GUIDELINES FOR IMPACT, QUALITY AND REPORTING IN THE NEW ERASMUS+ KA220 PROJECTS

GUIDELINES for IMPACT, QUALITY and REPORTING in the NEW ERASMUS+ KA220 PROJECTS

Updates, considerations and recommendations

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JULY 2024

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"If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write."

Martin Luther

About this document

This document is a resource consisting of updates and recommendations on the reporting of the Erasmus+ KA220 projects – Cooperation Partnerships, and it is meant to provide project managers with support and guidelines on how to better draft their final reports in terms of results, impact and indicators' attainment.

The document is a result of the first seminar organised by ANPCDEFP, the Romanian National Agency for Erasmus+ in 2024 on the theme of reporting, addressing one of the novelties in the new KA220 approach - assessment of the final report and adjustments of the final budget based on the indicators of each work package.

The document also clarifies several terms used with overlapping meanings in the application form and, later, in the reporting forms.

The guidelines from this document are valid for the Erasmus+ KA220 (Cooperation Partnerships) projects in all fields.

When using the information and recommendations in this document, it is important to adjust to the specificity of the project that is reported. The examples given are just suggestions to better orient and inform on the requested topic.

The content of the document reflects the opinion of the authors and includes references to documents and resources that are useful for the project implementing teams.

The new KA220 approach

Starting with the year 2022, the Erasmus+ KA2 projects shifted to a new paradigm, both in terms of project application and implementation. The *lump sum* model introduced a new approach for the Erasmus+ Programme beneficiaries, which provides higher flexibility in crafting the project activities and, consequently, the budget. Considering this, the indicators proposed by the project beneficiaries are customised and tailored to the project results as envisaged when submitting the applications.

1. **Lump sum approach**

The new KA2 Cooperation Partnerships approach brings on the paradigm of working with the concept of lump sums, that is a pre-defined grant covering the costs of the eligible project activities. This entailed both *flexibility* and *limitations* for the applicants, along with several updates regarding the final report.

The *flexibility* consists mainly of the possibility to configure the budget according to the design of the project. This approach replaced the *unit cost* approach which utilised pre-defined cost items for different categories of activities, thus limiting the possibility to structure the project based on the realities of each partner. With this new approach, the partners are free to configure the budget based on the costs they know better, with a higher accuracy in anticipating the fluctuations of costs.

The *limitations* are also a relevant variable in this discussion, since a project application may not request a different grant than the pre-defined lump sums: 120.000 EUR, 250.000 EUR and 400.000 EUR. As a result, the project budget must be designed around these amounts, leading to a clearer connection between the objectives and scope of the project, duration, activities, budget configuration and total amount requested.

2. **Work Packages (WP)**

In line with the lump sum approach, the new KA220 projects are designed around the concept of Work Packages (WP). A WP is defined as `*a set of activities contributing to the achievement of common specific objectives*`. Applicants must provide in their proposal a breakdown of the lump sum for each WP, with the help of a matrix that indicates the share of the budget for each WP and the share assigned to each partner organisation.

3. Indicators to express expected results

Already from the project design phase, the applicant has proposed a set of specific objectives of the project and expected results attainable through implementation of the activities (in the form of work packages).

The H*andbook on the lump sum funding model Key Action 2 – Partnerships for Cooperation*, available here, has guided applicants in writing successful projects in the new approach.

The handbook explains how the expected results should be expressed in indicators, specific and measurable ways of formulating results. The results are also considered of 2 types: quantitative and qualitative.

Already from the structure of the WP, these elements are part of the project design:

Name/title of the WP:

Specific objectives: how will it contribute to the project's objectives? / Allocated budget.

Activities: what, how and when these activities happen.

Expected results and the dates on which these results are developed & who will benefit from the results?

Quantitative indicators of result / Qualitative indicators of result / Targets of these indicators.

Work package

- Objectives
- Activities/Deliverables
- Quantitative result indicator
- Qualitative result indicator

Final report assessment methodology

The most important update that comes with the new KA2 Erasmus+ projects consists of the assessment methodology of the final report, which follows the WP structure. The assessment is conducted both for the project, but also for each WP (except WP1 – Project Management).

The project is assessed against a weighted average system with a scale of five thresholds, as indicated in the next table:

Project / WP Score	% Grant Paid
70 – 100	100%
55 – 69	90%
40 – 54	60%
10 – 39	30%
0 – 9	0%

The higher the amount requested for one WP, the more the project methodology will be expected to be accurate and comprehensive in explaining the obtained results, in terms of indicators - quantitative (outputs), qualitative (outcomes) and impact (long-term results).

This methodology could also be read as a set of conditionalities:

a. If **(Project score & WP$_n$ score)>= 70,** the total grant is paid in full.
b. If **(Project score <70)**, the total grant is reduced according to the scale.
c. If **(Project score>=70) & (WP$_n$ score <70)**, only the WP$_n$ grant will be reduced according to the scale.

Let's see one example:

Work Package	Budget share	Activities	Indicators	Results	Evaluation score
WP 2	25%	1.1, 1.2, ...			**50**
WP 3	25%	2.1, 2.2, ...			**80**
WP 4	30%	3.1, 3.2, ...			**90**
Project score					**74**

WA (weighted average = [(50*25)+(80*25)+(90*30)]/80 = 74

Grant reduction only for WP2: 60%*(25%*Grant)

If we consider 400.000 EUR the total grant, the reduction is of 40.000 EUR.

Project results

We are invited to express the **project's results** in terms as *outputs, outcomes* and *impact*. There is a difference between outputs and outcomes, on one hand, and impact, on the other hand. While **outputs and outcomes are direct results** from the activities and are measurable at the end of the project, **impact is a longer-term result, generated indirectly** through continuing the intervention beyond the project life, through sustainability measures.

needs → project objectives → WPs → results → indicators

From the initial phase of the project development, namely writing the application, we should see the *red line* of the project, from the needs to results described as indicators. An **indicator** is a measurable factor or value used to assess the quality of the project results and thus, the level of achievement of the objectives.

OUTPUTS	Type of results expressed as products generated directly from the project. An output is expressed in a **quantitative indicator format**. Usually, they represent tangible products and deliverables.
	Examples: - number of participants / number of activities - number of learning kits / toolkits distributed to beneficiaries
OUTCOMES	Type of results expressed as behavioural changes, direct effects of the intervention, changes in the way participants think, act, feel, and perform in their life contexts. **Outcomes are expressed in qualitative indicators** and represent effects visible at the end of the project implementation.
	Examples: - increased ability to teach in a foreign language - increased inclusiveness in delivering a programme - higher outreach among organisation's audience
IMPACT	Long-term result, when the project solution continues beyond the project life. It is NOT considered a direct result.
	Examples: - increased attractiveness of the programmes - improved inclusivity of the organisation - reduced risk of dropout / higher occupational satisfaction

Monitoring and evaluation in support of effective reporting

The project implementation comes with two sets of activities that help us in documenting thoroughly the achievement of the project objectives. These two concepts, **monitoring and evaluation**, even though they "work together", there are several distinctions that could help the project team to better schedule the project timeline.

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MONITORING: the process of gathering information/ data	• It is an internal process, and the outcome is a set of data that is used for evaluation. • May be related to the project evaluation; as well, it may be conducted independently of the final evaluation. • It is an ongoing process, collecting data through various instruments on different dimensions of project implementation. • Offers ongoing improvements and adjustments of the implementation to ensure both attaining the results envisaged through the intervention and the quality of project management. Examples: - every 3 months, we have a meeting to discuss with partners the progress of the project and the cooperation quality. - collecting data on the participants' progress (every 6 months with questionnaires). - running a survey at the end of each workshop Suggestions of tools and instruments that could be used: • PERT Chart - Project Evaluation and Review Technique • Network Diagrams • Critical Path Method / Gantt Chart • Balanced Scorecard KPIs system • Urgent – Important matrix • Types of scales: Likert, Thurstone, Guttman
KA220 PROJECTS: the progress / periodic report	The progress / periodic report is a relevant and important tool included in the monitoring phase of the KA220 projects. This tool offers the NA an overview of the implementation progress and the outcome is a set of recommendations related to the quality of the project implementation. The progress/ periodic report is not assessed based on the evaluation methodology used for the final report and it will not be scored. Nevertheless, the NA will approve or reject the progress / periodic report and will follow the contractual provisions.

|	
EVALUATION: a systematic process that generates a judgement	• It is based on pre-defined criteria / indicators and summarizes the data collected through monitoring. • It is followed by intervention in the process when it is conducted as ongoing evaluation or measures the results, as final evaluation. • The results are shared with the stakeholders. Examples: - ex-ante and post-project individual questionnaires. - the overall rate of integrating a new working methodology in one organisation. - satisfaction surveys for the beneficiaries of the project. Suggestions of tools and instruments that could be used: • Surveys (also by sampling), interviews, focus groups • Theory-based evaluation • Most Significant Change (MSC) • Outcome Mapping • Counterfactual analysis • Comparison/Control Groups & Randomised Control Trials • Delphi Method • Quantitative Data Analysis with SPSS or Excel
PROJECT INDICATORS: practical considerations	The project indicators are a qualitative or quantitative measure that quantifies the level of performance at the level of the organisation, project or position, allowing its comparison with the target values. With the new format, Erasmus+ KA220 project implementation and evaluation follow an approach based on project indicators, meaning that the final report is assessed against the indicators described in the initially submitted project proposal. There are two types of indicators required in the application form and in the final report: - qualitative indicators: numerical expressions of results; expresses the outputs. - quantitative indicators: effects, changes which express results; expresses the outcomes. Qualitative indicators can be made quantitative through scoring methods. It is important to define both quantitative and qualitative indicators in the KA220 projects. We invite you to read one relevant material on this topic created by the Dutch National Agency Erasmus+.

Theory of change (TOC) and impact evaluation

In the past decades, the Theory of Change (TOC) has gained a lot of popularity in programme design and programme evaluation, shifting the approach from the rather "traditional" project design models. It is, in fact, a subsequent phase in the project management history and it was generated in the context of more and more complex programmes, especially complex community-based initiatives, where stakeholders aspired to big changes, but with little specificity on the smaller steps, specific actions and activities to be conducted for achieving their big aspirations.

Thus, a programme theory or TOC explains how an intervention (a project, a programme, a policy, a strategy) is understood to contribute to a chain of results that produce the intended or actual impact.

TOC has brought a focus on the impact as a desired result that can be attained following a logical model comprising:

assumptions → inputs → activities → outputs → outcomes → impact
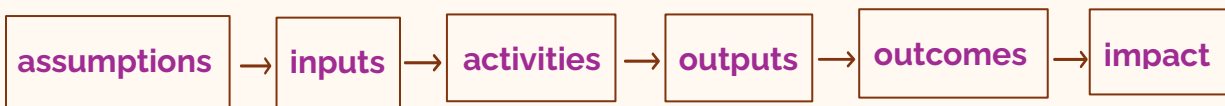
In TOC, impact is the final result – namely, a big, significant change – and the tricky part is that often it is considered that, following the logical model, it can be achieved following these steps, thus putting a pressure on the relation between inputs, activities and impact. This is considered an **attribution**, that is, "because we did these activities, the impact was achieved."
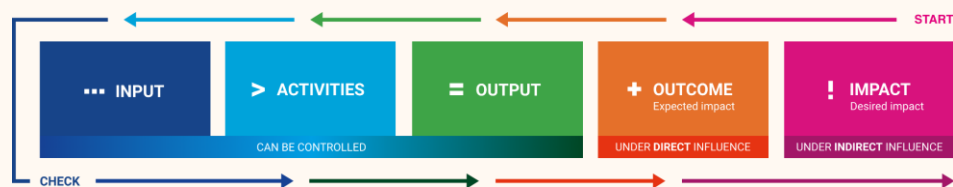
Source: Impacttool, Dutch National Agency Erasmus+

In programme evaluation, due to non-linear interventions and various changes in the life of a project, it is safer to consider that the project has **contributed** to the impact achievement **rather than attributing** the impact to our project. Contribution, not attribution.

When using TOC, it is important to plan an evaluation strategy around tracking whether these expected outcomes are actually produced, so the contribution to the impact can be proved and evidence-based.

Theory of Change Template
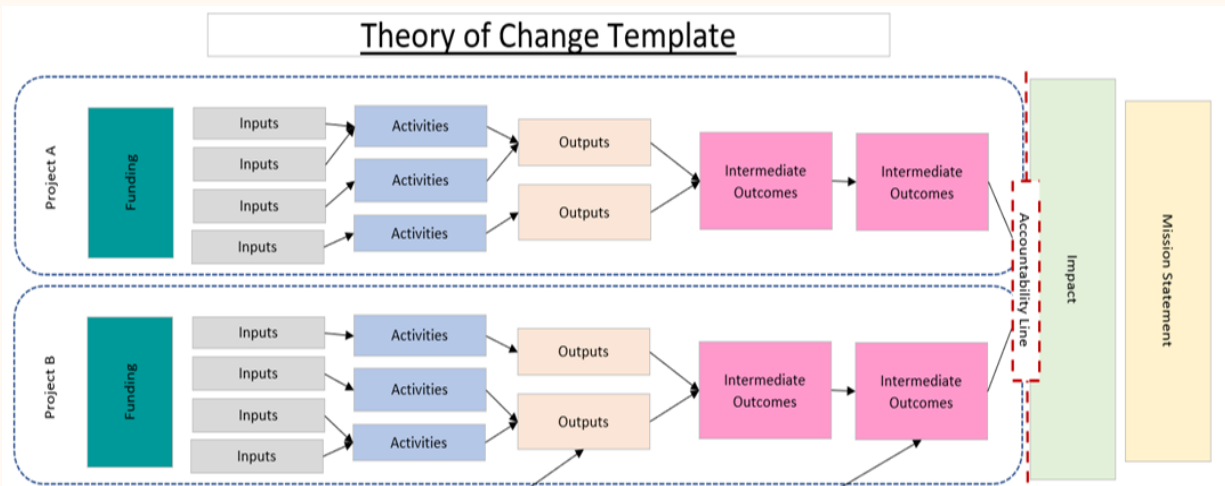
When designing projects following TOC, the backwards design is used, starting to ask questions for each of the phases:

- what is the desired impact of our intervention?
- which are the outcomes?
- what outputs are going to be produced in this intervention?
- what activities are going to lead to these changes?
- what inputs (resources) are needed?

	For every category of results: outputs, outcomes, impact (*if following TOC approach*), it is important to develop indicators - measurable features that express the level or levels of attainment (e.g. criteria = no. of students graduating a particular course; indicator = min. 75% of the enrolled students, max. 100% of the enrolled students). To develop indicators means to think ahead how to measure the implementation and effectiveness of the intervention proposed by the project. Through monitoring, collecting data on each output and outcome, the intervention can be scrutinised during implementation, to identify what is or is not working and find out why, so adjustments can be made timely.
	For each indicator, these are questions that help with being very specific: • Who/What is changing? • How many/on what level do we expect success? • How much is good enough? • By when does this outcome need to happen?

	With this vocabulary from TOC almost generalised across programmes and projects, it is easy to understand the difference in approaching impact: • In 'traditional' project design, it is an indirect result, following sustainability measures. • In TOC, it is usually asked for as a direct result from the logic chain of different steps which are organised towards desired impact, which is formulated as the intended change attainable through the intervention (set of inputs, activities leading to outputs, outcomes and impact).
!	Note: Although in the template shown above the accountability line is after outcomes and outputs, suggesting that impact is beyond direct control of the project intervention, the funding bodies often request from beneficiaries to prove impact, because this is how TOC approach started off - to create a logical model in order to achieve impact.

Final report

The final report follows the logic of the application form, namely '***needs – project objectives – WPs – results – indicators'***. The final report covers three main elements of the implementation: `*Project description*`, `*Work Packages*` (including the WP Management) and `*Follow-up*`. The '*Follow-up*` section covers the overall project implementation, while the '*Work Packages*` section breaks down each WP through the same set of questions. This document emphasises the importance of the latter elements from the perspective of the project indicators.

The final report requires the description of the project indicators through specific questions. See below the selection of the questions related to results achievement.

	PROJECT SUMMARY
	• What were the **concrete outputs and other project results**?
	The outputs should be presented in a numerical format: *x participants in y days of training*; *x teachers' guides* etc.
	Other results should be in terms of outcomes - effects, qualitative aspects of the results: increased competencies of participants (connected with the theme of the project); increased quality of relationships/culture/atmosphere in classrooms etc.
	PROJECT DESCRIPTION
	• What are the **concrete outcomes and achievements** of your project, and **how do they link back to the project objectives**? Were all original objectives of the project met?
	Outcomes - make sure they are the same from the summary, but here they will be presented extensively. Make sure they are connected with project objectives. Your report will be assessed against your project proposal. Achievements refer to other types of outcomes and potential impact: *increased x organisational aspect*; generally, as Erasmus+ is dedicated to education and training, the main outcomes are learning outcomes – competences, attitudes, knowledge, behaviours, skills, organisational capabilities and culture. You should refer to achievements you proposed in the project and only if you had other results that were not directly expected, you can add them too. Try to bring on all the intended, but also the secondary level achievements (not intended, but happened and are valuable for participants and organisations).

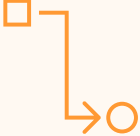|	WORK PACKAGE (except WP 1 – Project Management)
	a. Explain **how those results were achieved** and how they helped reach the project objectives. Please elaborate on the quality of the results and include the **reference of the supporting documents that support this evaluation**. b. Describe the target group for those activities and r**esults and explain how those were beneficial** for them. c. Provide information on the **level of achievement of the selected qualitative and quantitative indicators**. How were the **progress, quality and achievement of this WP results monitored**. Refer to the results planned, as presented in the application form. Explain what was done (activities) to achieve those results. Provide details to show the QUALITY of the results, maybe their uniqueness or innovative aspect and attach proves, so the assessor can decide in favour. Explain the target group (*who benefitted from the activity*) and what was the effect on them (skills, attitudes, competences etc.). Explain the level of that indicator: *at the beginning of the project, we had a 70% participation rate, and this indicator increased to 90% by the end of the project*. Also, show how the progress was monitored (*tools used - surveys, observations, direct discussions, tests* etc.), how you maintained the quality of the WP implementation (for example, *a good coordination or communication, iterative feedback on documents* etc.). Respond to each of the highlighted aspects.
	FOLLOW-UP
	a) Do you consider that your organisations **have developed high-quality practices as a result** of their participation in Erasmus+ Key Action 2? b) Please provide more information about your reply: **what type of high-quality practices you developed** or did not manage to develop? Why? A high-quality practice is a changed organisational practice from the initial stage (at the beginning of the project and that could be the motive to start the project itself). What changed in your organisation as a result

16	of being part of this project? Was it an intentional result or a subsequent effect of participating in the project? This is also a type of outcome, at the level of organisation, due to the fact that people in the project learned something new - be it as part of the intervention or part of the project management. How did you succeed to do this?
	IMPACT
	a) What was the **project's impact on the participants, participating organisations, target groups** and other relevant stakeholders?
	b) What are the **activities and results that will be maintained after the end of the EU funding**, and how will you ensure the resources needed to sustain them?
	Here you need to show the big change or a long-term effect (even if the question suggests that the impact is attained at the end of the project, when you are writing this final report). You need to consider levels of impact: **on participants** (*because they took part in this project, it is rather possible that they would ...*), **on organisations** (*because of the project, now and in the future your organisation might ...*), **on target groups**.
	The big group with same characteristics from where you selected your direct beneficiaries: for example, *target group can be teachers from low-results schools, from where you selected 20 participants* to benefit of course on how to increase literacy in secondary education pupils. They can disseminate the information and other teachers could benefit and start to be interested in increasing literacy skills on pupils.
	Also, because you are a Cooperation Partnership beneficiary, probably you involved **stakeholders**: decision-makers, authority bodies, national agencies, local or regional administrative bodies etc. - what is the long-term result in relation with these stakeholders, related with your project theme and intervention?
	Because the **impact is a long-term result**, attainable through continuing activities beyond project life and funding, the answer should foresee sustainability measures. **Can you continue some parts of the intervention with no funding** or do you need new funding to continue the intervention so as to achieve long-term results?

DISSEMINATION AND USE OF PROJECT RESULTS

- How did you see the potential to **use this project's approach and/or results in other projects on a larger scale** and/or in a different field or area of knowledge?

Again, because you are a KA220 beneficiary, it is expected that your project is contributing to and addressing a big issue or problem and it is important if your solution/intervention is scalable, meaning that more people and organisations, on regional or national level, can benefit from it.

This is a part of impact, using the results on a larger scale.

SUSTAINABILITY

- What are the **activities and results that will be maintained** after the end of the EU funding, and how will you ensure the resources needed to sustain them? How have you ensured that the project's results will remain available and be used by others?

As explained, impact is a long-term result, and the sustainability of funding is important for financing agencies. The funding budget is used to set-up an intervention, to pilot it, to design and put in place a mechanism, a process, a way of working.

Once the outputs and outcomes are achieved, with feasibility to generate impact, it is expected that the organisation(s) will integrate and include the intervention in their regular activities, as a new and increased way of acting. Therefore, the project is a phase for developing something big and important that will make your organisation achieve more impact and perform to its mission and vision.

You should ensure a way to make real use of your project's results beyond project life, transforming them into "business as usual".

INDIVIDUAL WORK EXERCISE

We invite you to work on some of these questions in two phases:
1. Draft the answers using only keywords and indicators that measure the project results.
2. Transcript the draft answer into a narrative description, a text that could be the final version of the final report.

Recommendations for a better description of the project results

The KA220 projects results are described using three concepts: outputs, outcomes, and impact. Here is a set of hints on how to describe more effectively the results, in a way that the stakeholders and the NA would better understand the added value of your project.

OUTPUTS: the products, deliverables that result directly from the project	• usually, are described as **quantitative indicators**; • tangible, easier to prove the achievement against initial target; • need a very specific description, without causing confusion for the evaluators of the report and for the audience; • be concise, as the focus of the final report is on outcomes and desired impact.
OUTCOMES: effects, behavioural changes	• be specific, as they are expressed as **qualitative indicators**; • describe it as much as possible in a measurable way; • focus on the beneficiaries of the project: individuals, organisations, communities, stakeholders; • understand what the envisaged outcomes are, as well as the outcomes generated without planning them.
IMPACT: long-term result, the solution continues beyond the project life	• as required in the KA220 final report, you could refer to the desired impact of the project, as it is almost impossible to foresee what impact your project could have at the end of implementation; • understand the *difference between attribution* and *contribution*: most likely, your project contributes to a broader change, along with other complementary projects and actions; • foresee sustainability measures and follow-up activities to maintain, develop further and, ultimately, integrate activities and results in the organisation(s) to achieve long-term results, the long-desired impact.

CONCLUSIONS

Time to conclude this document. There are multiple materials that clarify the concepts used for reporting on a project, nevertheless only few of them are tailored to the specifics of the Erasmus+ Programme. We invite you to read these pages before completing the final report, along with the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, the applicable KA2 Lump Sum Handbook, and the Annex III (for projects that started in 2022) or Annex 2 (for projects that started in 2023)*.

Additionally, try out the Impacttool developed by the Dutch National Agency Erasmus+.

* Please refer to versions of these documents that are valid for your project's application year.

TAKEAWAY #1

Make sure you have a clear understanding of the key terms used in the final report: outputs, outcomes, impact. Describe these types of results in a distinct, yet connected manner, so the *red line* of the report is easy to follow for the evaluators.

TAKEAWAY #2

Have a clear monitoring plan and a well-defined evaluation methodology and follow them. Closely monitor the achievements of the qualitative and quantitative indicators for each WP. Update the monitoring plan by frequently checking the deadlines for collecting data and for generating the information needed for the project evaluation. The monitoring process feeds the project evaluation: the more data are collected during the implementation, the more robust the final evaluation will be. Consequently, the final report will be more consistent.

TAKEAWAY #3

The project has a contribution to a broader change among your beneficiaries, organisations and communities. It is important to understand where the effects of your project start and where they end, how your intervention consolidates other complementary projects and vice-versa.