

EUA MEMBER CONSULTATION
A CONTRIBUTION TO
THE ERASMUS+
MID-TERM REVIEW

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings and draft recommendations



Ahead of the mid-term review of the Erasmus+ Programme, EUA conducted a consultation of its membership. The survey was open for responses from January to March 2016. In total, 218 higher education institutions from 36 countries participated in the membership consultation on Erasmus+.

On the basis of the results outlined in the present report, EUA, in close collaboration with its members, will develop its recommendations for the Erasmus+ Programme beyond 2020.

PART 1: General experience of institutions with Erasmus+

In **comparison with predecessor programmes**, i.e. the Lifelong Learning Programme and the various programmes for interregional third country collaboration, institutions appreciated the concept of a streamlined programme structure, as it provides more and better opportunities for collaboration with non-university and international partners.

However, respondents also stated that there has been no real simplification and flexibility has not improved, or at least not significantly, and the administrative burden has increased rather than diminished (65% of responses) for most actions, but particularly for Key Action 1 on student mobility.

Furthermore, there are issues with **Erasmus+ management support and tools**. However, the majority of institutions confirm that the problems do not arise from support staff at the National Agencies or at the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) – which were mostly reported to be supportive and helpful; rather they are due to cumbersome processes, complicated and patch-worked instruction architecture and support tools that are in principle welcome, but that require improvement, and should have been thoroughly practice-tested before launch.

To give some examples, respondents described the Programme Guide as being too long, yet at the same time lacking in necessary detail, which leads to the need of looking up information in other places. The push for more online-based, rather than paper-based, administration is welcome, but the different online tools and processes are not always compatible, and hence data transfers are not automated. In addition, some of these new instruments, such as the Mobility Tool - an online tool to manage Erasmus+ activities, are perceived as an improvement - but one-third of institutions found this particular tool useless in its present form.

Erasmus+ funding and funding rules are obviously an important, but very complex issue, given the differences between member states regarding their economic situations, national support for education and general social support, and national funding rules.

The overall amount of funding in Erasmus+ is insufficient, in particular for Key Action 2 programmes, which have success rates well under 20%. In addition, funding rules and conditions are regarded as

largely unambiguous, but unfavourable both to institutions and individuals. Compared to the previous programmes, cost coverage has been reduced, and lower staff cost ceilings and travel cost limits result in a higher co-financing contribution with an additional risk of ineligible costs, with consequences for participation.

For Key Action 1 (mobility), 69% of respondents found low grants an obstacle for participation, while for Key Action 2 (cooperation projects), 62% found the low ceilings for staff costs and travel problematic. This is likely to further emphasise the economic differences between European countries. At both extremes, institutions and individuals may decide against participating, though for different reasons: while some will not be able to afford participation, others will resign due to unattractive funding conditions and low cost coverage.

Erasmus+ priority areas are meant to support language diversity, ensure better equity of vulnerable groups and stakeholders from remote areas, and also refugees. But it strikes respondents that around one-fifth of institutions is not aware of the priority areas, in some countries it is up to 40%, which may be due to a lack of information, or a lack of awareness on the issues. Efforts to enhance equitable participation are laudable, but may not achieve their goals.

The response regarding the support for language learning was actually quite positive. But respondents argue that a top-up of 100-200 euros per month does not make a difference in enhancing the participation of students from remote areas and vulnerable backgrounds (special needs, disadvantaged learners, refugees etc.) in Erasmus+ mobility actions. Responses also included requests for more support for refugees.

Under the **suggestions for improvements**, universities are content with the principal structure and approach of the Erasmus+ Programme, but ask that the institutional needs and realities be better considered, as smaller and specialised higher education institutions in particular seem to face real problems. The main points made are the simplification and streamlining of administrative processes and IT instruments.

PART 2: Findings on Erasmus+ Key Actions

Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals

This action received a lot of responses in the consultation given the large number of grants for the **mobility of individuals**, which were increased under the Erasmus+ Programme, and the considerable contribution of institutions' central administrations and beneficiaries in terms of work and funding. Important advancements, such as a more flexible duration of stay, the introduction of digital applications and administrative procedures, and new programme features such as International Credit Mobility (ICM), are overshadowed by increased bureaucracy and a low number of grants under the ICM and the Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees (EMJDs). Social equity remains a critical point, given the required co-funding of individuals.

Student mobility inside Europe and to and from third countries is of key importance for students and institutions. But the administrative burden has increased, and the grants are insufficient in number and in the amounts, especially for International Credit Mobility.

While the Erasmus Charter is largely accepted, its actual benefits remain contested. The Online Language Support tool is principally welcomed, but requires further improvement.

Erasmus+ staff mobility remains an attractive and important strand, both for academic and administrative staff, with the potential to further promote mobility to enterprises. While it has been improved under Erasmus+, more flexibility and better coverage of real costs, in particular for travel, could further enhance its attractiveness.

The preparation of applications for **Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees** is time and resource intensive, whereas success rates are low. Funding for more projects over a longer duration could make EMJDs an even more attractive opportunity.

Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices

As international collaboration is of high importance for institutions, Key Action 2 is seen as a strategically important funding opportunity. However, more grants should be made available, and programme rules and procedures need to be simplified and streamlined.

Strategic Partnerships enable collaboration among higher education institutions and with other partners on themes and topics of their choosing. But more funding and more flexible funding rules are required (e.g. on staff rates and travel ceilings). In addition, decentralisation through management by National Agencies is contested as it may result in differences in the implementation of programme rules and criteria. Such national management also has a negative impact on the European and international visibility of the individual projects and the activity as a whole.

Knowledge Alliances, with their emphasis on university-industry cooperation, are in principle very much welcome. However, given the low number of grants the action should be streamlined with or even integrated into the Strategic Partnerships.

The replacement of different regional programmes with the central **Capacity Building** action is welcome, as it can develop an important and well visible instrument for international collaboration between European and non-European universities. While there is, of course, always room for improvement, the application and administrative processes seem to work well, also thanks to the commitment of colleagues at the EACEA.

However, the full potential of the action is currently hindered by the low number of grants and the restrictive funding rules which, due to rather low ceilings and limited budget autonomy, carry an unpredictable risk of ineligible costs.

Key Action 3: Support for policy reform

This action is smaller and aims at policy-level measures. The seven institutions that had actual experience with the action called for further simplification. While they confirmed the attractiveness of the action, only time will tell how meaningful the distinction actually is between Key Action 3 for policy reform and Key Action 2 for collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

The European Commission is conducting a mid-term review of the Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020, which will be carried out until the end of 2017.¹ The review formally started at the end of 2015, and will include a public consultation which is scheduled to take place in spring 2017.²

The EUA, as the representative body of more than 800 individual universities, and 33 national rectors' conferences, has continuously been involved in the discussions regarding the design and monitoring of the Erasmus+ Programme.³

In preparation for the upcoming mid-term review, EUA conducted a consultation (January to March 2016), with a focus on the overarching aims of the Erasmus+ Programme, such as streamlined programme structures, simplification, better integration of international mobility and collaboration and participation of disadvantaged groups.

The following report presents the findings of the survey that illustrate how Erasmus+ is received by institutions in different parts of Europe, what they found useful, what works well, as well as the challenges and suggestions for improvement.

It is therefore an important resource that EUA offers to all stakeholders involved in the discussions on the ongoing mid-term review. EUA itself will use the report as a basis for discussion with its members, and in particular the national rectors' conferences, in order to develop recommendations for the next generation of the Erasmus+ Programme. These recommendations will be published in the first half of 2017, in the context of the EC's public consultation.

Survey method, structure and response rates

An online survey with a deadline of March 2016 was disseminated to EUA member institutions and to EUA Newsletter subscribers in January 2016. Participation was open to all higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The survey consisted of a **main questionnaire on the institutions' general experience with Erasmus+**, and how it compares to the previous Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). The results of this questionnaire, which has received 218 responses, are presented in Part 1 of this report.

Detailed evidence on the individual Key Actions and sub-actions can be found in Part 2, which presents the results from **seven additional sub-questionnaires on specific Erasmus+ actions and programmes**. All but 36 of the respondents completed at least one, and most of them completed even

¹ Founded on article 21 of the Erasmus+ legal base: Regulation No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1478508051510&uri=CELEX:32013R1288>

² For a detailed timeline of the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_eac_014_evaluation_erasmus_en.pdf

³ For instance, EUA has consulted its membership and contributed to the discussions on the then called 'Erasmus for All': http://www.eua.be/activities-services/news/newsitem/12-10-04/EUA_contribution_to_the_European_Parliament_discussions_on_Erasmus_for_All.aspx & http://www.eua.be/Libraries/extranet/Erasmus_for_all_-_EUA_member_consultation_results.pdf?sfvrsn=0

several of the sub-questionnaires. A large number of responses were received for most of the actions of KA1 Mobility – 69% of respondents answered the section on student mobility and 56% answered on staff mobility – and KA2 Collaboration. KA3 Support to policy reforms had only seven responses, as it is dedicated to system reform and provides only a small number of grants with which not many institutions have participation experience (Figure 1).

The number of responses received relate to the level of interest and participation in the different actions of the programme, subject of course also to the amount of funding and number of grants provided. One should note that the **study loan facility**, a new action that was launched with Erasmus+ was not included in the survey as, in the period when the survey was conducted, it was just about to be launched in the first country, namely Spain.

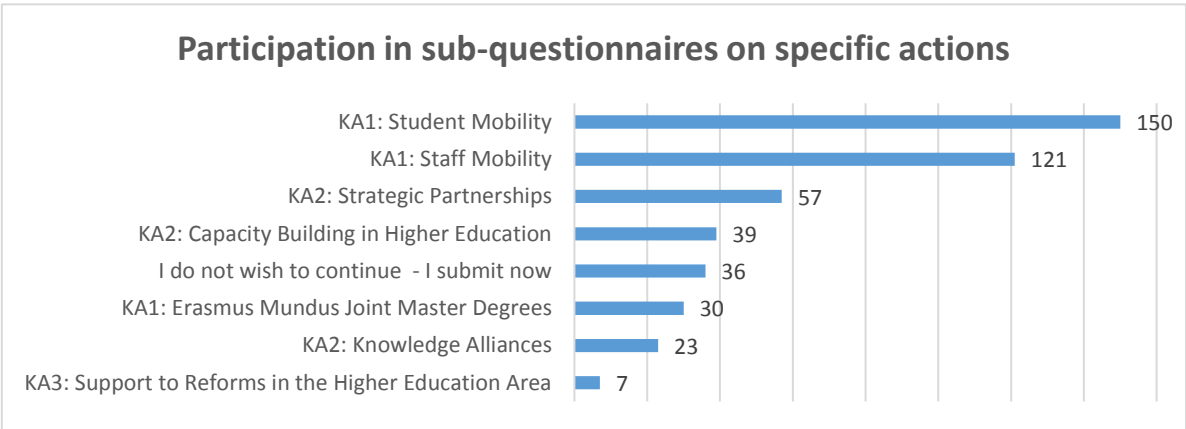


Figure 1: Depending on your interests please select actions you would like to comment on (You may of course select all, and then skip those questions you do not want to answer). (Q19)

Each multiple-choice question was followed by a comment box. In addition, at the end of each survey module, participants were asked to provide suggestions for improvements to the specific action lines.

Most respondents provided extensive comments that confirm that the responses were diligently drafted with a great deal of reflection and professional commitment. The actual comments often gave a clear description of the specific problems experienced with the implementation of actions in the specific national and institutional context. The survey responses therefore proved to be a rich source of rather differentiated and nuanced information for this report.

The composition of the sample

In total, 218 higher education institutions from 36 countries participated in the membership consultation on Erasmus+. The main contributing countries were Poland (31 responses), Germany (23 responses), Spain (22 responses), Italy (21 responses) and the UK (19 responses). One hundred and forty-nine (68%) of the survey respondents are EUA members.

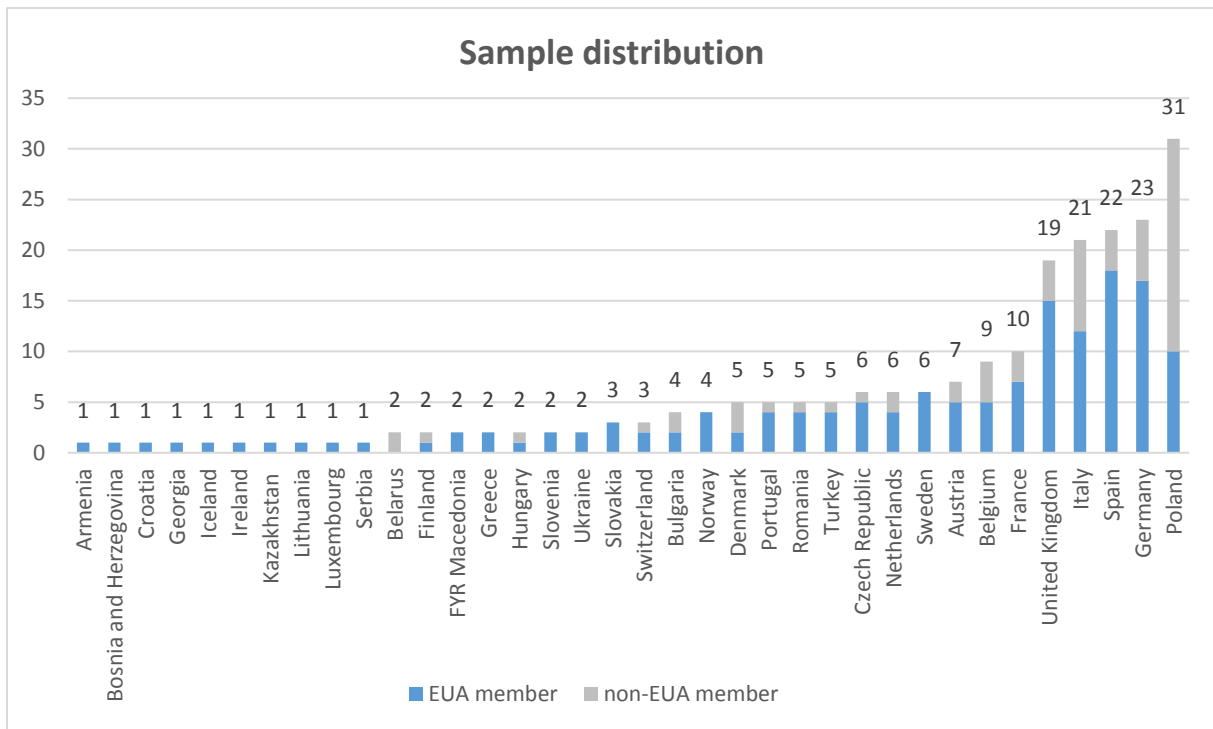


Figure 2: Please select the country in which your institution is located (...). / Is your university a member of the EUA? (Q6, Q2)

For the 15 countries with five responses or more, a **breakdown by country** has been provided for some of the questions (Figure 2): Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), France (FR), Germany (DE), Italy (IT), the Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Turkey (TR), and the United Kingdom (UK).

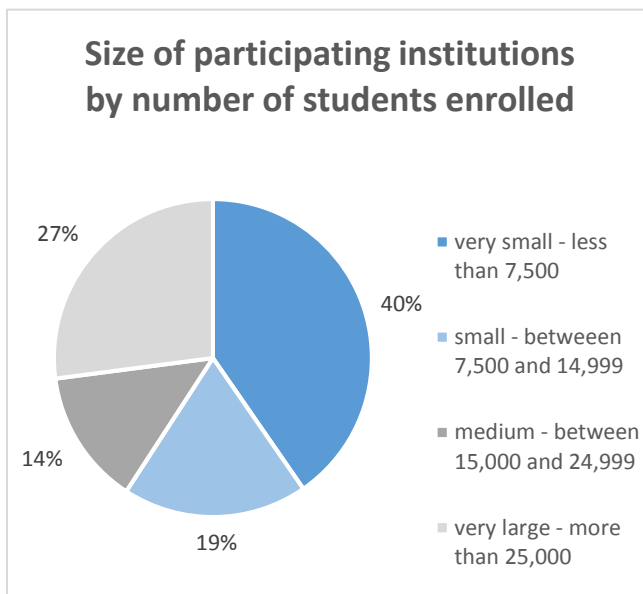


Figure 3: Size of participating institutions by the number of students

In addition, the **size of participating institutions** was considered in terms of the number of students enrolled: 59% of the responses came from very small (less than 7,500 students) or small (less than 15,000 students) institutions, but also almost a third (27%) of responses was collected from very large institutions with more than 25,000 students (Figure 3).

Sixty-five per cent of the responses came from international office staff, and a further 18% from institutional leadership (13% vice-rectors, 5% rectors (Figure 4)). Practically all respondents state that their institutions have prior experience with European Commission (EC) funding programmes – only 3% described themselves as “beginners” with no experience (Figure 5). However, when asked to compare Erasmus+ to its predecessor programmes, a small number of respondents pointed out that they themselves were new to their positions.

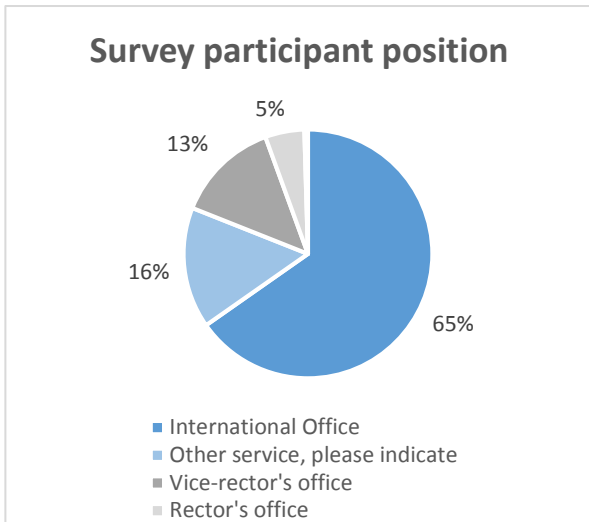


Figure 4: Where is your position located within your institution? (Q5)

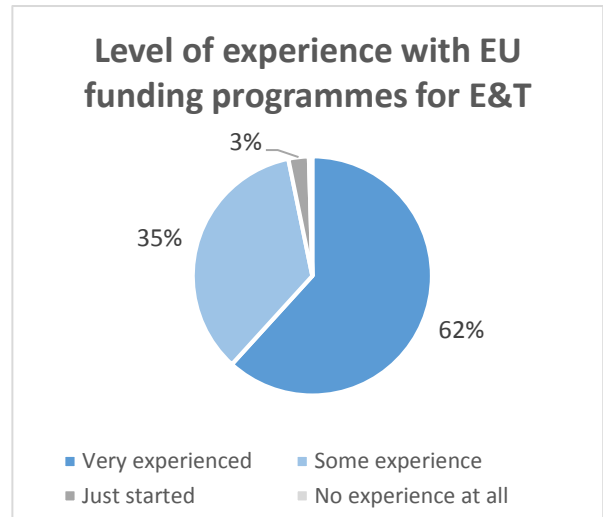


Figure 5: How experienced is your institution in using EU funding programmes for education and training? (Q7)

Many respondents expressed the reservation that their answers would be somewhat provisional, given that Erasmus+ is relatively new, no extensive experience with its implementation had yet been gathered, and rules and guidelines regarding some of the programme's actions had not yet been published at the time of data collection.

PART 1: GENERAL EXPERIENCE OF INSTITUTIONS WITH ERASMUS+

The main survey questionnaire posed questions regarding the institutions' experience with Erasmus+, and how it compares to the previous LLP in terms of the usefulness of all the actions, as well as the manageability and funding.

1. Comparison with predecessor programmes

The concept of a streamlined programme structure is appreciated as it provides more and better opportunities for collaboration with non-university and international partners. But there has been no real simplification, flexibility has not improved and the administrative burden has increased rather than diminished.

Respondents stressed that Erasmus+ offers better opportunities for collaboration and exchange compared with the former LLP (Figure 6.1). Around 55% indicated better **opportunities for mobility**, and specifically welcomed the introduction of International Credit Mobility (ICM), which facilitates mobility exchanges to and from the EU, as well as the possibility for students to benefit from several mobility stays.

Seventy-three per cent stated improved opportunities for collaboration with **partners from outside of Europe**, hence clearly endorsing the EC's approach to replace the previously existing region-specific collaboration programmes into one programme for international cooperation.

Respondents also reported improved opportunities for collaboration with **non-university partners** (industry, business, NGOs etc.), but the comments provided suggest that while institutions are aware of these possibilities, many have not (yet) applied for them. This is in line with the findings of a study conducted by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) at the request of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT):⁴ National Agencies also state that the "potential for more cross-sectoral cooperation" is a major advantage of Erasmus+, but that the take-up so far has been moderate.

However, regarding the collaboration and exchanges with **European partners**, around half of the respondents felt that Erasmus+ brought no significant changes.

⁴ Research For Cult Committee – Erasmus+: Decentralised Implementation - First Experiences, conducted by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA, 2016): [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU\(2016\)585877_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU(2016)585877_EN.pdf)

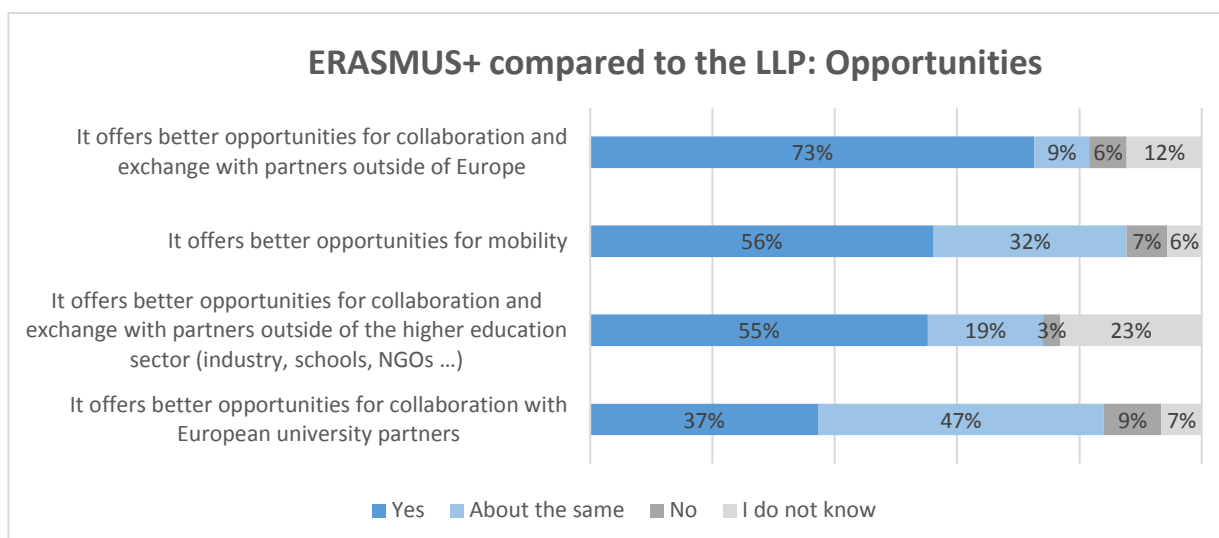


Figure 6.1: Compared to the previous Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, do you think the new Erasmus+ Programme... (Q8) – Opportunities

Simplification was one of the explicit goals of the Erasmus+ Programme. But the statements “Erasmus+ is easier to apply” and “The new **structure of the programme** makes things easier” were somewhat contested, with roughly a third of the respondents stating either “Yes”, “About the same”, or “No” (Figure 6.2).

On different questions addressing the **practicality of programme rules and structures**, 60%-80% reported no change, or even deterioration, compared to the previous programme. The responses on application processes are slightly more positive than on implementation. Feedback on the **flexibility** of the use of grants has been contested with about a third of the participants stating improvements, no change, or deterioration. But several participants noted in the comment section that flexibility in general terms has improved for some actions – for instance regarding internships, where shorter stays are now possible.

Sixty-five per cent of responses pointed to an increased **bureaucratic burden**. For most actions, but particularly for KA1 student mobility, the administrative burden was reported to have increased for the institutional management, as well as for the participating students and teachers.

“To manage the same number of mobility exchanges in the framework of the new programme Erasmus+ KA103, we have to either appoint additional staff or reduce the number of the exchange students and teachers.”

Very small institution, France

This is due to the request for larger amounts of and more detailed information, significantly longer and more complex forms, and different incompatible databases and online tools to be administered for this purpose. Their added

value in terms of enhancing the quality of the activities was also questioned.

While these complaints came from higher education institutions of all types and sizes, smaller and specialised ones especially pointed to difficulties faced by their staff (often only one person, and/or part-time) in coping with the increased workload.

As reflected in Figure 6.2, the new **programme structure of Erasmus+** also rendered mixed responses:

“The merging of the different LLP programmes and the structuring into three Key Actions helped to better understand the concept of the EC’s education programme. It makes it easier to channel the concept of a project, whether it is more mobility related, partnership related or policy related.”

Small institution, Germany

while the approach of an integrated programme was generally appreciated, many comments stated that even after two years, there is still some confusion and misunderstanding about the different Key Actions and their respective sub-actions, and the division of tasks between NAs and the EACEA. In addition, the decentralisation of an important part of the programme, the Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships, is criticised

regarding the practical implications (as every member state agency seems to develop its own approaches and procedures, often in their national language, that not all project partners speak) and loss of the European Dimension (further elaborated in section KA2.1 Strategic Partnerships).

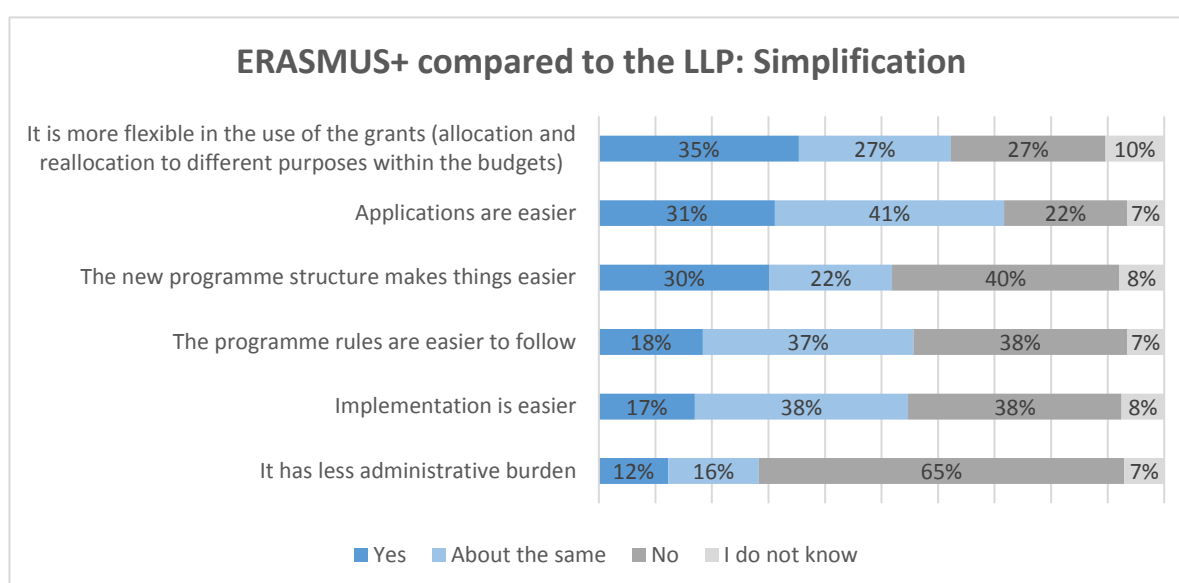


Figure 6.2: Compared to the previous Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, do you think the new Erasmus+ Programme... (Q8) – Simplification

2. Erasmus+ management support and tools

Problems in the Erasmus+ management do not arise from staff at the National Agencies (NAs) and the EACEA, but are due to cumbersome processes, complicated and patchworked instruction architecture and support tools, which are in principal welcome, but require improvement, and should have been thoroughly practice tested before launch.

Participants in the survey appreciated the work of both the NAs and the EACEA: around 90% evaluated the **support provided by their NA** as (fully or to some extent) helpful and prompt. The answers are similar on **support from the EACEA** – when excluding the one-third of “I do not know” responses⁵ (Figure 7.1).

⁵ Often, respondents would only be in direct contact with their NA, but not with EACEA.

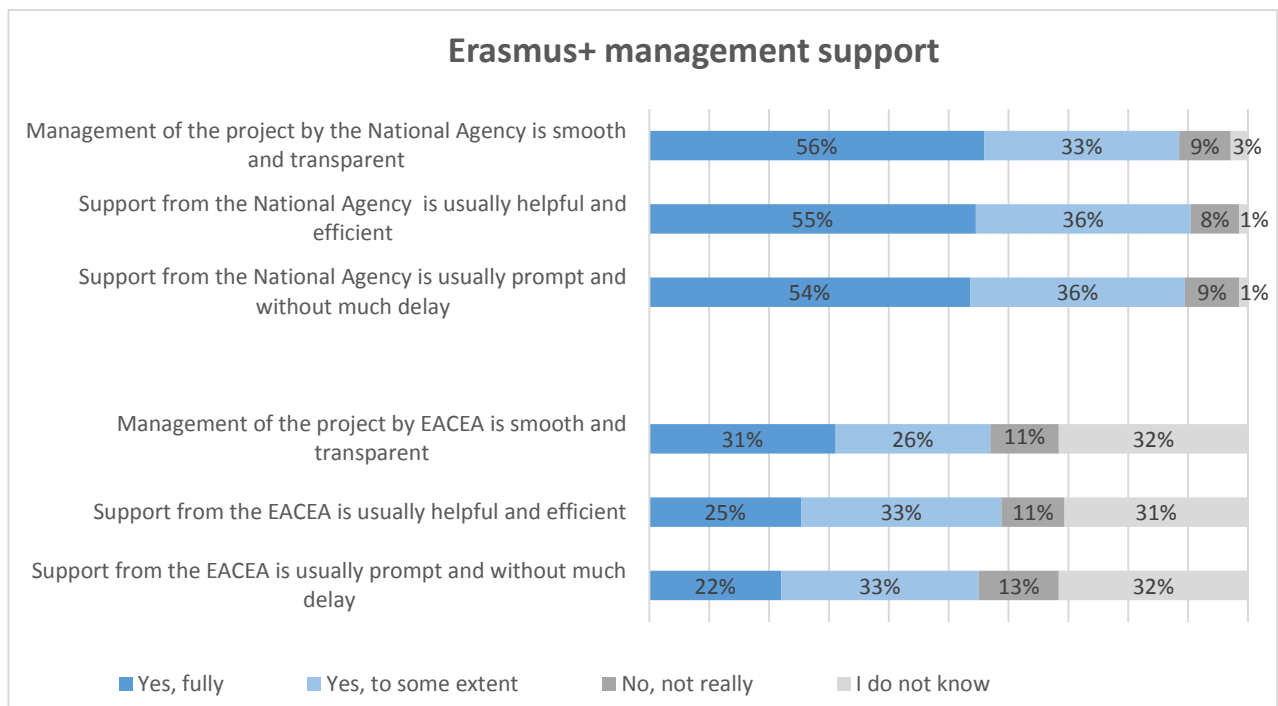


Figure 7.1: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ project management? (Q10): Support

A large number of respondents found the **Erasmus+ Programme Guide** and the newly introduced **mobility tool** “somehow useful”, and less than a quarter were fully satisfied (Figure 7.2).

Comments criticise the **Programme Guide** as being too big, yet at the same time as lacking necessary detail. The answers to more specific queries had to be searched in supporting documents or on websites. Relevant information is presented in a rather fragmented fashion, spread across different sections of different websites, including the DG EAC websites, the EC’s Education and Training website, the Erasmus+ website and the EACEA website. The Programme Guide’s lack of user-friendliness is also confirmed by the NAs, who subsequently have to handle more queries from Erasmus+ participants for clarification on regulations (ACA 2016).

There was also criticism regarding supporting information, handbooks and guidelines for specific actions that had often been released very late, at times after the participants had already commenced with the implementation.

While the **mobility tool** received a considerable number of negative responses (32%), in general it was nevertheless cited as a vast improvement compared to the approaches used in the past. However, apart from technical problems and errors experienced in its introduction phase, around a quarter of the survey participants also criticised its lack of user-friendliness: e.g. it does not communicate with other online tools such as the one used for administering the **Online Linguistic Support (OLS)** licences, and often is not compatible with the IT systems and formats that are used by the universities, resulting in staff having to enter student data twice.

“Students undertaking mobility in 2016 are likely to have been born in the late 1990s and brought up in the digital age. Their willingness to engage with analogue processes (paper forms, for example) is limited.”

Very large institution, UK

The use of scanned documents was welcomed as a major achievement, with considerable scope for improvement. Several participants called for paper-free processes, and an integrated online system, with fully web-based forms for administration and for mobile students

and staff. In addition, the NAs confirmed that a single platform for all communications would be ideal (ACA 2016).

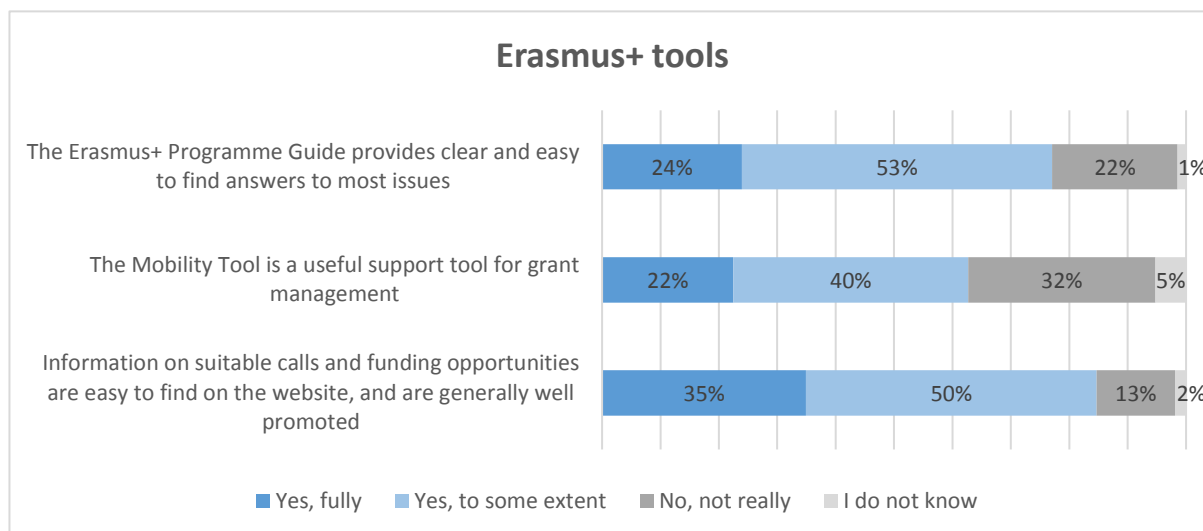


Figure 7.2: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ project management? (Q10): Tools

3. Erasmus+ funding

The overall amount of funding in Erasmus+ is insufficient. Funding rules and conditions are regarded as largely unambiguous, but unfavourable to institutions and individuals. Compared to the previous programmes, cost coverage has been reduced, resulting in a higher co-financing contribution, with consequences for participation. This is likely to further emphasise the economic differences between European countries. At both extremes, institutions and individuals may decide against participating, though for different reasons: while some will not be able to afford participation, others will resign due to unattractive funding conditions and low cost coverage.

While 92% of respondents acknowledged – fully or at least to some extent – that Erasmus+ has clear **funding rules**, one-third does not agree that the “Use of grants is flexible”, and “Financial reporting and accounting is easy” (Figure 8.1). Of general concern were the specific regulations and mechanisms regarding funding, including different **unit cost limits** and ceilings for budget items in the various Key Actions. For instance, several respondents called for streamlined unit costs across all KA2 actions in order to ease the administrative burden.

Furthermore it was criticised that for the financial management, administrators had to gather information from different sources, including for instance the Programme Guide, the operational handbook, action-specific financial guidelines, as well as grant agreements. Specific financial guidelines had been published too late, often after the grant agreements had been signed. Further streamlining and simplification would be appreciated.

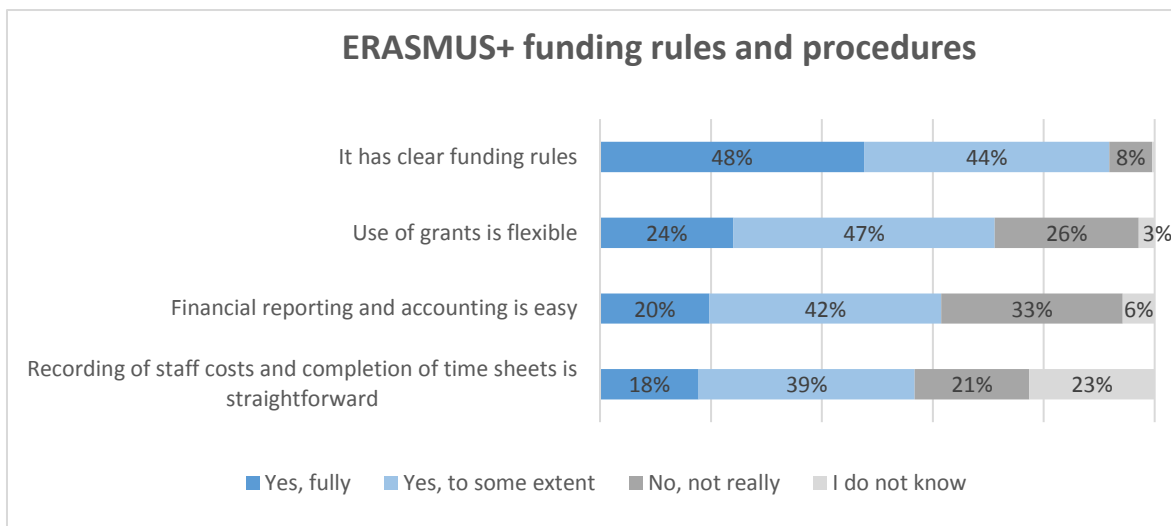


Figure 8.1: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning Erasmus+ funding rules and procedures? (Q11)

There is a strong indication that only institutions with sufficient levels of funding, either from their own additional national public or private funding (e.g. by mobile learners and teachers) can afford to participate in the Erasmus+ Programme.

Sixty-nine per cent of respondents stated that the fact that grants do not cover the full cost was an obstacle to **mobility** participation (Figure 8.3, in particular from the following countries: BE (88%), CZ (67%), ES (91%), FR (70%), IT (85%), NL (80%), PL (61%), PT (100%), and UK (78%).

In the comments section, cost coverage was underlined as an obstacle for participation of specific groups, for instance mobile students from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those not considered to be from one of the Erasmus+ priority areas, or in the case of ICM for incoming students from countries with comparatively lower purchasing power.

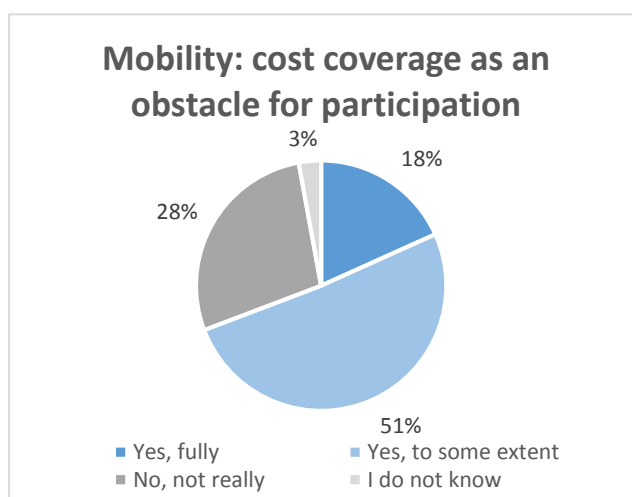


Figure 8.2: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning Erasmus+ funding rules and procedures? (Q11): Mobility: As grants do not cover the full cost, is this an obstacle for participation?

The **Erasmus student mobility grant activity** has often been criticised for contributing to social inequality as it provides partial funding to students regardless of their social situation. Under the Erasmus+ Programme, this has not significantly changed: participation requires substantial co-funding, which can result in *de facto* exclusion of students from less affluent family backgrounds.

"Students from some disadvantaged groups are simply excluded by the programme, e.g. those who have a family."

Very small institution, Italy

Erasmus+ provides a monthly 100-200 euros top-up for some groups of disadvantaged students but according to respondents, this does not help to enable the participation of those who have little private funding (see also Section 3, Erasmus+ funding). This is in principle an issue for students in all countries, although those with strong economies are in a better position to ensure social equity of their

citizens and would usually be expected to provide additional funding support for students in need. In some countries, additional funding had been provided from the European Structural Funds.

In addition, financial constraints are likely to restrict the choice of destination, due to different cost of living levels between, and within, countries: urban centres are more expensive than smaller cities, and mobility from a high-income country to a low-income country tends to be easier than the other way around. There is some evidence that Erasmus students work during their stay in high-income countries which depending on the type of work and amount of time it takes, could have negative but also positive impact on their studies.⁶ Evidently, whether a grant is actually sufficient, does not depend exclusively on the cost of accommodation. Hence, institutional measures to offer study-friendly jobs and low-cost accommodation could make a real difference. However, and in particular at institutions with many international students, providing these is not an easy endeavour.

There is no easy answer to these issues. In times of austerity, the provision of full grants from the European budgets would likely result in lower numbers of students who could benefit, or cuts in other parts of the Erasmus+ Programme, or both.

A needs-based top-up of the mobility grant could help solve the issue. However, if not provided by the EC, it will remain – as it does now – at the discretion of the individual member state. There is also the question of whether the portability of grants and loans, as reconfirmed in the 2015 Yerevan Communiqué,⁷ will help to improve the situation. However, as the 2015 Bologna Implementation Report shows, less well-off countries in particular do not provide funding for individual students at a level that would help them when moving abroad.⁸

For Erasmus+ **cooperation projects (KA2)**, 62% of respondents found that the ceilings for certain budget items and unit cost limits may hinder participation (Figure 8.2). This was especially the case for respondents from BE (88%), ES (82%), IT (80%), PT (100%) and SE (83%).

Travel cost coverage was pointed out as particularly problematic: the distance calculator – a compulsory tool to determine ceilings on international travel costs – applies ranges that are too wide (e.g. one of the bands is 500-1999 km), and prevents the coverage of the real travel cost for many destinations. The low unit cost and partial cost coverage for travel were also mentioned as conflicting between some national and institution-internal regulations.

The relatively low level of coverage for staff costs in cooperation projects was mentioned as an obstacle, especially by respondents from countries with higher income levels.

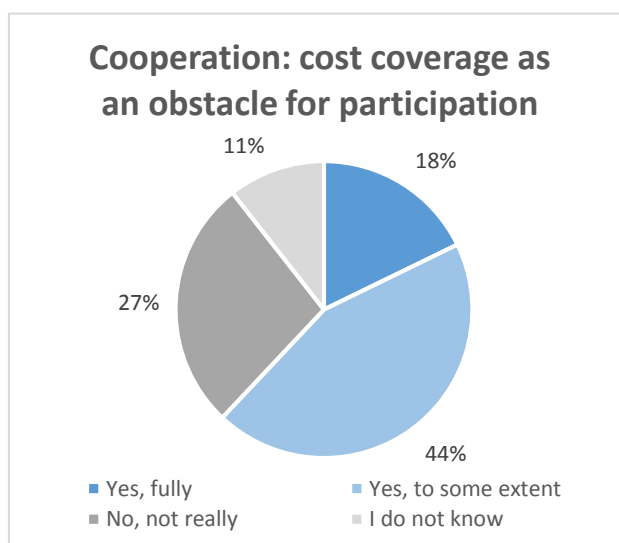


Figure 8.3: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning Erasmus+ funding rules and procedures? (Q11): Cooperation: As ceilings and allowances do not cover the full cost, this is an obstacle for participation.

⁶ The principal findings on use of external funding have been confirmed by several EUA projects and students, e.g. by the EUIMA, <http://www.eua.be/activities-services/projects/past-projects/research-and-innovation/euima.aspx>

⁷ <http://bologna-yerevan2015.ehea.info/files/YerevanCommuniquéFinal.pdf>

⁸ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015). The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report: p. 255 http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/182EN.pdf

Institutions from economically stronger countries (mainly northern and western Europe) usually enjoy a wider range of choices for external funding, also due to national programmes. They also tend to have an acute cost awareness. Participation in low cost coverage programmes such as Erasmus+ usually requires a strategic, non-financial motive, such as access to new cooperation partners, sustainability prospects, visibility, European added value etc.

Economically weak countries tend to offer no, or at least not many, national funding opportunities. In addition, universities in these countries, particularly in the EU-13, have less developed systems to identify their costs throughout the institution. This finding is in line with the results of the Horizon 2020 membership consultation⁹ that was conducted in parallel to this study.

4. Erasmus+ priority areas

Around one-fifth of institutions are not aware of the priority areas, in some countries up to 40% are not, which may be due to a lack of information, or a lack of awareness on the issues. Efforts to enhance equitable participation are laudable, but they may not achieve their goals, as e.g. the top-up for disadvantaged students.

An important question is to what extent Erasmus+ achieves its self-set priority goals, regarding supporting language diversity, and inclusion of vulnerable groups, participants from remote areas, and refugees, which are addressed under all three Key Actions.

The feedback on **languages** has been fairly positive: 28% of the survey participants found that Erasmus+ has fully achieved its priority in addressing multilingualism, and a further 52% agreed at least to some extent (Figure 9). In this context, the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) tool was considered useful for students, however at the expense of universities, as the management of its licences creates an additional administrative burden for the university staff (see also Part 2 – Key Action 1: Online Linguistic Support Tool (OLS)). Several respondents expressed their regret that the LLP's Erasmus intensive language courses (ELIC) had been discontinued.

With regard to the inclusion of **vulnerable groups and stakeholders from remote areas** (Figure 9), 62% and 55% of respondents respectively stated that Erasmus+ achieves these objectives fully, or to some extent, whereas close to 20% stated that it does not. Low funding ceilings, as well as the general socio-economic differences between countries, seem to be the main reasons. Respondents from PL and RO were particularly positive regarding the inclusion of vulnerable groups, with 74% and 100% respectively stating that vulnerable groups were at least to some extent successfully addressed. Respondents from ES (68%), IT (70%), PL (70%) and RO (60%) found that Erasmus+ supports the inclusion of participants from remote areas, but 50% of the Swedish participants disagreed.

Regarding the inclusion of students from remote areas and vulnerable backgrounds (special needs, disadvantaged learners, refugees etc.) many of the survey participants underlined that the currently available top-up of 100-200 euros per month¹⁰ hardly makes a difference for their participation in the

⁹ To be published in January 2017. <http://www.eua.be/activities-services/eua-campaigns/EUAconsultation-Horizon2020-Erasmus>

¹⁰ Eligibility criteria and level of the monthly top-up amount to students from disadvantaged backgrounds (including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants) are defined at the national level by the national authorities and the National Agencies. Mobile learners with special needs can apply for additional grant support to their NA in order to cover the supplementary costs for their participation in the mobility activities. Top-ups for students from remote areas ("outermost Programme Countries and regions") are pre-set by the Erasmus+ Programme guide. ([Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2016](#)).

programme. In order to foster the mobility of students from these groups, some universities provide additional funding from their own or external funds.

It is striking that a considerable number of respondents chose to answer the questions on remote areas and vulnerable backgrounds with “I do not know”: 18% on vulnerable groups, 27% on remote areas, and even 40% or more in some countries such as CZ, DE, NL and UK. Either they were not aware of these particular priorities of Erasmus+, or they may not be as relevant at their own institutions and surroundings.

The fact that more than half of the responses to the question on whether **refugees** were successfully addressed as a priority group for inclusion were “I do not know” (Figure 9), suggests a lack of information and knowledge, probably also because it has been introduced relatively recently as an Erasmus+ priority, and so far has been addressed almost exclusively through the cooperation project actions.¹¹ In addition, the inclusion of refugees has not been a concern for higher education institutions in all countries – at least not to the same degree of urgency – and where it was, Erasmus+ may not have been applied in this context, or it may have been overshadowed by national measures.

For those who were aware of the Erasmus+ priority group of refugees, the results show differences between the countries. Overall, only 20% of the total responses stated that this priority has been addressed fully or to some extent, and 27% responded that the Erasmus+ Programme has not addressed it. More than half of participants in FR (50%), NL (60%), PT (80%) and SE (50%) stated that more could be done at the European level.

This may also relate to the fact that with the arrival of larger numbers of refugees in Europe since the summer of 2015, both the awareness of the situation and the actual need for funding support has been on the rise. As EUA has documented through its Refugees Welcome Map,¹² also in countries with no or smaller numbers of refugees, European institutions have taken action, often by using their own funds. The EC supports collaborative projects, for instance under Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships, which currently facilitate good practice exchanges among institutions,¹³ and the Madad Fund for initiatives for refugee students in third countries.¹⁴ However currently there is no direct EU support for refugee students and staff in Europe.

When being asked for potential improvements on how to better address these priority groups, respondents proposed funding shorter-term mobility, which might be more attractive to some disadvantaged learners, and the development of targeted Erasmus+ sub-actions to better reach out to specific priority groups.

“We suggest that the EC sets up specific sub-actions to target the above priorities, rather than (including them) as horizontal priorities across the generic sub-actions, where their impact is often too limited.”

Very large institution, Belgium

¹¹ As of 2015, the inclusion of refugees has been an explicit priority in the calls for proposals and subsequent projects of KA2 and KA3. In addition, a number of OLS licences for refugees have been made available allowing them to study the language of their host country online. For further information, please visit the dedicated website of the EC: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/migration/higher-education-refugees_en

¹² <http://www.eua.be/activities-services/eua-campaigns/refugees-welcome-map/>

¹³ EUA is currently partner in the inHERE project, which based on the Refugees Welcome Map campaign will develop a good practice catalogue, provide training for university staff, and develop policy recommendations. This and other Strategic Partnerships can be browsed under: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/syria/madad/index_en.htm

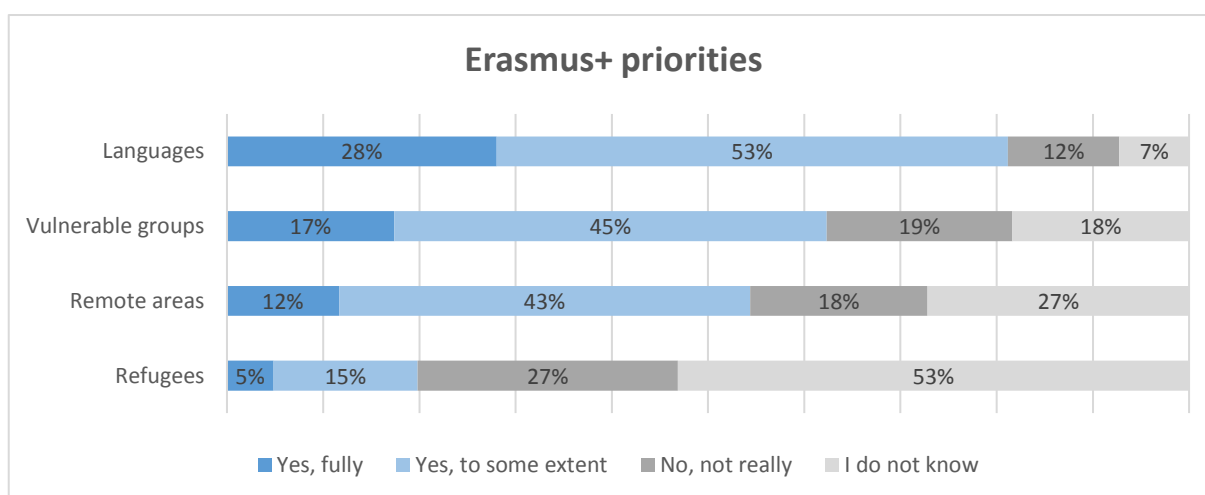


Figure 9: Do you think the Erasmus+ Programme succeeds in addressing the priorities it has set for itself regarding the following areas? (Q14)

5. Suggestions for improvements

At the end of the main survey, respondents were asked for ideas on how to improve and develop the Erasmus+ Programme, also in view of the next programme from 2020 onwards.

The suggestions confirm that universities are actually quite satisfied with the principal structure of Erasmus+, but propose to further simplify and streamline project management rules and processes, and to decrease the administrative burden.

While challenging for most institutions, smaller institutions especially point to insufficient staff and financial capacities as obstacles in participation in the Erasmus+ actions, both in KA1 mobility, but also particularly in cooperation projects. This point has also been confirmed in the Draft Implementation Report on Erasmus+ prepared by the EP’s CULT Committee (2015/2327(INI)),¹⁵ which calls for changes in order to improve the participation of small institutions. In addition, specialised higher education institutions pointed to the fact that some of the programme features and administrative processes do not align to their specific needs. For instance, higher music institutions mentioned that the application requirements for mobile music students and the selection procedure are highly competitive and involve more administrative steps than for other students. This, however, is not accommodated by the regulations of Key Action 1 - Student mobility.

Several suggestions were made for the technical improvement of the online tools, mainly to achieve better compatibility with a large number of commonly used IT database systems. In addition, it was suggested that the OLS administration and the Mobility Tool should be linked or even merged, and several respondents proposed the creation of a single web-based system that would include all steps of Erasmus+ administration and management – from application to the reporting stages, including grant management and the exchange of documents, with digital signatures and fully web-based forms. This has also been recommended by the NAs: “A reduction in the number of tools and communication platforms, as the current number is overwhelming, and the tools are not (well) connected to each other. Ideally, many NAs would welcome one single tool and communication platform.” (ACA, 2016: p. 41)

¹⁵ Draft report on the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of 11 December 2013 establishing ‘Erasmus+’: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC. [2015/2327\(INI\)](#)

Universities felt that the Erasmus+ Programme is well-intended in many ways, but is far from the institutional realities, and it was therefore suggested that the EC and the EACEA could organise focus groups with university staff who are working on Erasmus+, or even send some of their staff to the universities for job-shadowing in international offices, so as to better understand the day-to-day challenges of Erasmus+ administration.

PART 2: FINDINGS ON ERASMUS+ KEY ACTIONS

Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals

Given the large number of grants, which have been increased under Erasmus+, and the considerable contribution of institutions' central administrations and beneficiaries, in terms of work and funding, the KA1 mobility receives the highest attention in the programme: important advancements, such as more flexible duration of stay, the introduction of digital application and administrative procedures, and new programme features such as International Credit Mobility (ICM), are overshadowed by increased bureaucracy, the low number of grants under the ICM and the Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees. Social equity remains a critical point, given the required co-funding of individuals.

More than half of the 218 respondents also filled in the questionnaires on Key Action 1 student mobility (150 respondents) and staff mobility (121 respondents). There were, however, only 30 responses collected for Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees.

More than half of those who responded to the sub-questionnaires on student and staff mobility, and the Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees indicate that KA1 mobility actions have improved (fully or to some extent). But the fact that 20-30% of responses (depending on the action) state "no improvement", and 30-40% state improvement only to some extent (Figure 10), shows that there is still scope for enhancement, in particular regarding student mobility and Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees.

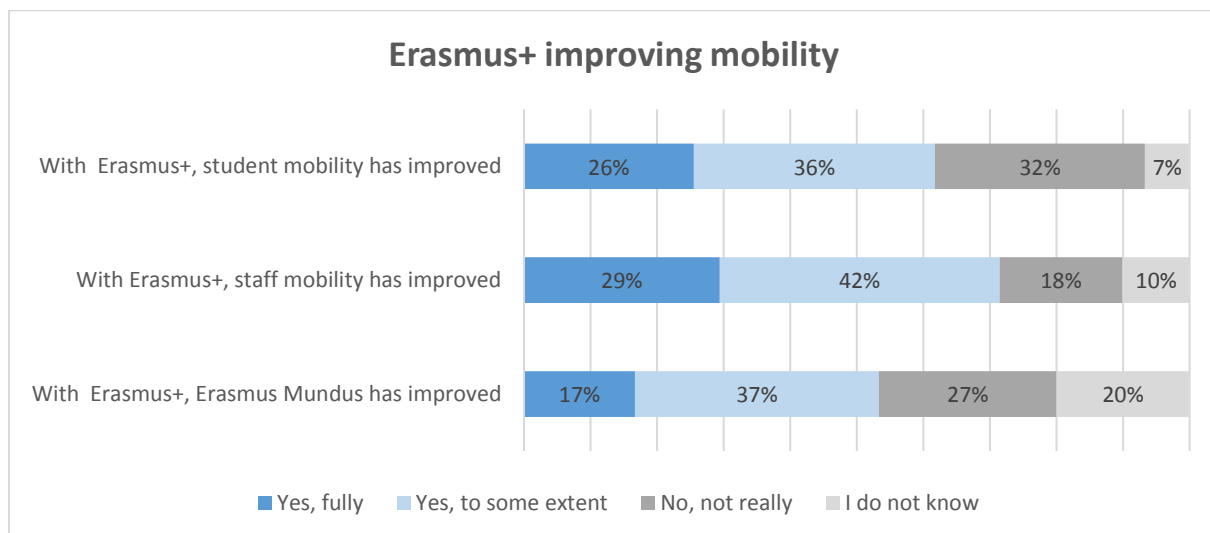


Figure 10: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Erasmus+ student mobility? (Q20)/ regarding staff mobility? (Q25) / regarding Erasmus Mundus? (Q28): Improvements

1. Student mobility

Participation rate: 69% (150 responses)

Student mobility inside Europe, and to and from third countries is of key importance for students and institutions. But the administrative burden has increased, and there are not enough grants or grants that are high enough, especially for International Credit Mobility. While the Erasmus Charter is largely accepted, its actual benefits remain contested. The Online Language Support tool is principally welcomed, but requires further improvement.

Student mobility as a core feature of Erasmus+ is highly valued by the vast majority of the survey respondents, which explains the high response rate with 150 respondents, which is the highest of all survey modules.

Ninety-nine per cent of respondents (84% fully, 15% to some extent) agreed to the statement that the student mobility grants provide an **attractive opportunity for European students to study in the EU**. Similarly, 84% (48% fully, 36% to some extent) also found it to be an **attractive offer for EU student mobility beyond European borders**, and 93% (69% fully, 24% to some extent) for **non-EU students to come to Europe**. It is therefore hardly surprising that 98% of respondents confirmed that they would continue with this action (Figure 11.1).

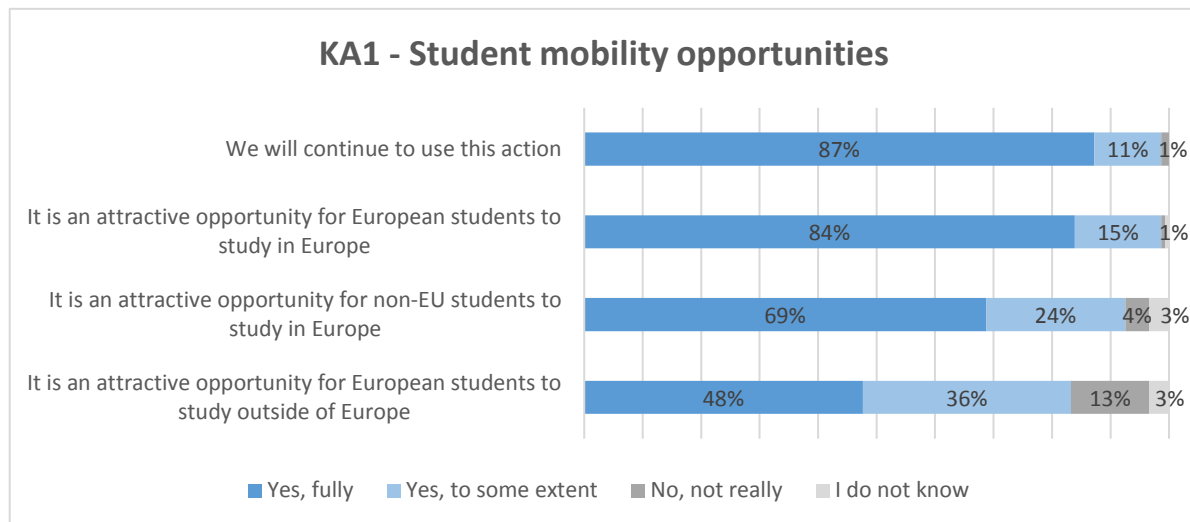


Figure 11.1: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ student mobility? (Q20): Opportunities

However, only 26% fully agree that under the Erasmus+, **the student mobility action has improved**. Asked for feedback on the **application process**, the **implementation and funding rules**, and the

"The amount of paperwork involved in just one student mobility is enormous, making this particularly challenging for small institutions who don't have a member of staff purely dedicated to administering the scheme and are trying to juggle this with other duties. (...)"

Very small institution, UK

reporting requirements, the option "Yes, to some extent" dominates the responses: for example, while 33% find the application process for the students straightforward, 44% agree only to some extent, and 21% think that it is not. The same holds true for clarity of financial rules (50% agree to some extent), **reporting requirements for students** (52% agree to some extent), and **flexibility of the action** (50% agree to some extent). The scope

for improvement is also confirmed by the fact that 44% found the **administrative requirements for institutions** overly bureaucratic and work-intensive (Figure 11.2). Especially smaller institutions reported to be struggling.

The comments that have been provided suggest some improvement in comparison to the LLP, but overall, student mobility under the Erasmus+ Programme has not become easier. A frequently cited example is the calculation of the grants based on single days, which creates a high administrative burden and is – in comparison to the previous arrangement – not very favourable for students. Many of the respondents therefore called for simplification and increased flexibility in the grant allocation. A point of harsh criticism was the application and reporting requirements, which require students – in addition to the application documents for the host institution – to make up to nine submissions¹⁶ at their home institution. Some respondents stated that this might deter students from applying.

Another frequently cited example was the new Erasmus+ learning agreement (LA): while survey participants welcomed working with scanned documents, they criticised the increased length and the three-stage process that LAs now require.

Positive responses refer in particular to **support from the NAs**, which 93% find either fully or to some extent sufficient.

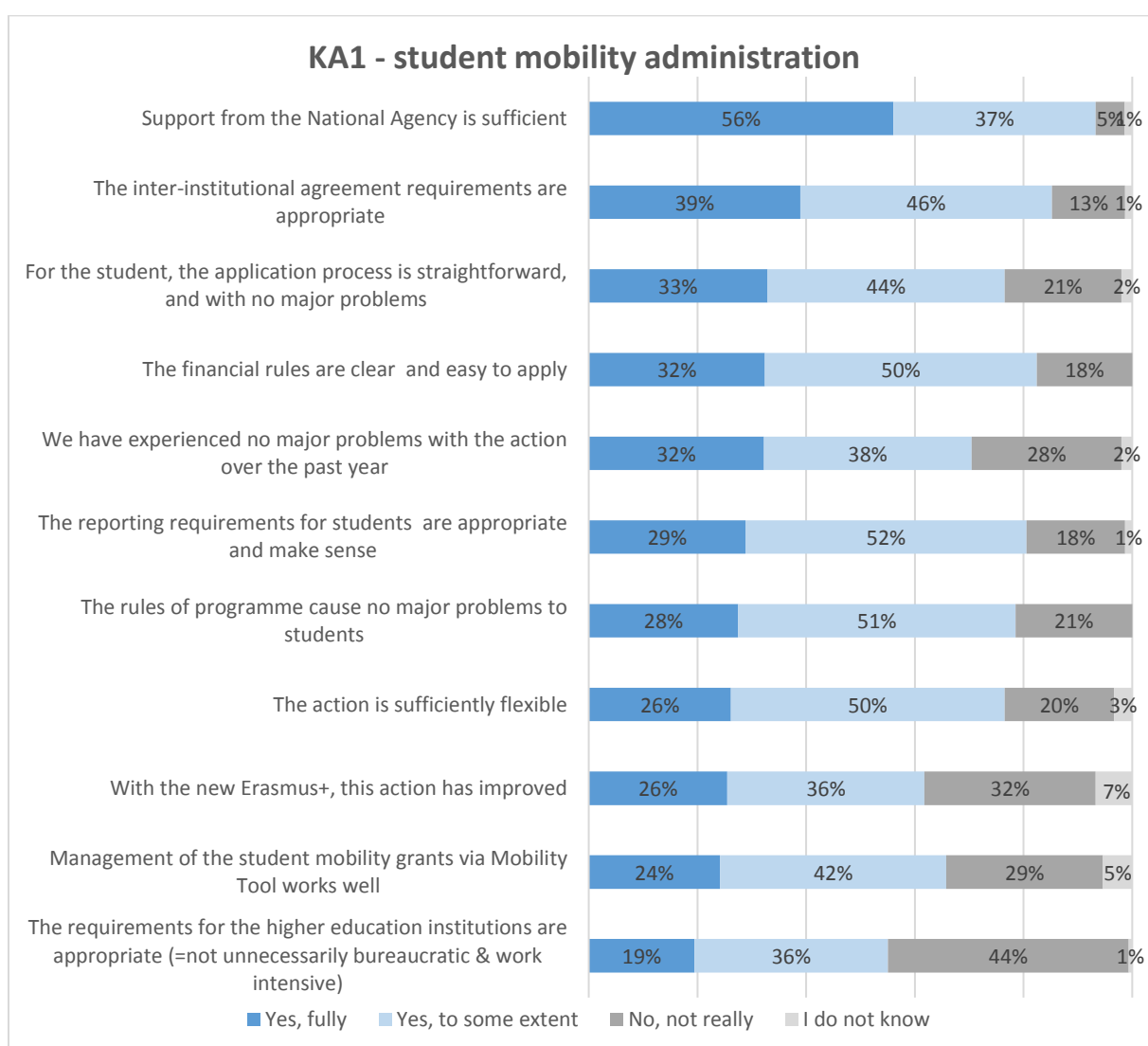


Figure 11.2: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Erasmus+ student mobility? (Q20): Administration and management

¹⁶ Such as: learning agreement, changes to learning agreement, grant agreement, confirmation of arrival, confirmation of departure, OLS test before the mobility, OLS test after the mobility, final participants' survey, transcript of records etc.

The feedback received on the **level of funding** is of concern: 35% stated that due to the low level of grants, individual students might be deterred from participation. Interestingly, the outliers on this question are amongst the EU countries with the most outgoing students in absolute numbers (Eurostat, 2012):¹⁷ while respondents from DE and FR found that the level of funding that mobile students receive does not impact participation (89% and 72% respectively agreed fully or to some extent), respondents from ES and IT thought that it might do so (56% and 42% respectively). There are several factors that may have influenced these responses, such as the availability of top-up grants from national and regional governments, but also the general economic situation and price level of the country. The consequence is that students from economically weak backgrounds and countries are likely to be excluded from the programme.

An even more critical response was received on the **number of available grants**, with 42% stating that they are insufficient (Figure 11.3). But the actual student demand differs significantly between countries, and the availability of alternative national grants for mobility can play a role. Whereas 80% of respondents from AT and 79% from the UK were fully or to some extent satisfied, 67% from ES and 75% from IT, found the number of grants insufficient.

Very small institutions ($\leq 7,500$ students), which were often specialised, were more likely to call for more grants in the survey sample: 52% compared to, on average, 37% from larger institutions.

A large number of respondents called for more grants under the newly introduced International Credit Mobility (ICM), especially for outgoing mobility to industrialised countries and Latin America which, according to them, are the preferred destinations for EU students. While in the remaining period of Erasmus+ until 2020, the number of grants per year will increase, their dissemination per region would normally not change, as they are determined by different funding sources within the EC, as well as by policy priorities.¹⁸

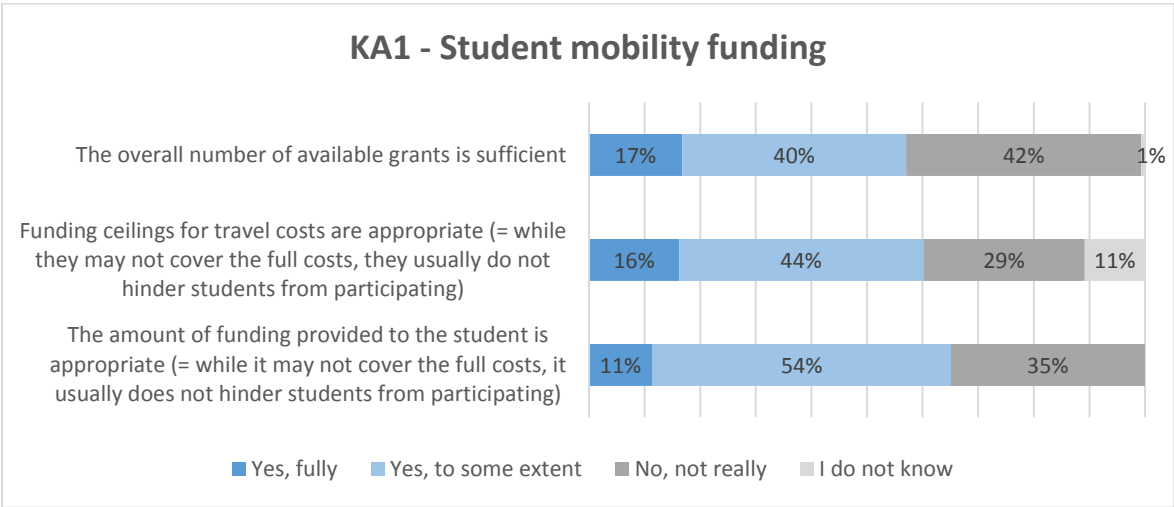


Figure 11.3: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Erasmus+ student mobility? (Q20): Funding

¹⁷<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/mapToolClosed.do?tab=map&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tps00064&toolbox=types>

¹⁸ The funding for ICM comes from several different budget sources which prescribe the eligibility of third country nationalities and mobility destinations: ENI (European Neighbourhood Instrument), DCI (Development Cooperation Instrument), IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession - Western Balkans), PI (Partnership Instrument for Industrialised Countries) and EDF (European Development Fund) for ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries.

Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE)

As in the LLP, in order for higher education institutions in programme countries to participate in any of the Erasmus+ actions they need to meet the conditions of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE).

Sixty-four percent of the survey participants found that the Charter has contributed to **improving the quality of the internationalisation activities** at their institution, and in some comments, the ECHE was praised for raising awareness of the core principles of internationalisation, mobility and international collaboration.

By contrast, 26% of institutions stated that they do not really need the ECHE as they are already quality assured and another 5% did not find it useful at all. Some comments describe ECHE as a “tick-the-box exercise”, which universities are obliged to carry out in order to participate in Erasmus+. There were strong doubts on whether universities would maintain its principles and monitor its implementation once granted an ECHE.

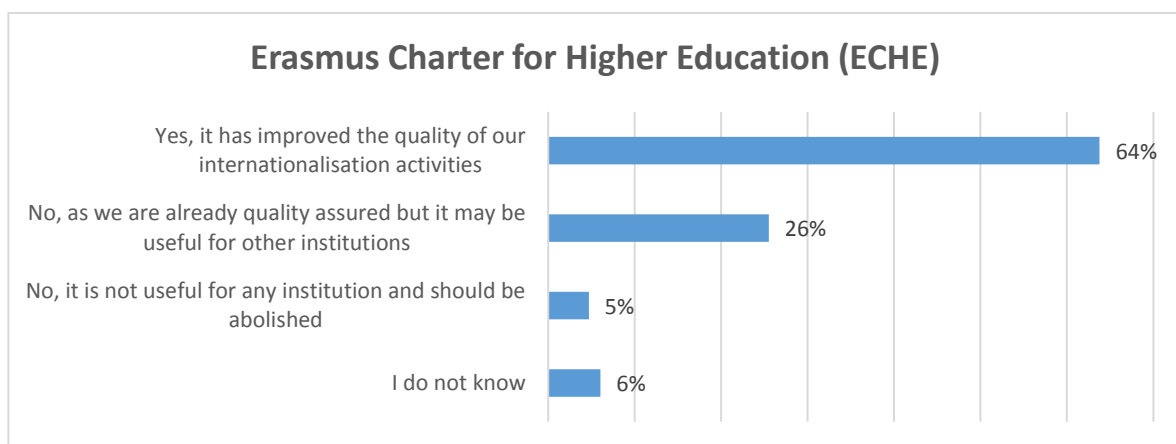


Figure 12: Do you think that the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) is useful in enhancing the quality of your institution's internationalisation activities? (Q24)

Online Linguistic Support Tool (OLS)

One of the new features of the Erasmus+ is the Online Linguistic Support Tool (OLS). Mobile students can assess their language skills before their departure and upon return. They can also follow online language courses in 12 languages at the time of the survey. The home institution manages the licences for their students and tracks their participation in the courses.

Only a relatively low number of survey respondents contested that the OLS brings any benefits for students (11%), contributes to **language learning and linguistic diversity** (9%), and is a reliable tool for language skills assessment (17%). While only 9% contest the quality of the courses offered, 34% refrained from making judgement (Figure 13).

On the other hand, explicitly positive responses on these four questions have also been relatively low ($\leq 28\%$). This refers in particular to the **language skills assessment** functions and the **language courses** provided in the OLS, only 16% found them fully reliable and of high quality. The fact that on these issues around half of the respondents found the tool to be useful only to some extent, indicates a clear scope for improvement, and the comments by respondents provide some indications on what could be changed:

Compared with the Intensive Language courses (EILC) under the LLP, the quality of the courses provided by the OLS was found to be lower: tests were cited as too easy to pass with a large number of students instantly achieving C1 level. Several participants mentioned that they would like to see more languages on offer, and that the OLS should also be made available to mobile students coming from and going to partner countries.

"It is a pity the Erasmus Intensive Language Programmes were suppressed. They were one of the very successful features of the Erasmus programme. No online platform can replace a real class, with a real teacher and real classmates."

Small institution, France

Participants also pointed to the additional administrative burden for their staff in managing the licences for the OLS. It has been frequently mentioned that only one log-in per institution is provided, which has to serve for the administration of licences at larger institutions for several hundreds of mobile students. It was even suggested that the OLS may be better managed at the national level by the NAs rather than by the university staff.

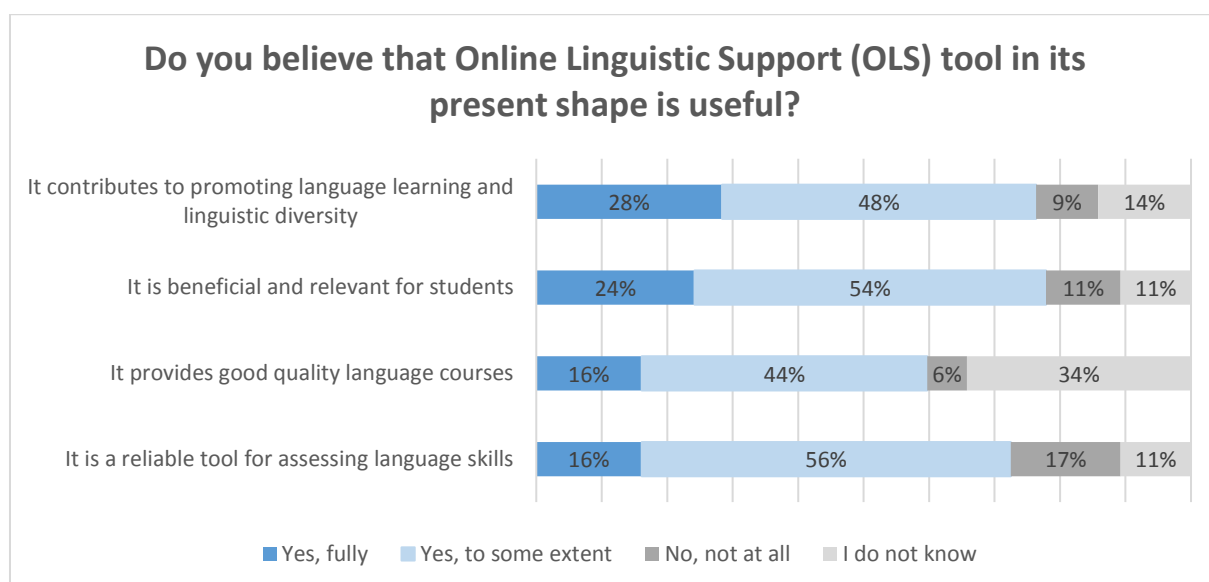


Figure 13: Do you believe that the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) tool in its present shape is useful? (Q25)

2. Staff mobility

Participation rate 56% (121 responses)

Erasmus staff mobility remains an attractive and important strand, both for academic and administrative staff, with the potential to further promote mobility to enterprises. While it has been improved under Erasmus+, more flexibility and better coverage of real cost, in particular for travel, could further enhance its attractiveness.

The fact that 56% of the respondents answered the questionnaire on staff mobility shows the interest in this action.

As they found it to be an **attractive opportunity** for both teaching staff (66% fully, 29% to some extent), and for administrative staff (66% fully, 33% to some extent), practically all respondents stated that they will **continue using this action**, and 71% found that under Erasmus+, staff mobility has improved (29% fully agreed, 42% to some extent) (Figure 14.1).

The fact that almost half of the respondents had no opinion on **staff mobility to public and private enterprises** suggests that this action is not yet very commonly used. Comments confirm that this opportunity is not well known and should receive better marketing, for instance through publication of successful case studies. Interestingly, the expectations of institutions that do not have their own experience with this action yet are quite high (67% find it fully useful or useful to some extent), whereas among the institutions that have already participated, only 33% found it useful (16% fully, 17% to some extent). The question is therefore why there seems to be so little actual benefit from this activity which is, in principle, welcomed by the institutions.

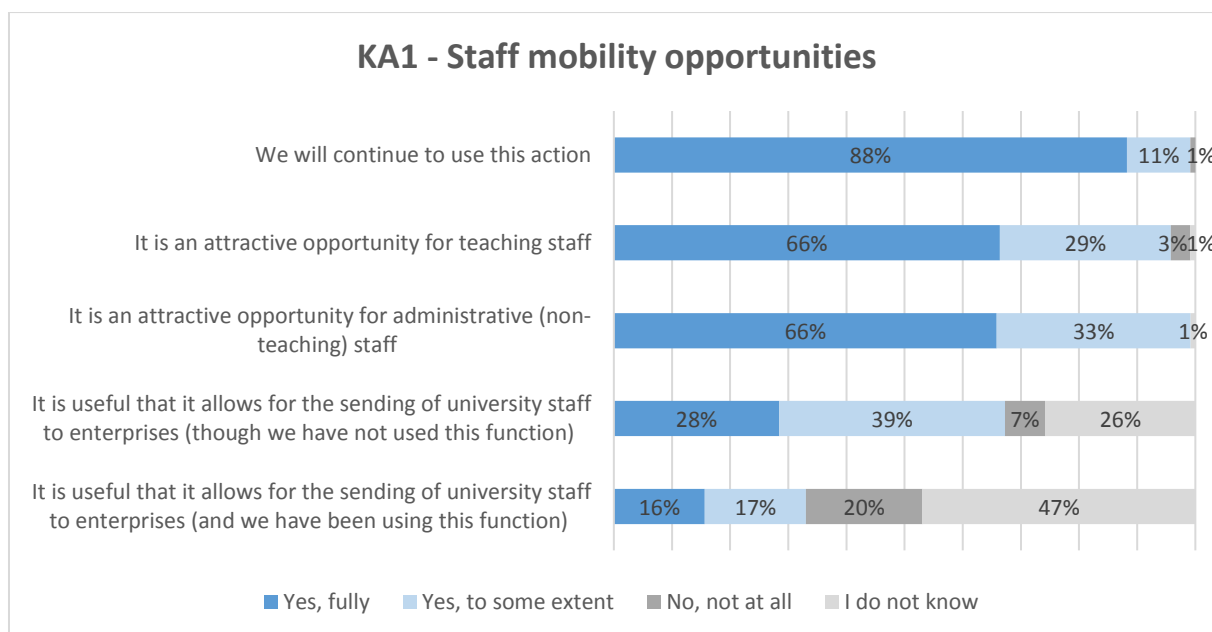


Figure 14.1: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Erasmus+ staff mobility? (Q25): Opportunities

Responses also suggest that for around 90% of the institutions, the **application process** and the general **rules of the programme** did not cause major problems for staff. However, when asked about the **administration requirements** for the institutions, one-quarter found them to be overly bureaucratic and to likely generate a high workload.

While responses suggest that staff mobility is somewhat flexible (Figure 14.2: 34% supporting this fully and 54% to some extent), this is further qualified through a relatively high number of comments that all concern a lack of **flexibility**, e.g. due to the prescribed duration and structure of mobility periods which make it difficult to organise meaningful training measures. Both survey respondents and the participants in a workshop on Erasmus+ for international coordinators of music institutions¹⁹ proposed that a combination of staff mobility with conference attendance might be one way to motivate more staff to participate.

As in the context of student mobility (Figure 11.2 above), the usefulness of the **mobility tool** was highly contested, with about a quarter stating that it works well, yet another quarter stating that the tool is not useful for the management of staff mobility grants.

¹⁹ An event of AEC, <http://www.aec-music.eu/events/international-relations-coordinators-meeting-2016>

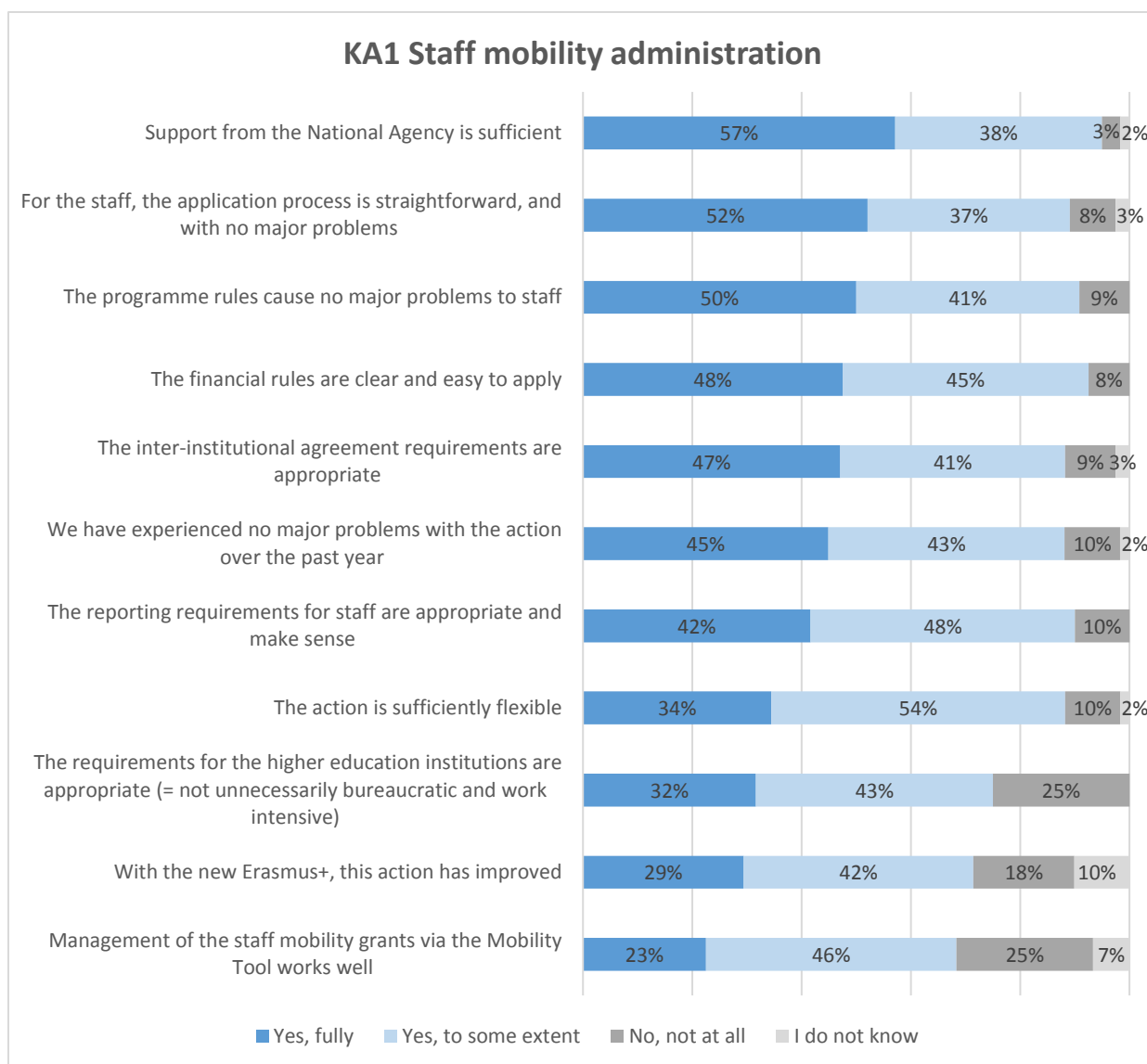


Figure 14.2: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Erasmus+ staff mobility? (Q25): Administration

Regarding funding conditions, depending on whether the question was on the number of grants provided, their size, or the ceilings, between one-quarter and one-third of respondents found them insufficient, but about the same number found them fully sufficient.

A breakdown by country and institution size can help in better understanding these contradictory responses. While 29% of all respondents found the overall **number of grants** to be fully sufficient, for Germany, this was 67%. While on average 29% found them insufficient, this number is much higher for BE (80%), ES (57%) and IT (50%), and for very small (40%) and medium-sized institutions (41%).

Seventy-six percent (fully and to some extent) found the **size of the grant** sufficient, especially institutions from DE (94%), IT (90%) and SE (83%), whereas 24% stated that the grant as well as the **funding ceilings** were too low and might hinder participation. This was especially the case for the **ceilings for travel costs**, which 33% thought might deter staff from participating in mobility. This may in part be due to the distance calculator's wide distance bands, which may not result in covering the real cost. As a result, any cost exceeding the ceiling would have to be covered by sources other than the grant, which – even in the case of minor sums – can also result in conflicts with national legislation and institutional regulations that require full cost coverage.

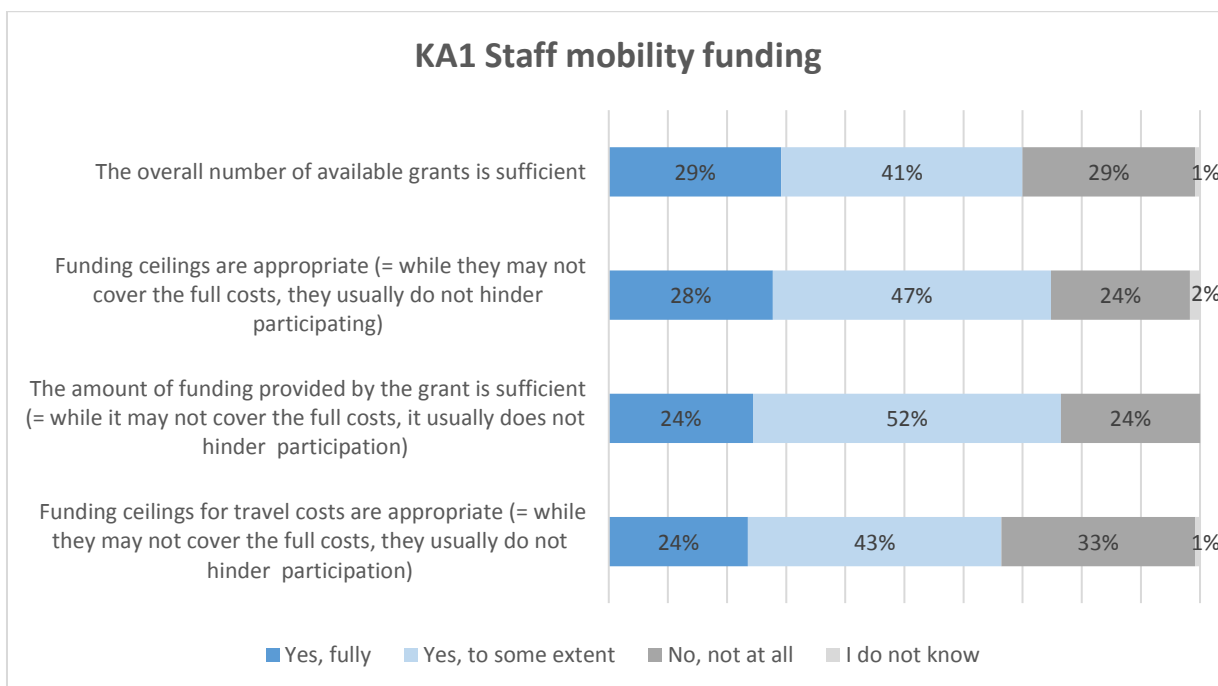


Figure 14.3: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Erasmus+ staff mobility? (Q25): Funding

3. Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees

Participation rate 14% (30 responses)

Preparation of applications is time and resource intensive, whereas success rates are low. Funding for more projects over a longer duration could make Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees (EMJDs) an even more attractive opportunity.

Only 14% responded to the survey module on EMJDs, which reflects that not many higher education institutions have experience with the action. But survey participants confirmed that EMJDs are an **attractive opportunity** for international students (77% fully agreed, 20% to some extent), European students (50% fully agreed, 47% to some extent), and also more generally for collaboration amongst European higher education institutions (67% fully agreed, 33% to some extent).

While 53% stated that they will definitely continue to use this action, only 17% were certain that under Erasmus+, Erasmus Mundus has improved, and 27% thought it has not (Figure 15.1).

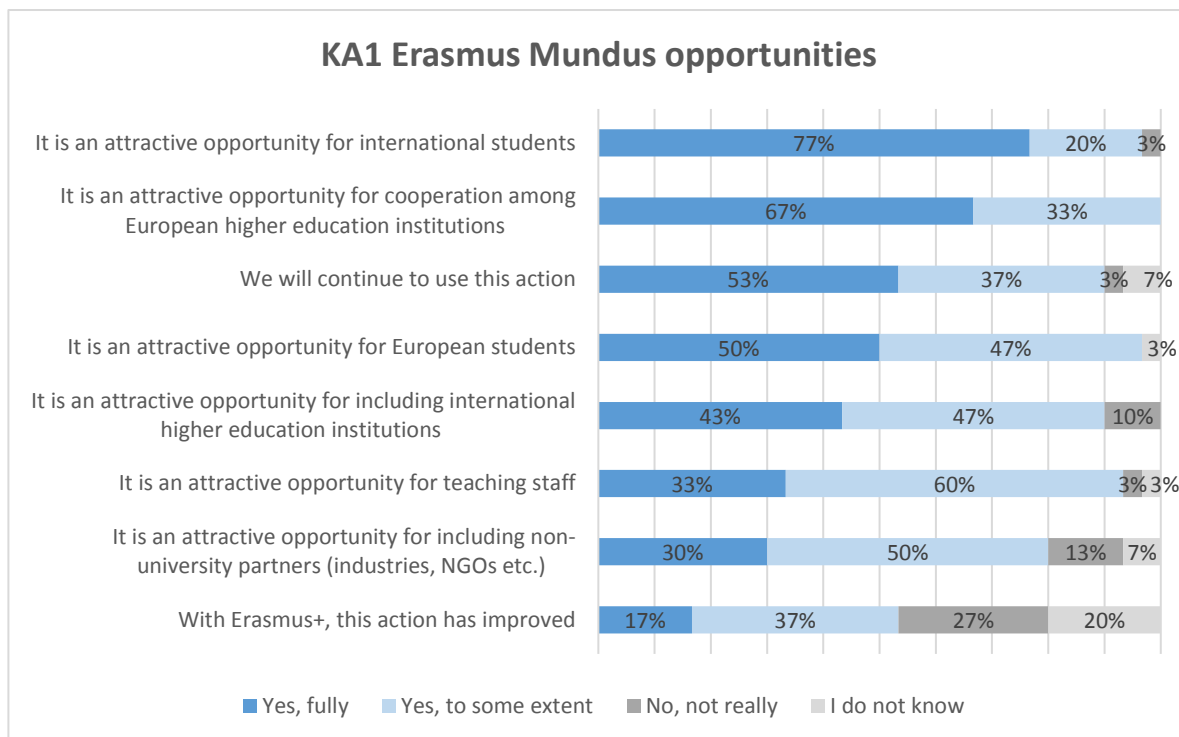


Figure 15.1: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees? (Q28): Opportunities

Regarding the **administration**, the EMJDs have developed some solid features: most respondents found the **partnership requirements** reasonable (33% agreed fully, 57% at least to some extent) and the **financial rules** easy to apply (37% agreed fully, 50% at least to some extent) (Figure 15.2).

On all other issues, it is striking that the number of fully satisfied responses is under 20%, whereas between 20-30% indicate that there are problems: for instance, regarding the **requirements for participating institutions**, only 17% stated that they were fully appropriate while another 27% found them overly bureaucratic and work intensive. And while the application process was rated as straightforward by more than half of the respondents (fully and to some extent), 47% stated that it would **not be worth preparing applications** given the high work and time investment, and low success rates.²⁰ In the comments section respondents expressed their frustration with the highly complex and laborious preparation of an application and the low success rates.

²⁰ 11 Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees were granted in 2014, which represents a success rate of 18% (Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report 2014).

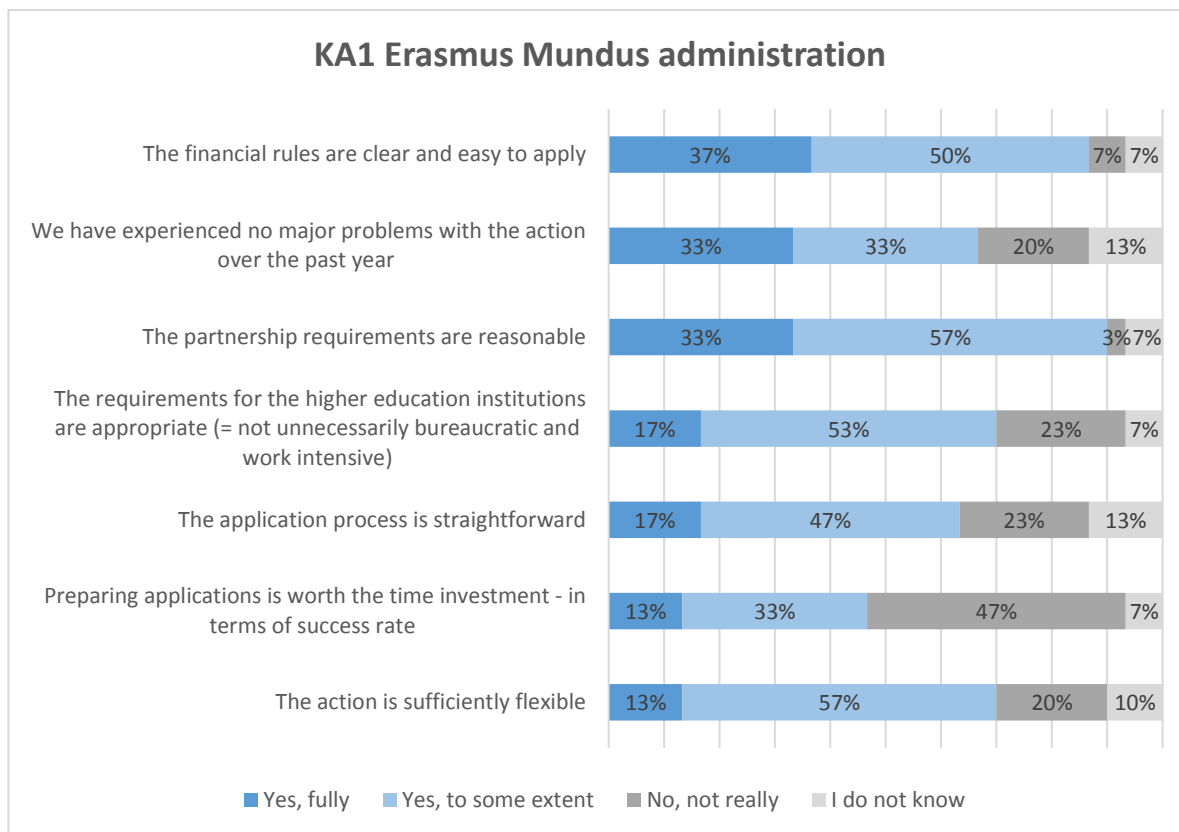


Figure 15.2: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees? (Q28): Application and administration

The majority of respondents felt that the **funding ceilings** are appropriate and do not hinder participation (67% fully or to some extent). However, in line with the complaints on the low success rate, 30% suggest increasing the **amount of funding** provided by this action. In particular, the funding for the work intense administration of the programme was regarded as insufficient. On the positive side, it was stated that the grants for students are very attractive. Respondents appreciated the recent change in which the grant allocations for living expenses are now the same for both EU and non-EU students.

A frequent criticism was also that the **funding duration** has been shortened from five years under the previous programme generation²¹ to three consecutive intakes of students, plus one preparatory year, under Erasmus+²², in both cases with the option to re-apply once. The shortened maximum funding duration was mentioned to impact the sustainability prospects: while respondents stated that in principle it might be possible that the Joint Degrees become self-sustainable in that duration, it was obviously easier with longer-term funding in the predecessor programme. Another related issue is that at the end of the funding cycle, the Master degree programmes lose the Erasmus Mundus label, which is seen as proof of quality and a good marketing tool.

Many of the respondents also expressed their hope that the future Erasmus Mundus would be increased to fund a larger number of projects as, from their experience, it is a very attractive action.

²¹ Decision no 1298/2008/EC establishing the Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:340:0083:0098:EN:PDF>

²² Three consecutive intakes of 1 to 2 academic years (60/90/120 ECTS. Erasmus+ Programme Guide (2016))

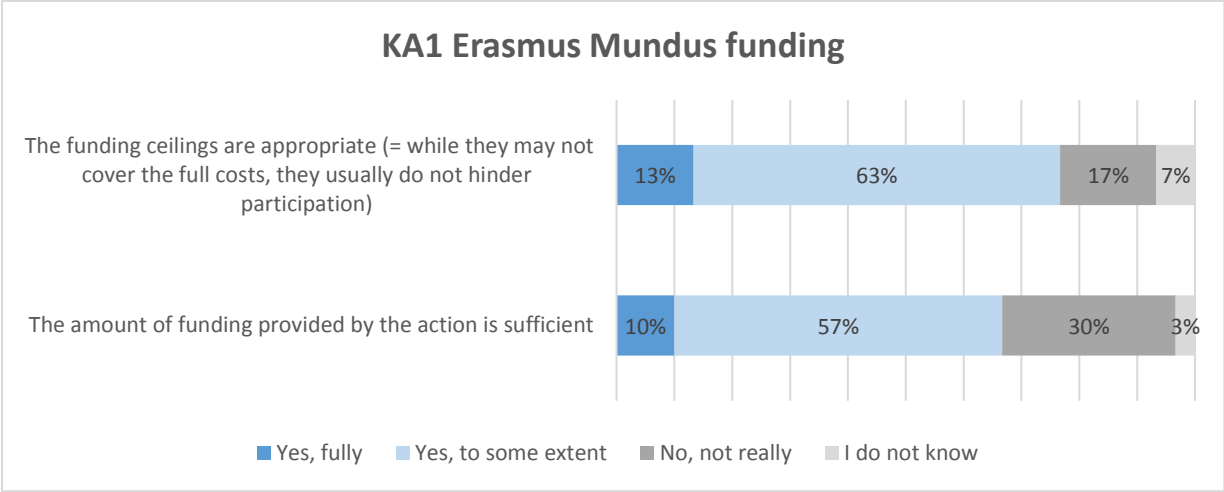


Figure 15.3: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees? (Q28): Funding

Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices

As international collaboration is of high importance for institutions, Key Action 2 is seen as a strategic funding opportunity, but more grants should be made available and programme rules and procedures should be simplified and streamlined.

Key Action 2 comprises three activities: Strategic Partnerships (cooperation projects between European institutions), Knowledge Alliances (for business and industry cooperation) and Capacity Building (the successor of a range of previously separate interregional collaboration programmes such as Alfa, Tempus, Asia Link etc.).

On average 18% of the survey participants chose to respond to the survey modules on KA2: there were 57 participants in the module on Strategic Partnerships, 39 for Capacity Building, and 23 for Knowledge Alliances. The relatively low response rate to these survey modules also underlines the fact that while each of the actions is found to be a very **attractive opportunity** and is generally met with high interest, they provide only a relatively low number of grants, resulting in low success rates. Therefore, a relatively large number of respondents – for instance 63% for Knowledge Alliances – stated that **applying would not be worthwhile** (Figure 16).

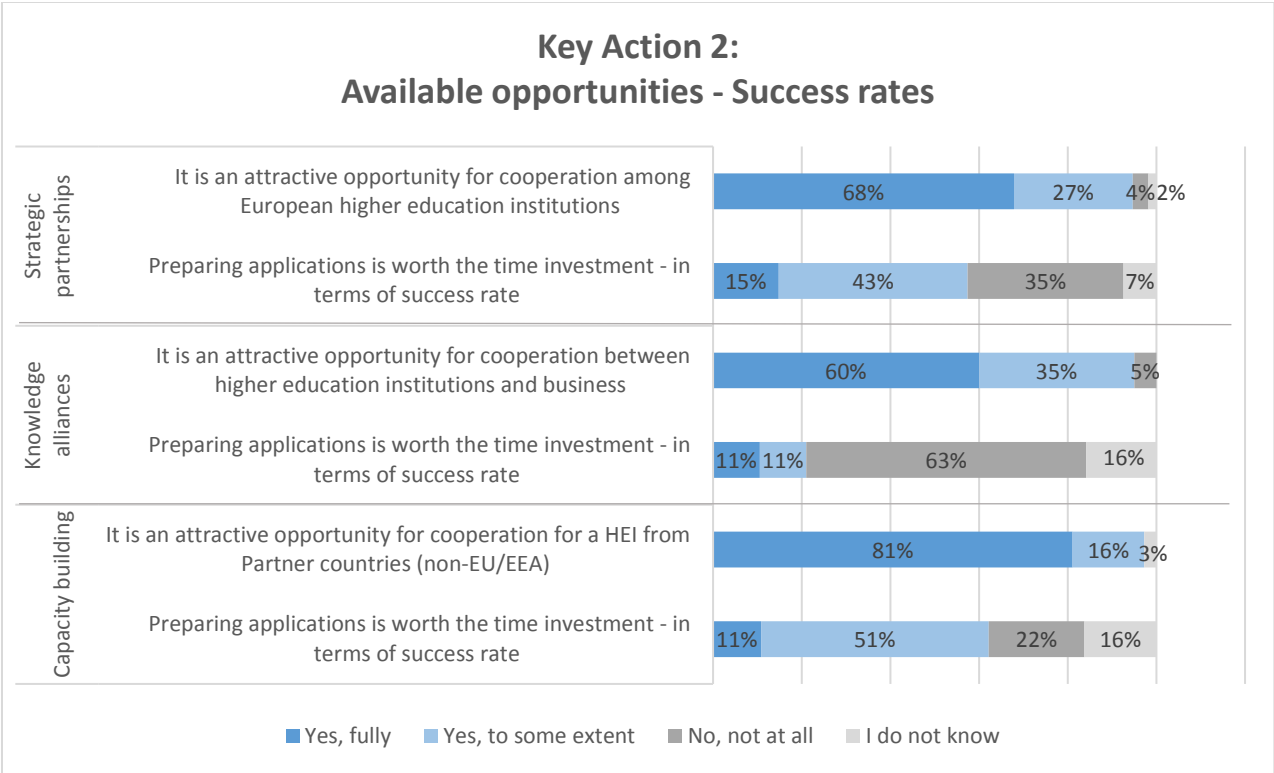


Figure 16: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Strategic Partnerships (Q31)/ Knowledge Alliances (Q34)/ Capacity Building (Q37): Opportunities; Applications

1. Strategic Partnerships

Participation rate 26% (57 responses)

Strategic Partnerships enable collaboration among higher education institutions and with other partners on themes and topics of their choosing. But more funding and more flexible funding rules (e.g. on staff rates and travel ceilings) are required. In addition, the decentralisation, i.e. the management by NAs, is contested, as it may result in undesired differences in the implementation of programme rules and criteria. Furthermore, it could have a negative impact on the European and international visibility of the individual projects and the activity as a whole.

Strategic Partnerships is a new action that did not exist previously. Whereas the LLP allowed for partnership projects in response to EU priorities and thematic calls, the Strategic Partnerships promote cooperation and peer-learning for innovation in the sector as well as joint initiatives. The majority of respondents found it to be a **useful addition to the EU funding opportunities** (68% fully agreed, 37% to some extent), and an attractive opportunity for both **cooperation amongst European institutions** (68% fully agreed) and **non-university partners** (56% fully agreed). But not all participants were convinced of separating the action into two strands (“cooperation for innovation” and “exchange of best practices”): while 13% found that it makes sense, 25% disagreed (Figure 17.1).



Figure 17.1: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Strategic Partnerships? (Q31): Opportunities

Responses regarding the administration of Strategic Partnership projects were mainly positive, for instance 84% found that the administrative requirements were appropriate (30% fully agreed, 54% to some extent). The action was also found to be sufficiently **flexible** by 76% (22% fully agreed, 54% to some extent). While the **application process** was found to be rather straightforward (31% fully agreed, 54% to some extent), applications were seen as a risky investment of time and resources, in view of the low number of grants and low **success rates**.²³ Respondents commented that Strategic Partnerships were overly competitive, and 35% thought that applying was not worthwhile (Figure 17.2). In the comment section, respondents often criticised the application procedure as being too lengthy and time consuming. The forms were found to be repetitive and too long.

²³ In 2014, the success rate for applications was at 17%, with a total of 154 Strategic Partnerships granted in the field of higher education (Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report 2014).

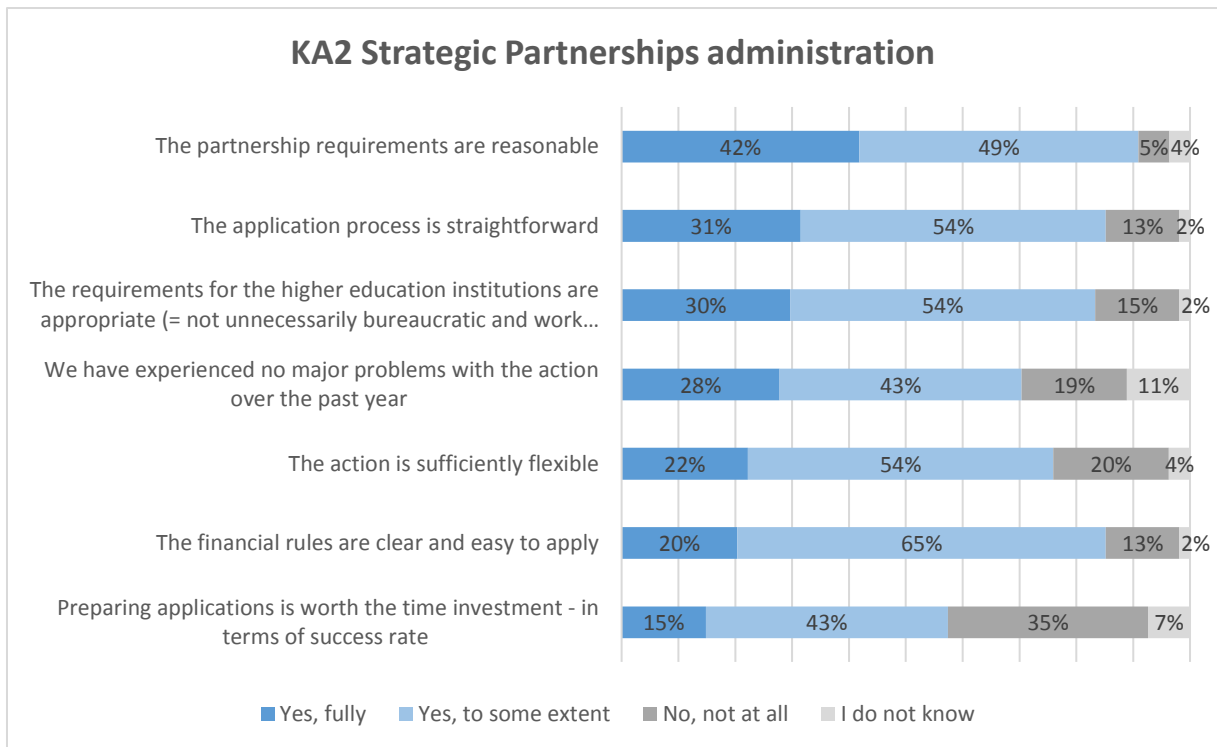


Figure 17.2: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Strategic Partnerships? (Q31): Applications and Administration

Given the small **number of project grants** per country, it is hardly surprising that only 4% found that there were enough grants, whereas 59% stated there were not (Figure 17.3). In DE even 88% said the number of grants is insufficient, and in ES it was 78%, showing that in larger higher education systems the granted project-to-application ratio might look even less favourable. Larger institutions are also more likely to complain about insufficient numbers of grants, i.e. 76% of those with more than 25,000 students called for more grants, compared to 30% of the very small institutions with less than 7,500 students.

In addition, the majority of respondents did not agree or did not fully agree with statements such as “The **amount of funding** provided is sufficient” (31% did not agree, 56% agreed only to some extent). Respondents from ES (56% said “No”) especially disagreed with this statement. Also the statement “The **funding ceilings** for staff costs are appropriate” received mixed feedback – 55% only agreed to some extent and 25% stated “No” (Figure 17.3). The larger institutions were especially dissatisfied with the **level of cost coverage** (40% said “No”). In fact, staff unit costs were the most frequently criticised item in the comments section and were described as being unrealistic and unfair. A co-funding arrangement, as had previously been in place, would be easier to plan and implement and overall would be more transparent. One of the problems is that institutions, at the start of the project, cannot assess how much *de facto* co-funding they will actually have to provide: if the price for a flight ticket or hotel accommodation exceeds the ceiling, the additional cost cannot be assumed by the project budget.

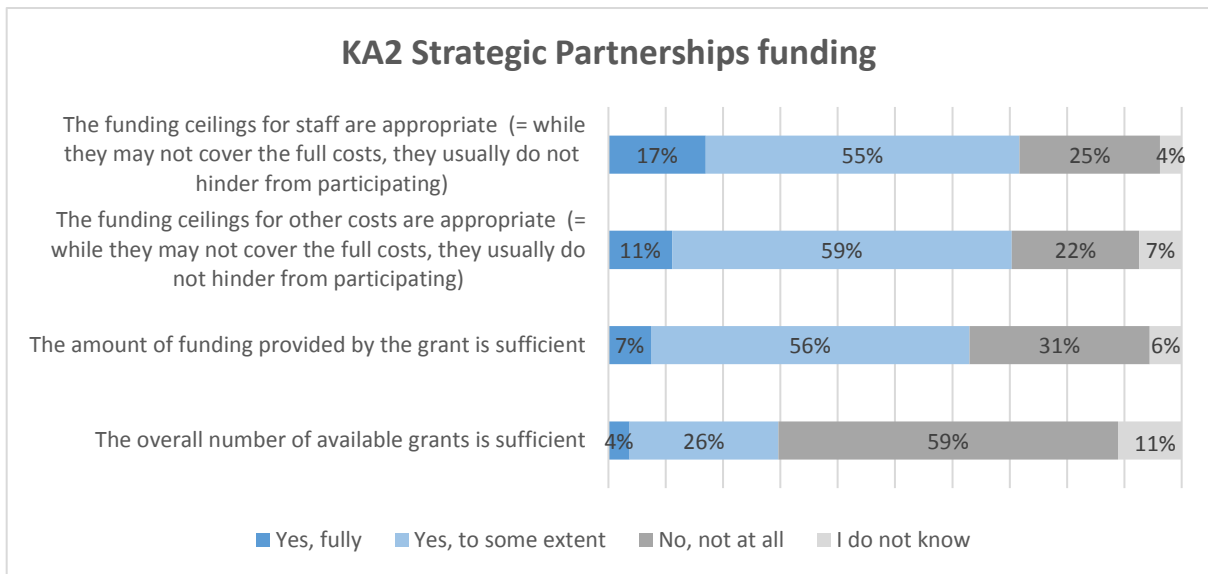


Figure 17.3: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Strategic Partnerships? (Q31): Funding

Strategic Partnerships is the only one of the KA2 actions that is decentralised, i.e. it is managed entirely by the NAs which, according to the majority of respondents works well (38% fully agreed, 29% to some extent). Whereas 33% thought it would be better to **select projects for funding** at the European rather than the national level, 53% preferred this to be done by the NAs (Figure 17.4), as did 70% of very small institutions ($\leq 7,500$ students).

By contrast, comments point to some of the negative consequences of the decentralisation, e.g. that during the selection procedure, the different agencies might apply criteria and regulations differently. It was also mentioned that National Agencies might not possess the same expertise and capacity as the

“Decentralisation has had unfortunate consequences, resulting in strategic submissions to National Agencies, in the lack of coherence in the application of regulations, in the unequal quality of submissions approved, and in the loss of European dimension.”

Very large institution, Spain

EACEA. A point of criticism was that project evaluators would come only from the national level. Respondents also expressed their concern that due to the decentralisation, the Strategic Partnership projects might no longer have a European dimension and visibility: selection would consider only specific national priorities, and results would only be considered at the national level.

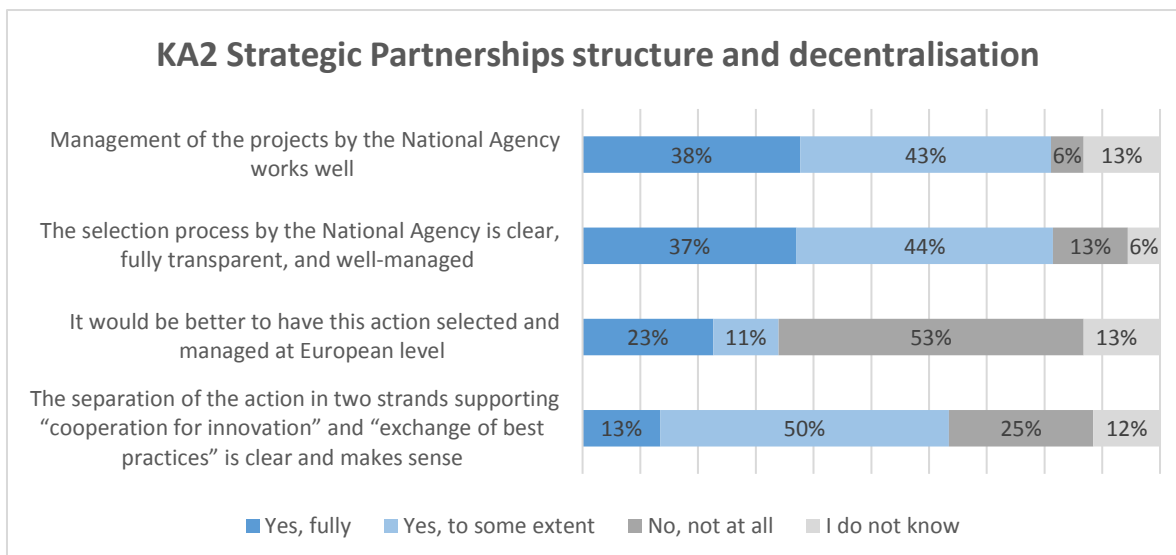


Figure 17.4: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Strategic Partnerships? (Q31): Programme structure and decentralisation.

The findings and comments could be interpreted as indicating that many institutions appreciate the Strategic Partnerships being selected and managed at the national level, and they expect better support, and a better understanding of their particular needs. This seems to be especially the case for smaller institutions, as some of them might perceive difficulties in competing at the European level.

Replacing the Europe-wide selection with a national one would make it more likely that all member states have projects managed by their institutions, and that a chance is given to institutions and project themes that otherwise might not succeed in a European competition. But whereas the smaller institutions may appreciate having a chance for a project and would – given the financial and managerial implications – have no capacity for more than one project, larger institutions might become frustrated by the fact that many of their good proposals are not awarded.

Another scenario could be that alliances of larger, internationally-renowned institutions apply in a very strategic manner to certain NAs. This could result in an even higher concentration of project grants to a few universities, given that selection processes are managed by each NA independently, with no overall coordination at the European level.

To date, only two to five projects per year and country have been awarded, this may lead to frustration in countries where National Agencies receive a large number of good quality proposals. There is also anecdotal evidence of projects being awarded to proposals with a comparatively low evaluation score.

Given the level of national responsibility, there is no longer space for European-level steering with regard to the diversity of consortia (composition by countries, types of institution) as well as topics: Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships may fund very similar projects. In addition, some agencies seem to insist on the use of their national language, and there is a risk that the outcomes may be published only in the national language of the applicant.

For the same reasons, the European and international visibility of the projects might be much lower than in the past.

2. Knowledge Alliances

Participation rate 11% (23 responses)

The emphasis on university industry cooperation is in principle very much welcome. However, given also the low number of grants the action should be streamlined with or even integrated into the Strategic Partnerships.

Out of the overall sample, 11% of respondents participated in the module on KA2 Knowledge Alliances, also a new activity,²⁴ which serves university-enterprise collaboration with a relatively small number of grants.

More than 90% of the respondents found the action to be attractive in principle, and a **useful addition to the EU funding opportunities**. While 63% considered applying again, the remaining 37% were not sure (Figure 18.1).

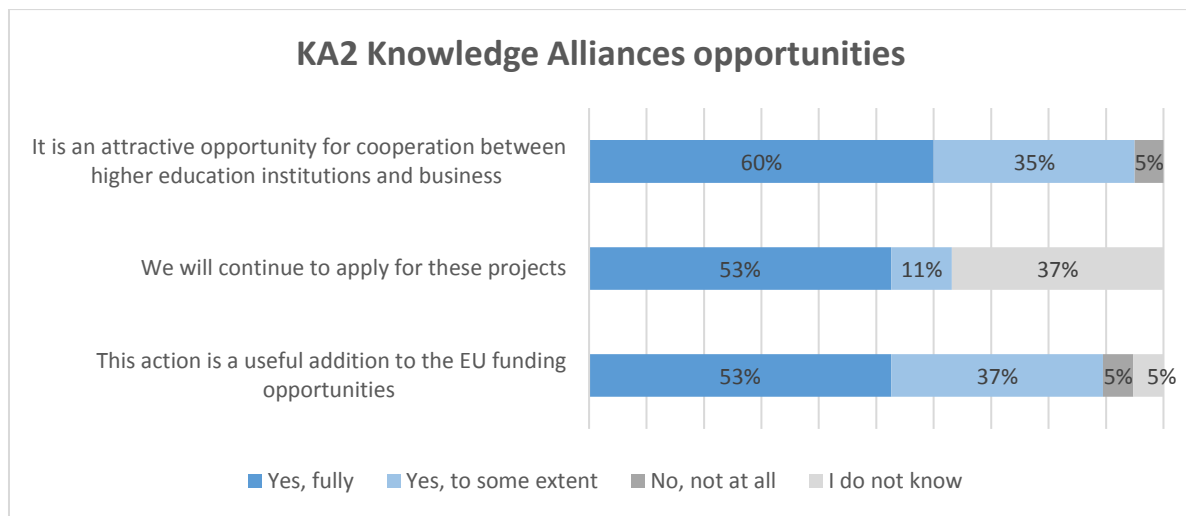


Figure 18.1: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Knowledge Alliances? (Q34): Opportunities

This might be due to the work intensive **application procedure** and a relatively low number of **available grants** resulting in low **success rates**.²⁵ more than 60% stated that given these factors, it is not worth applying. Respondents underlined in the comments that more universities should be given the opportunity to participate.

"It is an interesting opportunity for university-business cooperation, but a grant approval rate of 4% (2014) is devastating in comparison to the extensive application process."

Very large institution, Germany

Most respondents found the **administrative requirements** for

Knowledge Alliances to be more or less appropriate (25% fully agreed, 55% to some extent), partnership requirements reasonable (25% agreed, 60% to some extent), and financial rules more or less easy to apply (21% agreed, 63% to some extent) (Figure 18.2).

However, in order to further improve the action and streamline application procedures and management, respondents suggested to merge Knowledge Alliances into Strategic Partnerships, or to at least align the regulations, ceilings and procedures with the Strategic Partnerships. Several participants

²⁴ Some pilot projects have already been started under the LLP.

²⁵ For 2014, 10 projects were granted. The success rate was 4% (Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report 2014)

stated that it was absolutely unclear why, for example, staff cost ceilings were different across the two actions.

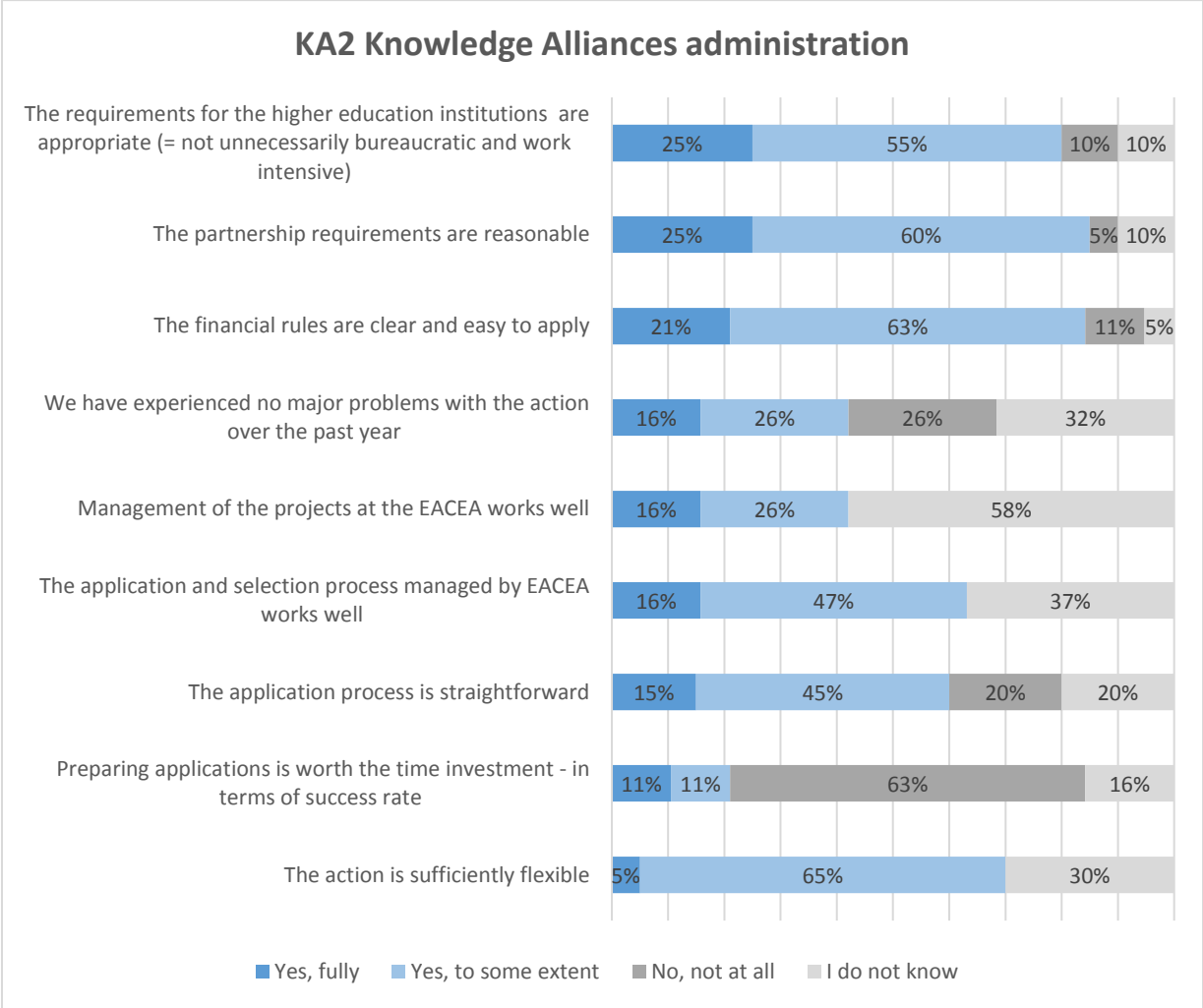


Figure 18.2: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Knowledge Alliances? (Q34): Administration

In terms of funding conditions, most respondents found the **grant size** sufficient (20% fully, 45% to some extent) while another 20% disagreed. Even though Knowledge Alliances provide, in comparison to other KA2 actions, higher unit costs for staff, only a few respondents said that the **funding ceilings** were fully appropriate and would not deter participation. This was especially the case regarding the ceilings for “other costs”, which only one respondent found fully sufficient (Figure 18.3).

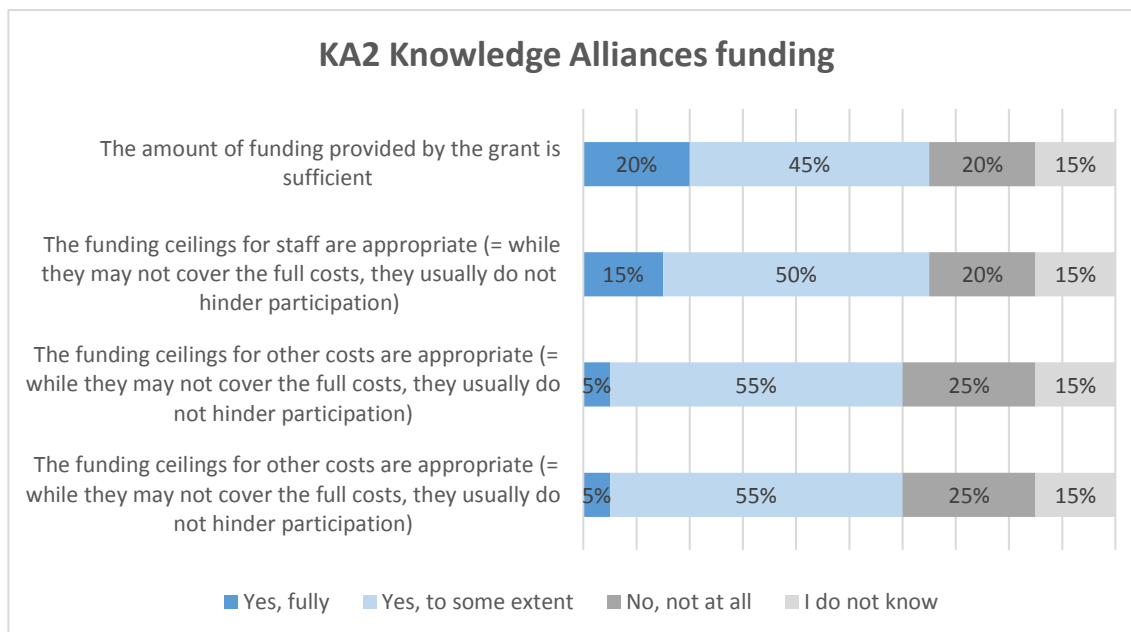


Figure 18.3: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Knowledge Alliances? (Q34): Funding

3. Capacity Building

Participation rate 18% (39 responses)

The replacement of different regional programmes with a central Capacity Building action is welcome, as it can develop an important and highly-visible instrument for international collaboration between European and international universities. While there is, of course, always room for improvement, the application process and administration seem to work well, also thanks to the commitment of colleagues at the EACEA.

However, currently the full potential of the action is hindered by the low number of grants and the restrictive funding rules which, due to rather low ceilings and limited budget autonomy, carry an unpredictable risk of ineligible costs.

The Capacity Building action succeeded a range of separate regional programmes such as Alfa, Tempus, Asia Link etc. and 87% of respondents (68% fully, 19% to some extent) confirmed this to be a good idea. The advantages are the streamlining of rules and processes, but also the opportunity for truly global projects, involving partners from different parts of the world, and the potential to become a well visible and renowned instrument of the European Union's global dimension.

While practically all respondents (81% agreed fully) found it to be an **attractive opportunity** for cooperation with institutions from partner countries – which is indeed its purpose – more than half also agreed fully to benefits for cooperation with programme countries. Therefore, the majority of participants (73%) said that they will definitely **continue to apply** for this action (Figure 19.1).

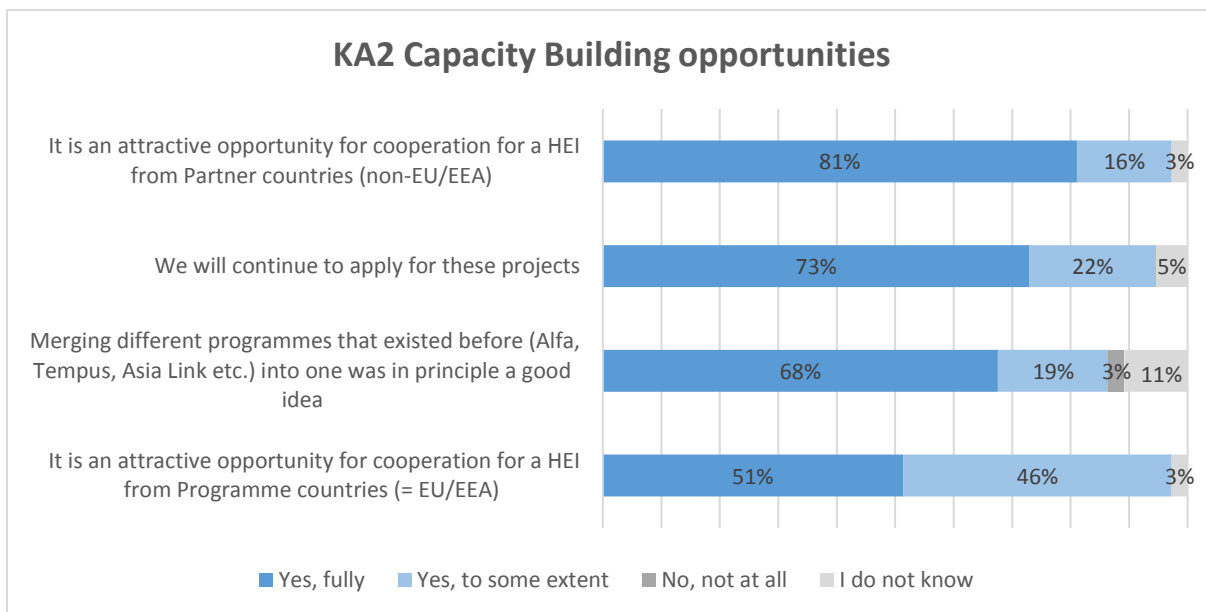


Figure 19.1: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Capacity Building in the field of higher education? (Q37): Opportunities

For other KA2 activities, including Capacity Building, the feedback regarding **project administration** was mostly positive, e.g. requirements are not overly bureaucratic according to 30% of respondents, with another 54% stating they are to some extent. While **financial rules** are only fully clear to 27%, and clear to some extent to 57%, this seems to not be a source of large problems, probably also due to the prompt support that the EACEA provides.

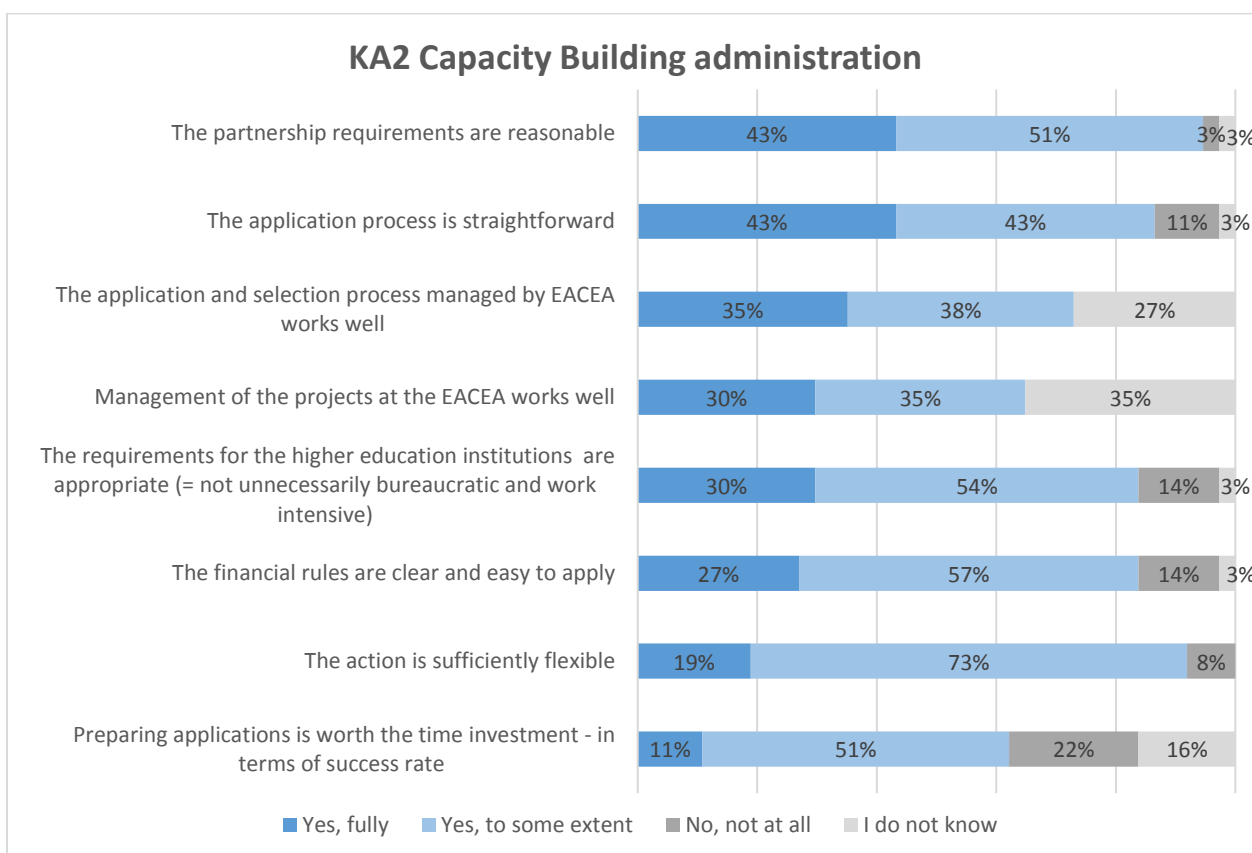


Figure 19.2: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Capacity Building in the field of higher education? (Q37): Administration

However, on average a third of respondents criticised issues surrounding funding: for instance, 39% found the number of **available grants** insufficient, 35% stated that **funding ceilings** for staff (in form of unit cost) are too low and 30% found ceilings for other costs to be inappropriately low.

Once again, smaller institutions were generally more satisfied than larger ones: for instance, while 100% of the very small (under 7,500 students), 67% of the small (7,500-14,999 students) and 63% of the medium-sized institutions (15,000-24,999 students) thought that there were enough grants available, at least to some extent, this was only the case for 26% of the institutions with more than 25,000 students. The same goes for the amount of funding provided: while 67% of the very small, 86% of the small and all of the medium-sized institutions agreed that it was sufficient, at least to some extent, only 42% of large institutions agreed.

Also the majority of comments received were about funding. Due to ceilings and unit cost restrictions, participants found Capacity Building projects challenging, especially with regard to **staff and travel costs** – in some countries, it only covers a fraction of the actual staff costs. Even worse, any expense for flights exceeding the ceiling set by the Distance Calculator is regarded as ineligible. While for some destinations the real cost always exceeds the eligible ones, for others this may happen due to changing prices, which makes it impossible to plan. This uncertainty of how much *de facto* co-financing might be required is seen as a deterrent, particularly for institutions from partner countries, which are often in a much more difficult situation financially.

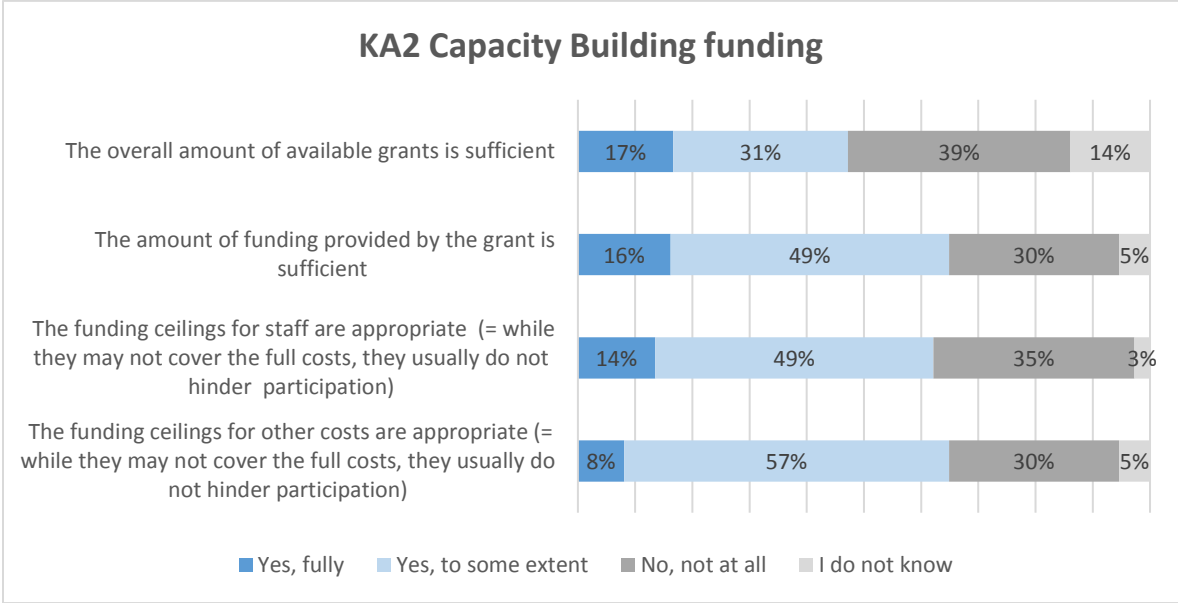


Figure 19.3: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Capacity Building in the field of higher education? (Q37): Funding

Key Action 3: Support for policy reform

Participation rate 3% (7 responses)

This action aims at policy-level measures. Only time will tell whether projects can deliver to an extent that justifies their distinction from the collaboration projects under KA2.

Key Action 3 is another new feature of Erasmus+: a range of higher education stakeholders can apply, under either sector specific or thematic calls, for collaborative projects to support policy reform. Calls for proposals of the two types of actions included in KA3 are issued alternately every other year – forward-looking cooperation projects, aiming at the stimulation of policy development through testing or assessing innovative approaches, bringing together institutions and other key organisations. European policy experimentation projects test policy implementation and include consortia of public authorities and public or private organisations. In addition, calls for specific policy objectives may be issued under KA3, such as the 2016 call for proposals for “Initiatives for policy innovation - Social inclusion through education, training and youth.”

In the survey module on KA3, only seven responses were received, all from institutions that had either been awarded a KA3 project or were applying for one. All confirmed that KA3 is an important action and of high interest.

However, also for this action, the **administration** was described as burdensome, both for the coordinators and the partners. The **application procedure**, with lengthy forms and, at times, quite repetitive information, was criticised by some.

“The cumbersome administrative routines associated with KA3-projects limits the achievements in the project since it takes time from project work.”

Large institution, Sweden

While only a relatively small number of project grants are available, compared to KA2, applications still enjoy a higher **success rate**: in 2014, seven projects were awarded (for all four Education and Training sectors), with a success rate of 35%.²⁶ In addition, KA3 uses **co-funding rates** instead of funding ceilings and unit costs which, according to some, is preferable in terms of planning and

budgeting.

Respondents criticised that specific guidelines and information on managing KA3 projects were issued with too much delay, often after the signature of grant agreements and the kick-off date of the projects. The flow of information could also be improved when promoting the calls, and more specific information on this action could be added to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. KA3 projects were found to be very attractive overall, but not all stakeholders and potential applicants were aware of the opportunities at hand.

²⁶ Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report 2014.

APPENDIX

1. Background literature

Several organisations and institutions have published statements in preparation for the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme, and in line with the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation roadmap some reports have also been drafted at the time of publication for this report.

The following list of reports (section A) is non-exhaustive, and in addition contains an overview of relevant background documents and publications (section B).

A. List of reports and statements on the Erasmus+ Programme

Academic Cooperation Association ACA (2016): Research For Cult Committee - Erasmus+: Decentralised Implementation - First Experiences, conducted by the Academic Cooperation Association. Available online under:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU\(2016\)585877_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585877/IPOL_STU(2016)585877_EN.pdf)

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission (2016): Erasmus Mundus Action 2 - Scholarship Holders' Impact Survey: Results. Available online under: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/tools/documents/EM_Scholarship_Holder_Impact_Survey_Results_en.pdf

European Commission. Education and Culture (2014): The Erasmus Impact Study. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions. Available online under:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

European Parliament. Committee on Culture and Education (2016):¹ Draft Report on the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+' the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC. 2015/2327(INI). Available online under:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+COMPARL+PE-587.695+01+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>

European Parliament. Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (2016): Draft opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for the Committee on Culture and Education on implementation report on Erasmus+ (2015/2327(INI)). Available online under:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=COMPARL&reference=PE-589.123&format=PDF&language=EN&secondRef=01>

European Parliamentary Research Service EPRS (2016): The Erasmus+ Programme (Regulation EU No. 1288/2013): European Implementation Assessment. Available online under:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/581414/EPRS_STU\(2016\)581414_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/581414/EPRS_STU(2016)581414_EN.pdf)

B. Background information on the Erasmus+ Programme

European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2013): Erasmus+ legal base: Regulation No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1478508051510&uri=CELEX:32013R1288>

European Commission. Education and Culture (2015): Erasmus+ Programme. Annual Report 2014. Available online under: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-annual-report_en.pdf.

European Commission. Education and Culture (2016): 2017 annual work programme for the implementation of 'Erasmus+': the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. C(2016)5571 of 5 September 2016. Available online under: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/awp/docs/c-2016-5571_en.pdf. For an overview of past annual work programmes of the EC's Education and Culture programmes please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/awp/index_en.htm

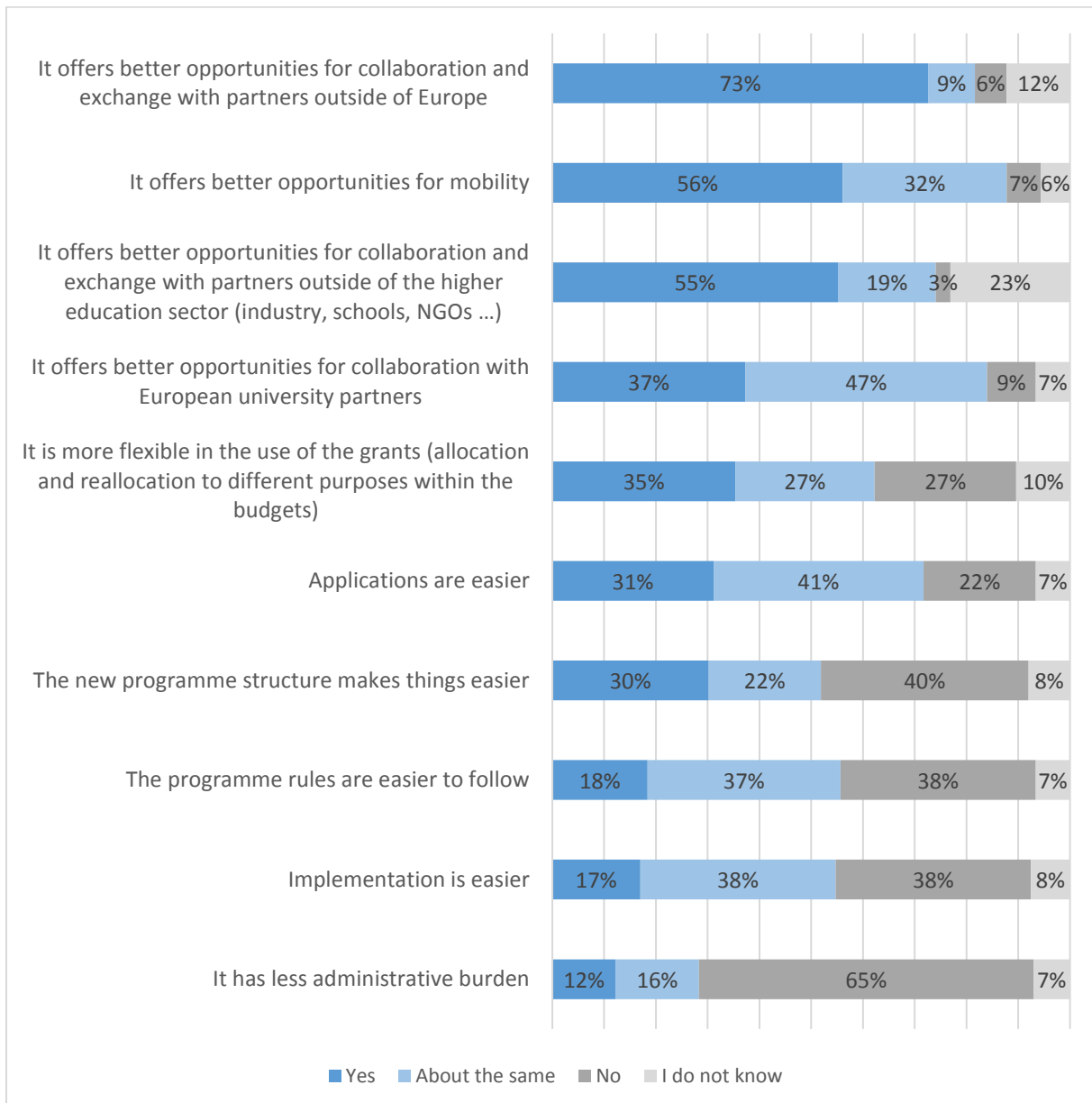
European Commission (2016): Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2017. Available online under: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

European Commission. Education and Culture (2016): Evaluation Roadmap. Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+. Available online under: http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_eac_014_evaluation_erasmus_en.pdf

2. Factsheets on specific aspects and actions of the Erasmus+ Programme

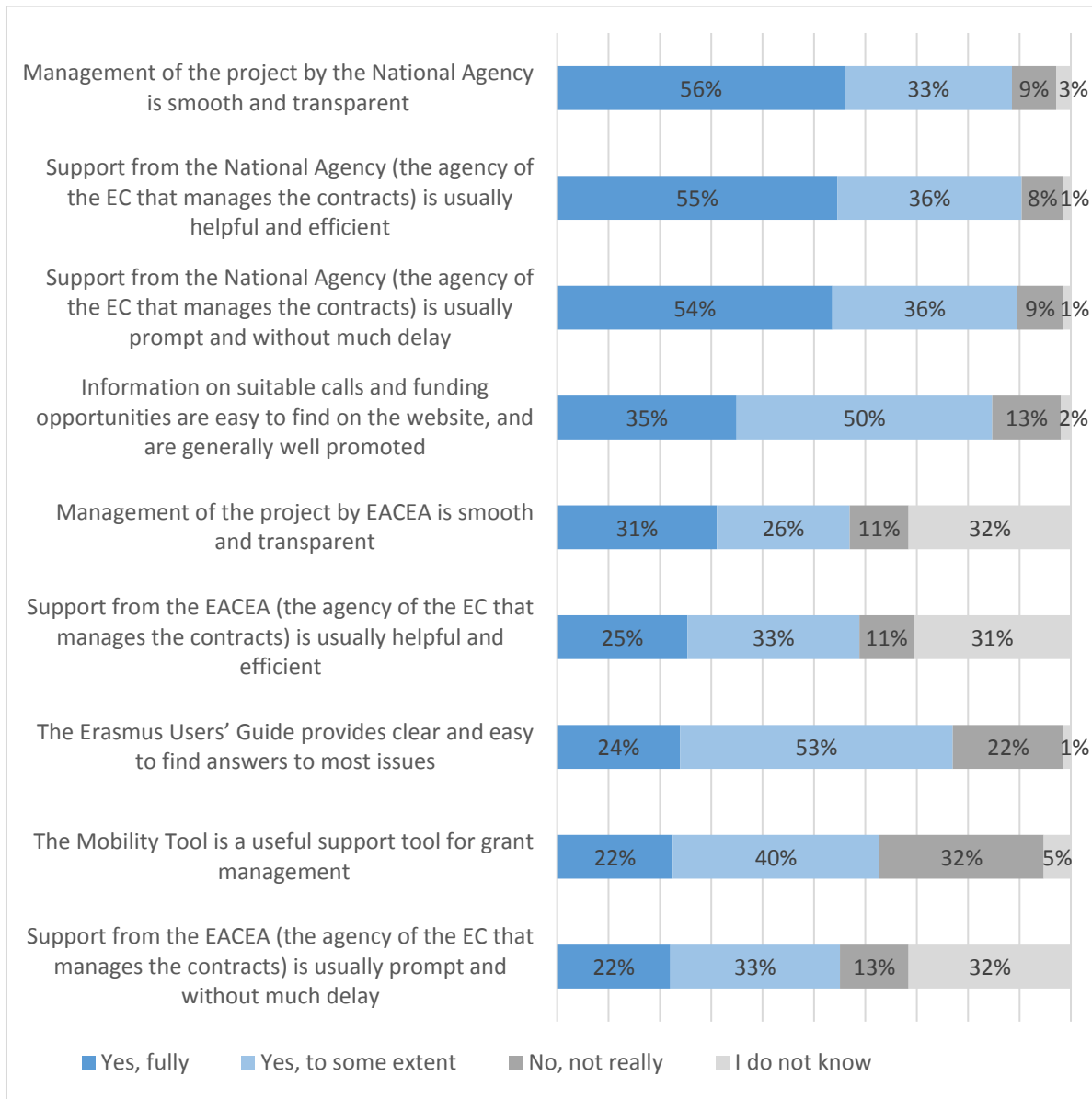
Core findings of EUA's membership consultation survey – by survey modules

A. Erasmus+ compared to the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)



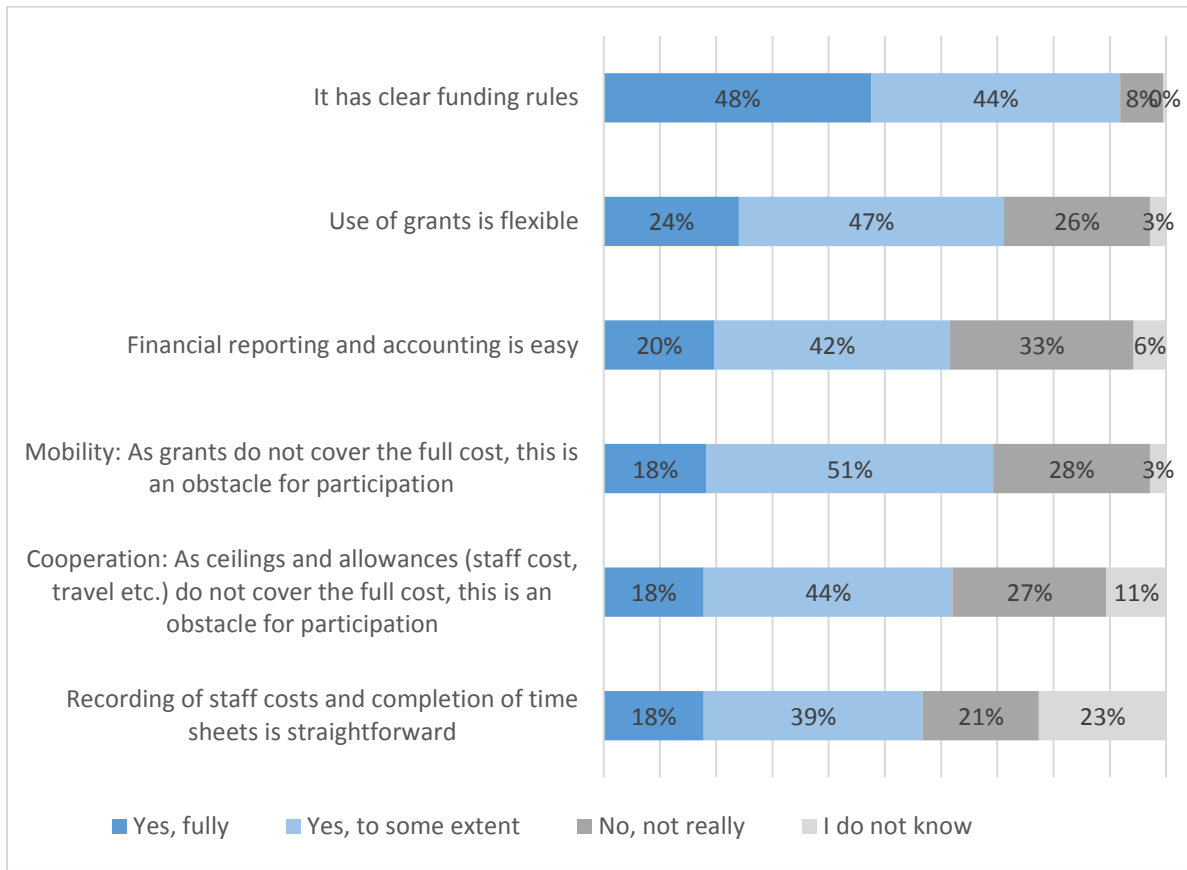
Question 8: Compared to the previous Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, do you think the new Erasmus+ programme... (n=218)

B. Erasmus+ project management



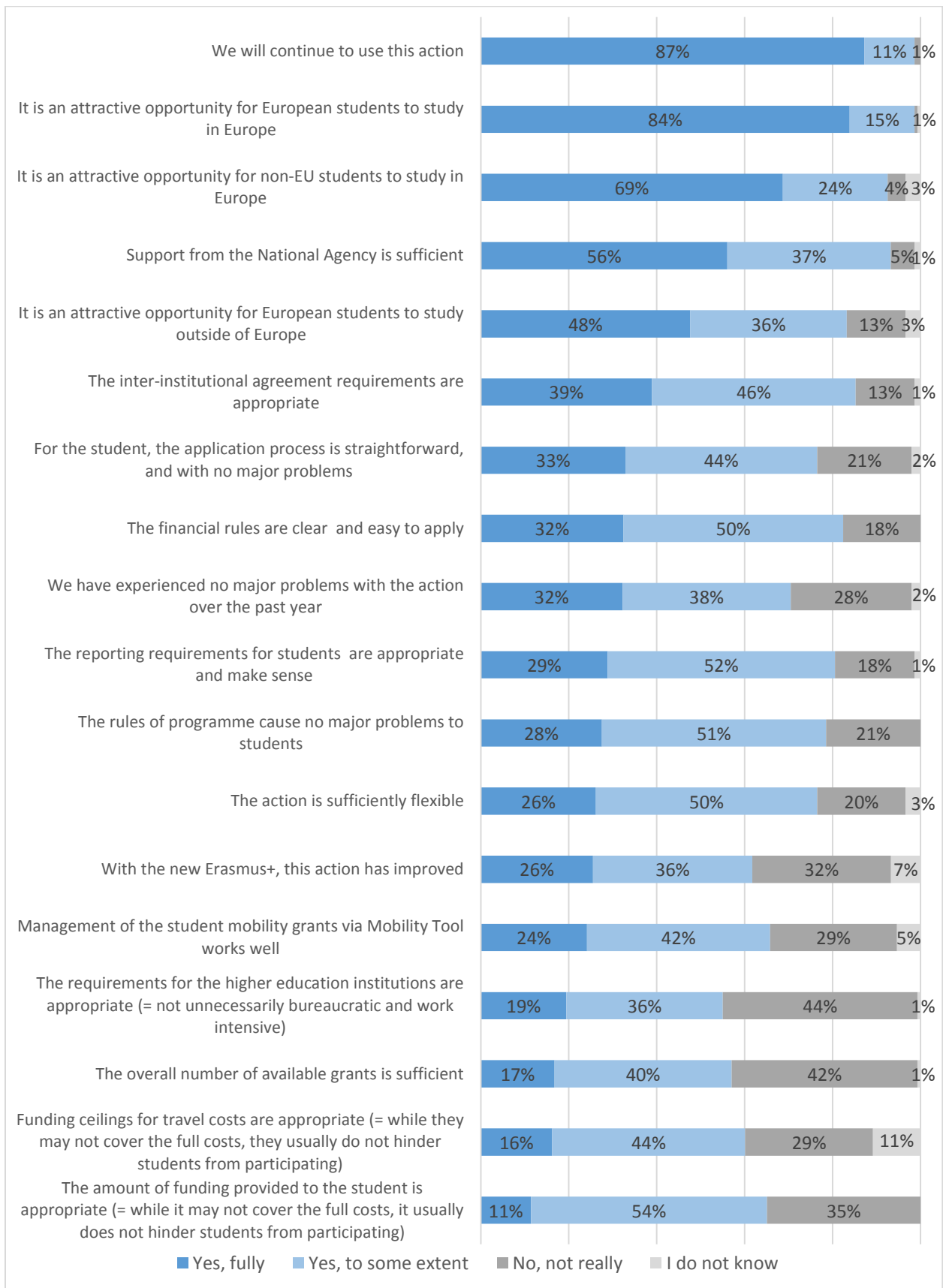
Question 10: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ project management? (n=218)

C. Erasmus+ funding



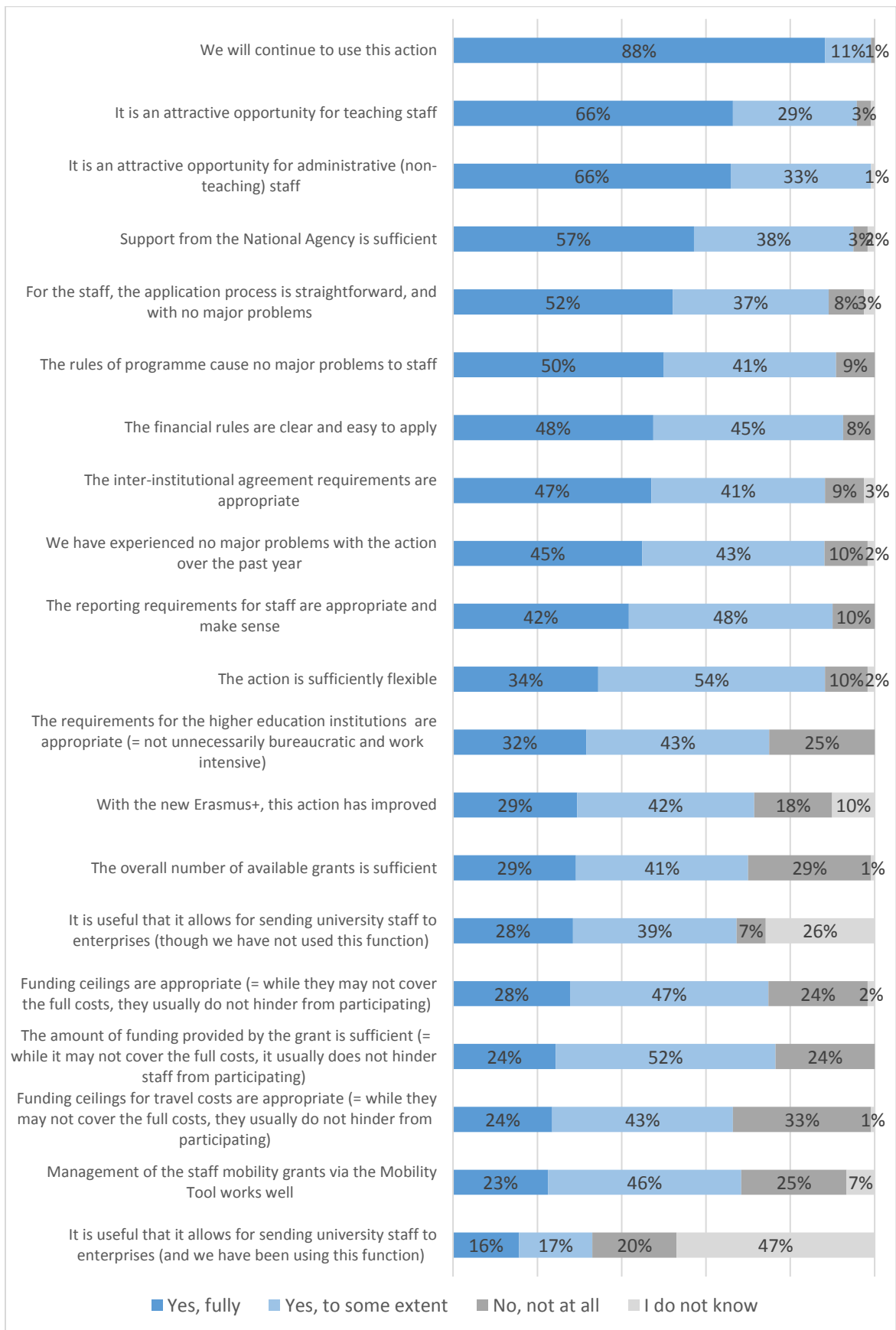
Question 11: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning Erasmus+ funding rules and procedures? (n=218)

D. Key Action 1: Student Mobility



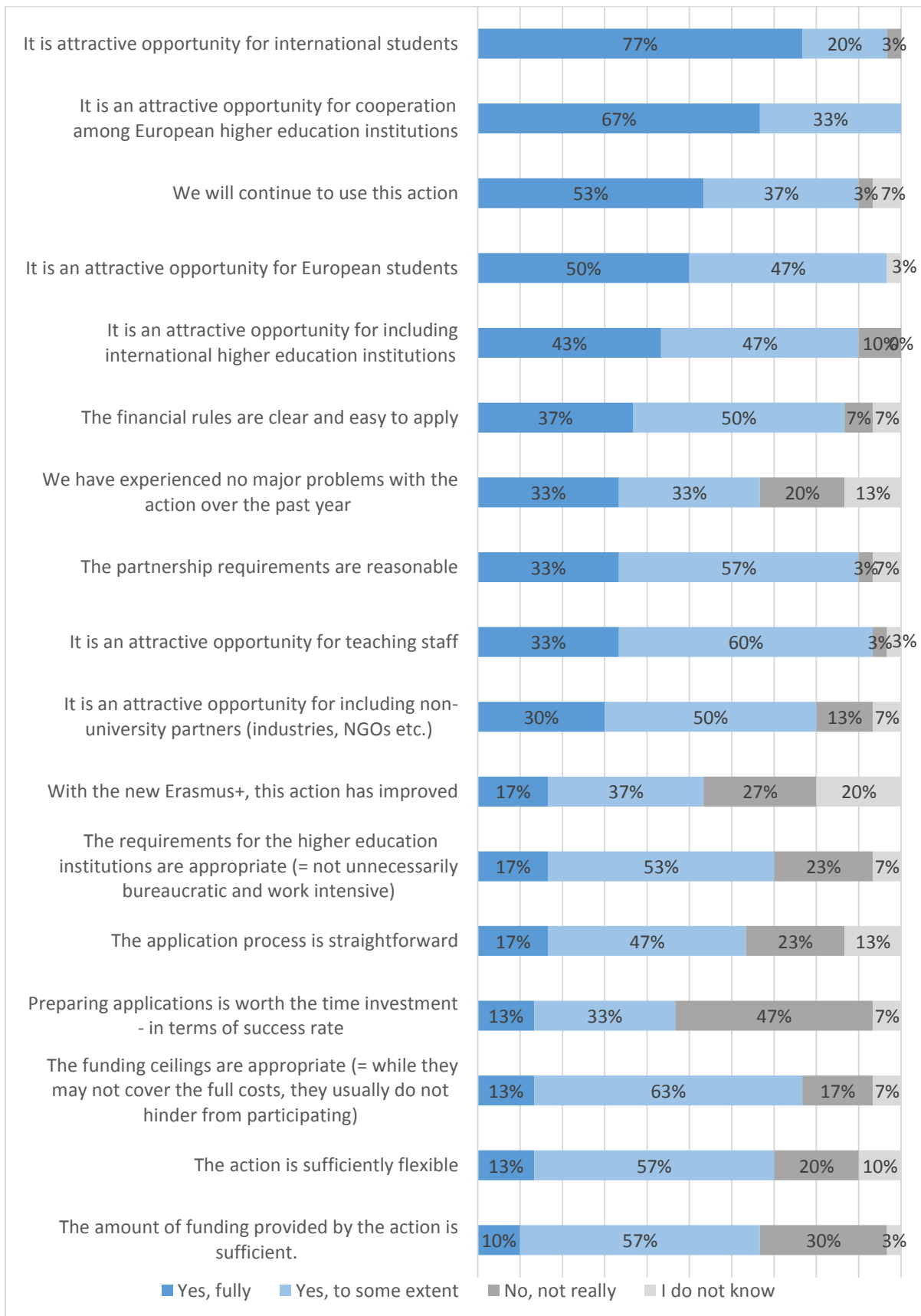
Question 20: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ student mobility? (n=150)

E. Key Action 1: Staff Mobility



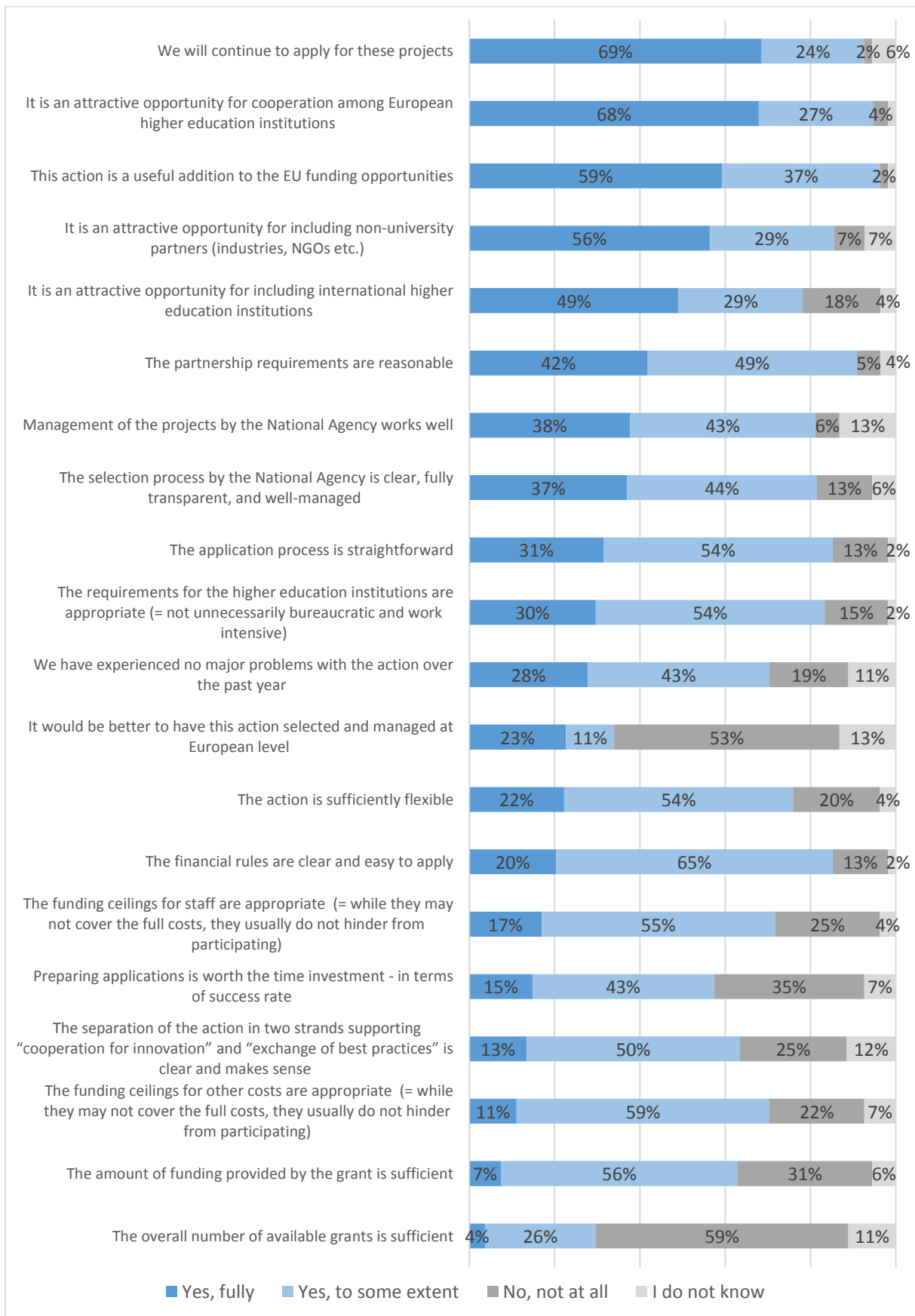
Question 25: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ staff mobility? (n=121)

F. Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees



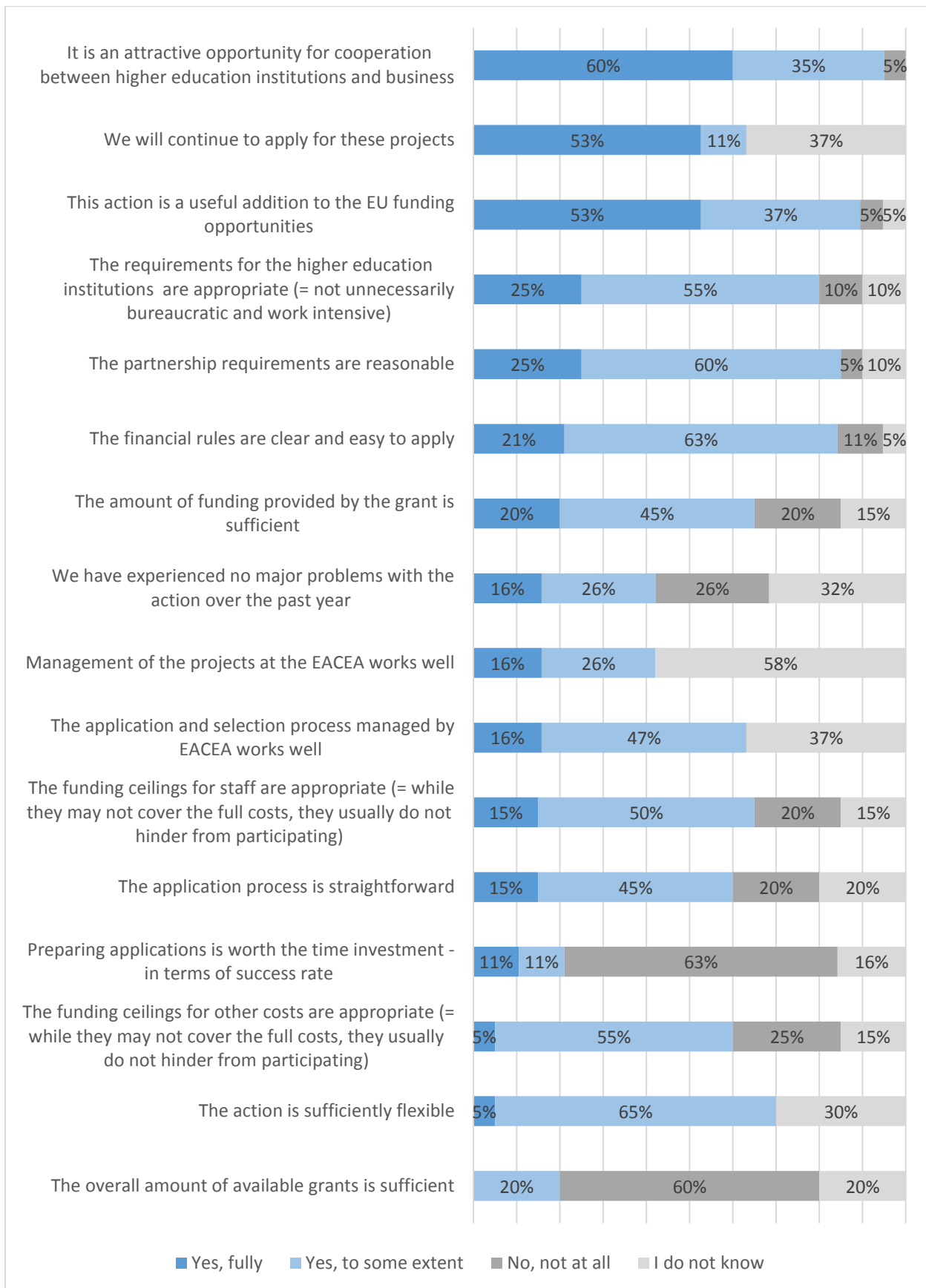
Question 28: Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees? (n=30)

G. Key Action 2: Strategic Partnerships



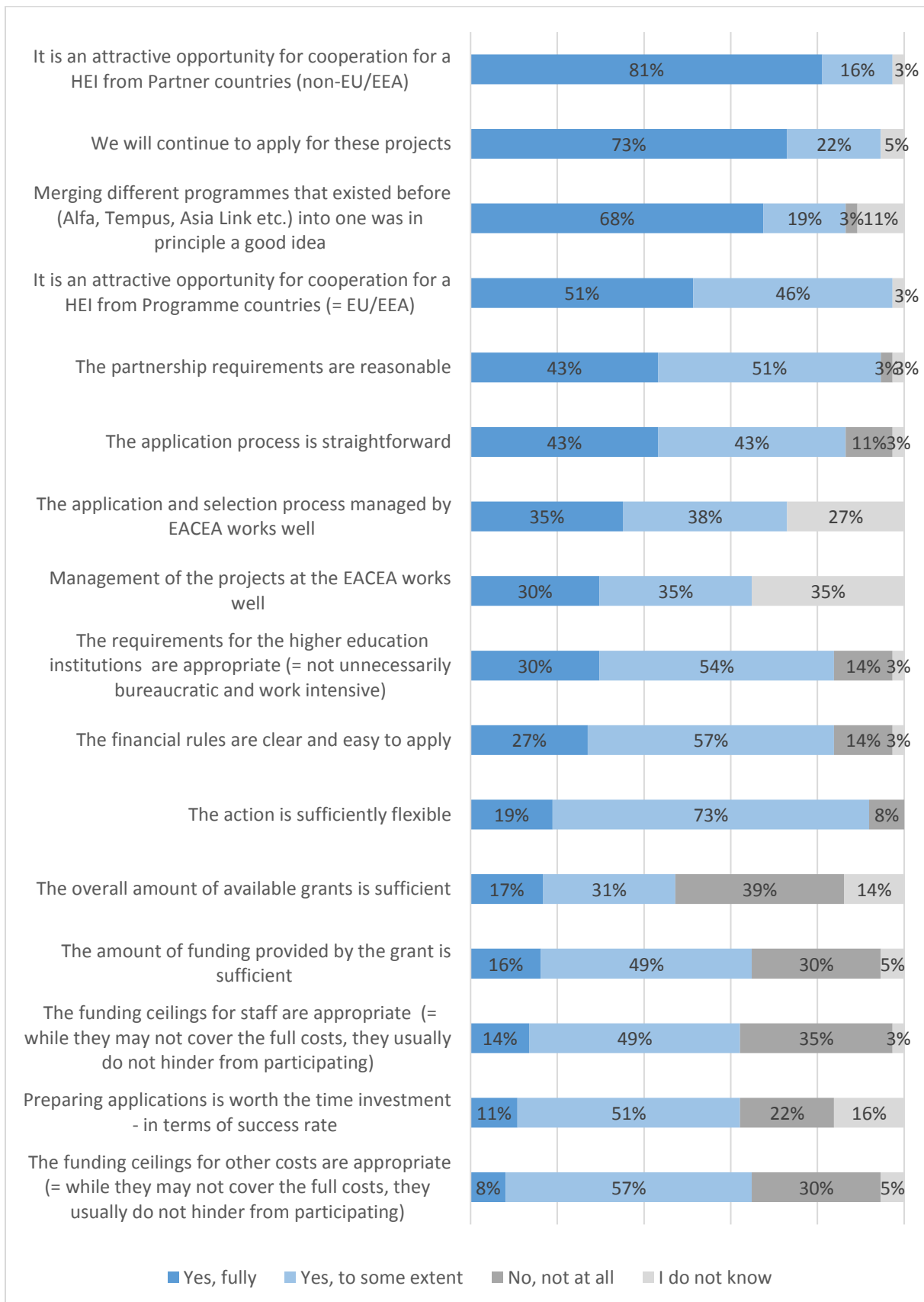
Question 31: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Strategic Partnerships? (n=57)

H. Key Action 2: Knowledge Alliances



Question 34: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Knowledge Alliances? (n= 23)

I. Key Action 2: Capacity Building



Question 37: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Capacity Building in the field of higher education? (n=39)

3. Survey questionnaire

EUA Consultation on simplification and streamlining of Erasmus+ - The EU Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport

Dear colleague,

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback about your Erasmus+ experience is extremely important to us. We would like to know from you, what are the issues that work well, and what should be changed regarding the proposal submission and evaluation, management of grants and financial and strategic aspects.

The questionnaire

The Erasmus+ consultation survey is made up of two parts. **Part 1** of the questionnaire asks about your general impressions on **principal aspects** that EUA has been lobbying for and that the new programme promised to include:

- a streamlined programme architecture,
- simplified application and grant administration rules and procedures,
- more flexibility and versatility of programmes,
- simpler and more flexible budget rules

This should take no longer than 15 minutes.

As this does not leave any scope for nuances regarding different types of actions, **Part 2** asks for your concrete experience with some of the programme's **specific actions** and its **associated support measures**. It is up to you to decide on which of the actions you want to provide feedback:

- KA1: Student mobility
- KA1: Staff Mobility
- KA1: Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees
- KA2: Strategic Partnerships
- KA2: Knowledge Alliances
- KA2: Capacity Building in Higher Education
- KA3: Support to Reforms in the Higher Education Area
- Any other comments you want to submit

Each module takes approximately 5 minutes to complete.

(...).

Institutional data

Please indicate below the requested data. This will help EUA to analyse your responses in a coherent way and get back to you in case clarifications are needed. Survey results will only be used in an aggregated and anonymised form. The institutional and contact details will never be publicly related to your answers without your prior authorisation.

1. Name of the institution:
2. Please select the country in which your institution is located from the drop down menu below. (...)
3. If you cannot find the country of your institution in the list above and you have therefore chosen 'other', please indicate the name of the country in English below.
4. Information about the person filling in the survey:
5. Where is your position located within your institution?
 - Rector's office
 - Vice-rector's office
 - International Office
 - Finance department
 - Other service, please indicate _____
6. EUA membership Is your university a member of the European University Association (EUA)? If you want to check in the EUA members directory, whether your institution is a member of EUA refer to <http://www.eua.be/about/members-directory>
 - Yes
 - No
7. How experienced is your institution in using EU funding programmes for education and training? (please select one option)
 - Very experienced
 - Some experience
 - Just started
 - No experience at all

Main survey: general features of Erasmus+

8. Compared to the previous Lifelong Learning programme 2007-2013, do you think the new Erasmus+ programme has in general improved?
Please select one option for each item: *Yes, No, About the same, I do not know.*
 - It is easier to apply
 - It is easier to implement
 - It has less administrative burden
 - The programme rules are easier to follow
 - It is more flexible in the use of the grants (allocation and reallocation to different purposes within the budgets)
 - It offers better opportunities for collaboration with European university partners
 - It offers better opportunities for collaboration and exchange with partners outside of Europe
 - It offers better opportunities for collaboration and exchange with partners outside of the higher education sector (industry, schools, NGOs ...)
 - It offers better opportunities for mobility
 - The new programme structure makes things easier
9. Please provide your additional comments here

10. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ project management?
Please select one option for each item: Yes, fully./ Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./I do not know.
- The Erasmus Users' Guide provides clear and easy to find answers to most issues
 - Information on suitable calls and funding opportunities are easy to find on the website, and are generally well promoted
 - Support from the EACEA (the agency of the EC that manages the contracts) is usually prompt and without much delay
 - Support from the EACEA (the agency of the EC that manages the contracts) is usually helpful and efficient
 - Management of the project by EACEA is smooth and transparent
 - Support from the National Agency (the agency of the EC that manages the contracts) is usually prompt and without much delay
 - Support from the National Agency (the agency of the EC that manages the contracts) is usually helpful and efficient
 - Management of the project by the National Agency is smooth and transparent
 - The Mobility Tool is a useful support tool for grant management
11. Please provide your additional comments here.
12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning Erasmus+ funding rules and procedures? Please select one option for each item: *Yes, fully./Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./I do not know.*
- It has clear funding rules
 - Use of grants is flexible
 - Financial reporting and accounting is easy
 - Recording of staff costs and completion of time sheets is straightforward
 - Cooperation: As ceilings and allowances (staff cost, travel etc.) do not cover the full cost, this is an obstacle for participation
 - Mobility: As grants do not cover the full cost, this is an obstacle for participation
13. Please provide your additional comments here
14. Do you think the Erasmus+ programme succeeds in addressing the priorities it has set for itself regarding the following issues? Please select one option for each item: *Yes, fully./ Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./I do not know.*
- Vulnerable groups
 - Remote areas
 - Languages
 - Refugees
15. Please provide your additional comments here
16. What would you like to improve in the Erasmus+? And how would you do that?
- In the current Erasmus+ Programme
 - For the new EU funding programme for education and training beyond 2020
17. Do you have any further suggestions or remarks regarding the Erasmus+ in general? If so, please elaborate.

Thank you! You have now successfully completed the first part of the survey. At this point, you can either submit and exit the survey or continue to the chosen optional modules of the specific Erasmus+ actions. This would be very helpful for us, as it will provide very concrete advice on what has to be improved. Each action will take around 5 -10 minutes to complete.

18. Depending on your interests please select actions you want to comment on (you may of course select all, and then skip those questions you do not want to answer)
- I do not wish to continue - submit now

- KA1: Student Mobility
- KA1: Staff Mobility
- KA1: Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees
- KA2: Strategic Partnerships
- KA2: Knowledge Alliances
- KA2: Capacity Building in Higher Education
- KA3: Support to Reforms in the Higher Education Area

Key Action 1

19. **Student Mobility:** Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus + student mobility? Please select one option for each item: *Yes, fully./ Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./ I do not know.*
- It is an attractive opportunity for European students to study in Europe
 - It is an attractive opportunity for European students to study outside of Europe
 - It is an attractive opportunity for non-EU students to study in Europe
 - For the student, the application process is straightforward, and with no major problems
 - The rules of programme cause no major problems to students
 - The reporting requirements for students are appropriate and make sense
 - The overall number of available grants is sufficient
 - The amount of funding provided to the student is appropriate (= while it may not cover the full costs, it usually does not hinder students from participating)
 - Funding ceilings for travel costs are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder students from participating)
 - The financial rules are clear and easy to apply
 - The requirements for the higher education institutions are appropriate (= not unnecessarily bureaucratic and work intensive)
 - The inter-institutional agreement requirements are appropriate
 - The action is sufficiently flexible
 - Support from the National Agency is sufficient
 - Management of the student mobility grants via Mobility Tool works well
 - We have experienced no major problems with the action over the past year
 - With the new Erasmus+, this action has improved
 - We will continue to use this action
20. What would you improve about this action (student mobility)?
21. Do you believe that Online Linguistic Support (OLS) tool in its present shape is useful? Please select one option.
- It is a reliable tool for assessing language skills
 - It provides good quality language courses
 - It is beneficial and relevant for students
 - It contributes to promoting language learning and linguistic diversity
22. Do you think that the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) is useful to enhancing the quality of your institution's internationalisation activities? Please select one option.
- Yes, it has improved the quality of our internationalisation activities
 - No, as we are already quality assured but it may be useful for other institutions
 - No, it is not useful for any institution and should be abolished
 - I do not know
23. Please provide your additional comments here

24. **Staff Mobility:** Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus+ staff mobility: Please select one option for each item: *Yes, fully./ Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./ I do not know.*

- It is an attractive opportunity for teaching staff
- It is an attractive opportunity for administrative (non-teaching) staff
- It is useful that it allows for sending university staff to enterprises (and we have been using this function)
- It is useful that it allows for sending university staff to enterprises (though we have not used this function)
- For the staff, the application process is straightforward, and with no major problems
- The rules of programme cause no major problems to staff
- The reporting requirements for staff are appropriate and make sense
- The overall number of available grants is sufficient
- The amount of funding provided by the grant is sufficient (= while it may not cover the full costs, it usually does not hinder staff from participating)
- Funding ceilings are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
- Funding ceilings for travel costs are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
- The financial rules are clear and easy to apply
- The requirements for the higher education institutions are appropriate (= not unnecessarily bureaucratic and work intensive)
- The inter-institutional agreement requirements are appropriate
- The action is sufficiently flexible
- Management of the staff mobility grants via the Mobility Tool works well
- Support from the National Agency is sufficient
- We have experienced no major problems with the action over the past year
- With the new Erasmus+, this action has improved
- We will continue to use this action

25. What would you improve about this action (staff mobility)?

26. Please provide your additional comments here

27. **Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees:** Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees? Please select one option for each item: *Yes, fully./ Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./ I do not know.*

- It is an attractive opportunity for European students
- It is attractive opportunity for international students
- It is an attractive opportunity for teaching staff
- It is an attractive opportunity for cooperation among European higher education institutions
- It is an attractive opportunity for including international higher education institutions
- It is an attractive opportunity for including non-university partners (industries, NGOs etc.)
- The application process is straightforward
- The partnership requirements are reasonable
- The action is sufficiently flexible
- The amount of funding provided by the action is sufficient.
- The funding ceilings are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
- The requirements for the higher education institutions are appropriate (= not unnecessarily bureaucratic and work intensive)
- The financial rules are clear and easy to apply

- Preparing applications is worth the time investment - in terms of success rate
- We have experienced no major problems with the action over the past year
- With the new Erasmus+, this action has improved
- We will continue to use this action

28. What would you improve about this action (Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees)?

29. Please provide your comments here

Key Action 2

30. **Strategic Partnerships:** Do you agree with the following statements regarding Strategic Partnerships? Please select one option for each item: *Yes, fully./ Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./ I do not know.*

- It is an attractive opportunity for cooperation among European higher education institutions
- It is an attractive opportunity for including international higher education institutions
- It is an attractive opportunity for including non-university partners (industries, NGOs etc.)
- The application process is straightforward
- The partnership requirements are reasonable
- The action is sufficiently flexible
- The separation of the action in two strands supporting “cooperation for innovation” and “exchange of best practices” is clear and makes sense
- The overall number of available grants is sufficient
- The amount of funding provided by the grant is sufficient
- The funding ceilings for staff are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
- The funding ceilings for other costs are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
- The requirements for the higher education institutions are appropriate (= not unnecessarily bureaucratic and work intensive)
- The financial rules are clear and easy to apply
- The selection process by the National Agency is clear, fully transparent, and well-managed
- Management of the projects by the National Agency works well
- It would be better to have this action selected and managed at European level
- Preparing applications is worth the time investment - in terms of success rate
- We have experienced no major problems with the action over the past year
- This action is a useful addition to the EU funding opportunities
- We will continue to apply for these projects

31. What would you improve about this action (Strategic Partnerships)?

32. Please provide your additional comments here

33. **Knowledge Alliances:** Do you agree with the following statements regarding Knowledge Alliances? Please select one option for each item: *Yes, fully./ Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./ I do not know.*

- It is an attractive opportunity for cooperation between higher education institutions and business
- The application process is straightforward
- The partnership requirements are reasonable
- The action is sufficiently flexible
- The overall amount of available grants is sufficient
- The amount of funding provided by the grant is sufficient

- The funding ceilings for staff are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
 - The funding ceilings for other costs are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
 - The requirements for the higher education institutions are appropriate (= not unnecessarily bureaucratic and work intensive)
 - The financial rules are clear and easy to apply
 - The application and selection process managed by EACEA works well
 - Management of the projects at the EACEA works well
 - Preparing applications is worth the time investment - in terms of success rate
 - We have experienced no major problems with the action over the past year
 - This action is a useful addition to the EU funding opportunities
 - We will continue to apply for these projects
34. What would you improve about this action (Knowledge Alliances)?
35. Please provide your additional comments here

36. **Capacity Building in the field of higher education:** Do you agree with the following statements regarding the Capacity Building in higher education? Please select one option for each item: Yes, fully./ Yes, to some extent./ No, not really./ I do not know.
- It is an attractive opportunity for cooperation for a HEI from Programme countries (= EU/ EEA)
 - It is an attractive opportunity for cooperation for a HEI from Partner countries (non-EU/EEA)
 - The application process is straightforward
 - The partnership requirements are reasonable
 - The action is sufficiently flexible
 - The overall amount of available grants is sufficient
 - The amount of funding provided by the grant is sufficient
 - The funding ceilings for staff are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
 - The funding ceilings for other costs are appropriate (= while they may not cover the full costs, they usually do not hinder from participating)
 - The requirements for the higher education institutions are appropriate (= not unnecessarily bureaucratic and work intensive)
 - The financial rules are clear and easy to apply
 - The application and selection process managed by EACEA works well
 - Management of the projects at the EACEA works well
 - Preparing applications is worth the time investment - in terms of success rate
 - Merging different programmes that existed before (Alfa, Tempus, Asia Link etc.) into one was in principle a good idea
 - We will continue to apply for these projects
37. What would you improve about this action (Capacity Building in the field of higher education)?
38. Please provide your additional comments here

Key Action 3

39. Please provide your comments regarding the **KA3 - Support to Reforms** in the Higher Education Policy area here

Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey. Your feedback is instrumental for our further lobbying work on the behalf of the universities. We will keep you informed on further developments on the Erasmus+ Midterm review consultation and the results of the survey.

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, website and publications.

