Pathways to impacts and sustainability

In Erasmus + (action 2) and Horizon Europe projects

EUROPEAN GANOM
Education, Research & Innovation

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Educational Material Identity

Pathways to impacts and sustainability (In Erasmus + (action 2) and Horizon Europe projects)

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Explanation of buttons and icons

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Structure

Main Goal
Learning Outcomes
Keywords

Educational Material

Activities

Literature References

Main Goal

The objective of this course is to provide learners with the **knowledge, skills, and mindset** to design, plan, and evaluate the **pathways to impact and sustainability of EU-funded projects** (Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes).

Expected Learning Outcomes 1/3

Knowledge level

Learners will be able to understand:

- The definition and importance of impact in EU-funded projects
- The dimensions of sustainability
- The types of impacts to target in Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe
- The role of impact planning in project proposals
- The evaluation process
- The challenges in achieving impact
- The best practices for maximising impact

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Expected Learning Outcomes 2/3

Skills level

Learners will be able to:

- Define and plan impacts for EU-funded projects
- Develop a pathway to impacts with concrete steps for integration, dissemination, and sustainability
- Design realistic indicators (qualitative and quantitative) to measure project success
- Engage stakeholders
- Disseminate project outcomes
- Foster synergies with other projects to enhance reach and impact
- Monitor and evaluate project impacts

Expected Learning Outcomes 3/3

Attitudes level

Learners will be able to develop:

- A results-oriented mindset, focusing on tangible benefits and long-term sustainability of project outcomes
- Collaborative and inclusive approach, valuing stakeholder engagement and teamwork to maximise impact
- Adaptability to tailor dissemination and evaluation strategies
- Accountability for ensuring project results are accessible, useful, and widely shared
- Innovative thinking to create synergies with other projects and leverage collective strengths
- Commitment to quality, ensuring rigorous evaluation and continuous improvement of project activities
- Openness to feedback, using external inputs to refine and enhance project outcomes

Keywords

- Sustainability
- EU-funded projects (Erasmus+, Horizon Europe)
- Impact evaluation
- Dissemination strategy
- Stakeholder engagement
- Indicators (qualitative & quantitative)
- Synergies

Definitions

Impact:

- Concrete **benefits** to the target groups at various levels (faculty, institutional, local, regional, national)
- **Beneficial changes** and improvements brought by the project (during and after its completion)

Sustainability:

Activities/measures ensuring that the results of the project will last beyond the project lifetime.

- **Financial sustainability**: results can be maintained without further EU funding
- **Institutional sustainability**: organisational structures and human resources can achieve a lasting effect (ex: carry out some activities)
- **Policy sustainability (for some projects)**: achieve a lasting improvement of public policies

The importance of impacts

Planning, monitoring and valorising impacts of an EU funded project is important because it enables to:

- Visualise and disseminate results / concrete benefits of your project
- Underline key successes and identify potential for improvement
- Evaluate efficiency and added-value of some activities as contributions to larger objectives
- Respect the contractual obligations for Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe grant holders (especially in lump sum grant projects)



The importance of impacts

Evaluation of project quality (activities, results, deliverables) in both EU programmes addresses impacts as a priority (especially for lump sum project calls).

EU funded projects must:

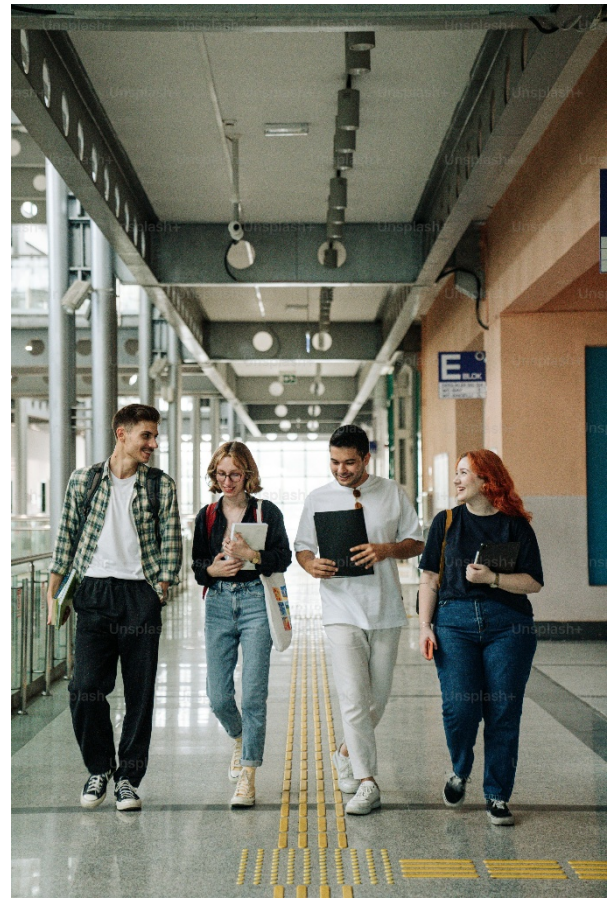
- **Benefit** the targeted participants and organisations
- Produce results and deliverables with a **strong potential for use** outside the consortium organisations:
  - During the implementation of the project and after its completion
  - At local, regional, national or European level



Beneficiaries of impacts

Funded projects under the Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programmes should benefit to:

- **Participating organisations**
- **Individuals**: participants of the activities during project lifetime, target groups of the produced results and outcomes
  (ex: students for Erasmus + calls)
- **Stakeholders, society and policy-makers:** organisations, in relevant sectors involved in your project, which will promote, use and exploit your produced results and outcomes
  (ex: regional educational authorities or ministries for Erasmus + calls)



Beneficiaries of impacts

TIPS!

From the start of the project (even during grant preparation if possible), involve relevant organisations and individuals as **associated partners**, **targets of its dissemination strategy** and/or in **external advisory boards.**

- Relevant ecosystems will know about the project and share its vision
- It maximises the use or exploitation of project results after the end of the funding



Which kind of impacts to target?

Example #1 Erasmus + KA2 projects

- **Innovation in education:** development and integration of new teaching tools, methods, and pedagogies, increased use of innovative digital tools
- **Digital transformation**: increasing digital competence and literacy among users and institution
- **Environmental Sustainability**: raising awareness about green practices and supporting the green transition
- **Cross-sector cooperation**: building links between schools, universities, NGOs, and businesses



Which kind of impacts to target?

Example #1 Erasmus + KA2 projects

- **Institutional Transformation**: strengthening the ability to operate at a transnational level and improving internationalization strategies
- **Skill Development**: improved competences for staff and learners, including digital skills, foreign languages, and transversal skills like entrepreneurship
- **Systemic Influence**: improved alignment between education/training systems and the needs of the labour market



Which kind of impacts to target?

Example #2 Horizon Europe (Pillar II)

- **Scientific Impact**

Creating high-quality knowledge, strengthening human capital in R&I, and promoting Open Science practices

- **Societal Impact**

Addressing EU policy priorities, including the European Green Deal, digital transition, and health resilience, through dedicated Missions

- **Economic/Industrial Impact**

Fostering competitiveness, generating innovation-based growth, and creating jobs by bridging research with market-driven innovation.



Which kind of impacts to target?

EU funded projects should target impacts and benefits at:



Individual level

For direct targets groups of activities and results (ex: students or teachers in Erasmus + KA2 projects)

Example: increased digital competence of students; improved employability skills in computer sciences



Organisation level

For organisations participating directly in the project (ex: universities for Erasmus + KA2 projects)

Example: adoption of new teaching modules in computer sciences curricula



Systemic/sector level

For relevant stakeholders and sectors of education, innovation or society

Example: improved alignment between education and EU labour market needs in computer sciences

Which kind of impacts to target?

EU funded projects should target impacts and benefits at:

- **Local and regional levels**
  - **Targets:** participating organisations, local and regional research or education authorities

- **National level**
  - **Targets**: national networks, policy-makers, other organisations in the same field, companies

- **EU level**
  - **Targets**: EU networks, policy-makers, other organisations in the same field, companies
  - **Impacts to achieve:** increased transnational cooperation, excellence in research and education

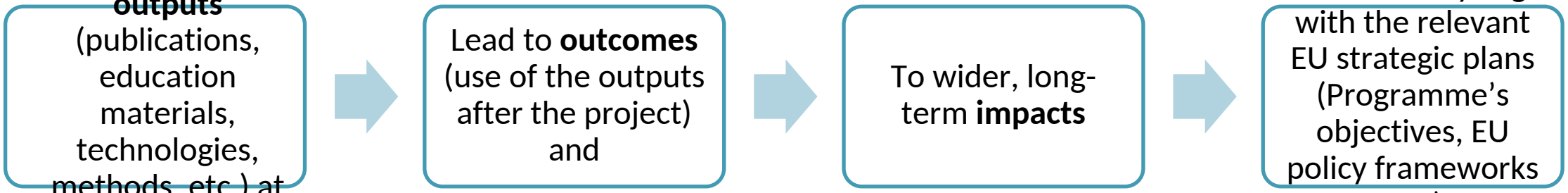
Planning impacts

In applications, sections dedicated to impacts (definition, evaluation methods etc.) stand for around:

- 1/3 of evaluation score for Horizon Europe
- 1/5 of evaluation score for Erasmus + action 2

EU funded proposals must clearly define their "**pathway to impacts**":

- How the project's **outputs** (publications, education materials, technologies, methods, etc.) at end of project…



Planning impacts

For a relevant “pathway to impacts”, proposals should include:

- Concrete and logical steps to **integrate the project results into the regular work and organisation** of consortium organisations
- Concrete and effective steps and actions to disseminate results at **internal level** (consortium) or **external level** (share them with other organisation, society and citizens)
- Tangible steps and actions to ensure **the sustainability of the project** (its ability to continue to have impact and produce results after the EU grant)



Planning impacts

Impacts must be planned, from proposal stage with an **evaluation plan** which must be operational once the project starts. Evaluation plan should include:

1) A set of indicators

Project proposals should define:

Monitoring indicators	→	*Measure and demonstrate the successful progress, implementation and achievements of the projects*
Impacts indicators	→	*Measure and demonstrate the impact of the project on all stakeholders: the target audience, partners*

Planning impacts

TIPS!

Good practice #1

The plan should include both qualitative and quantitative **realistic** indicators: not too ambitious, easy to follow-up, understandable for everyone.



Example

An Erasmus + project intends to implement innovative learning activities

- *Qualitative indicators: topics covered by the activities, teaching methods used*
- *Quantitative indicators: number of participants experimenting the activities, satisfaction rate*

Planning impacts

TIPS!

Good practice #2

Evaluation plan should include **targets to achieve**, for each indicators. This can help evaluators overview the reach of a project (what it wants to achieve).



Good practice #3

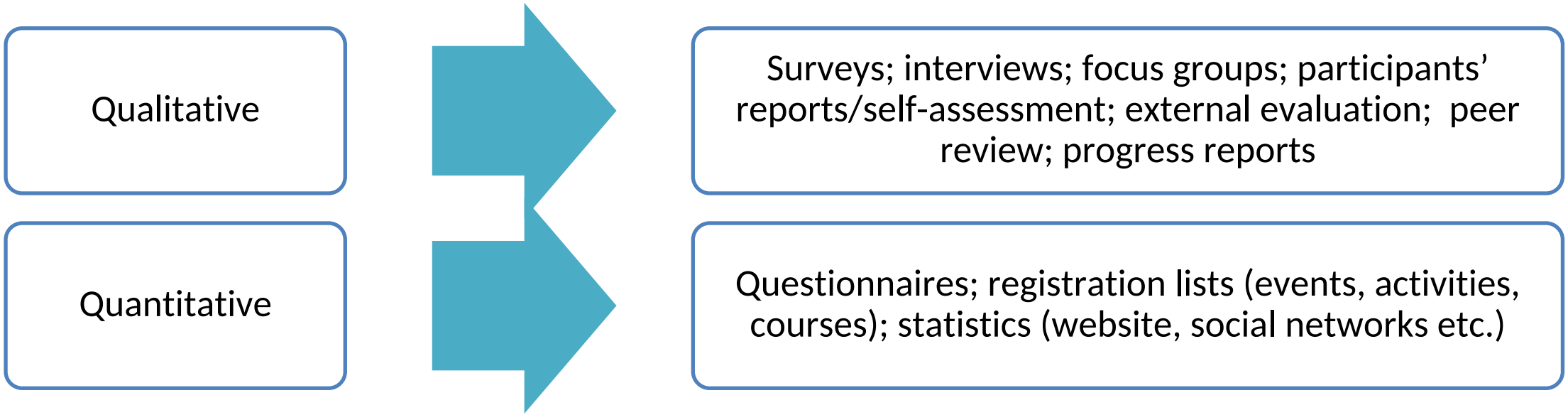
Discuss the set of indicators with the consortium, before submission, for a **joint vision** of quality and evaluation (ex: with WP leaders).
Discuss with previous project coordinators to identify **potential mistakes.**

Planning impacts

2) Evaluation method(s) and tools

Project proposals should define, based on mutual agreement within the consortium:

- Tools to be used to measure data related to the set of defined indicators
- Calendar of evaluation activities (When? Who?)



Planning impacts

TIPS!

Good practice #1

When you want to evaluate, based on **self-assessment**, the level or type of skills/learning outcomes acquired by participants, you should use a combination of ex ante and ex post questionnaires: it will allow to overview and measure **progress**.



Good practice #2

Gathering qualitative inputs or data from **external stakeholders** (ex: civil society, labour market) is complicated and long to achieve. Make sure to plan this type of evaluation during project implementation, to ensure you get data for the final reporting phase.

A strong pathway to impacts

Some challenges can be encountered:

- Difficulties in obtaining additional funding (to add new activities or continue research or educational innovation, after project ending)
- Limited public outreach and exploitation of results
- Difficulties to publish



To ensure efficient reach of identified impacts:

- Increase target group capacities and public reach with a strong dissemination strategy which is adapted to national contexts (variety of actions, use of national languages etc.)
- Ensure the quality and accessibility of project results and deliverables (translated versions of deliverables, dissemination on organisations' and networks' websites etc.)

A strong pathway to impacts

- Foster **synergies** with other funded projects in the same calls (ex: HE Pillar II) or fields (Erasmus +)
    - Foster joint research or education analysis forces
    - Complementary scientific experimentations
    - Share methodologies
    - Organise joint dissemination actions (final conference in Brussels) with other projects
    - Develop living labs (research, with citizens etc.)



Literature References

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