



## **Navigating Democratic Participation:**

State of Play in Erasmus+ National  
Agencies for Education & Training

# Navigating Democratic Participation: State of Play in Erasmus+ National Agencies for Education & Training



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
EDUCATION AND YOUTH BOARD

Published by SALTO Participation and Information

**Authors:** Dr Dan Moxon, Dr Adina Serban, Elizabeth Harding (People, Dialogue and Change)

**Coordination:** Joana Freitas (SALTO PI)

**Text revisions and editing:** Sara Southam

**Design and graphic design:** OÜ Dada AD

Tallinn, August 2025

# Contents

<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Figures</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction and background</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1. Introduction and objective of the research	5
1.2. Background	6
1.3. Methodology	8
<b>2. Findings from the research</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1. Relevance and understanding of participation priority within NAs	10
2.2. Coordination of participation activities within NAs	13
2.3. Participation activities and measures within NAs	16
2.4. Participation, MIL and digital participation	19
2.5. Challenges in dealing with participation in the Erasmus+ Programme	27
2.6. Resources and support needed by NAs	31
<b>3. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1. Recommendations for SALTO PI	37
<b>4. Inspiration and Opportunities for NAs</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1. Building NA capacity and commitment for participation	40
4.2. Beneficiary engagement strategies	43
4.3. Building beneficiary capacity	48
Shaping the Future of Participation in Erasmus+	52

# List of Abbreviations

**AE** – Adult Education

**EPALE** – Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe

**E&T** – Education & Training

**EU** – European Union

**HE** – Higher Education

**KA1** – Erasmus+ Key Action 1

**KA2** – Erasmus+ Key Action 2

**LTA** – Long-Term Activity

**MIL** – Media and Information Literacy

**NA** – National Agency (in the field of Education and Training)

**SALTO PI** – SALTO Participation & Information Resource Centre

**SE** – School Education

**TCA** – Training and Cooperation Activity

**VET** – Vocational Educational Training

## Figures

**Figure 1:** Survey respondents' profile – page 10

**Figure 2:** Participation priority importance perceptions per sector – page 13

**Figure 3:** Management arrangements for the participation priority within NAs – page 16

**Figure 4:** Integration levels of the participation priority into NA participation strategies – page 17

**Figure 5:** Types of practices used by NAs to promote the participation priority, overall trends – page 19

**Figure 6:** Public activities and practices named by NAs that address the participation priority – page 19

**Figure 7:** Importance of learning activities about MIL within the work of NAs – page 22

**Figure 8:** Percentages of NAs relating MIL topics to their participation work – page 25

**Figure 9:** Importance of digital participation to the work of NAs – page 26

**Figure 10:** Percentages of NAs relating digital participation topics to their participation work – page 28

**Figure 11:** Resources and support required by NAs – page 34

1.

# Introduction and background

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

This report analyses and summarises the findings from research on the needs, challenges, and practices of Erasmus+ National Agencies (NAs) in the field of Education & Training (E&T) on the topic of Participation in Democratic Life in the Erasmus+ Programme.

This research was coordinated by SALTO Participation & Information (SALTO PI) with the aim of informing its future actions for the E&T sectors. It was commissioned by People Dialogue and Change and carried out between July and December 2023.

The objective of this research was to provide insights for SALTO PI to help shape their future work on the topic.

The study aimed to increase the understanding of NAs' practices in implementing the Participation in Democratic Life priority within the Erasmus+ Programme, as well as the challenges they – and their applicants and beneficiaries – face.

Specifically, the research sought to explore the status of participation-related work among NAs in the E&T sectors, their needs and interest in cooperation on this topic, and their expectations for possible support from SALTO PI.

The research methodology was based on an online survey and three focus groups with NA staff, targeting NA Directors, Vice Directors, and officers responsible for horizontal priorities or participation-related activities.

**The survey and focus group invites were sent to the**

**39** E&T National Agencies

---

**36** out of **39** NAs answered the survey, which represents

**92%** participation

---

**23** participants from

**23** NAs took part in focus groups

## DEFINITION

Throughout the survey, and in the focus groups, a working definition of Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values and Civic Engagement was given to research participants as follows:

“Participation in Democratic Life entails any endeavour (in-person or virtual) where **CITIZENS ACTIVELY TAKE PART AND INFLUENCE UPON POLITICAL AND CIVIC LIFE**, such as:

- voting;
- joining a political party / citizens' council / civil society organisation/etc.;
- expressing their voices, i.e., in consultations or debates;
- seeking a positive social change through volunteering, advocacy, or activism;
- attending demonstrations; signing (online) petitions;
- leading digital information campaigns, etc.

E&T, particularly citizenship / civic education, can help individuals develop the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required to become civically engaged.

It can also provide them with **participation opportunities inside and outside of the institution**, such as internal student councils and external, socially oriented active learning projects.”

This is referred to as the “participation priority.”

A total of 36 out of 39 (92%) NAs active in the E&T sectors participated in the study. The report concludes with recommendations for SALTO PI on how to tailor its support to best address the needs of NAs and enhance the implementation of the participation priority in Erasmus+.

A final chapter was developed in response to the research findings, offering additional insights into NA practices and potential action areas. The chapter offers practical examples and ideas to support NAs in strengthening their efforts to promote the participation priority across the Erasmus+ Programme.

## 1.2. BACKGROUND

### 1.2.1. Participation in Democratic Life Priority

The participation of individuals in democratic life, civic engagement, and the promotion of common values, is a cornerstone of the European Union's vision for an active, informed, and cohesive society. Thus, “Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values and Civic Engagement” is one of the four horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme (read more on the Erasmus+ Programme Guide).

Referred to as the “participation priority”, it addresses the barriers that citizens face in engaging in democratic processes and contributing to the political and social fabric of their communities.

The current Erasmus+ Programme (2021–2027) builds on its predecessors by placing participation as one of the key topics of its agenda. It seeks to enhance individuals' understanding of the European Union and to foster civic participation through both formal and non-formal education. The programme supports initiatives that promote

active citizenship, media literacy, intercultural competence, and social responsibility. These efforts are vital for raising awareness of the European Union’s cultural and historical heritage while promoting inclusivity and engagement across diverse communities.

E&T, particularly citizenship or civic education, can help individuals develop the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required to become civically engaged. Institutions can also provide learners with participation opportunities inside (e.g., student councils) and outside (e.g., socially oriented active learning projects) the institution.

In this report, participation in democratic life is defined as entailing any endeavour (in-person or virtual) where citizens actively take part and influence political and civic life by expressing their voices or seeking a positive social change through volunteering, advocacy, and activism.

### 1.2.2. SALTO Participation and Information

SALTO PI was established in 2018 to promote youth participation through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps in the Youth and Volunteering sectors. In 2023, following the expansion of SALTO PI’s work to the E&T sectors, there was a clear need to better understand the state of play of the implementation of the horizontal priority amongst the National Agencies in these fields (existing data at the time focused only on the Youth sector).

It is part of the SALTO network of 11 Resource Centres established by the European Commission and hosted by the Estonian Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps NA (part of HARNO).

Through these efforts, SALTO PI aims to ensure the systematic integration of participation-related

SALTO PI’s mission is to **INFORM**, **SUPPORT**, and **INSPIRE** the stakeholders of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps in using these programmes to promote meaningful democratic participation guided by common values.

Key responsibilities of SALTO PI include:

Providing information, tools and inspiration that can foster a shared understanding of the participation priority and the recognition of the programmes as tools for promoting it

Increasing the capacity and motivation of NAs to effectively engage and communicate the priority and have systemic and high-quality approaches to it

Contributing to the quality of the framework for implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and communication of the participation priority in the programmes.

objectives across the programmes, contributing to a Europe where everyone has the right, means, space, opportunity, and support to be active in democratic life and influence decision-making.

### 1.3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology consisted of a survey and three focus groups. Draft survey questions were specified in advance by SALTO PI.

This research was based on the outcomes of an online survey and focus groups with NA staff. Overall, 36 out of 39 (92%) of the NAs active in the E&T sectors took part in this research from all 33<sup>1</sup> countries.

Both the survey and the focus groups were conducted on a confidential basis to the research team and SALTO PI, and statements made by participants have been anonymised within the main text of this report. Publicly available information, such as links provided to practise examples and information which identifies an NA but not individual research participants, has been included in order to support knowledge sharing and capacity building on the priority.

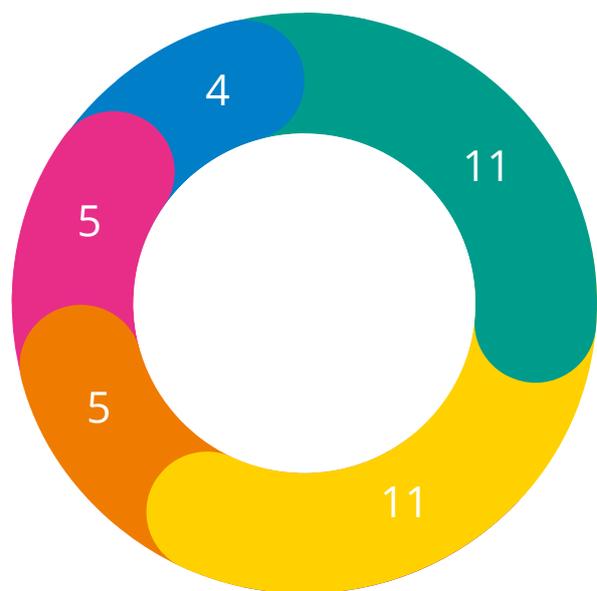
Prior to taking part in the research, all focus group and survey participants were given an information sheet/screen outlining their rights as research participants, including voluntary participation. The two phases of the study are in dialogue with each other, and results are integrated throughout.

#### 1.3.1. Survey of Erasmus+ NAs

The survey was conducted online using the SurveyMonkey platform and was available between 4 August and 15 September 2023. It was designed to gather insights from NAs in the E&T sectors on the

implementation of the Participation in Democratic Life priority within Erasmus+. The survey included 36 questions, primarily open-ended, and covered key areas such as the prioritisation of participation within NA strategies, activities to promote participation across different sectors, and the integration of MIL and digital participation. Additionally, respondents were asked to reflect on the challenges they faced in implementing this priority and to suggest resources or tools that could support their work more effectively.

**Figure 1:** Survey respondents' profile



- Erasmus+ Programme Officer (eg. KA2)
- Head of unit, Assistant Director or similar
- Horizontal priorities officer
- Other
- TCA Officer

Source: Survey. 36 responses from 33 countries.

1 Several countries have more than one relevant NA for the field of education and training in place (e.g., Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy) and thus more than one reply was received from these countries.  
<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/contacts/national-agencies>

Each NA was asked to submit a single response on behalf of their organisation. A total of 21 NAs (58%) provided information on who completed the survey, with responses submitted either by individual staff members – ranging from horizontal priorities officers to NA Directors – or by internal working groups bringing together experts from different departments. On average, respondents spent approximately 19 minutes completing the survey.

### 1.3.2. Focus groups

Building on the findings from the online survey, three online focus groups were conducted in September and October 2023. Each session lasted 90 minutes and brought together NA staff to explore key aspects of the participation priority in greater depth. Discussions were guided by a set of semi-structured interview prompts and provided an opportunity for participants to exchange experiences and challenges with colleagues.

A total of 23 participants from 19 NAs took part in the focus groups. Participants represented a range of job roles, including senior programme managers, programme officers, policy analysts, and experts working across the four Erasmus+ sectors, as well as in Key Actions 1 and 2. The focus groups allowed for a more detailed examination of NAs' approaches to the participation priority, the resources they require, and opportunities for future cooperation and support from SALTO PI.

**Should you wish to receive the list of survey questions and focus group prompts, please contact [saltoparticipation@harno.ee](mailto:saltoparticipation@harno.ee).**



## 2.

# Findings from the research

## 2.1. RELEVANCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF PARTICIPATION PRIORITY WITHIN NAs

### 2.1.1. Importance of the participation priority

NAs place strong emphasis on the participation priority, with both survey and focus group findings showing **a high level of interest in understanding and promoting it in their work**. In the survey, 81% of respondents rated the participation priority as either very important or extremely important to the Erasmus+ Programme, and 80% said the same about its importance to their NA.

**NAs also see participation as highly relevant to the E&T sector**, with 78% of respondents identifying it as very or extremely important. While

"The participation priority is crucial for all sectors as it reflects the core principle of European cooperation."

*Survey respondent*

**81%** of respondents identified participation as either very important or extremely important to the Erasmus+ Programme

all sectors rated it highly, it was considered slightly less critical for Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) (both 69%) compared to School Education (SE) (83%) and Adult Education (AE) (80%).

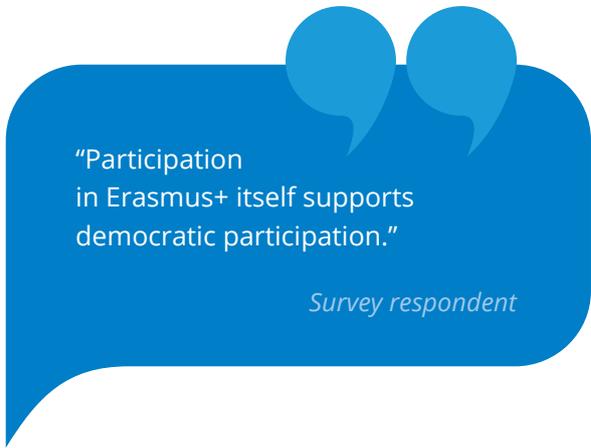
A key reason for this strong emphasis is that they consider participation to be embedded in the core mandate of Erasmus+.

Survey respondents frequently cited its alignment with European values and identity, noting its particular relevance in the context of the upcoming European elections.

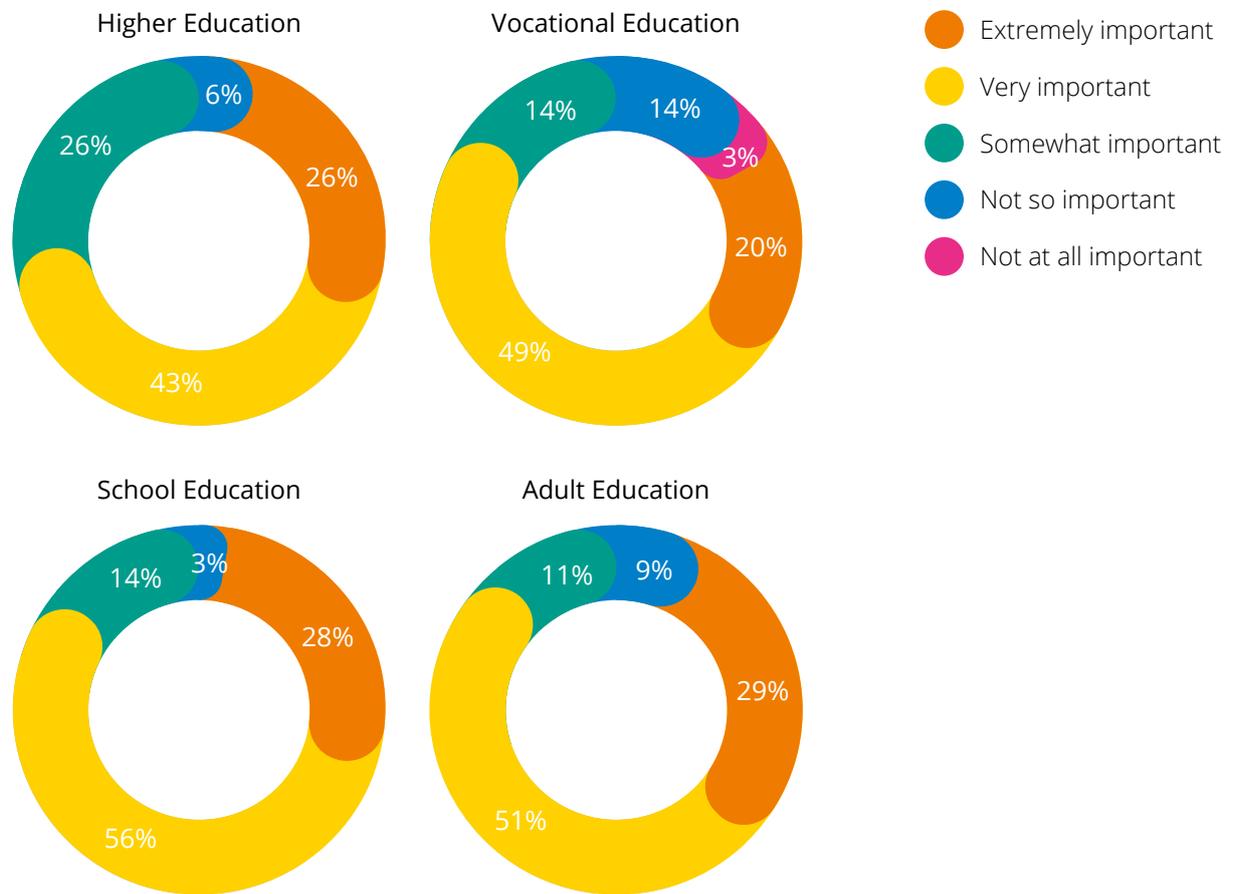
However, despite its recognised importance, some NAs felt that **participation received less attention than other horizontal priorities**.

Several factors contribute to this. Some respondents pointed out that participation lacks dedicated officers within their agencies, leading to fewer targeted efforts to promote it. Others noted that because there is no specific funding mechanism or

points system tied to participation, it is often less of a focus for beneficiaries. Additionally, NA staff sometimes perceive that simply taking part in Erasmus+ already supports the participation dimension of the programme, suggesting a broad but not always well-defined understanding of the priority. Focus group discussions further revealed a need to build confidence among NA staff in promoting participation. Some participants expressed that without clear indicators or structured reporting requirements, it can be difficult to measure progress or advocate for stronger action internally. As a result, several NAs highlighted the importance of raising awareness about the participation priority within their own teams to ensure it receives the attention it deserves.



**Figure 2:** Participation priority importance perceptions per sector:



“Here, a distinction between the desired relevance and the actual relevance should be made. Even if the priority should be extremely relevant for all the mentioned sectors in light of the current societal challenges, it looks different in practice. This is not least due to the fact that the European Commission itself mentions the other three priorities more frequently and provides more information on them.”

*Survey respondent*

### 2.1.2. Key topics relating to the participation priority

NAs connect a very wide range of topics to the participation priority, **particularly citizenship, EU values, and issues relating to democratic backsliding**. Survey respondents were asked to highlight the current discussion in their country, organisation, or society on the topic of participation. Responses from 30 respondents highlighted the following items.

Items relating to **democratic decline or democratic backsliding**:

- Anti-democratic tendencies and the rise of extreme-right-wing political parties;
- Disengagement of citizens, lack of trust in political institutions and the need to develop new participatory approaches to involve people in decision-making;

- Information disorder, media and information literacy, digital citizenship and (lack of) digital skills;
- The need to increase engagement in upcoming elections, especially European elections.

Other items:

- Climate activism;
- Inclusion and diversity in relation to participation;
- Integration of participation into the curriculum;
- Voting rights from 16.

Survey respondents were also asked to identify **focus areas related to the participation priority that they would like to see addressed** (other than digital participation or Media Information Literacy<sup>2</sup>). The answers from 12 respondents indicate a varied set of priorities and no strong overall trends. Topics suggested were:

- Civic engagement and active citizenship;
- EU citizenship and citizens' rights;
- EU values, including the principles of unity and diversity, social responsibility, and solidarity;
- Sustainability and environmental awareness;
- New media and digitalisation;
- Gender equality;
- Interconnection of formal and non-formal education;
- Inclusive events and communication,
- Ethics in lifelong learning;
- Social and intercultural competences;
- Critical thinking.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked not to consider these areas as they were already addressed elsewhere in the survey.

“From my point of view, at our higher education institutions, there is not much knowledge about the participation priority.”

*Focus group participant*

### 2.1.3. Sector differences

Within the focus groups, there were **differences highlighted regarding how the different sectors in E&T approached participation and democratic life** generally. The priority was said to manifest itself in different sectors in different ways:

- Schools in many countries teach some elements of civic engagement, participation, and democratic life. This creates more widespread opportunities for the promotion of the priority in School Education compared to other sectors.
- In Higher Education, it is understood to be less common for providers to offer courses on the topic. However, there are believed to be opportunities for learners to reflect on, recognise, and highlight learning related to the participation priority that was gained from taking part in mobilities or extracurricular activities on other topics.
- In Adult Education, the topic was sometimes delivered as a specific course, but occurs less commonly than within school education.
- The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector was the area where NAs felt the connection to the participation priority was least often made, as much of its focus is on employability.

**Overall, the results from the focus groups suggest NAs believe there is greater awareness and understanding of the participation priority in School and Adult Education than in VET and Higher Education.**

## 2.2. COORDINATION OF PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES WITHIN NAs

### 2.2.1. Staff dealing with participation matters within their NAs

There is no single approach to managing the participation priority across **NAs, with structures and responsibilities varying widely. Focus group discussions highlighted that NAs divide their sectors differently, and the internal organisation of E&T teams also differs across countries.**

Survey findings show that, in July–August 2023, only one NA had a dedicated participation officer. However, **39% of NAs (12) in E&T had an identified lead person responsible for the participation priority**, with job titles including:

- Head of unit;
- Horizontal priorities officer;
- Inclusion officer;
- NA director (3);
- Participation officer;
- Programme coordinator;
- Senior desk officer;
- Senior programme officer;
- Technical advisor;
- Thematic officer.

In addition, 10 NAs (32%) had a named department, section, or working group leading on the participation priority, three of which operate alongside a designated individual. However, 12 (39%) of the NAs had no clear internal arrangements for managing the priority.

#### **Collaboration with the Youth NAs also varies.**

Some E&T NAs had worked closely with their Youth counterparts or are part of the same organisation, while others operate independently. In some cases, the lack of collaboration is due to organisational structures, while in others, capacity constraints prevent closer cooperation.

#### **For many NAs, participation was one of several priorities managed by the same staff or working group.**

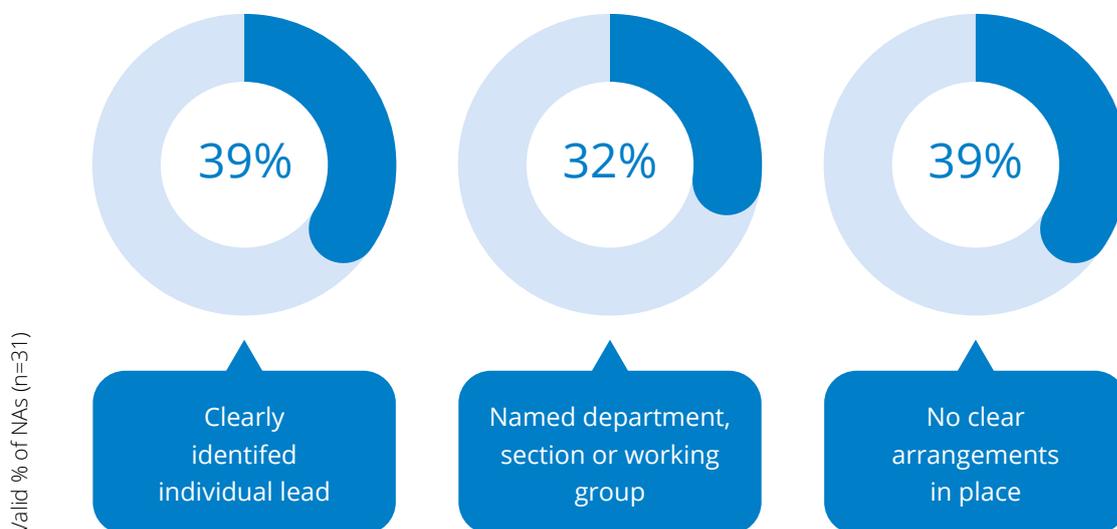
Some focus group participants noted that the existing inclusion working groups were beginning to expand their focus to include participation. However, there was broad interest in achieving greater consistency across NAs, with some participants suggesting the introduction of dedicated participation or citizenship officers within the NA network.



"It says something that we have officers for green Erasmus, and for inclusion, and also for digitalisation but not for participation.... I think it should be given the same emphasis."

*Focus group participant*

**Figure 3:** Management arrangements for the participation priority within NAs



### 2.2.2. Perceived roles of NAs related to participation

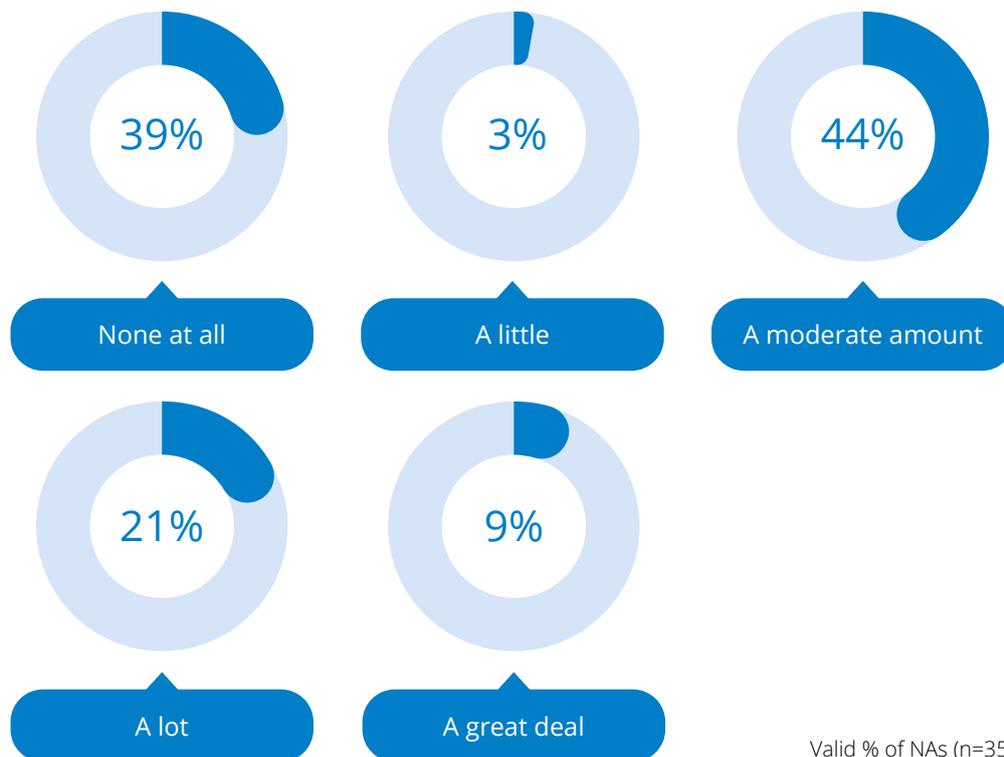
Most NAs see their primary role in relation to participation as facilitators – promoting the priority to beneficiaries and funding projects that align with it. In an open-text survey question, the majority of respondents described their role as:

- Providing accessible information to potential beneficiaries;
- Advising applicants on how to develop participation-focused projects;
- Developing tools, learning materials, and events (e.g., conferences) to support implementation;
- Creating networks of ambassadors and delivering training.

A smaller number of NAs take a more strategic, policy-oriented approach. These NAs focus on promoting civic engagement, fostering awareness of EU values, and encouraging democratic participation. Some respondents highlighted their role in supporting migrants' integration and in raising awareness of the importance of political involvement in shaping policy.

While some efforts are being made to embed participation into a broader strategic approach, this remains limited. Survey findings indicate that **nearly three-quarters of NAs (25) integrate participation into their strategy to a moderate extent or more. However, just over a quarter (10) report little or no integration.** This finding should be interpreted cautiously, as, at the time of the research, only one NA explicitly stated that it has a dedicated participation strategy.

Figure 4: Integration levels of the participation priority into NA participation strategies



## 2.3. PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES AND MEASURES WITHIN NAs

### 2.3.1. Current practices of NAs related to the participation priority

Many NAs did not provide information or appeared uncertain about how they will address the participation priority during the 2024–2027 programme period. When asked about their planned approach, only eight NAs provided responses, with most offering limited detail.

Planned initiatives included:

- Themed events and information campaigns aimed at reaching wider target groups;
- Developing programme ambassadors to promote the participation priority and support applicants;
- Showcasing good practice examples of participation-focused projects;
- Exploring the possibility of a TCA linked to European Parliament Elections;
- Considering the development of a participation strategy;
- Creating dedicated website pages to highlight European initiatives and research on democratic participation.

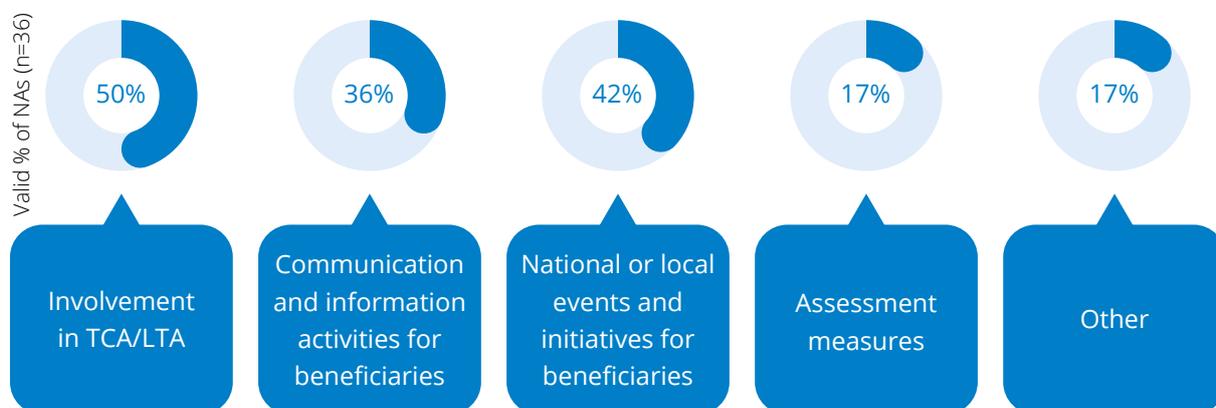
Focus group discussions suggested that the **new programme period presents an opportunity to embed the participation priority more systematically**, for example, by integrating it into the Erasmus+ evaluation framework. Some participants proposed using indicators, such as: “Are you more likely to vote in elections?” and “Do you feel a stronger sense of European belonging?” to assess impact.

**Both the survey and focus groups explored and provided the opportunity to share the specific actions** NAs take to promote the participation priority and support its implementation by beneficiaries. While some responses provided only general descriptions (e.g., “information campaigns” or “national events”), a number of specific approaches were identified.

**The most commonly reported practices were cooperations among NAs in the framework of TCAs and LTAs**, cited by 18 (50%) of the NAs. Other widely used measures included **national or local events targeting beneficiaries** and general communication efforts to raise awareness of the priority. However, in many cases, NAs indicated that participation was simply referenced within broader programme activities rather than being the primary focus.

A small number of NAs reported using **assessment-related measures to promote participation**, such as awarding extra points to applications linked to the priority, providing thematic training for assessors, or setting participation as a national funding priority. One NA stood out for its structured approach, having developed an extensive range of participation-related activities as part of its dedicated Civic Education and Engagement strategy. However, across the NA network, the limited detail provided on current activities makes it difficult to assess the depth and effectiveness of these initiatives.

**Figure 5:** Types of practices used by NAs to promote the participation priority, overall trends



**Figure 6:** Public activities and practices named by NAs that address the participation priority

- Activities or practices**
- [Civic Education and Engagement” strategy, and a wide range of accompanying initiatives, including an ambassadors’ network and research](#)
  - [“Lokale Erasmus+ Initiativen” \(LEI\) and “Europa macht Schule” \(EmS\) aimed at higher education institutions – both volunteer-run \(but NA-coordinated\) programmes facilitate interactions among young Europeans, from involvement within university circles to foreign student ambassadors in German schools](#)
  - [Fundamental Academic Values Award](#)
  - LTA on [Erasmus+ ambassadors in VET \(EuroApprentices\)](#)
  - Online bar camp [“The future of Europe - Europe is your future! for pupils from 10 different countries](#)
  - [Website with a specific site on participation](#)
  - Use of [Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe](#)
  - Study on [VET Erasmus+ mobility as a route to acquire transversal skills](#)
  - LTA called [PEACE \(Participation Erasmus Alumni for Civic Engagement\)](#)
  - Involvement in the Europe Day Festival
  - Annual event to inform about the Erasmus Charter on Higher Education principles.
  - [A strategic partnership with the EC Representation on EU School ambassadors.](#)
  - TCA Participation in Civic Engagement 2.0

### 2.3.2. Insights into NA activities related to participation

There is considerable variation in how NAs perceive the quality of their own work on the participation priority. When asked to rate their NA's effectiveness on a scale from 1 to 10, 35 respondents gave an average score of 6.3. In addition, 24 respondents (69%) rated their work above five, with responses ranging from a low of 3 to a high of 10.

Focus group discussions highlighted a **strong commitment among NAs to strengthen their work on participation but also revealed a lack of a common approach.**

"To reach good results in terms of participation, any initiative should be carefully prepared first of all in terms of selection and preparation of the target group. It's also very important to guarantee equal opportunities to participation and to explore the use of innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation, e.g., digital democracy tools."

*Survey respondent*

"Always the best successes are good-quality projects, submitted and well conducted with long-lasting results."

*Survey respondent*

There is no shared understanding of how best to embed participation within programme activities or how to measure its success.

Survey responses suggest that NAs judge the impact of their work based on their ability to:

- Expand outreach to new beneficiaries and encourage first-time applicants;
- Demonstrate how Erasmus+ can be used to support participation;
- Raise awareness of the participation priority among beneficiaries and stakeholders.

When asked about the **key success factors for participation-related activities**, NAs identified the importance of tailoring communication and outreach to beneficiary needs. While raising awareness was seen as the primary goal, increasing organisations' capacity to address participation was also mentioned, albeit with less emphasis.

NAs assess the impact of their participation-related activities through:

- The number of new, relevant participants and organisations engaged;
- The level of media coverage and visibility generated;
- The number of applications focused on the participation priority in the subsequent funding call and the success rate of these applications;
- The extent to which organisations share insights and collaborate following NA-led activities.

To achieve these outcomes, NAs highlighted the importance of:

- **Targeted communication** to reach the right audiences and ensure engagement from diverse participants.
- **Showcasing best practices** through peer-to-peer learning, using:
  - Case studies of Erasmus+ projects in relevant sectors;
  - Role-modelling to foster collaboration and engagement;
  - Real-life examples, simulations, and scenario-based learning;
  - Contributions from experts, researchers, and practitioners in democratic participation.
- **Using participatory and interactive methods** in events to encourage ownership and active involvement from participants.

“[A success factor is] designing interactive formats that encourage collaboration, dialogue, and exchange of ideas among participants, enhance the overall engagement and generate richer outcomes ... Empowering participants to actively contribute, share ideas, and take ownership of the activity fosters a sense of ownership and investment in its success.”

*Survey respondent*

The conclusions suggest there is enthusiasm for strengthening participation-related activities, but also room for greater alignment and knowledge-sharing in future programme implementation among NAs.

## 2.4. PARTICIPATION, MIL AND DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

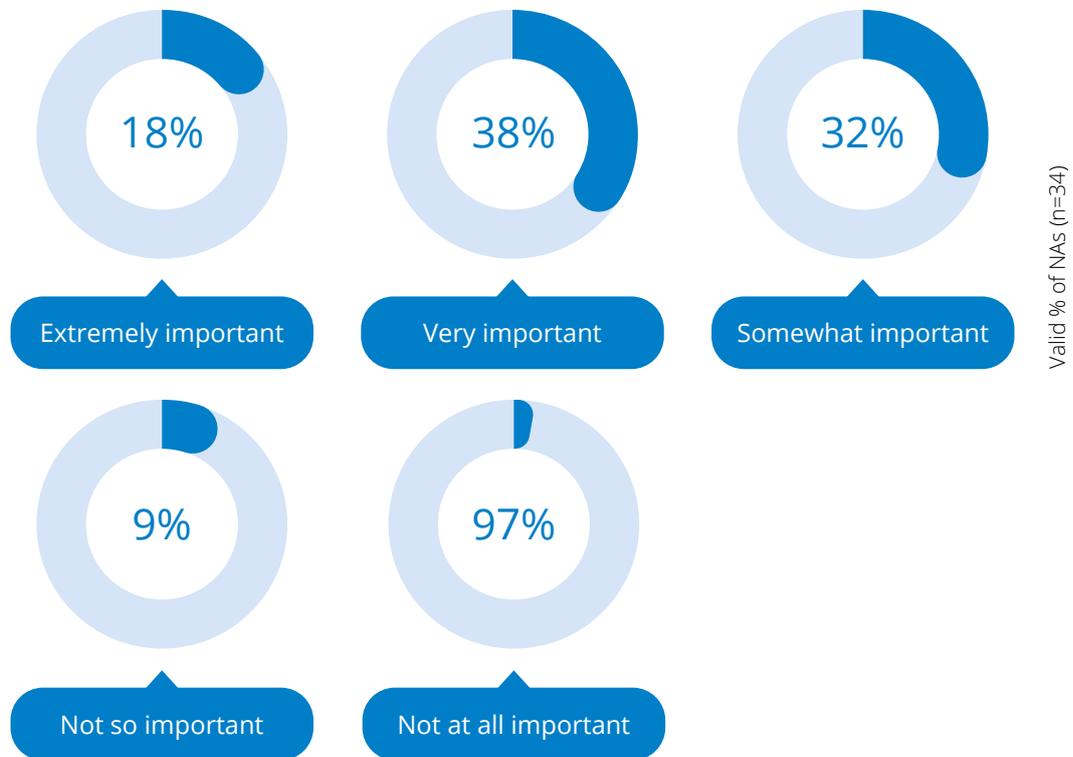
### 2.4.1. Insights into NA activities related to MIL

This section examines how Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is being implemented, supported, and promoted by NAs in relation to the participation priority. Throughout the survey and focus groups, a working definition of MIL was used:

The findings indicate that, across the NA network, **MIL is generally perceived as less central than the participation priority overall**. When survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of education and learning activities related to MIL within their NA's work, just over half of the 19 respondents (56%) rated it as either very important or extremely important. This is significantly lower than the importance attributed to the participation priority as a whole (see Section 2.1.1) and slightly lower than the emphasis placed on digital participation (see Section 2.4.2).

**MIL is seen as most relevant to the School and Adult Education sectors, where it is both taught as a dedicated subject and embedded within broader curricula**. Among 30 survey responses on how MIL topics relate to the participation priority within the E&T sector, most described MIL as a transversal skill applicable across all sectors.

**Figure 7:** Importance of learning activities about MIL within the work of NAs



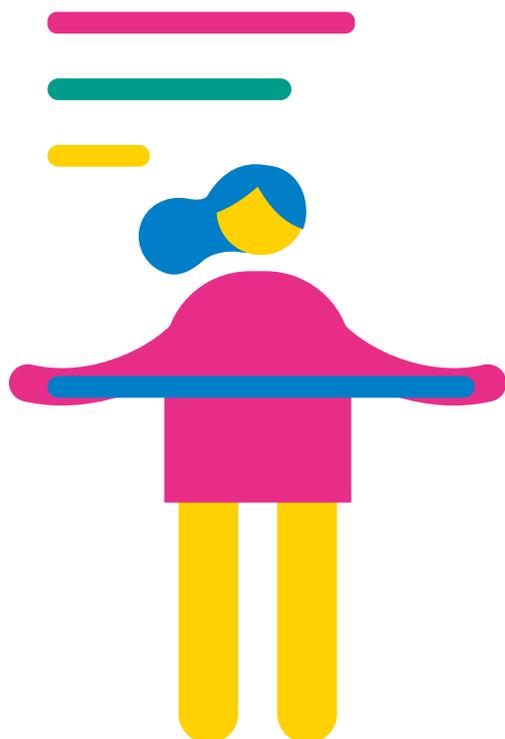
"It is important to recognise that within school education especially, MIL is integrated into teaching and curricula in many different subjects, there are established contents and methods, and teachers are trained to deal with the topic on a regular basis – all actions within Erasmus+ must also link to these national developments!"

*Survey respondent*

"Media and Information Literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, competences, and practices that allow an individual to effectively access, analyse, critically evaluate, interpret, use, and create and disseminate information and media products on a creative, legal, and ethical basis."

In relation to the participation priority, **MIL is generally viewed as a key competence enabling learners to engage in democratic societies and as a core component of digital citizenship.** Survey respondents indicated that, from the perspective of NAs, **MIL plays a role in fostering critical thinking and analytical skills, equipping individuals to make informed choices** – an essential foundation for active democratic participation. Some respondents also linked MIL to digital citizenship, though the extent of this connection varied across NAs.

Discussions within the focus groups revealed limited engagement with MIL-specific questions. Participants acknowledged that MIL is widely incorporated into school curricula and recognised its role in fostering critical thinking. However, they noted that its **direct connection to democracy and civic engagement is not always emphasised in teaching.**



“Media literacy equips individuals with the ability to discern credible information from misinformation or propaganda. In an era of digital communication, MIL is crucial for citizens to make informed decisions, engage in meaningful discussions, and participate actively in democratic processes.”

*Survey respondent*

---

“MIL is intertwined with digital citizenship, promoting responsible and ethical behaviour in the online realm. Educating individuals about their rights and responsibilities in the digital space empowers them to participate responsibly and contribute positively to societal discussions.”

*Survey respondent*

---

“I think in most cases the beneficiaries treat them separately ... media literacy or critical thinking, they tackle those aspects only from how to develop those skills, not to use them later. I think that they don't show them ... how to be an active citizen.”

*Focus group participant*

One survey respondent provided a detailed and strategic vision of MIL's role within Erasmus+ in relation to the participation priority. While their response may not be fully representative of all NAs, it is nonetheless **valuable in illustrating a comprehensive approach to integrating MIL into the programme.**



**E&T Initiatives:** MIL-related initiatives could be incorporated into various educational and training programmes funded by Erasmus+. For instance, projects that focus on media literacy education, digital skills, critical thinking, and active participation can align well with the participation priority.

**Interdisciplinary Approach:** MIL topics are relevant across disciplines, making them suitable for a wide range of sectors within the Erasmus+ E&T sector. They can be integrated into programmes spanning formal education, adult learning, vocational training, and more.

**Media Literacy Projects:** Erasmus+ funding opportunities, such as Key Action 2 (Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices) or Key Action 3 (Support for Policy Development), could potentially support projects that aim to enhance media

literacy, by developing resources for media education, or promote MIL awareness among educators and learners.

**Media Literacy Studies:** Especially, Jean Monnet Actions play a crucial role in promoting MIL topics related to the participation priority ... These studies contribute to enhancing active European citizenship and promoting shared values. By examining the European Union's role in a globalised world, they help raise awareness about the Union and facilitate dialogue among citizens.

**Cross-Cutting Theme:** MIL can be considered a cross-cutting theme that supports other priorities and objectives within Erasmus+, such as social inclusion, active citizenship, and the development of critical thinking skills ..."

*Survey respondent*

**While most NAs recognise the relevance of MIL to the participation priority in their work, it is often assumed that projects or activities focusing on MIL inherently address participation.** In the survey, respondents were asked whether MIL was explicitly linked to the participation priority within their NA's work. Just under two-thirds affirmed this connection. However, among the 21 responses elaborating on how MIL was integrated, many provided only limited detail. **Most replies suggested that the link between MIL and the participation priority remains largely implicit, with many NAs considering Erasmus+ projects related to MIL as inherently contributing to participation without the need for additional clarification or conceptual framing.** One respondent suggested that MIL presents a primary opportunity for adult education projects to engage with the participation priority, and the use of the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) was highlighted as a relevant tool in this context.

When asked to identify specific practices used to address MIL, respondents again provided limited details. Most indicated that MIL-related activities are typically framed in terms of developing MIL competences, rather than explicitly linking them to democratic participation. **This suggests that, while MIL is acknowledged as a relevant topic, a more structured and intentional approach may be needed to ensure its full potential in supporting democratic engagement is realised.**

**Figure 8:** Percentages of NAs relating MIL topics to their participation work



## 2.4.2. Insights into NA perspectives related to digital participation

This section examines how digital participation is being implemented, supported, and promoted by NAs, in relation to the participation priority. A working definition of digital participation was used throughout the survey and focus groups:

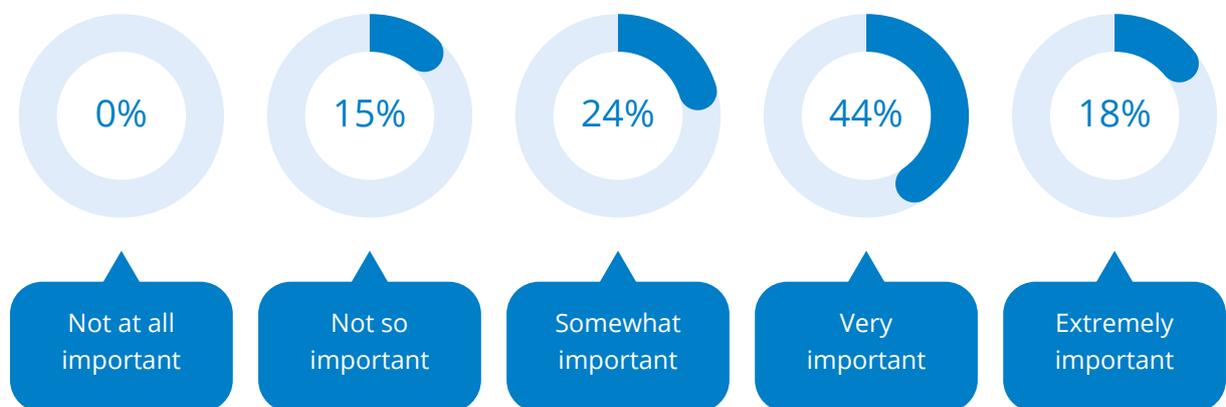
“Digital participation, sometimes called e-participation, is a form of participation that takes place online. Digital participation involves the use of ICT, social media, and other digital tools to enable citizens to influence and engage with political and civic life.”

*Focus group participant*

**The findings strongly suggest that many NAs combine digital participation with broader concepts such as digitalisation, digital skills development, or digital transformation. Most responses from survey participants referred to these areas rather than to digital participation as a distinct concept.**

Across the NA network, digital participation – as understood by NAs – is rated as less important than the participation priority overall. When survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of education and learning activities related to digital participation within their work, over two-thirds (21 respondents) identified it as very important or extremely important. While this rating is lower than that of the participation priority as a whole (see Section 2.1.1), it is slightly higher than the importance placed on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) (see Section 2.4.1).

**Figure 9:** Importance of digital participation to the work of NAs



Valid % of NAs (n=34)

**The research findings indicate that most NAs lack a clear understanding of the concept of digital participation and its relationship to the participation priority.** When asked how digital participation is linked to the participation priority within the Erasmus+ Education and Training (E&T) sector, many of the 30 responses were highly limited. **Further analysis suggests that most NAs in the survey interpreted digital participation as the digital delivery of NA services, support for digitalisation in Erasmus+ projects, or the development of digital skills.**

Few responses demonstrated a strong alignment with the concept of digital participation. **While some respondents acknowledged that digital skills could support participation, only a small number clearly distinguished between digitalisation and digital participation.** Even among those who recognised a distinction, responses remained broad and lacked specific insights into how digital participation is actively integrated into their work.



“Our National Agency is an agency ‘without papers.’ We interact digitally with beneficiaries. We foster the use of digital platforms (e.g., eTwinning), and tools in the schools and it applies to all sectors.”

*Survey respondent*

-----

“Digital participation can foster innovative approaches to teaching and learning. It may involve the integration of digital tools, online platforms, and digital content in educational settings.”

*Survey respondent*



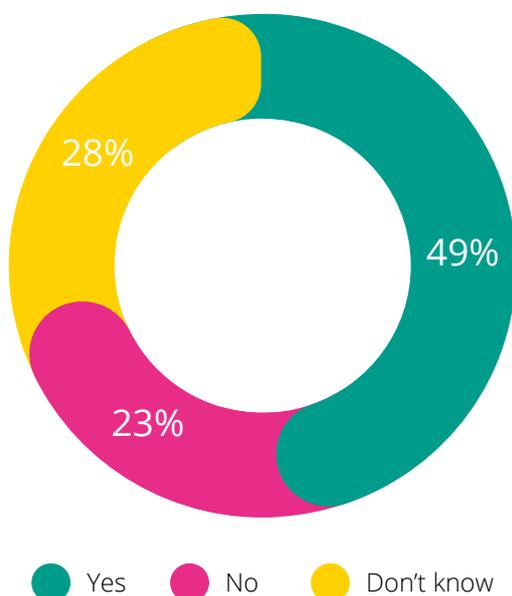
“Digital activities are nowadays even more important in different phases of the Erasmus Programme than they used to be before COVID. This is the case in all the sectors. The possibility to practise digitalisation helps to promote civic participation, especially when new groups are integrated into the programme activities. The development of digital participation with a focus also on civic and democratic issues is considered really important, especially in the school and adult education sectors. However, here it is important to distinguish, e.g., issues relating to the digital transformation overall, digital skills, digital pedagogy, digital methodologies in youth work, etc. (dealt with by SALTO Digital) from issues relating to civic engagement and democratic participation (dealt with by SALTO PI).”

*Survey respondent*

**Although a substantial proportion of NAs believe they are addressing digital participation within the participation priority, the evidence suggests that their understanding of the concept is too narrow for this to be meaningfully applied in practice.** When asked whether digital participation was linked to the participation priority in their NA's work, just under half (48.7%) responded affirmatively, while around a quarter (22.9%) said it was not, and 28.6% indicated they did not know.

NAs that indicated digital participation was relevant to their work were asked to elaborate. However, the 12 responses received further reinforced the lack of a shared understanding of digital participation. Answers primarily referenced the use of social media to promote Erasmus+ programmes, digital skills development for marginalised groups, or partnership projects focused on digitalisation. **None of the responses demonstrated a clear conceptual link between digital participation and the participation priority as defined by SALTO PI.**

**Figure 10:** Percentages of NAs relating digital participation topics to their participation work



“Digitalisation is the priority. That is very often chosen, yes, by our beneficiaries, but not in the connection with participation, unfortunately.”

*Focus group participant*

While some NAs reported having projects and activities to promote digital participation, most – if not all – of the highlighted practices were more closely related to digitalisation. When asked which practices they used to address digital participation, responses continued to reflect confusion between digital participation and digital transformation. Many NAs interpreted digital participation as the integration of digital tools into their work or the use of digital platforms for communication. **In several cases, it was understood primarily in terms of hybrid and virtual event formats rather than as a means to foster engagement in political and civic life.**

Focus group discussions further demonstrated this conceptual confusion. **Rather than exploring digital participation as a tool for civic engagement, participants largely focused on how digitalisation was incorporated into their work.** Discussions specifically addressing digital participation were limited. In one focus group, there was some recognition that digitalisation could be expanded to include digital participation. However, it was noted that E&T beneficiaries rarely take this approach in practice.

Some participants acknowledged that young people engage in participation online, particularly through social media, but that they often overlook more formal participation mechanisms. **There was broad agreement that misinformation and fake news online pose challenges that need to be addressed.** Additionally, concerns were raised regarding digital exclusion, with participants highlighting that certain groups may face barriers to engaging in digital participation due to a lack of access or digital skills.

## 2.5. CHALLENGES IN DEALING WITH PARTICIPATION IN THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

The survey and focus groups were asked about the biggest challenges that NAs are facing regarding participation in the Erasmus+ Programme. These can be grouped around the following overarching topics/areas:



### 2.5.1. Lack of capacity, confidence, and dedicated participation leads

The lack of lead persons on the topic of participation within NAs represents a challenge. Focus group participants identified **concerns about a lack of consistency in NAs in managing and promoting the participation priority and the lack of designated officers** or named contacts with responsibility for leading within all the NAs.

**The capacity and confidence of the existing named lead contacts is also a challenge.** Some people who are named contacts expressed, within the focus groups, a concern that they were now seen as the ‘expert’ and the person who would deliver the priority across the NA. These participants felt this was the responsibility of all NA staff and it was not possible for one person to deliver all that is needed to promote and develop the work around the participation priority in the E&T sector.

“Also, I notice now that since I’ve been appointed the participation officer, all my colleagues have very high expectations and that they think all of a sudden, I’m an expert on this priority.”

*Focus group participant*

### 2.5.2. Broad scope and understanding of the participation priority

A widespread challenge was that the participation priority was felt to be broad and difficult to address in all areas. **Not all NAs feel confident in their knowledge of the topic.** NAs in the survey identified that they had challenges both understanding the theme for themselves and making it understandable for beneficiaries. It was felt to be **challenging to identify how the theme could be developed at a concrete level by beneficiaries.** The focus group participants agreed that there is a lack of in-depth understanding within both NAs and beneficiaries. **This lack of understanding related to both the participation priority itself and what the priority means in practice.** One example given in focus groups was the misunderstanding amongst beneficiaries that participation has to be linked to political party membership or party politics – which was said to be off-putting for beneficiaries. Whilst some focus group participants felt confident in the priority, others expressed a need for the NA to better understand the priority and what it entails. **It was felt that breaking the priority down into sub-topics and focusing on certain aspects could be helpful.**



“We need a definition and concrete examples of what this theme represents within a project.”

*Focus group participant*

“The priority comprises many different aspects like media literacy, active citizenship, common values, cultural heritage, etc. – which makes it somewhat fuzzy... as an NA, we are not experts in the field, we can only gather and disseminate relevant material and showcase examples of good practice.”

*Survey respondent*

“This is such a broad issue and such a difficult priority to work with as it entails almost everything.”

*Focus group participant*

“To raise awareness of common values. What are our common values? ... to have this more in common knowledge is perhaps a challenge or a possibility as well.”

*Focus group participant*

### 2.5.3. Relevance to the programme, to beneficiaries, and competition with other priorities

Some NAs feel there was a **lack of information about the participation priority across the programme**, with information missing from supporting documents such as the programme guide, guide for NAs, application forms, assessment guides, etc., which define the priority further, clarifying the scope of the topic and how it might be addressed across the sectors and key actions.

“[We need] explanations, priorities, definitions, a list of topics to be addressed, etc.”  
*Survey respondent*

Survey respondents identified that it felt **hard to link the priority to the current actions within the programme, and the relevance of the priority to the current key actions within E&T was said not to be clearly visible**. These findings were echoed in the focus groups.

Within the survey in particular, the issues highlighted included **difficulty making KA2 teaching and training materials suitable to fit into general VET curricula, or the lack of obligation for KA1 applicants to demonstrate how they deal with the priority in their applications**. This was also confirmed in the focus groups.

“We could be looking to the future and to emphasise this priority more in the next programme generation, to have it more in front and if we look at the situation of democracies, I think there are lots of reasons to do so.”  
*Focus group participant*

-----

“The nature of the priority is such that it can be difficult for the beneficiaries to integrate it in their projects if they are not already thematically connected to it.”  
*Survey respondent*

-----

“It seems that many educational organisations participating in Erasmus+ struggle to actualise the participation priority into their projects.”  
*Focus group participant*

NAs find it **challenging to engage target groups around the topic and to build interest amongst potential beneficiaries**. Within the survey, some NAs highlighted a lack of interest from teachers or the priority itself not being attractive for beneficiaries. This was confirmed in the focus groups, where participants talked about

**teachers having little time and lacking the skills needed to pursue the priority.** Participants felt beneficiaries in the **HE and VET sectors, in particular, had a lack of knowledge of the European Union and European values** (except in countries where it is taught through a specific curriculum). In the survey, it was said that **E&T beneficiaries often felt the priority belonged to the Youth sector and there are fewer established practices for potential beneficiaries in E&T.** The results from the focus groups identified a need to have extracurricular activities linked to the priority gain recognition, especially within higher education in particular.

**The participation priority was also said to be in competition with other priorities in the programme.** Survey responses indicated that participation was harder to understand for both NAs and beneficiaries, who often found it easier to work on other topics. In the focus groups, participants raised that **within the programme application and reporting forms the participation priority was not addressed as thoroughly as the other priorities.**

Engaging the diversity of target groups that might need to be involved in democratic participation was also said to be a challenge for beneficiaries when working on the topic.

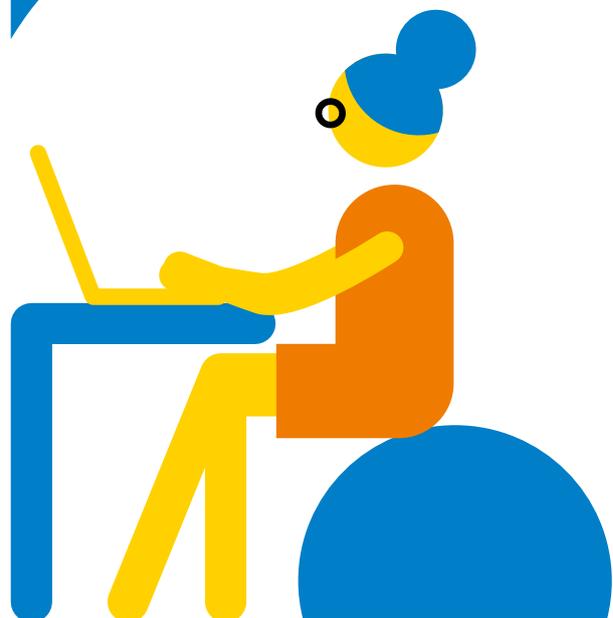
**These issues, combined with a lack of confidence and knowledge, were said to lead to beneficiaries focusing on inclusion and green transition instead of participation.**

“[We have] a low level of development of civil society and an insufficiently democratic school system. In SCH we observe that teachers do not always have the time and space to implement this priority in school life. They focus more on digital competences. As a result, we have lots of projects concerning Digital, Green, or Inclusion, but not necessarily Participation.”

*Survey respondent*

“Involving different target groups as educators, policymakers, community leaders, civil society organisations, and individuals can be challenging.”

*Survey respondent*



### 2.5.4. Political Sensitivities and Measuring Impact

Other concerns identified through the survey included both **beneficiaries and NAs being unsure of how to address political issues** such as the rise of political polarisation and false information, particularly with the rapid evolution of technology and online platforms. The results from the focus groups also showed that this polarisation means that **the participation priority is seen to be aligned with politics in some countries**. This creates a tension that concerns some teachers and lecturers and creates a reluctance to engage in the topic.

According to survey participants, **measuring the impact of participation initiatives on individuals' civic knowledge, skills, and behaviour was also felt to be complex** and presents a final challenge. This was further confirmed in the focus groups, with some participants being keen to explore the issue, looking at which key indicators could be used and how to create commonality. There was also a discussion on how to capture outcomes related to participation from mobility projects.

## 2.6. RESOURCES AND SUPPORT NEEDED BY NAs

Overall, there was a great deal of enthusiasm amongst NAs to work on promoting the priority and a real desire to develop a greater understanding of what it covers as well as how it can be delivered. The resource and support needs of NAs are relatively consistent across the network and there is a good deal of commonality over the tools and approaches they wish to develop to support beneficiaries.

“This topic is not welcome in some schools as it is connected to politics... some professors are afraid of this.”

*Focus group participant*

-----

“We are trying to raise awareness that you can participate without being a member of a political party, you can participate in society.”

*Focus group participant*

-----

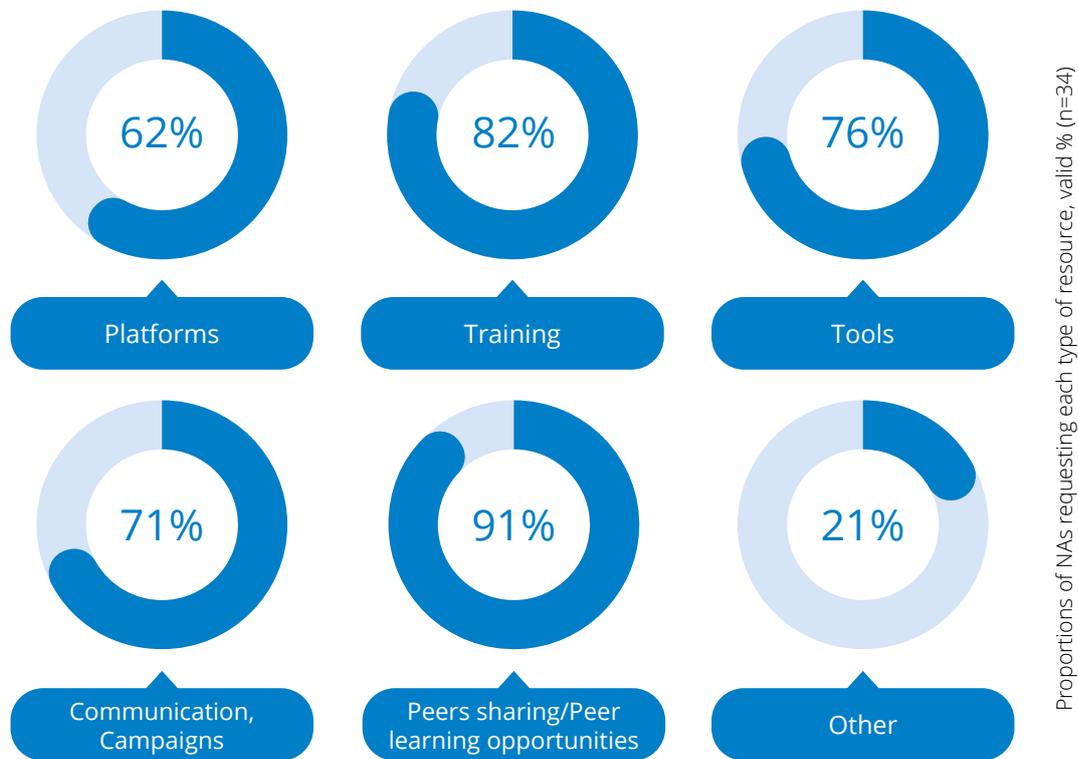
“Designing effective educational approaches that instil democratic values, critical thinking, and active citizenship requires careful consideration. Balancing theoretical knowledge with practical skills and experiences can be complex.”

*Survey respondent*

### 2.6.1. Formats and approaches of interest

In the survey, participants were asked: What types of resources would help you in better promoting the participation priority? Resource and support needs of NAs were further explored in depth within the focus groups and through a series of open-box questions in the survey.

**Figure 11:** Resources and support required by NAs



Survey respondents were asked to indicate what they felt were the highest-quality approaches to promote participation in democratic life. The 29 answers suggest there are a number of opportunities for SALTO PI to produce resources to support a number of these areas and according to the responses NAs wish to utilise:

- Awareness-raising measures and accessible information for potential beneficiaries** – to demonstrate the added value of being part of the European project, and the possibility to practise civic engagement in the context of the Erasmus+ Programme.
- Training and capacity-building measures for potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders** – in order to develop all actors' knowledge of democratic participation.

Suggestions of this included the use of KA2, TCA, and training of the trainers.

- Dissemination of good practice examples to beneficiaries** – such as models of best practice, personal success stories, and example teaching materials.
- Specific projects for addressing ethical issues, or key political tensions** – (e.g., Brexit, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, etc.)

Responses also **highlighted the importance of careful choice of target groups** – particularly to reach those who question democratic values, and people in early years education / early stages of life and long-term engagement and support to project beneficiaries throughout the project cycle. **Tools and support that enable these approaches are therefore also important.**

## 2.6.2. Topics of interest

There is an understanding amongst NAs that SALTO PI will need to prioritise their work and **a desire to focus collectively on specific sub-topics of the participation priority, given its breadth**. Focus group participants identified **European values and electoral engagement**. This is within the context of a perceived lack of understanding amongst citizens about the purpose of the European Union, the rise in anti-democratic, extreme-right-wing political parties, the rise of fake news, and proliferating conspiracy theories.

**There is an opportunity for SALTO PI to produce a conceptual framework outlining the various sub-topics within the participation priority. NAs recognised it is a very broad priority**, so a framework is suggested to give consistency, to explain different elements, and to build a common understanding and interpretation of the priority.

## 2.6.3. Networking and peer-to-peer learning

**There is an opportunity for a network of 'participation officers' or named 'participation leads' amongst NAs**. Participants in the focus groups in part attended because of the opportunities for conversation and to learn from each other. There was **unanimous support for such a network of participation officers**. This confirmed results from the survey that an NA E&T network for participation would create synergies, inter-agency learning, sharing of practice, ideas, and materials, providing support and stimulus.

There are multiple opportunities for SALTO PI to **stimulate peer-to-peer learning on the participation priority**. Across the survey and focus groups, there was enthusiasm for peer support and

peer learning through international events to bring people together with opportunities to explore and better understand the priority, building confidence, sharing practice, etc. This could include **workshops and training sessions designed for educators and trainers to enhance their pedagogical approaches to teaching democratic participation**. Improved relationships through such events will also bring opportunities for increased collaboration between NAs.

## 2.6.4. Practical guides and platforms

There are a wide range of opportunities for highly practical resources relating to the participation priority which can be promoted through SALTO PI's participation pool. Participants taking part in the survey and/or the focus groups ask for a **single platform for the priority containing information on events, resources, and best practice examples**. It is an opportunity to pull together existing materials from NAs, as well as other actors (e.g., Council of Europe, E&T beneficiaries). According to research participants, **the platform could host examples of practice, projects, toolkits, and materials** that are categorised for general use and for the four sectors, e.g.:

- **Curriculum integration guides:** Detailed guides that provide educators with practical approaches for integrating democratic participation and civic education across different subjects and disciplines within each sector.
- **Policy briefs and research summaries:** Accessible summaries of research findings, best practices, and policy recommendations related to promoting participation within each sector.
- **E-learning modules for beneficiaries:** Interactive e-learning modules that cover topics related to democratic participation, including

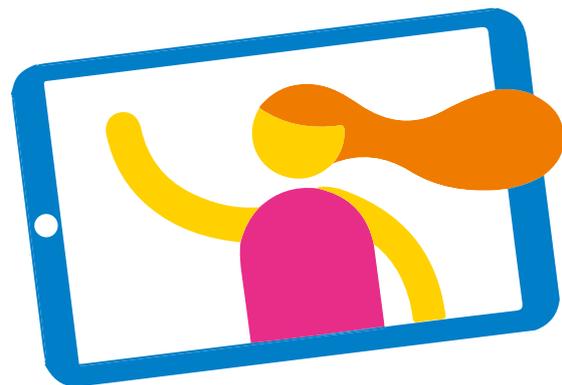
civic rights and responsibilities, media literacy, advocacy skills, and political awareness. These modules could be adaptable for different age groups and educational levels.

- **Experiential learning resources:** Resources and toolkits that outline experiential learning methods that can be used in promoting participation to learners, e.g., mock elections, policy debates, and local governance simulations.
- **Participation assessment tools:** Assessment tools that can help educators evaluate learners' participation skills, critical thinking abilities, and contributions to democratic activities.

### 2.6.5. Communication and collaboration

There is a general need to **increase awareness and improve communication around the participation priority to E&T stakeholders, including NAs**. Both the survey and the focus groups identify a need for stronger communication on the priority to raise its profile. The survey **participants feel the European Commission could be stronger in promoting the participation priority within the E&T sector**. It is recognised that participation should run through all projects and NAs want to support beneficiaries to recognise this. According to research participants, **having a strategic approach across the programmes and in all sectors for NAs** will promote the participation priority, inform, and empower NA staff to work better with beneficiaries. Focus group participants also suggested the value of the development of a shared participation strategy across E&T NAs.

There are opportunities for **collaboration between the E&T and Youth sectors** within the Erasmus+ Programme. A total of 32 (91.4%) of the NAs in the survey indicated they would find the development of events and resources linking the Youth sector with E&T useful. Those focus group participants who had good relationships with the youth sector suggest **the Youth sector has material and practices that can be used or adapted for E&T**. According to these participants, there is material and practice from the Youth sector that can be used or adapted, and some NAs take training from one sector and apply it in another.



"We have done joint workshops... between the VET and European Solidarity Corps on mentorship of young people before they undertake either VET placement or they undertake a volunteering placement."

*Focus group participant*

## 3.

## Conclusions and recommendations

**The participation priority is regarded as important to NAs, the Erasmus+ Programme, and the E&T sector.** The school sector is understood to be the sector where the priority is most often realised, as a result of many countries having civic education programmes in schools. **VET** is identified as the area where the participation priority is least emphasised owing to the focus on employment programmes in this sector. Within HE it is understood that the priority relates to learning linked to mobility and extracurricular activities, and within AE it is typically addressed as a standalone course.

**A large majority of NAs view their role as facilitators who promote the participation priority to potential beneficiaries and fund projects on this topic. They do not consider themselves experts in this topic.** Indeed, many NAs find the topic **challenging to address**, too **broad** in nature, and **difficult to work with compared to other horizontal priorities**. The principal goal for NAs when addressing the participation priority is **awareness-raising** among beneficiaries, partners, and potential applicants. NAs identify that **outreach to new beneficiaries**, encouraging **new applications** on priority, and **showcasing how the programme can be used** to address participation are key outcomes for their work. NAs **did not identify using specific approaches for different sectors** of the E&T field when addressing the participation priority.

A large majority of NAs view their role as facilitators who promote the participation priority to potential beneficiaries and fund projects on this topic. They do not consider themselves experts in this topic.

The management of the participation priority within NAs is varied. Over a third of NAs have no structured arrangements in place for leading on the priority, which results in limiting the extent to which NAs are working on this topic. NAs make some efforts to integrate their work on the participation priority into a strategic approach, but only to a narrow degree. **The majority of NAs appear to be unclear, or unable, to provide extensive information on how they will address the participation priority in the 2024–2027 programme period.**

NAs connect a very wide range of topics to the participation priority, particularly **citizenship, EU values, and issues relating to democratic backsliding and MIL**. Around two-thirds of NAs link MIL to the participation priority in their work. **NAs' work on MIL typically focuses on enabling the E&T sector to address the**

**development of MIL competences amongst learners.** It is often viewed that projects or activities focusing on MIL address the participation priority by default, as MIL competences are prerequisites for an individual to engage in democratic participation. **NAs lack a clear understanding of digital participation and its relationship to the participation priority.** Many NAs conflate digital participation with broader concepts such as digitalisation, digital skills development, or digital transformation.

**The use of TCA/LTA was the most commonly identified practice amongst NAs to address the participation priority.** National or local activities aimed at beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries as well as information and communication activities were also commonly used measures. Many NAs address the participation priority **within other communication and activities as part of general and generic events or communication.** Only one NA stood out as undertaking a much more extensive range of activities than other NAs developed under its dedicated strategy on “Civic Education and Engagement.”

Whilst NAs believe the participation priority is important to the programme, it is clear that it is just one of many areas that are important. The human and operational resources dedicated to promoting the priority are not extensive. There

The use of TCA/LTA was the most commonly identified practice amongst NAs to address the participation priority.

are **barriers caused by a lack of staff capacity, lack of named staff to lead on the priority and lack of expertise in the topic amongst NAs.** Though it should still be stressed that all NAs are active in attempting to address the priority, it is **often outcompeted by other priorities.**

**There are difficulties in understanding the topic amongst both NAs and beneficiaries.** It is considered to be too broad and difficult to develop at a concrete level by beneficiaries. There is a **perceived lack of information about the participation priority within the programme** and produced to support the programme. There are said to be **challenges linking the priority to the current actions within the programme** in a concrete way. Compared to other horizontal priorities, NAs find it **difficult to engage target groups around the topic and to build interest amongst potential beneficiaries.** For instance, there is **uncertainty over how to address political issues** such as the rise of political polarisation and false information and **reluctance in some stakeholders to engage in ‘politics’.**

Despite the challenges, there remains **significant potential for NAs to strengthen** their work on the participation priority. By developing **clearer strategic approaches, enhancing collaboration with experts in civic education and MIL, and sharing best practices across countries,** NAs can better support beneficiaries in addressing this priority.

While capacity constraints and competing priorities pose limitations, the **widespread recognition of participation as a key value within Erasmus+** provides a strong foundation for future progress. With **targeted efforts to clarify its scope, improve communication, and build engagement,** the participation priority can be more effectively integrated into the programme’s long-term impact.

### 3.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SALTO PI

SALTO PI is committed to supporting NAs on this journey, and sought actionable opportunities to do so through this research.

Combining their interpretation of the responses received through the research with their thematic knowledge and understanding of the position of SALTO PI, the research team outlined a number of recommendations for ways in which SALTO PI might further support the progress of the participation priority for E&T NAs.

#### 3.1.1. Facilitate networking and peer-to-peer learning

Recommendations related to NA needs for further networking can be summarised as follows:

- **Create a network of ‘participation officers’** or named ‘participation leads’ amongst NAs to stimulate peer-to-peer learning amongst NAs and raise the status of the participation priority.
- **Provide training and take lessons from other priority officer networks:** NA officer networks have been created for other priorities and have shown a need for role and priority training. Many network members will be ‘just’ programme officers with the additional assigned role of a participation officer and may not have specific competences related to participation (‘For many, it’s just an additional hat that they are wearing.’). Participation officers will need training and resources in order to feel competent enough to train their NA staff on participation matters.
- **Clarify role expectations:** Some NAs employ full-time officers, whereas other NAs assign programme officers with an additional role as

a priority officer. What should be the profile/ tasks to be achieved? Facilitating a debate on this might help visualise differences among NAs on who they have foreseen the role of a participation officer.

- **Facilitate exchange of experience among NAs:** a place to exchange with fellow participation officers both online and offline, recurring, but with changing topics or target groups.
- **Facilitate networking:** a list of participation officers in each field would be a good starting point (in line with GDPR requirements).
- **Provide room for regular exchange** (low threshold, e.g., short monthly online meetings on different topics, similar to ‘SALTO Cafe’).
- **Online and in-person training** for participation officers.
- Actively **involve participation officers** in the further development of the SALTO service offer.

#### 3.1.2. Develop practical guides and platforms

When developing these resources, SALTO PI should be mindful not to duplicate existing resources available at an international level, particularly those produced by the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

- **Simplify messaging:** Break the participation priority into specific subtopics with clear, actionable examples (e.g., media literacy, local civic engagement projects). Create accessible resources tailored for different sectors.
- **Develop a conceptual framework** for the participation priority which breaks down and explains the various sub-topics within it in a concrete manner.
- **Create case studies of good practice** in each sector and each action relating to the priority, for distribution by NAs to potential

beneficiaries. This could be supported by dedicated research into practices within each sector.

- **Develop training and resource materials** on the participation priority for the E&T sector, making them available through the Participation Pool. This resource could include:
  - **Curriculum integration guides** for each sector;
  - **Policy briefs** and research summaries for each sector;
  - **E-learning modules** for beneficiaries;
  - **Experiential learning toolkits** for educators;
  - Participation **assessment tools**.
- Work with NAs to **develop a TCA** or other initiatives around European values linked to the European elections.
- **Promote non-political participation:** Develop materials that emphasise democratic participation as civic rather than political (e.g., volunteering, local community initiatives).
- **Map Erasmus+ project outcomes:** and complete an inventory or compendium of existing project results and achievements that NAs can build on in order not to start from scratch, perhaps utilising the experience of the Youth sector.

By developing clearer strategic approaches, enhancing collaboration with experts in civic education and MIL, and sharing best practices across countries, NAs can better support beneficiaries in addressing this priority.

### 3.1.3. Support communication and collaboration

- **Promote cross-sectoral activities/ exchange between the Youth field and the E&T field.** NAs within E&T are open to collaboration with the Youth sector. Consideration of cross-sectoral opportunities should be given to each recommendation, and cross-sectoral working should only be undertaken when there is a clear value-added proposition from doing so.
- Host or co-ordinate **projects that stimulate peer-to-peer learning on a priority** within the E&T sector such as international conferences, events, and training within the E&T sector.
- **Leverage existing networks:** Partner with civil society organisations, youth groups, and community leaders to introduce expert inputs, amplify participation efforts, and engage diverse audiences.

### 3.1.4. Review digital participation and MIL needs and support

In relation to digital participation, the understanding of NAs on this topic is so limited that it is difficult to make extended recommendations. Equally, there are no strongly identified needs or obvious opportunities in relation to MIL. As such, these broad recommendations may form starting points for further development of these topics:

- **Assess NA interest and capacity for digital participation** by hosting introductory events such as short seminars, round-tables, or online discussions to build an understanding of the topic.
- **Reassess needs and opportunities for digital participation** within the E&T sector based on insights from these events, while considering competing priorities and limited current demand.

- **Avoid duplicating existing work** by the Council of Europe, UNESCO, or national curriculum provisions, and focus on identifying gaps or added value.
- Explore how **MIL teaching in schools** can be more closely aligned with democracy and the participation priority.
- Commission a small-scale study or policy paper to **examine opportunities for integrating MIL into broader democratic participation frameworks**.

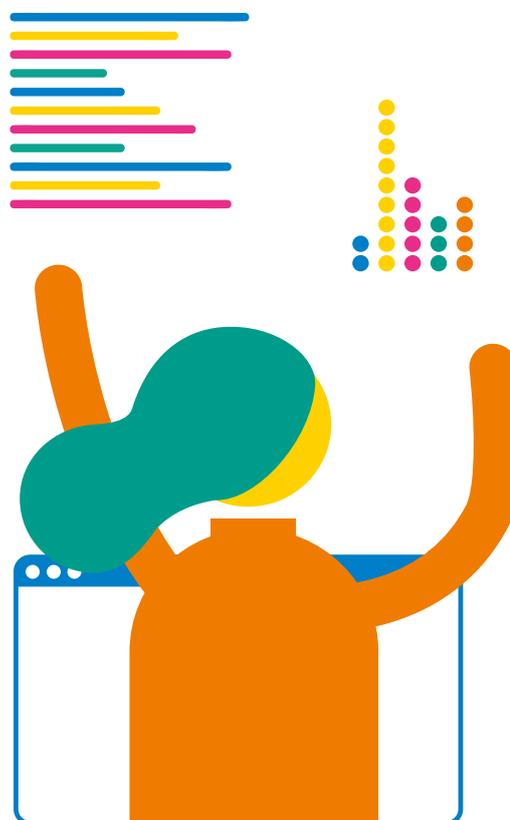
SALTO PI will continue to support NAs with tailored guidance, strategic partnerships, and innovative tools that strengthen participation at all levels. Fostering peer-to-peer collaboration, developing practical resources, and enhancing communication efforts, SALTO PI will create an enabling environment where participation is not just encouraged but embedded within Erasmus+ and beyond.

Through this shared effort, SALTO PI remains dedicated to making participation more accessible, impactful, and meaningful for all stakeholders.

### 3.1.5. Additional recommendations

- **Promote non-political participation:** Develop materials that emphasise democratic participation as civic rather than solely political (e.g., volunteering, local community initiatives).
- **Invest in impact measurement tools:** Develop standardised indicators to measure the effectiveness of participation activities. Encourage beneficiaries to include reflection and outcome reports in their projects.
- **Leverage technology for monitoring:** Use online platforms and tools to track participation outcomes and build evidence of success stories to inspire future projects.

SALTO PI has already actioned many of these recommendations and will strongly consider them in order to strengthen their work and ongoing commitment to empowering NAs in advancing the participation priority across the E&T sector.



## 4.

# Inspiration and Opportunities for NAs

Building on SALTO PI's mission and the recognition of participation as a key programme value and the potential for NAs to strengthen their approach, the following chapter highlights practical examples, innovative approaches, and additional resources collated following the research that can support NAs in strengthening their efforts, fostering collaboration, and ensuring the participation priority is both meaningful and actionable across the Erasmus+ Programme.

While challenges remain, the experiences of certain NAs demonstrate that with strategic planning, dedicated resources, and targeted initiatives, real progress can be made in the shared work of promoting the participation priority across the Erasmus+ Programme.

## 4.1. BUILDING NA CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There are a number of strategies and practices adopted by NAs to enhance their preparation, orientation, and capability to address the participation priority effectively.

### Developing Strategic Foundations

- Creation of **national participation strategies** and **targeted action plans** to provide clear direction and measurable goals.
- Establishment of a **dedicated Participation Officer role** to ensure focused dedicated knowledge source and attention to priority objectives.
- Use of **lessons from other priority officer networks**, such as ensuring capacity and readiness for the officer role, training tailored to the dual demands of programme- and priority-specific responsibilities and **support from NA directors and the European Commission**, especially regarding expectations of the role.



## SPOTLIGHT ON NATIONAL STRATEGIES: CZECH REPUBLIC AND FRANCE

Two NAs shared strategies they had developed to advance the participation priority within Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, offering valuable practices that other NAs might adapt. The approaches by the Czech Republic (CZ01) and France (FR01) reflect their commitment to aligning national actions with programme priorities, combining structured planning with innovative initiatives.

The **Czech NA's Participation Action Plan** is a detailed framework that integrates civic engagement, skill development, and European identity into its objectives.

It outlines clear priorities, with actionable steps such as promoting good practices, offering professional consultations, and supporting participatory projects through informational seminars and webinars. A strong focus is placed on monitoring, with specific metrics like the number of events and shared resources used to track progress. By addressing barriers to participation, the Czech NA emphasises media literacy, digital skills, and project management as key areas for capacity building, supporting both formal and non-formal education sectors.



The Czech action plan can be found here:

[https://www.dzs.cz/sites/default/files/2024-08/Action%20plan%20Participation\\_24\\_final.pdf](https://www.dzs.cz/sites/default/files/2024-08/Action%20plan%20Participation_24_final.pdf)

The **French NA's Civic Education and Engagement Strategy** takes a thematic approach, organised around three key axes: active citizenship education, recognition of civic engagement in educational pathways, and the promotion of the Erasmus+ contribution to participation. This strategy includes targeted initiatives such as launching a survey on civic engagement in Erasmus+ projects, creating an ambassador network, and organising dedicated events like annual conferences and workshops. A significant innovation is the integration of research findings, such as survey recommendations, to inform future activities, including training for multipliers and assessors.

### Common features and learning outcomes from the strategies:

- **Cross-sectoral collaboration:** Both NAs emphasise involving diverse stakeholders and bridging formal and non-formal education.
- **Monitoring and feedback loops:** Clear metrics and regular reviews are embedded into their strategies to assess impact and adapt actions.
- **Capacity building:** Targeted training and knowledge-sharing initiatives are prioritised to enhance staff and participant engagement with the participation priority.

These strategies exemplify how structured planning, combined with creative and collaborative approaches, can inspire meaningful progress on participation goals.

### Building Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

- Formation of cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary participation teams to cascade information from the officer. Comprising representatives from key sectors (e.g., VET, HE, schools, youth) and experts in areas like ICT, inclusion, and civic education.
- Regular engagement with Youth sector teams and NAs, communication experts, and TCA colleagues to share knowledge and align efforts.

### Enhancing Professional Development

- Delivery of targeted training workshops and opportunities for mentorship, designed to build staff confidence and the capacity to address participation challenges.
- Promotion of shared learning opportunities, including participation in events, webinars, and exchanges with experienced NAs.

### Facilitating Knowledge Sharing

- Ensuring access to knowledge platforms or centralised information hubs to support NA staff – especially new team members – in gaining a quick orientation to participation-focused resources.
- Encouraging active contributions to and use of shared knowledge resources among NA colleagues.

### Links to NA websites with participation-specific sections:

#### Belgium (BE03):

<https://jugendbuero.be/programme/erasmus/eu-prioritaten/>

#### Czech Republic (CZ01):

<https://www.dzs.cz/priority#participace>

#### Finland (FI01):

<https://www.oph.fi/en/programmes/active-citizenship>

#### Germany (DE02)

<https://www.na-bibb.de/themen/teilhabe>

#### Iceland (IS01)

<https://www.erasmusplus.is/um-erasmus/virk-thattaka/>

#### Italy:

<https://www.erasmusplus.it/programma/priorita/partecipazione/>

#### Latvia: (LV01)

<https://erasmusplus.lv/lidzdaliba-demokratiskajos-procesos?tab=collapse-1847>

## 4.2. BENEFICIARY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Effective engagement strategies are essential to demystify the participation priority, inspire action, and ensure that beneficiaries understand its relevance and potential impact. NAs use various approaches to connect with beneficiaries, and inform and motivate them to integrate participation-focused activities into their projects.

### Raising Awareness and Inspiring Action

- **Awareness campaigns:** Organisation of national events, regional outreach activities, webinars, online discussions, etc., to clarify the participation priority, explore topics within it, and address misconceptions.
- **Dedicated website sections:** Creation of specific sections on NAs' Erasmus+ websites, providing clear, basic information on the participation priority. These sections offer context

Awards and recognition have been integrated into the existing quality award assessments, including those for the eTwinning and EPALE projects, but some agencies have created specific national recognition processes or prizes.

The Estonian NA (EE01) holds a “Golden Apple” award ceremony each year, recognising outstanding Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects that have contributed to the development of the education and youth fields and highlighted the importance of international cooperation. Award categories include for promotion of each programme priority, with the Golden Apple for Participation 2024 going to MTÜ Korruptsioonivaba Eesti and the Estonian Cooperation Council for empowering the voice of young people through inclusive budgeting in schools.

Learn more:

[Empowering youth to have a say through participatory budgeting in schools](#)

The German NA (DE01) presents the “Fundamental Academic Values Award” annually to early-career researchers in recognition of their outstanding contributions to preserving and promoting fundamental academic values within the European Higher Education Area. Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the award highlights excellence in areas such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and public responsibility for higher education. In 2024, the prestigious awards were presented during the Science Year ‘Freedom’ closing event in Berlin, honouring the top three researchers for their impactful work in advancing these shared European values.

Learn more:

[Fundamental Academic Values Award](#)

and clarifications, showcase practice examples from projects, and include links to further documents and resources, ensuring beneficiaries gain a foundational understanding of the priority.

- **Cross-sector partnerships:** Collaboration and partnerships with civil society organisations, youth groups, and community leaders to enhance outreach and engage more diverse beneficiary groups.
- **Award and recognition labels** are frequently leveraged to further promote and acknowledge projects that have contributed to development in the priority.
- **Role models and inspirational figures:** Highlighting the achievements of individuals engaged in democratic participation through campaigns and events, offering relatable examples to inspire beneficiaries and showcase the impact of participation-focused projects.
- **Alumni and ambassador networks:** Engaging with programme initiatives such as PEACE LTA, Europeers and EuroApprentices as well as the creation of national ambassador networks to deliver peer-to-peer programme promotion and develop participant voice and awareness of priority topics.



## ALUMNI AND AMBASSADOR NETWORKS: LEVERAGE EXISTING NETWORKS

Alumni and ambassador networks play a vital role in fostering European values, promoting Erasmus+ opportunities, and inspiring active citizenship. These networks exemplify how structured initiatives can connect past participants, amplify programme visibility, and create meaningful societal impact. Below, we explore five notable networks, their approaches, and common practices that other NAs may find valuable.

### PEACE – PARTICIPATION ERASMUS ALUMNI FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The PEACE initiative, a Long-Term Activity (LTA) coordinated by the Italian NA INDIRE, connects alumni and ambassadors across Erasmus+ sectors to strengthen European citizenship and civic engagement. It engages participants through transnational seminars, thematic research, and innovative tools like the “Participate in Europe” e-modules. These resources provide accessible insights into democratic participation, European values, and institutions. PEACE also organises school visits and community events to increase programme awareness and inspire participation.

- **Key Practices:** Cross-sector collaboration, e-learning modules, and thematic events tailored to European elections.
- Learn more: [PEACE Long-Term Activity](#).

### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AMBASSADOR SCHOOL PROGRAMME (EPAS)

The Swedish NA reported long-term cooperation with the European Commission Representation through their European Parliament Ambassador School Programme (EPAS) since 2009.

EPAS educates students about European parliamentary democracy, the role of the European Parliament, and EU values. Coordinated by the European Commission Representation, the programme equips teachers to act as role models and engage students in projects on European themes.

- **Key Practices:** Strategic partnerships with educators, focus on EU democratic processes, and inclusive outreach to diverse student groups.
- Learn more: [EPAS Programme](#)

## EUROPEERS

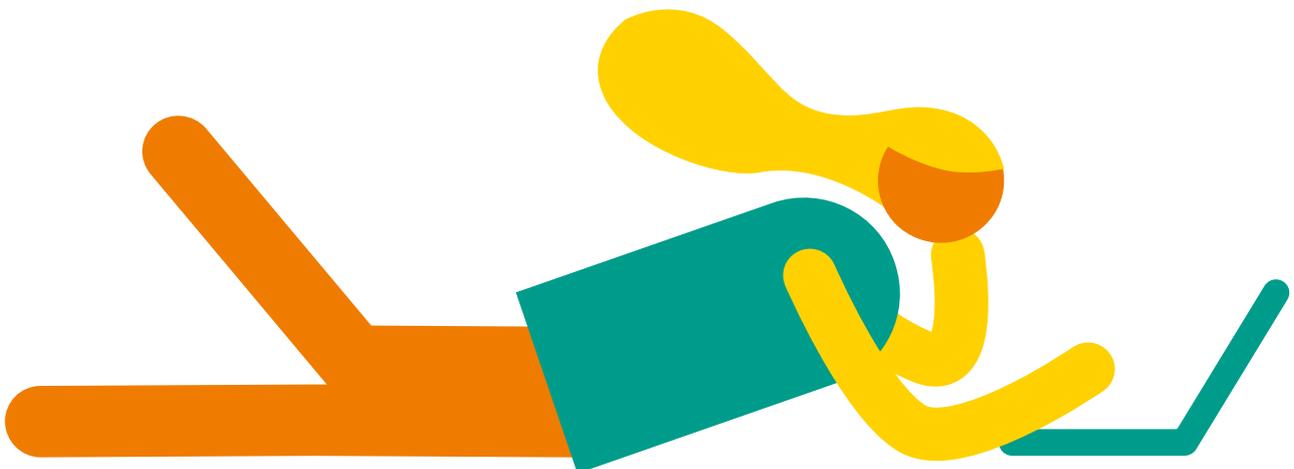
Founded in 2005 by the German NA, EuroPeers is a dynamic network of young people sharing their Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps' experiences. Through school visits, workshops, and public events, EuroPeers motivate others to explore EU opportunities. Their peer-led approach ensures inclusivity and engagement with diverse audiences.

- **Key Practices:** Grassroots event organisation, skill development in project management, and active use of media for outreach.
- Learn more: [EuroPeers Network](#)

## EUROAPPRENTICES – ERASMUS+ AMBASSADORS IN VET

EuroApprentices is a grassroots network promoting Erasmus+ in VET. Established in 2017, it now includes 11 countries and empowers apprentices to share their mobility experiences through social media, local events, and European forums. This initiative enhances civic engagement and inclusion, fostering a diverse ambassador community.

- **Key Practices:** Peer-to-peer outreach, annual international meetings, and a focus on inclusion and democratic participation.
- Learn more: [EuroApprentices Network](#)



### LOCAL ERASMUS+ INITIATIVES (LEI) – HIGHER EDUCATION AMBASSADORS

The Local Erasmus+ Initiatives (LEIs), supported by the German NA (DE01) and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), empower student university groups to promote Erasmus+ mobility opportunities at the local level. These student-led groups not only encourage outbound students to participate in Erasmus+ study and internship programmes but also support incoming students with integration and everyday guidance. LEIs provide an accessible entry point for students to learn about Erasmus+ and serve as a first point of contact for student mobility questions.

- **Key Practices:** Peer-to-peer engagement, integration support for international students, and local outreach promoting Erasmus+ mobility.
- Learn more: [Local Erasmus+ Initiatives.](#)

### EUROPA MACHT SCHULE (EMS) – SCHOOL AMBASSADORS

The Europa macht Schule (Europe meets School) programme is a voluntary initiative designed to foster cultural exchange and intercultural understanding between international students and school pupils in Germany. International students serve as ambassadors for their home countries, offering presentations on cultural, historical, and political topics, while also participating in school activities to deepen their connection to German society. The German NA (DE01) oversees the programme, which enriches both the academic and social lives of participants, encouraging school pupils to consider mobility opportunities while helping international students develop skills that benefit their future careers.

- **Key Practices:** Peer-led cultural exchange, school integration for international students, and community engagement to foster intercultural understanding.
- Learn more: [Europa macht Schule.](#)

### 4.3. BUILDING BENEFICIARY CAPACITY

To empower beneficiaries to address the participation priority effectively, NAs focus on building capacity through tailored support, training, and mentorship. These practices ensure beneficiaries have the tools, knowledge, and confidence needed to design and implement impactful projects.

#### Providing Practical Tools and Examples

- **Good practice collections:** Collation of project examples, translated and adapted to local or sector needs which showcase participation in action.
- **SALTO PI Participation Pool:** The Participation Pool is a website of dedicated resources collecting best practices, up-to-date training materials, and hands-on tools addressing Participation in Democratic Life, Media & Information Literacy, Strategic Communication, and Digital Participation. Initially developed for the Youth sector, resources are expanding and many transferable practices and examples can be found there, such as:
  - **Information and links:** [European Schoolnet: Digital Citizenship Projects](#)
  - **Inspirational Practices & Tips for NAs:** [Sharing the Power with Young People in the German National Agency](#)
  - **Lesson plans:** [Minecraft to Foster the Online Participation of Younger Kids](#)
- **European Project Results Platform (EPRP):** The platform is a useful source to identify projects that align with participation goals and outputs that are already developed, especially to identify partner organisations from each country. Topic filters already relate to many participation topics and additional filters can help refine searches by topic, country, date, and quality or recognition labels.

#### GOOD PRACTICE COLLECTIONS

The French NA (FR01) curated a collection of Erasmus+ projects that focus on combating discrimination, euroscepticism, and disinformation.

These projects aim to develop social skills, promote democratic values, enhance understanding of the European Union, and foster media literacy. By supporting these initiatives, Erasmus+ contributes to the development of active,

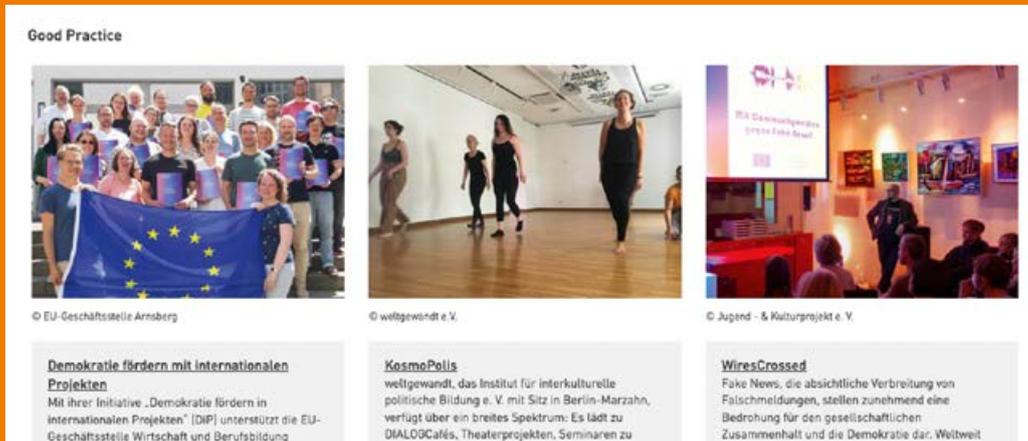


European citizens who respect democratic values and are prepared to engage in their communities and broader European political life.

The collection is divided into five thematic parts, offering practical examples of how Erasmus+ can support the promotion of European citizenship and active engagement.

Learn more:

[French NA Portfolio of Erasmus+ Projects \(FR\)](#).



The German NA (DE03) compiled a collection of Erasmus+ project examples to showcase diverse initiatives in participation, social inclusion, and civic engagement, directly linked to the section of their website giving more information on the participation priority. The webpage highlights key project details, such as the

duration, topics covered, and participating countries, providing a comprehensive overview of how Erasmus+ fosters inclusion and participation.

Explore the collection: [German NA BIBB Website - Project Examples \(DE\)](#).

### Tailored Training and Guidance

- Workshops and bespoke training:** Delivery of topic-specific training sessions and discussions, often through TCA and LTA initiatives. Support for beneficiaries has been cross-sectoral, sector-specific, national seminars linked to transnational or built on previous, successful TCAs.

### UPCOMING TCAS

School TCA [“European Conference on Living and Teaching European Values Today”](#): 07.05.2025 – 09.05.2025

Cross-sectoral TCA [“Participation in civic engagement and Green actions”](#): 08.04.2025 – 11.04.2025

○ **Guidance and mentoring:**

Assignment of experienced mentors to new applicants or underrepresented sectors, such as HE and VET, to support the integration of participation goals into project designs.

○ **EPALE and eTwinning collaboration:**

Adaptation and sharing of training programmes, awards, and discussion materials developed through EPALE and eTwinning to enhance beneficiaries' knowledge and engagement with the participation priority.

Some EPALE and eTwinning publications include:

[Integrating EU values into the classroom](#)

[If not in Schools, where? Learn and practice Democracy with eTwinning guide](#)

[Teaching media literacy and fighting disinformation with eTwinning \(2021\)](#)

[EPALE Germany Resources KITs: Political Education & Critical Media Competence \(DE\)](#)

[EPALE discussion: The role of media literacy in adult learning](#)

TCA & LTA examples, with formats, content, and outcomes that might be re-used or accessed either through the SALTO E&T website or by contacting partner NAs:

- AT SCH TCA [“European political education in schools”](#)
- BE SCH VET TCA [“Democratic Participation on Tools for SCH and VET organisations”](#)
- DE SCH online TCA [“The future of Europe – Europe is your future! Pupils’ participation in democratic life” - an Online Barcamp to promote civic engagement and pupil mobility.](#) Video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CRFL2Cn6Bk>
- DE SCH TCA [“Erasmus+ Online Contact Seminar \(TCA\) - Media Literacy and Disinformation”](#)
- Outcomes: [https://salto-et.net/AMP/activity\\_outcomes/show\\_public\\_outcomes/DE03\\_0335\\_TSS\\_2022](https://salto-et.net/AMP/activity_outcomes/show_public_outcomes/DE03_0335_TSS_2022)
- ES Cross-sector: [“Civic participation and EU values. Make Europe shine!”](#)
- IE AE KA1 focused seminar: [“Civic EmpowerED- Adult Education and mobility learning training”](#)
- NL National TCA [“European future: now is the turn of young people!”](#)

## Studies and Evaluation

- **Systematic evaluation of participation impacts:** Completion of research to understand the national context and needs and clarify priorities, as well as measuring the long-term impacts of participation-related initiatives
- **Assessment measures:** Revising Erasmus+ application and evaluation forms to better assess participation priority requirements, making them as prominent as digital, green, and inclusion priorities. Inclusion of the priority within assessor training and awarding additional points in the evaluation of projects with a participation focus.

A range of NAs within the Erasmus+ Programme have undertaken detailed research initiatives to evaluate the impacts of participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement. These studies provide insights into the national contexts, emerging trends, and long-term outcomes of participation-related initiatives, guiding future improvements in project management and priority promotion.

**The Irish NA (IE02)** focused on the role of Erasmus+ in fostering transversal skills among VET learners and staff. Their report, *Erasmus+ VET Mobility as a Route to the Acquisition of Transversal Skills*, highlights how Erasmus+ mobility projects contribute to navigating the complexities of a rapidly evolving world. This publication underscores the value of transversal skills and provides a roadmap for VET organisations to maximise their impact. [Read the report here.](#)

**The French NA (FR01)** launched a survey in June 2023 to explore social and civic engagement in Erasmus+ projects. This study assessed the characteristics, motivations, and impacts of these projects on participants' engagement journeys. Its findings offer actionable recommendations for strengthening support to project leaders, improving skills recognition, and promoting best practices. The research findings are compiled in Erasmus+ Observatory No. 23: *Social and Civic Engagement in Erasmus+ Projects and the European Solidarity Corps*, which provides a robust framework for designing impactful initiatives.

[Access the publication here.](#)

**The German NA (DE02)** explored participation in democratic life through their journal *Education for Europe – No. 2023/38 – Getting Involved in Europe*. This publication reflects on Germany's sixth-place ranking in the EU for satisfaction with democracy and tackles challenges like fake news. It includes good practice examples, actionable insights, and an inspiring poster entitled *We Are Part of the Erasmus+ Community*. [Explore the journal here.](#)

These initiatives collectively enhance our understanding of participation priorities and serve as valuable resources for stakeholders across the Erasmus+ community.

## Shaping the Future of Participation in Erasmus+

The research findings, recommendations, and inspiring examples presented here highlight both the challenges and the opportunities in advancing the participation priority across the Erasmus+ Education and Training sector. While structural and capacity limitations persist, there is a clear and shared ambition among National Agencies to embed participation more deeply within the programme. By fostering stronger collaboration, developing clearer strategies, and leveraging expertise in civic education and media literacy, NAs can take meaningful steps to empower beneficiaries and enhance the impact of participation-focused initiatives.

SALTO PI stands ready to support this journey, providing NAs with the tools, networks, and guidance needed to translate ambition into action. Through strengthened peer-to-peer learning, practical resources, and strategic partnerships, SALTO PI will continue to facilitate knowledge exchange and drive innovation in participation practices. As the landscape of civic engagement evolves, so too must the approaches taken to ensure participation remain an accessible and integral part of Erasmus+.

This is an opportunity to shape the future of participation within the programme – not just as a priority on paper but as a lived reality for beneficiaries. By working together, sharing insights, and embracing new possibilities, NAs and SALTO PI can make meaningful participation a lasting and transformative force across Erasmus+, helping to build a more inclusive and engaged society.

