a SP, (c) designing a specific monitoring mechanism for Ministry engagement, (d) imparting greater flexibility in the programme, to bring in new 'structural' actors into the formal partnership, should the Ministry engagement wane (e.g. a different Ministry, a relevant national agency or potentially a regional authority), or (e) designing a risk-management plan at the stage of the project application, which would target different scenarios for decreased or changing Ministry engagement such as might be brought about, for example, by a change of government.

Recommendation 2: As an alternative to the mandatory participation of the Ministry of Education, the programme could allow project consortia to formally include the national and regional authorities and structural actors who are most appropriate to achieving the objectives of the project.

The Ministry is an important participant in structural reform in most instances - and, indeed, under the regulations of Erasmus+ 2014-2020, it was required to be a formal project partner. However, it was found that in some cases, this requirement can be too rigid and impede or delay the submission of strong projects with a structural nature. More flexibility may be desirable, depending on the national system, given that some countries are more decentralised, or potentially because the central Ministry finds legal problems with signing onto an EU project grant as a full partner.

Most importantly, the project application should ultimately demonstrate how the relevant authorities were engaged in the project preparation, how they will be involved in the project, and how they may potentially co-fund. This should take precedence over the formal participation in the project consortium that is contracted for the purposes of the grant.

Recommendation 3: EU and Partner Country Ministries should look again at the process of priority setting for CBHE projects, with a view to (a) favouring existing EU, Partner Country, regional and international strategies and commitments, (b) clarifying for applicants how priorities were set, in which policy context and how they will be evaluated during project selection.

While it was felt important to have priorities to guide the applicants, previous CBHE priorities may have been too binding, static or insufficiently accommodating of international policy processes (Bologna Process, SDGs....). Allowing 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.

It will also be worth considering framing the CBHE action within current EU policy priorities for the Neighbourhood, as well as within overarching EU strategies related to development (the Green Deal, for example), or the global dimension of the European Education Area, as opposed to inventing new priorities for one specific funding action. It will be important to find a balance between providing a guiding framework for proposal selection, ensuring relevance both to Partner Countries and the EU, and affording the HE sectors in Partner Countries an opportunity to judge what it deems relevant at different points in time.

Recommendation 4: National Structural Projects that incentivise collaboration between diverse HEIs should be emphasised in the forthcoming Erasmus+ programme.

Projects that tend to have a more inclusive approach, bringing together institutions of different missions and capacities in the same country, were cited as having more impact at system level and also as fostering more cooperation amongst institutions *in the same country*. This is a unique feature of the CBHE action and should continue to be emphasised in Structural Projects.

Recommendation 5: The EC should explore ways of bringing national and multi-country projects into a more productive relationship, rather than treating them as discrete funding opportunities.

Maintaining the possibility to have both national and multi-country SP is important. Multi-country projects allow Ministries and authorities in Partner Country Regions to work together, exchange practice and benchmark. They are also important for achieving regional objectives, such as in the Western Balkans. However, multi-country SP may not be as efficient for generating national reforms, given that some of the efforts are diluted in managing an international consortium with diverse systems and Ministries. Applicants should understand that the objectives and methodology of the project need to be reinforced by either its multi-country or national dimension. The proposal selection should ensure an added value of the multi-country nature of the project in achieving its goals. The EC should also consider how to

best allocate SP funding (national versus regional/multi-country) in a way that favours the achievement of longer-term impacts on the HE sectors of Partner Countries and Regions. One possibility may be for a project to operate as a national project in first instance, and then be eligible for a follow-up grant or measure to disseminate or exploit results in a more international or regional partnership (or vice-versa).

Recommendation 6: Further incentives for the participation of EU partners should be built into the CBHE action

The connection with the Programme Country partners was deemed critical for the success of projects and for their added value. This characteristic provides an important framework for supporting change: it forces university staff and leadership to look beyond their own institutional walls, at practices both in other universities in their own country and internationally. It is also a tool of soft diplomacy for the EU and helps to promote academic and civic values. However, the study suggested that CBHE projects - and specifically Structural Projects - may be less attractive among Programme Country partners (compared to previous programmes like Tempus) and/or their active participation in projects seems to have declined (despite the fact that the number of applications received per year has steadily increased). As such, it is worth considering how to promote and incentivise Programme Country participation⁴⁵. This could include reducing some of the bureaucratic management burden and project administration and potentially cross-promoting CBHE projects with other strategic, highly visible EU-funded actions, such as the European University Alliances. Specific attention could be given to how to motivate EU partners and other relevant actors to participate in Structural Projects in particular.

45 The CBHE Structural Impact Study provided some evidence that Programme Countries found the action less attractive compared to previous programmes. These results align with a recent EUA survey of its members (EUA Mid Review Report), which showed that the majority of institutions that replied (73%) would continue to apply for CBHE in the future, but 38% were not sure whether it is worth the time and effort, given the low/inappropriate staff funding ceilings and the low selection rate. <https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/eua%20membership%20consultation%202016%20mid-term%20review%20of%20erasmus.pdf>

Recommendation 7: A 'transitional' status, at least in terms of the project funding rules, may be helpful for countries that have transitioned from being a Partner to a Programme Country.

The case of Serbia provides an interesting example, as in some ways the HE sector is prepared to participate as a Programme Country in the EU programmes, while in other way, the benefits of being a Partner Country are still required. Providing a transitional status would help to incentivise universities to continue to participate and to coordinate, while still meeting some of their capacity development needs. This could include permitting the HEI to purchase equipment where justified and also continuing to allow SP that would benefit those countries in transition.

Recommendation 8: Partner Country coordination should be more highly valued in project selection, as should the way in which the project intends to transfer capacity in project management from Programme to Partner Countries.

The ability of universities from the Partner Countries to be coordinators and 'writers' of proposals is very important for generating ownership and relevance. The capacity to write and manage projects has evolved over time and should also be seen as an impact in itself. Shifting the focus from being 'recipients' to being initiators of projects is hence critical. In many Partner Countries, only a few universities have developed expertise in navigating the complexities of writing an E+ CBHE proposal and the administration of managing it. Partner Country Coordination could be more highly valued in the proposal selection. Applicants could also show, as part of their project management methodology, how capacity to collectively manage and administer projects is built in the Partner Country partners throughout the course of the project, so that they may lead in the future.

Recommendation 9: CBHE could be better connected to mobility projects (ICM), Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, EU Research projects (Horizon) and other actions.

Impact can be amplified if synergies are established between different EU funding mechanisms and with other donors and partners. This principle is widely accepted, but seldom implemented systematically.

Demonstration of such synergies could also be favoured when selecting projects and also during monitoring. The award of extension grants could be a possibility and made conditional on the mobilisation of synergies (see recommendation 11 below).

Recommendation 10: A more flexible provision of funding and project duration could help the CBHE programme respond to a wider range of purposes, enhance participation of structural actors and stakeholders over time, and also build the quality, sustainability and visibility of outcomes.

There should not be a one-size-fits-all approach to the grant length and amount. Smaller projects (of EUR 500,000 or less and of 1-2 years) should also be possible, as start-up projects, pilots, or possibly national projects that are later scaled-up to be international.

Administrative flexibility, and the lightening of some of the heavy project administration tasks should also be thought through for the next programming period. A heavy administration burden does not only dissuade both Programme and Partner Country institutions from coordinating projects but can also distract staff resources from project implementation and dissemination.

The project partnership should be able to accommodate and incorporate, in an administratively light way, new structural actors along the way. Structural Projects are constantly evolving and require flexibility and adaptability in order for structural impacts to be optimally achieved. This not only pertains to the Ministry involvement, but also to the consortium itself. A structural impact may be better achieved if a consortium has the possibility to formally engage new structural actors along the way, as the exploitation and sustainability dimensions of the project evolve along with the policy context

and conditions. This consideration should be accommodated in the grant agreement and even encouraged, if the project illustrates and defends the importance of this in terms of impact achievement.

Recommendation 11: Competitive extension grants should be introduced into the CBHE action as a means to enhance dissemination and exploitation and consolidate structural impacts.

Three-year projects are usually not sufficient to consolidate and exploit project results. A portion of the project grant (12-15%) could be reserved for an optional grant extension, dedicated specifically to intensifying exploitation and dissemination (e.g. upscaling, mainstreaming, etc), only to be released if the partnership demonstrates that it has met the project objectives and produced the main outputs and is also contributing to current EU strategy objectives, such as those outlined by the recent Communication on European Education Area (EEA) and its 'global dimension'.

Alternatively, a portion of the E+ CBHE action funding could be reserved for smaller 'Dissemination and Exploitation Grants', for which ongoing or recently completed projects could apply. Demonstrating synergies with other programmes and initiatives could be a criterion for selection.

Recommendation 12: The 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.

The NEOs accumulate memory of project impacts over time and can provide a platform to exploit project results and synergies at national level. In addition, they may capacitate HEIs and other actors to prepare and manage projects and provide constant programme feedback to the EACEA and the EC. They can also lead national impact studies, in conjunction with the HERE Team, which examine the collective impact of different funding actions.

Recommendation 13: The HERE, or a similar type of network, have the potential to support the development of projects, promote synergies and assess impact in Partner Countries. In this sense, the EC and E+ programme should consider further financing for such an action.

In most countries examined by this study, the national HERE Teams have been very active and have played an important role in the CBHE programme: their work has inspired project ideas, development and implementation, as well as the dissemination and application of project results at all levels including the national level. It is clear that they have made a significant contribution to impact enhancement, policy development and system change. The focus groups that included HERE and the interviews with NEOs conducted for this study provide ample testimony of this, in respect of their knowledge and expertise, their role in national and institutional frameworks and ecosystems, and the active commitment of individuals and teams.

Any continuing or future approach should consider how to make best possible use of this important resource, as an important factor of policy change and systems development. It should also consider how to deploy this resource in monitoring activities: NEO and HERE are close to projects and policy actors 'on the ground' and hence could play a role in ensuring consistent national monitoring, beyond what the E+ programme and the EACEA provide. Hence, a contribution of HERE to monitoring could be considered, e.g. as members of monitoring teams.

This would align with established good practice of other national and international donor organisations active in higher education, which involve stakeholders and alumni in active meaningful roles and in a systematic fashion in the development and implementation of their programmes and their assessment. This involvement helps to enhance ownership, strengthen capacity for monitoring in Partner Countries, and also to rebut any accusation of paternalist or foreign attitudes.

Recommendation 14: A more regular, systematic CBHE assessment at project and action level would provide a useful contribution to the overall impact on the Partner Countries. Together with similar assessments from other actions under Erasmus+ and other EU programmes (Horizon), this could contribute to the EU's strategy development and assessment in view of the global dimension of the EEA and the ERA and provide important messages to underpin EU foreign policy and development cooperation.

The CBHE action has demonstrated a clear impact on the ability of the EU to use soft-power instruments to shape its international relations and international cooperation. Incorporating CBHE and higher education in general into an assessment of EU external relations would be important and also consistent with the stated objectives of the European Education Area and its global dimension. In the same vein, CBHE should be included in an assessment of EU international research collaboration strategies, given the extent to which the action has generated research capacity in HEIs and in HE systems. While the action does not fund research *per se*, it certainly aims to build research capacity. This should be considered in the forthcoming Communication of DG Research on a global strategy for research and higher education and youth. Impact assessment should not be done in a one-off or programme-isolated manner only, as a number of EU education and research funding opportunities may be operating in a Partner Country, potentially reinforcing one another over time.

6. Areas to be explored in the future studies

Finally, there are a number of areas that were not part of the Terms of Reference for this study, but which should be further explored in order to better assess the complex area of structural impact, in the context of the E+ programme in the EU Neighbourhood Region, as well as beyond, globally:

1. This study has not considered impact **assessment beyond the European Neighbourhood Region**. The 'former Tempus' countries are in a unique position for three reasons:
 - ◆ They benefitted from the Tempus programme, which also offered SP. This helped to prepare them for the CBHE, but also for other E+ actions. Relatedly, many of them also participate directly or indirectly in the Bologna Process.
 - ◆ The NEO and the national HERE Teams can be important in systems with weak structures of institutionalised communication between Ministries and the HE sector and a limited international exchange cooperation capacity. However, even in systems which do not face these challenges, they can ensure visibility and focus attention on CBHE and, generally, on E+ and its priorities.
 - ◆ The ex-Tempus countries have received higher amounts of funding under the E+ CBHE action in comparison with countries in other regions of the world. In this sense, it would be important to assess which conclusions from this study might be generalised to other regions.
2. In the course of the research conducted for this study, it was found that several Partner Countries are either planning or now launching **national level impact assessments of EU projects** (Israel, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina). It would be important to juxtapose these study results and look at their respective methodologies.
3. It was consistently mentioned in the surveys and Focus Groups that there is a lack of **longitudinal assessment of impact at the level of secondary beneficiaries** of CBHE projects, for example employers and new graduates. Tracking studies/career development of students, staff and employers that have participated in projects and benefited from their outputs would be important for future impact assessments, potentially best conducted at the national level, facilitated by NEO and HERE Teams, with comparable methodologies.
4. Serbia was an interesting case study for a country that had transitioned from being a Partner to a Programme Country. **Longitudinal EU project impacts in transitioning countries** (Partner to Programme Country) could be another avenue of exploration, especially as it is intended that other countries in the Western Balkans will graduate to Programme Country status.
5. **Impacts of the CBHE on Programme Country partners** has not been systematically assessed. In order for the programme to remain attractive to Programme Country HEIs, this should be seriously considered.
6. As mentioned in the recommendations, the **CBHE action should be regarded as an important factor in the assessment of EU external relations**, as well as in the evaluation of the European Education Area and its global dimension, and in the **EU international research collaboration strategies**.

Annexes

Annex 1 Partner and Coordinators Survey

Survey on Impact of Structural Projects (Coordinators and Partners)

This survey is part of a study to assess the impacts of Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) action in Partner Countries⁴⁶. The study will produce a series of conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis of empirical data. The data will be collected through different means:

1. Surveys on project partners and on Ministries⁴⁷ in Partner Countries
2. Focus groups in a selected number of Partner Countries and interviews with project beneficiaries.
3. Analysis of project reports
4. Individual selected semi-structured interviews with NEOs/Ministries/ project partners

This survey is intended to assess the impact of individual Erasmus+ CBHE 'Structural Projects' from the perspective of Partner Country institutions and project Coordinators. The survey refers specifically to Structural Projects selected for EU funding in 2015 and 2016. However, respondents will have the opportunity to mention important 'Joint Projects' that they feel should also be taken into account for this impact study.

⁴⁶ The Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2020 makes explicit reference to project impact: "The proposal is likely to have a substantial impact on the capacities of participating organisations (notably higher education institutions) in the eligible Partner Countries, in particular on the development and modernisation of higher education, to assist them in opening themselves up to society at large, the labour market and the wider world and to support their capacity for international cooperation; The proposal will produce multiplier effects outside the participating organisations at local/regional/national or international level. Measures will be put in place to assess the effective impact achieved by the project".

⁴⁷ Normally Ministries of Education responsible for 'Higher Education' in the Partner Country

Please note that Ministries of Education in the Partner Countries will receive another survey assessing the overall systemic impact of the Erasmus+ CBHE action in their countries.

All data received via the questionnaire will be aggregated and anonymised before including the results in any publication. All information collected about you personally will be kept confidential.

Survey structure:

Section 1: General Information

Section 2: National level Impact

Section 3: Institutional level impact

Section 4: Specific questions for project coordinators

SECTION 1 - GENERAL INFORMATION

5. Are you a coordinator or a partner in the CBHE project?
(coordinators will fill out some additional questions at the end)

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No

6. What type of institution are you?

- ◆ Higher Education Institution (HEI)
- ◆ Association of Universities
- ◆ Company
- ◆ National Agency or regulatory body
- ◆ Vocational training institution
- ◆ NGO
- ◆ Other (open)

7. Name of project (drop down list of projects)

(Institutions that have been involved in several structural projects may be asked to fill out this survey for the other projects as well)

8. Main focus of the project (select all items below that apply)

- ◆ Teaching and learning
- ◆ Quality assurance
- ◆ Recognition
- ◆ Qualifications frameworks
- ◆ Social inclusion
- ◆ Employability
- ◆ ICT/e-learning
- ◆ Internationalisation
- ◆ Mobility

- ◆ Governance and management
- ◆ Funding
- ◆ Research and innovation
- ◆ Lifelong Learning
- ◆ Other (open text)

9. What was the perceived level of involvement/contribution of your institution in the project? (rate on a scale: Little to no impact, medium impact, high to very high impact)

10. What was your role in the in the project? (select all items that apply)

- ◆ Main actor in the coordination of the project
- ◆ Part of the project management team
- ◆ Leader of a work package
- ◆ Involved in all or most project activities
- ◆ Involved in some project activities
- ◆ Part of the quality committee or quality work package
- ◆ Other (please explain)

11. Structural Projects require that the Ministry of Education⁴⁸ be a full partner in the CBHE project. How engaged have the ministries been in your partner countries/your country?

- ◆ Very engaged in the implementation and in the dissemination of results
- ◆ Primarily engaged in the dissemination of results, but not the implementation
- ◆ Moderately engaged
- ◆ Poorly engaged

⁴⁸ Or the Ministry responsible for Higher Education

12. In which ways did the Ministry provide an added value to the project? (click one or more) (optional question*)

- ◆ Steering
- ◆ Mainstreaming
- ◆ Dissemination
- ◆ Coordination
- ◆ Sustainability
- ◆ Other (please explain)

13. Do you think it is important for Ministries of Education to be formal partners in Structural Projects in order to generate a structural/systemic impact of the CBHE project?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ Yes, but structural projects should be able to be awarded without the Ministry in the formal partnership
- ◆ No. (Please explain)

SECTION 2 - SYSTEM LEVEL IMPACT

14. What was the general level of impact⁴⁹ your Structural project has had at system level, if you assess it as of present? (scale)

15. Which of the structural impacts below did you expect your project to achieve at the application stage?

- ◆ Change in national legislation related to the higher education sector
- ◆ Adoption of a new strategy for the higher education sector
- ◆ Adhesion to the Bologna Process

- ◆ Adoption of other international agreements, charters or standards (such as recognition conventions, etc.)
- ◆ Reform of the funding system at national level related to higher education
- ◆ The creation of a new national structure, body, agency for support services for higher education institutions
- ◆ Reform of the national quality assurance system
- ◆ Changes in the degree and degree recognition system
- ◆ Structural support to improve higher education internationalisation (international cooperation agreements, national mobility programme, university incentivisation programmes, etc.)
- ◆ National measures to foster innovation in learning & teaching
- ◆ National measures to enable or support digitally enhanced learning & teaching
- ◆ Changes in the higher education institutions' governance systems
- ◆ Reforms in the status of higher education institutions' staff (careers, remuneration, etc.)
- ◆ Establishment of new working modes and processes between national authorities, such as the Ministry, and the higher education institutions
- ◆ Creation of a national network or association of higher education institutions or reinforcement of such a network.
- ◆ New roles and responsibilities attributed to particular stakeholder groups, such as students, employers, professional bodies
- ◆ Other (*open text*)

⁴⁹ "Impact" for Structural projects means a strong effect should be had on higher education systems and promoting reforms at national and/or regional level in the eligible Partner Countries. This should be in 1) modernisation of policies, governance and management of higher education systems; 2) strengthening of relations between higher education systems and the wider economic and social environment.

16. To which of the previously listed impacts has your CBHE Structural Project actually contributed in your country? *(rate on a scale: Little to no impact, medium impact, high to very high impact)*

- ◆ Change in national legislation related to the higher education sector
- ◆ Adoption of a new strategy for the higher education sector
- ◆ Adhesion to the Bologna Process
- ◆ Adoption of international agreements, charters or standards (such as recognition conventions, etc.)
- ◆ Reform of the funding system at national level related to higher education
- ◆ The creation of a new national structure, body, agency for support services for higher education institutions
- ◆ Reform of the national quality assurance system
- ◆ Changes in the degree and degree recognition system
- ◆ Structural support to improve higher education internationalisation (international cooperation agreements, national mobility programme, university incentivisation programmes, etc.)
- ◆ National measures to foster innovation in learning & teaching
- ◆ National measures to enable or support digitally enhanced learning & teaching
- ◆ Changes in the higher education institutions' governance systems
- ◆ Reforms in the status of higher education institutions' staff (careers, remuneration, etc.)
- ◆ Establishment of new working modes and processes between national authorities, such as the Ministry, and the higher education institutions
- ◆ Creation of a national network or associations of higher education institutions or the reinforcement of such a network.

- ◆ New roles and responsibilities attributed to particular stakeholder groups, such as students, employers, professional bodies
- ◆ Other (open text)

17. Is a Structural Project an appropriate tool and/or funding mechanism to drive change at system level? *Please explain your choice*

SECTION 3 - INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL IMPACT

18. What was the general level of impact⁵⁰ the project has had on your institution? *(scale)*

19. To which of the listed impacts has the CBHE Structural Project contributed in your institution?

- ◆ Adoption of a new institutional strategy for the development of the HEI
- ◆ Change in an institutional bye-law or protocol
- ◆ Adherence to international standards and adoption of international tools (such as those of the Bologna Process)
- ◆ New or differentiated funding at institutional level related to processes, programmes, services, etc.
- ◆ Widening access to under-represented groups (example: gender, disadvantaged students etc.)
- ◆ The creation of a new structure, body, unit or support service within the HEI

⁵⁰ In the context of the Erasmus+ programme, and inspired by the 2020 Programme Guide, impact means: A strong effect is had on the capacities of participating organisations (notably higher education institutions) of the project, in particular on the development and modernisation of higher education, to assist them in opening themselves up to society at large, the labour market and the wider world and to support their capacity for international cooperation.

- ◆ New working modes and processes that are established across faculties or between faculties and support services
- ◆ (Better) Involvement in networks or associations of HEI (at national or international level)
- ◆ Human resource capacity (academic and administrative staff) has been developed
- ◆ Other (*please describe*)

20. To what extent do you attribute the impacts which you have identified above directly to the Erasmus+ CBHE project?

- ◆ To a very large extent - The project was the primary driver of this change
- ◆ To some extent - The project helped to push this change along, though the change had already begun
- ◆ Indirectly - The project did not aim to have this impact, but the impact can be indirectly attributed to it
- ◆ To a minor extent - The project was helpful, but not the main contributor to this change
- ◆ No extent - The project did not contribute to this change as it was hoped it would

21. Have there been spin-off projects or initiatives?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No
- ◆ If yes, please explain (*open*)

22. How have project results been scaled-up or exploited?

- ◆ Other HEIs have used the project results
- ◆ The outcomes have been widely disseminated as part of a national strategy or campaign

- ◆ The project recommendations have led to further reforms at the national or institutional level
- ◆ Other (*please describe*)

23. Are there CBHE 'Joint Projects' which have also had a structural/systemic impact? If yes, please list them and explain briefly their major impact. You may list weblinks to these projects.

24. Which main changes would you recommend in order to improve the Structural Projects action? Please briefly explain

25. What other tools or funding mechanisms would you propose in order to have a systemic impact? (*Please briefly explain*)

SECTION 4 - Additional questions if you answered 'Coordinator' in Section 1

If you were acting as the CBHE project coordinator, please answer the following additional questions:

26. In the case of a multi-country project, please select the statements which you believe are true:

- ◆ The project had a strong impact in all participating Partner Countries
- ◆ The project had a much stronger impact in one or several countries as opposed to others
- ◆ There was a clear regional impact
- ◆ There was a benefit in promoting the cooperation between multiple Partner Countries.
- ◆ Do not know
- ◆ Other (*open*)

27. What were the main challenges for you during project implementation?

- ◆ Some partners were inactive
- ◆ Staff change/new government affected the ministry participation
- ◆ In order to have a structural impact, we needed to involve institutions beyond the project partnership which were not foreseen at the stage of the application nor in the budget
- ◆ Projects tend to be siloed: It is important to establish synergies between projects to ensure impact
- ◆ The rules and procedures for the E+ CBHE programme were very cumbersome, which was a burden for the coordinator and for partners
- ◆ The grant was not sufficient
- ◆ Co-funding could not be assured by all partners
- ◆ Other (please describe)

28. Based on your experience, would be interested to coordinate a CBHE project again?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No
- ◆ Maybe, if rules and procedures for the CBHE programme are revised

If you are a Programme Country coordinator please also answer the following questions:

29. How would you describe the motivation to coordinate the CBHE project?

- ◆ The project was an institutional initiative, part of an effort to strengthen the institution's strategy for cooperation for development
- ◆ The project served to develop a new presence in a country or region, in the hopes of further academic collaboration
- ◆ The project served to build upon an existing relationship in a country or region, in the hopes of further expanding it
- ◆ The project was intended to generate visibility for our university in the world
- ◆ Other (*open*)

30. What makes the CBHE action attractive for you, in particular and also in comparison with other funding schemes? (open)

Annex 2 Ministry Survey

General survey on the impact of the CBHE Structural Projects 2015-2016, from the perspective of Ministries of Partner Countries

This survey is part of a study to assess the impacts of Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) projects in Partner countries⁵¹. The study will produce a series of conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis of empirical data. The data will be collected through different means:

4. Surveys to project partners and to ministries in Partner Countries
5. Focus groups in a select number of Partner Countries and interviews with project beneficiaries
6. Analysis of project reports
7. Individual selected semi-structured interviews with NEOs/ministries/project partners

This survey addresses ministries of higher education in Partner Countries. It is intended to assess the general impact of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action. It should be answered in reference to any of the **structural** projects⁵² in which the ministry has participated.

⁵¹ Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2020, pp 167, makes explicit reference to project impact: "The proposal is likely to have a substantial impact on the capacities of participating organisations (notably higher education institutions) in the eligible Partner Countries, in particular on the development and modernisation of higher education, to assist them in opening themselves up to society at large, the labour market and the wider world and to support their capacity for international cooperation; The proposal will produce multiplier effects outside the participating organisations at local/regional/national or international level. Measures will be put in place to assess the effective impact achieved by the project".

⁵² **Structural Projects:** aimed at 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: 1) modernisation of policies, governance and management of higher education systems; 2) strengthening of relations between higher education systems and the wider economic and social environment.

All data received via the questionnaire will be aggregated and anonymised before including the results in any publication. All information collected about you personally will be kept confidential.

1. **Please list all CBHE Structural projects in which your ministry participated, awarded in the years 2015 and 2016.**
2. **Who initiated the CBHE structural project(s)?** (select all that apply)
 - ◆ Our ministry
 - ◆ Another Partner country ministry
 - ◆ National HEI(s)
 - ◆ EU HEIs (s)
 - ◆ Foreign Non-EU HEI(s)
 - ◆ Other (*explain*)
3. **Which of the impacts below did you expect the Structural Project(s) to have?**
 - ◆ Change in national legislation in or related to the higher education sector
 - ◆ Adoption of a new HE strategy
 - ◆ Adherence to the Bologna Process
 - ◆ Adherence to other international agreements, charters or standards (such as recognition conventions....)
 - ◆ Reform of the funding system at national level related to higher education
 - ◆ The creation of a new national structure, body, agency for support service for HEI
 - ◆ Reform of quality assurance system
 - ◆ Changes in the degree and degree recognition system

- ◆ Structural support to improve higher education internationalisation (international cooperation agreements, national mobility programme, university incentivisation programmes, etc.)
- ◆ National measures to foster innovation in learning & teaching
- ◆ National measures to enable or support digitally enhanced learning & teaching
- ◆ Changes in the higher education institutions' governance systems
- ◆ Reforms in the status of HE staff (careers, remuneration, etc.)
- ◆ Establishment of new working modes and processes between national authorities, such as the ministry, and the HEI
- ◆ Creation of a national network or association of HEI, or its reinforcement.
- ◆ New roles and responsibilities attributed to particular stakeholder groups, such as students, employers, professional bodies
- ◆ Articulation/cooperation of HE with other tertiary or secondary education
- ◆ Other (*open text*)

4. Which of the previously listed impacts have actually been achieved as a result of the CBHE Structural project(s) in which your country has participated? (select up to five and *rate on a scale: None to little impact, medium impact, high to very high impact*)

- ◆ **Change in national legislation in or related to the higher education sector**
- ◆ Adoption of a new HE strategy
- ◆ **Adherence to the Bologna Process**
- ◆ Adherence to other international agreements, charters or standards (such as recognition conventions....)
- ◆ **Reform of the funding system at national level related to higher education**
- ◆ The creation of a new national structure, body, agency for support

- service for HEI
- ◆ Reform of quality assurance system
- ◆ Changes in the degree and degree recognition system
- ◆ Structural support to improve higher education internationalisation (international cooperation agreements, national mobility programme, university incentivisation programmes, etc.)
- ◆ National measures to foster innovation in learning & teaching
- ◆ National measures to enable or support digitally enhanced learning & teaching
- ◆ Changes in the higher education institutions' governance systems
- ◆ Reforms in the status of HE staff (careers, remuneration, etc.)
- ◆ Establishment of new working modes and processes between national authorities, such as the ministry, and the HEI
- ◆ Creation of a national network or association of HEI, or its reinforcement.
- ◆ New roles and responsibilities attributed to particular stakeholder groups, such as students, employers, professional bodies
- ◆ Articulation/cooperation of HE with other tertiary or secondary education
- ◆ Other (*open text*)

If you selected a) change in national legislation, what type? (select all that apply)

- ◆ Revision of QA processes or set up of a QA agency
- ◆ Establishment of a qualifications framework
- ◆ Internationalisation of the HE sector strategy
- ◆ Social inclusion/access policy
- ◆ Legislation on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- ◆ Policies and agreements on recognition of studies
- ◆ Other (*open text*)

If you selected "Implementation of the Bologna Process commitments", how? (select all that apply)

- Three-cycle system put in place/reinforced
- Adoption of ECTS
- Implementation of the Diploma Supplement (DS)
- Revision of QA processes or set up of a QA agency according to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)
- Establishment of a qualifications framework
- Social inclusion/access policy
- Mobility policy or mobility benchmarks
- Other (please describe)

If you selected Changes in the national funding system for HE, what type? (select all that apply)

- Change in the tuition fee schema
- Increase or change in funding allocation in research budget (general)
- Change in funding allocation schema for HE
- Increased competitive funding/performance-based funding for HE
- Funding for scholarships for disadvantaged
- Other (please describe)

5. To what extent do you attribute the above impacts directly to the Erasmus+ CBHE programme?

- ◆ To a very large extent - CBHE was the primary driver of this change
- ◆ To some extent - CBHE helped to push this change along, though the change had already begun
- ◆ Indirectly - CBHE projects did not initially aim to have this impact, but the impact can be indirectly attributed to them
- ◆ To a minor extent - CBHE was helpful, but not the main contributor to

this change

- ◆ No extent - CBHE did not contribute to this change as it was hoped it would

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

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No, but we plan to do this
- ◆ No

7. If yes (to 6), which of the following data collection and monitoring mechanisms has been developed. (select all that apply)

- ◆ Indicators or implementation plan for new legislation
- ◆ Data on incoming international students, researchers and staff
- ◆ Monitoring/assessment of reform take-up at HEI level
- ◆ National/external accreditation and QA criteria for HEI
- ◆ National Higher Education Reform Experts help to track and assess impact
- ◆ New statistical/data collection or reporting measures put in place (to monitor student diversity, mobility, employability, etc).
- ◆ Other (open text)

8. If yes (to 7), please select with whom these measures been developed:

- ◆ The European Commission
- ◆ National Erasmus+ Office
- ◆ With Higher Education Reform Experts
- ◆ National university association or council
- ◆ National QA agency

- ◆ Other (*explain*)

9. Have there been spin-off projects or initiatives related to CBHE projects?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No
- ◆ If yes, please describe. (*open*- please provide project links)

10. How engaged has your ministry been in the CBHE projects?

- ◆ Day-to-day involvement in implementation and dissemination;
- ◆ Participation in dissemination only;
- ◆ Available for consultation and advice;
- ◆ Periodic monitoring;
- ◆ Other (*open*)

11. Do you think it is necessary for ministries to be formal partners of structural projects in order for structural impact to be generated?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ Yes, but structural projects should be able to be awarded without the ministry in the formal partnership as well.
- ◆ No

Please explain: _____

12. What measures have been taken to ensure the long term exploitation of the project?

- ◆ The project has been replicated so as to benefit more HEI/stakeholders
- ◆ Other HEI have used the project results in their own institutions
- ◆ The outcomes have been widely disseminated as part of a national strategy or campaign

- ◆ The project recommendations have led to further reforms at the national or institutional level
- ◆ Other (*please describe*)

13. Are there CBHE joint projects which have also had a structural impact? If yes, please list them (provide links if possible)

14. Please list the structural impacts (intended or unintended) of the joint projects you have indicated.

15. To which extent do you think the CBHE Structural Projects in your country addressed the pre-defined National Higher Education Priorities for the programme?

- ◆ To a very large extent
- ◆ Somewhat
- ◆ Not sufficiently enough
- ◆ Not at all
- ◆ I am not aware that there were National Priorities

16. In the next CBHE programme, would you prefer that the concept of national and regional priorities be maintained to channel the thematic focus of the applications or shall the priorities be abolished to permit a wider thematic variety in the projects?

- ◆ Maintain priorities, but revise the procedure for how they are decided
- ◆ Maintain priorities as before
- ◆ Maintain priorities, but do not exclude other strong proposals that may address different priorities
- ◆ Abolish National Priorities

Annex 3 List of projects represented amongst respondents

The following projects were represented in the Partner and Coordinators Survey:

2016 - Paving the way to interregional mobility and ensuring relevance, quality and equity of access - PAWER (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia)

2016 - ELEVATING THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MOLDOVA - ELEVATE (Moldova)

2015 - European Dimension in Qualifications for the Tourist Sector - EurDiQ (Kyrgyzstan, Russia)

2016 - Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development - SUSDEV (Russia, Kazakhstan)

2015 - Strengthening of Internationalisation in B&H Higher Education - STINT (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

2016 - Fostering Competencies Development in Belarusian Higher Education - FOSTERC (Belarus)

2016 - ENHANCEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SECTORS INTEGRATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEW SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT - ENINEDU (Russia, Kazakhstan)

2016 - Curriculum Reform for Promoting Civic Education and Democratic Principles in Israel and in Georgia - CURE (Georgia & Israel)

2015 - Towards a National Qualifications Framework for Jordan - NQF-J (Jordan)

2015 - Professional Standards Framework for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Lebanese Universities - E-TALEB (Lebanon)

2015 - QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN UKRAINE: DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASE OF ENQA STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES - QUAERE (Ukraine)

2016 - Transforming Assessment Practices in Large Enrolment First Year Education - TAP (Palestine)

2016 - Students' Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia - MILETUS (Ukraine, Serbia)

Promoting internationalization of research through establishment of Cycle 3 QA System in line with the European Agenda - C3QA (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine)

2016 - Boosting Armenian Universities Internationalization Strategy & Marketing - BOOST (Armenia)

2015 - Creative Leadership & Entrepreneurship - Visionary Education Roadmap - CLEVER (Israel)

2015 - Internationalization by Innovative Technologies - IN2IT (Israel)

2015 - Institutional framework for development of the third mission of universities in Serbia - IF4TM (Serbia)

2016 - Tunisian Network for Employability and Development of Graduates' Skills - TUNED (Tunisia)

2015 - Developing programs for Access of disadvantaged groups of people and Regions to higher Education - DARE (Israel)

2015 - Les TICE appliquées à l'expérimentation scientifique - EXPERES (Morocco)

2015 - Co-construction d'une Offre de Formation à Finalité d'Employabilité Elevée - COFFEE (Algeria)

2015 - Introduction of part-time and short cycle studies in Serbia - PT&SCHE (Serbia)

2015 - Restructuring and development of doctoral studies in Azerbaijan in line with requirements of European higher education area - NIZAMI (Azerbaijan)

2015 - Development of approaches to harmonization of a comprehensive internationalization strategies in higher education, research and innovation at EU and Partner Countries - HARMONY (Belarus, Armenia, Russia)

2016 - Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres on the Recognition of Qualifications/MERIC-Net - MERIC (Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia)

2016 - Solutions Académiques pour le Territoire Euro-méditerranéen Leader d'Innovations et Transferts technologiques d'excellence - SATELIT (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria)

2016 - Structuring cooperation in doctoral research, transferrable skills training, and academic writing instruction in Ukraine's regions - DocHub (Ukraine)

2016 - Furthering the Quality of Doctoral Education at Higher Education Institutions in Uzbekistan - UZDOC2 (Uzbekistan)

2015 - Teaching Excellence in Israel - TEACHEX (Israel)

2016 - Promoting teachers' success in their induction period - P_TEACH (Israel)

2015 - Modernisation of Institutional Management of Innovation and Research in South Neighbouring Countries - MIMIr (Jordan)

2015 - RESeaU Méditerranéen pour l'Employabilité - RESUME (Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia)

2016 - Programme Evaluation for Transparency and Recognition of Skills and Qualifications - TLQAA+ (Lebanon)

2016 - Boosting Engagement of Serbian Universities in Open Science - BE OPEN (Serbia)

2016 - Qualifications Framework as Platform for the development of learning outcomes based curriculum - QFP (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

2016 - Social Innovation for Local Indian and Israeli Communities and graduate Entrepreneurs - SILICE (Israel)

2016 - Optometry CUrriculum for Lifelong Learning through ErasmUS - OCULUS (Israel)

5 projects were not represented:

2015 - Serlous Games pour la MAintenance des infrastructures ferroviaires - ΣRail (Morocco, Tunisia)

2015 - NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS: GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS - NURSLIN (Uzbekistan)

2015 - Internationalisation and Modernisation of Education and Processes in the Higher Education of Uzbekistan - IMEP (Uzbekistan)

2016 - Apprentissage Hybride Mutualisé et Ouvert dans les Universités Marocaines - MarMOOC (Morocco)

2016 - Exploitation des Compétences et Valorisation des acquis pour une Meilleure Insertion et Visibilité professionnelles - e-VAL (Morocco)

Projects that were selected in the Ministry Survey (projects covered) were the following:

2015 - Modernisation of Institutional Management of Innovation and Research in South Neighbouring Countries - MIMIr (Jordan)

2015 - Towards a National Qualifications Framework for Jordan - NQF-J (Jordan)

2015 - Strengthening of Internationalisation in B&H Higher Education - STINT (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

2015 - European Dimension in Qualifications for the Tourist Sector - EurDiQ (Kyrgyzstan, Russia)

2015 - QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN UKRAINE: DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASE OF ENQA STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES - QUAERE (Ukraine)

2015 - Restructuring and development of doctoral studies in Azerbaijan in line with requirements of European higher education area - NIZAMI (Azerbaijan)

2016 - Apprentissage Hybride Mutualisé et Ouvert dans les Universités Marocaines - MarMOOC (Morocco)

2016 - Exploitation des Compétences et Valorisation des acquis pour une Meilleure Insertion et Visibilité professionnelles - e-VAL (Morocco)

2016 - Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres on the Recognition of Qualifications/MERIC-Net - MERIC (Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia)

2016 - Solutions Académiques pour le Territoire Euro-méditerranéen Leader d'Innovations et Transferts technologiques d'excellence - SATELIT (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria)

2016 - Qualifications Framework as Platform for the development of learning outcomes based curriculum - QFP (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

2016 - Students' Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia - MILETUS (Ukraine, Serbia)

2016 - ELEVATING THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MOLDOVA - ELEVATE (Moldova)

2016 - Structuring cooperation in doctoral research, transferrable skills training, and academic writing instruction in Ukraine's regions - DocHub (Ukraine)

Promoting internationalization of research through establishment of Cycle 3 QA System in line with the European Agenda - C3QA (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine)

2016 - Paving the way to interregional mobility and ensuring relevance, quality and equity of access - PAWER (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia)

2016 - Curriculum Reform for Promoting Civic Education and Democratic Principles in Israel and in Georgia - CURE (Georgia & Israel)

26 projects were not represented in the Ministry Survey:

2015 - Professional Standards Framework for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Lebanese Universities - E-TALEB (Lebanon)

2015 - Serlous Games pour la MAintenance des infrastructures ferroviaires - ΣRail (Morocco, Tunisia)

2015 - RESeaU Méditerranéen pour l'Employabilité - RESUME (Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia)

2015 - Les TICE appliquées à l'expérimentation scientifique - EXPERES (Morocco)

2015 - Co-construction d'une Offre de Formation à Finalité d'Employabilité

2015 - Institutional framework for development of the third mission of universities in Serbia - IF4TM (Serbia)

2015 - Introduction of part-time and short cycle studies in Serbia - PT&SCHE (Serbia)

2015 - NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS: GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS - NURSLIN (Uzbekistan)

2015 - Internationalisation and Modernisation of Education and Processes in the Higher Education of Uzbekistan - IMEP (Uzbekistan)

2015 - Development of approaches to harmonization of a comprehensive internationalization strategies in higher education, research and innovation at EU and Partner Countries - HARMONY (Belarus, Armenia, Russia)

2016 - Transforming Assessment Practices in Large Enrolment First Year Education - TAP (Palestine)

2016 - Tunisian Network for Employability and Development of Graduates' Skills - TUNED (Tunisia)

2016 - Programme Evaluation for Transparency and Recognition of Skills and Qualifications - TLQAA+ (Lebanon)

2016 - Boosting Engagement of Serbian Universities in Open Science - BE OPEN (Serbia)

2016 - Fostering Competencies Development in Belarusian Higher Education - FOSTERC (Belarus)

2016 - Boosting Armenian Universities Internationalization Strategy & Marketing - BOOST (Armenia)

2016 - Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development - SUSDEV (Russia, Kazakhstan)

2016-ENHANCEMENTOFHIGHEREDUCATIONANDCORPORATESECTORS INTEGRATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEW SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT - ENINEDU (Russia, Kazakhstan)

2016 - Furthering the Quality of Doctoral Education at Higher Education Institutions in Uzbekistan - UZDOC2 (Uzbekistan)

2015 - Developing programs for Access of disadvantaged groups of people and Regions to higher Education - DARE (Israel)

2015 - Creative Leadership & Entrepreneurship - Visionary Education Roadmap - CLEVER (Israel)

2015 - Internationalization by Innovative Technologies -IN2IT (Israel)

2015 - Teaching Excellence in Israel - TEACHEX (Israel)

2016 - Social Innovation for Local Indian and Israeli Communities and graduate Entrepreneurs - SILICE (Israel)

2016 - Promoting teachers' success in their induction period - P_TEACH (Israel)

2016 - Optometry Curriculum for Lifelong Learning through Erasmus - OCULUS (Israel)

Annex 4 Focus Group Guidelines

Assessment of the impact of CBHE Structural Projects on Higher Education systems in Partner Countries

Focus Groups: Instructions for organisation and Methodology

This initiative is carried by the SPHERE consortium (www.supportthere.org) on behalf of the EC and the EACEA in close relation to the HERE initiative.

The aim of the assessment is to analyse, through document review, surveys, interviews and Focus Groups, how Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) Structural Projects have impacted on higher education systems in the Partner Countries ('ex-Tempus' countries).

The assessment consists of the following complementary measures:

- ◆ **Online surveys** to partners of structural projects and ministries - ideally to be filled before the Focus Groups takes place.
- ◆ **National Focus Groups** to assess quality and relevance of the impact. The Focus Groups will gather a wider range of actors and stakeholders in their national context. Much contextual information is expected from the discussions. This will allow for a more in-depth, tailored, qualitative approach in specific countries where the CBHE has been transformative. The Focus Groups will be a means to further verify information received in two surveys - one of Partners and Coordinators and one of Ministries - launched in the end of June 2020. The Focus Groups are NOT intended to assess the impact of a particular project in isolation, nor to provide a comprehensive case study of one country.
- ◆ **Follow-up interview** - if required

Implementation of Focus Groups: Countries targeted

The countries to be targeted, as agreed with the EACEA, are:

- ◆ Lebanon, Morocco (Southern Med)
- ◆ Moldova, Ukraine (Eastern Partnership)
- ◆ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia (Western Balkans)
- ◆ Tajikistan, Uzbekistan (Central Asia)
- ◆ Russia

Given the recent developments with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Focus Groups may be held online. They should be organised by mid-October 2020.

Methodology of the Focus Groups

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>Surveys and Focus Groups are to assess the impact of the Erasmus+ CBHE programme at the level of countries and systems, as defined by the Erasmus+ programme guide. The Focus Group will help to better understand the issues raised in the surveys. The Focus Groups are NOT intended to assess the impact of a particular project in isolation, nor to provide a comprehensive case study of one country.</p>
<p>Length & structure</p>	<p>Each country will be asked to arrange two sessions, one after the other. Each of the two sessions will be 1.5 hours and will have different target audiences: one for immediate project partners and one for external stakeholders who have benefited from projects and can speak more generally about structural impacts. There should be a short break between the groups, so that the research team can reset.</p>
<p>Participation</p>	<p>For each of the sessions, it is suggested to have 8 participants in total. Session 1 would gather 8 immediate project participants, representing different types of organisations (universities, national agencies, student bodies, ministry..). Ideally these individuals will also have participated in the impact survey and/or have been invited to participate. They will be asked to comment on the E+ programme design as conducive for generating impact (or not) and about project precedents, follow-up, and intended versus unintended results.</p> <p>Session 2 will target 8 individuals who represent different stakeholders who have a sense of national impacts and changes in the HE system yet did not directly participate in the projects as a partner. This could include: a representative of a national agency or body related to higher education, a national higher education organisation or research centre, a relevant NGO or company, university representatives and/or leadership (in the form of academic and admin staff). The intention will be to gather perceptions on the programme from 'outside' the partnership, and assess structural impact more generally, as well as the specific national, contextual elements that may have helped or hindered the impact.</p> <p>**The two lists of participants should be suggested by the NEO to the SPHERE Team and approved by the EACEA.</p>

Approach to Session 1

Impact and assessment of the E+CBHE programme for structural purposes - 1.5 hrs

Introduction by the SPHERE Team (expectations for study, surveys, approach to FG)

1. Tour de table/introductions (*participants should present in detail their individual projects)
2. Do these projects generate change in the HE system?
 - What are the key elements of these projects (methodologically, or in terms of participation), that incite this change?
3. How are projects generated/what are the precedents?: *identification of key projects, precedents for the development and for their success, and how previous programmes may have generated projects*
4. What are the motivating factors for preparing a structural project? Who has led this process? And what are the motivations for a multi-country project versus a national project?
5. What were your expectations for the projects and how does that compare with the results actually achieved?
6. What was the impact on different types of beneficiaries? Were there intended and unintended impacts on different types of beneficiaries?
7. What have been the modes of measurement for impact and WHO has measured impact? Do you think this has been adequate to assess impact?
8. Programme efficiency and structure: To what extent did the structure of the CBHE Programme facilitate the impact and what improvements would you suggest?
 - a. Efficacy of relationship with ministry
 - b. Structural nature of the projects/ joint projects and structural im- pact?
 - c. Relevance of national priorities
 - d. d. General programme design and whether it enables structural impact

Approach to Session 2

SYSTEM LEVEL IMPACT and its contextual specificity - 1.5hrs

Introduction (to the E+ programme and the expectations for structural impact/definition of structural impact)

1. Tour de table - which projects are you familiar with and what is your general impression of the E+ CBHE action?
2. What changes and reforms can be seen as somehow linked to the projects? Were these changes already in motion? What particularities about your national HE context should be considered in assessing the projects and their ability to generate impact?
3. *Do you agree or disagree with these statements?*
 - The project activities have contributed to national or regional policies /laws/ regulations in the higher educator sector in our country
 - The projects have helped to establish or develop further external bodies/ associations/agencies
 - The projects have helped to improve the excellence/ competitiveness/ attractiveness of our country and the Higher Education institutions involved
 - The projects have introduced new management/organizational processes, practices, procedures and guidelines in universities
 - The projects produced innovative new tools and frameworks (i.e. the courses developed, services, procedures, strategies)
 - The projects generated new means of cooperation with employers and other stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, associations, civil society etc.).
 - The projects strongly involved local and national authorities and policy makers
4. What other types of funding actions or programmes could or do support structural change in HE and what are their key features?

Preparation for the SPHERE Team

The SPHERE Team will **review cluster reports** and the **E+ Results Portal**.

The CBHE Impact surveys will be conducted in the course of July. Their results will also be important for the preparation of the FG.

Preparation for participants

Participants will receive prior to the meeting:

- An agenda
- A protocol for the meeting

Logistical arrangements

The SPHERE Team will liaise directly with the NEO to organise the logistics of each group. This will include: Setting a date, agreeing to the participants for each session, formal invitation of participants, disseminating information on the meeting as well as preparatory work.

The Focus Groups will be held on the Zoom platform, which SPHERE offers. In exceptional cases where Zoom is not authorised, an alternative platform will be arranged for with the NEO.

The meetings will be recorded.

Key questions will be provided in the form of a PPT to guarantee flow.

Follow-up

The SPHERE Team will prepare an internal synthesis report. Necessity for follow-up interviews or clarification questions will be determined. The results of the FGs will be considered and incorporated in the final report of the Study.

Annex 5. Projects Referenced in Focus Groups

Projects referenced in Bosnia and Herzegovina Focus Group

- ◆ 2015 - Strengthening of Internationalisation in B&H Higher Education - STINT (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- ◆ 2016 - Qualifications Framework as Platform for the development of learning outcomes- based curriculum - QFP (Bosnia and Herzegovina) - *terminated*
- ◆ 2017 - NEXT DESTINATION BALKANS: AGRITOURISM LANDSCAPES DEVELOPMENT/LANDS 585833-EPP-1-2017-1-RSEPPKA2-CBHE-JP
- ◆ 2015 - School-to-Work Transition for Higher education students with disabilities in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia & Herzegovina/ TRANS2WORK 561847-EPP-1-2015-1-EL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
- ◆ 2019 - VITALISING ICT RELEVANCE IN AGRICULTURAL LEARNING/ 609755-EPP-1-2019-1-BA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
- ◆ 2019 - DUAL edu: Strengthening capacities for the implementation of dual education in BH higher education/ 610251-EPP-1-2019-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP

Projects referenced Lebanese Focus Group:

Tempus

- ◆ 2005 - Quality Assurance for Higher Education in Lebanon (QAHEL)
- ◆ 2011 - Towards the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency (TLQAA)
- ◆ 2012 - Innovation and Development of Academic-Industry Partnerships through Efficient Research Administration in Lebanon (IDEAL)
- ◆ 2013 - Services pour l'Employabilité et la Mobilité sous forme des Stages en Entreprises des étudiants du Maghreb/Machrek (SEMSEM)

Erasmus+

- ◆ 2015 - Professional Standards Framework for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Lebanese Universities - E-TALEB (Lebanon)
- ◆ 2015 - RESeaU Méditerranéen pour l'Employabilité - RESUME (Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia)
- ◆ 2016 - Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres on the Recognition of Qualifications/MERIC-Net - MERIC (Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia)
- ◆ 2016 - Programme Evaluation for Transparency and Recognition of Skills and Qualifications - TLQAA+ (Lebanon)
- ◆ 2016 - European project design and management in the South Mediterranean region (EuNIT)
- ◆ 2016 - Refugees Education Support in MENA Countries -RESCUE (CBHE JP)
- ◆ 2018 - The Lebanese Diploma Supplement (LEBPASS)
- ◆ 2019 - Collaborative Network for Career-Building, Training and E-learning (CONECTE)

Projects referenced in Moldova Focus Group:

- ◆ 2011- Creating Digital Network Universities in Applied Science Themes and Economics in Moldova- CRUNT (Tempus project)
- ◆ 2012 - Fostering Sustainable and Autonomous Higher Education Systems in the Eastern Neighbouring Area - ATHENA (Tempus project)
- ◆ 2015- Creating Moldovan E-network for promoting innovative e-teaching in the continuing professional education - TEACHME (Joint project)

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

- ◆ 2015 - Introducing Problem Based Learning in Moldova: Toward Enhancing Students' Competitiveness and Employability - PBLMD (Joint project)
- ◆ 2016 -ELEVATING THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MOLDOVA - ELEVATE (Structural project)
- ◆ 2018 - Towards European University Lifelong Learning Model in Moldova - COMPASS (Structural project)
- ◆ 2018 - Strengthening Research Management and Open Science capacities of HEIs in Moldova and Armenia -MINERVA (Structural project)
- ◆ 2019 - Moldova Higher Education Leadership and Management - MHELM (Structural project)
- ◆ 2019 - Setting Peer Review Instruments and Goals for Medical (health) education - SPRING (Joint project)
- ◆ 2016 - Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres on the Recognition of Qualifications/MERIC-Net - MERIC (Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia)
- ◆ 2016 - Solutions Académiques pour le Territoire Euro-méditerranéen Leader d'Innovations et Transferts technologiques d'excellence - SATELIT (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria)
- ◆ 2018 - SP - AMEL AMELioration de la formation tout au long de la vie dans l'enseignement supérieur au Maroc
- ◆ 2017 - SP - SALEEM Structuration et Accompagnement de L'Entrepreneuriat Etudiant au Maghreb
- ◆ 2015 - JP - RISE: Modernising human Resource management In South mediterranean higher Education
- ◆ 2017 - JP - INCITES- INstitutionnalisation des Structures d'Innovation de Transfert et d'Exploitation du Savoir

Projects referenced in Morocco Focus Group:

- ◆ 2015 - Serlous Games pour la MAintenance des infrastructures ferroviaires - ΣRail (Morocco, Tunisia)
- ◆ 2015 - RESeaU Méditerranéen pour l'Employabilité - RESUME (Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia)
- ◆ 2015 - Les TICE appliquées à l'expérimentation scientifique - EXPERES (Morocco)
- ◆ 2016 - -Apprentissage Hybride Mutualisé et Ouvert dans les Universités Marocaines - MarMOOC (Morocco)
- ◆ 2016 - Exploitation des Compétences et Valorisation des acquis pour une Meilleure Insertion et Visibilité professionnelles - e-VAL (Morocco)

- ◆ 2017 - SP- AUDITUM, AUDit et contrôle interne à l'Université Marocaine
- ◆ 2015 - SP - MIMIR - Modernisation of Institutional Management of Innovation and Research in South Neighbouring Countries

Projects referenced in Russia Focus Group:

- ◆ 2015 - European Dimension in Qualifications for the Tourist Sector - EurDiQ (Kyrgyzstan, Russia)
- ◆ 2015 - Development of approaches to harmonization of a comprehensive internationalization strategies in higher education, research and innovation at EU and Partner Countries - HARMONY (Belarus, Armenia, Russia)

- ◆ 2016 - Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development - SUSDEV (Russia, Kazakhstan)
- ◆ 2016 - ENHANCEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SECTORS INTEGRATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEW SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT - ENINEDU (Russia, Kazakhstan)
- ◆ 2016 - Paving the way to interregional mobility and ensuring relevance, quality and equity of access - PAWER (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia)

Projects referenced in Serbia Focus Group :

Projects referenced in Serbia Focus Group :

- ◆ 2015 - Institutional framework for development of the third mission of universities in Serbia - IF4TM (Serbia)
- ◆ 2015 - Introduction of part-time and short cycle studies in Serbia - PT&SCHE (Serbia)
- ◆ 2016 - Boosting Engagement of Serbian Universities in Open Science - BE OPEN (Serbia)
- ◆ 2016 - Students' Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia - MILETUS (Ukraine, Serbia)

CB - Also mentioned:

- ◆ Implementation of Dual Education in Higher Education of Serbia - DualEdu (SP)
- ◆ **PESHES** (Development and Implementation of System for Performance Evaluation for Serbian HEIs and System), reference number - 573820-EPP-1-2016-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

TEMPUES projects mentioned

- ◆ **FUSE** (Fostering University Support Services and Procedures for Full Participation in the European Higher Education Area), reference number - 544006-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-RS-TEMPUS-SMGR, link to the [project website](#), and to the project card on the [Erasmus project results platform](#);
- ◆ **SIPUS** (Strengthening of Internationalisation Policies at Universities in Serbia), reference number - 544538-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-RS-TEMPUS-SMGR, link to the [project website](#), and to the project card on the [Erasmus project results platform](#); link to the [project website](#), and to the project card on the [Erasmus project results platform](#).

Projects referenced in Tajikistan Focus Group:

- ◆ **Structural: PAWER** - Paving the way to interregional mobility and ensuring relevance, quality and equity of access (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia)
- ◆ **Structural: HiEdTEC** - Modernisation of Higher Education in Central Asia through new technologies (2018) (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan)
- ◆ **Joint: TACES** - Introducing transdisciplinary European studies in Tajikistan (five Tajik HEIs + three programme countries)
- ◆ **Joint: MIND** - Management, Innovation, Development (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan + four programme countries)
- ◆ **Joint: HECAFS** - HE for Central Asian Food Systems and Standards (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan + four programme countries)


- ◆ **Joint: STUTOAL** - STrengthening Network EdUcaTiOn, Research and Innovation in Environmental HeALth in Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan + four programme countries + one third country)

Projects referenced in Ukraine Focus Group:

- ◆ **Structural: QUAERE**- Quality assurance system in Ukraine: development on the base of ENQA standards and guidelines
- ◆ **Structural: DocHub**-Structuring cooperation in doctoral research, transferrable skills training, and academic writing instruction in Ukraine's regions
- ◆ **Structural:** Students' Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia - **MILETUS** (Ukraine, Serbia)
- ◆ **Structural:** Promoting internationalization of research through establishment of Cycle 3 QA System in line with the European Agenda - **C3QA** (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine)
- ◆ **MASTIS** mentioned as a joint project to be looked at

Projects referenced in Uzbekistan Focus Group:

- ◆ **Structural: NURSLING** - National Qualification Frameworks: Guidelines for Development and Recognition of Qualifications (Uzbekistan)
- ◆ **Structural: IMEP**-Internationalisation and Modernisation of Education and Processes in the Higher Education of Uzbekistan (Uzbekistan)
- ◆ **Structural: PAWER** - Paving the way to interregional mobility and ensuring relevance, quality and equity of access (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia)
- ◆ **Structural: UZDOC2** - Furthering the Quality of Doctoral Education at Higher Education Institutions in Uzbekistan
- ◆ **CLASS and MIND** mentioned as other projects to be looked at



The present study has been conducted under the European Commission's initiative "Support and Promotion for Higher Education Reform Experts" (SPHERE). The SPHERE consortium comprises the University of Barcelona (Coordinator) and the European University Association (EUA), and it provides training and networking opportunities for Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) and National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) in countries neighbouring the EU (former Tempus Partner Countries). Please access www.supporthere.org to find out more about the initiative